

10 best museums in london

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London is absolutely world-class when it comes to museums. Obviously, we're biased, but with more than 170 of them dotted about the capital – a huge chunk of which are free to visit – we think it's fair to say that there's nowhere else in the world that does museums better.

Want to explore the history of TfL? We've got a museum for that. Rather learn about advertising? We've got a museum for that too. History? Check. Science? Check. 1940s cinema memorabilia, grotesque eighteenth-century surgical instruments, or perhaps a wall of 4,000 mouse skeletons? Check, check, check!

Being the cultured metropolitans that we are, Time Out's editors love nothing more than a wholesome afternoon spent gawping at Churchill's baby rattle or some ancient Egyptian percussion instruments. In my case, the opportunity to live on the doorstep of some of the planet's most iconic cultural institutions was a big reason why I moved here at the first chance I got, and I've racked up countless hours traipsing around display cases and deciphering needlessly verbose wall texts in the eleven years since.

From iconic collections, brilliant curation and cutting-edge tech right down to nice loos, adequate signage and a decent place to grab a cuppa; my colleagues and I know exactly what we want from a museum, and we've put in a whole lot of time deliberating which of the city's institutions are worthy of our time.

What is it? Full of more nature-based information than David Attenborough, this is the magnificent South Kensington home of around 80 million plant, animal, fossil, rock and mineral specimens. Why go? To come face-to-face with animatronic dinosaurs, a man-sized model of a foetus, a dodo, a giant sequoia tree, an earthquake simulator, glow-in-the-dark crystals and much more. Plus, it's also a world-class research institution.

What is it? A powerful museum shining a light on people's experiences of conflict from the First World War to today. A few minutes walk from Waterloo, IWM is made up of permanent galleries, such as the ace Curiosities of War exhibit, and temporary displays, exploring recent conflicts and terrorist attacks. Why go? For impressive and extensive collections, including the profoundly moving and troubling permanent Holocaust gallery (not recommended for under-14s).

What is it? Hello, sailor! An ode to all things nautical and a treasure trove of watery artefacts, maps, art and memorabilia. The museum is part of the Royal Museums, Greenwich, which also features the Queen's House gallery, the Cutty Sark clipper ship and the Royal Observatory. Why go? To be wowed by almost 2.5 million historical items, such as Admiral Nelson's uniform from the battle of Trafalgar.

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