

London's Street Markets

There are almost 300 street markets in London. They're free, fun (mostly) and photogenic.

Words of Warning:

Markets are subject to legal regulation. Stall holders have to pay for their pitch and contribute to cleaning up after the market closes. If you are going to buy, make sure you examine whatever it is closely. Be wary of anything wrapped so that you can't see or feel all of it. Be especially wary of anything electrical. Some clothes are real bargains – look for where a label has been cut out. Fresh produce is often sold off cheap near closing time. Markets attract pickpockets – store your cellphone and your wallet inside a secure, closed bag you carry close to you, rather than in your pockets.

Special or General?

Some markets are specialized, like the historic Bermondsey Antiques Market which operates on Fridays from 4.00 a.m. (!) until 12.00 noon. Mostly it's dealer to dealer, with the bulk of trading over by 7.00 or 8.00 when the 'early bird' tourists start to drift in.

Most markets are 'general', selling fruit and vegetables and consumer items – clothes, bags, craft goods, CDs, household wares etc.

Closest to the Tufts London Office...

★ Leather Lane, fifteen minutes' walk due East along Theobald's Road, then right onto Gray's Inn Road then left through Baldwin's Gardens – then you're there. It's a lunch time, weekday market, closing down around 3.00 p.m. More than a dozen types of food on offer from stalls and cafes – burritos, falafel, kebabs, curries, halal, Thai, Ethiopian, Korean, Caribbean, Brazilian, Mexican, Japanese, Turkish, Lebanese.... Probably the most varied food street market in London. Go early to avoid the office-worker queues.

★ Bloomsbury Farmers' Market – produce and preserves; (Thursdays 9.00 a.m. –2.00 p.m.)
Torrington Square, ten minutes' walk north-east of Faraday House.

Famous Markets ...

★ Covent Garden – cafes, craft and clothes stalls in elegant covered market buildings of the 1820s; usually street musicians, jugglers etc.; very touristy and quite pricey; don't miss the slightly more eccentric overflow Jubilee market on the south side. (Antiques on Mondays from 5.00 a.m. General Market Tuesday– Friday from 10.00 a.m. Arts & Crafts Saturday and Sunday from 10.00 a.m.). London Transport Museum nearby – not just for transport freaks; excellent posters and offbeat souvenirs. St.Paul's – the Actors' Church – has dozens of memorial plaques to famous theatre folk. Covent Garden Underground station gets terribly congested, use Leicester Square instead. Market runs daily; very crowded at weekends.

★ Petticoat Lane – actually two adjoining markets; Wentworth Street, open six days a week for cheap clothing and Middlesex Street, Sunday till 2.00 p.m. only, with 1,000 stalls; very colourful and crowded; notorious for pickpockets. Nearest stations Liverpool Street, Aldgate and Aldgate East. Brick Lane market is within walking distance and keeps going till 5.00 p.m. Finish the day at one of forty curry houses on Brick Lane or visit its 24 hour bagel shop.

- ★ Portobello Road - food, produce (fruit and veg) and clothing stalls daily but the big day is Saturday, when antiques, bric-a-brac and second-hand shops and stalls are all open; claims to be the biggest antiques market in Britain; interesting specialist shops down the side-streets (e.g. Books for Cooks bookshop) ; very touristy at the top end but gets cheaper and less touristy the further you go downhill; under the Westway Flyover second-hand clothes and ethnic food stalls; carry on north to Golborne Road for Portuguese pastries and Moroccan food. Nearest stations - Notting Hill Gate (top end) and Ladbroke Grove (bottom end).

Now try these ...

- ★ Spitalfields Market - approach from Liverpool Street station to enter the new market extension (posh shops and cafes) to penetrate to the original (1887) covered market in the rear, where there are craft stalls and a food court; antiques on Thursdays; vinyl some Fridays; open every day.
- ★ Columbia Road - Sunday's 8.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. Mostly plants and flowers, but also artisan breads, cheeses, preserves, soaps, candles etc.; so literally very colourful; Plus colourful customers, too - a gift to photographers. Fifteen minutes' walk from Bethnal Green Tube station.
- ★ Borough Market - still a wholesale food market in the early hours but becomes a general food market after 10. a.m. Wednesdays-Saturdays; impressive market buildings; good for trying samples of cheese, ham etc.; speciality foods a speciality. Southwark Cathedral right next door (memorial chapel dedicated to John Harvard). Or visit historic (1677) galleried George Inn nearby at 75-77 Borough High Street. Nearest station London Bridge.
- ★ Camden Lock Market - sprawling complex of streets and stalls around Camden Town Tube station; Crafts, clothing, bric-a-brac, books, fast food; alleged to be fourth top visitor attraction in London; mainly Saturdays and Sundays; can get very crowded. Worth noting that 'Camden Market' on Google Maps pulls up a t-shirt store that's not the actual market, continue up the road to the lock to find it.
- ★ Roman Road - unknown to tourists, the real deal for local East Enders, totally traditional; half a kilometre of cheap and end-of-line fashion (Top Shop, Ralph Lauren, French Connection), homewares, street food (Paola's Pasta and Polenta; Andy's donuts, churros, vegan snacks); Kelly's eel pie and mash shop for ethnic Cockney nosh; Tuesdays and Thursdays 10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. Saturdays 10.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m). Nearest stations Mile End or Bow Road (DLR).
- ★ Walthamstow Market - is the longest street market in Europe, running for one kilometre, with 350 pitches; open Tuesdays - Fridays 8.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m. Saturday 8.00 a.m. - 5.30 p.m. Nearest Tube station Walthamstow Central. Follow up with a visit to the William Morris museum at Water House.
- ★ Strutton Ground - small but very centrally located street market five minutes from Westminster Abbey; some books, clothing, produce and groceries but popular for street food at lunch time; open weekdays 10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.); excellent fish and chips at The Laughing Halibut (closes 8.00 p.m. but go early at lunch time). Nearest Tube station St. James's Park.