

Quirky London: The London rarely seen

Trip overview

Distance	14 miles
Difficulty	Easy
Duration	2 hours
Traffic	Largely traffic-free
Terrain	Flat. Need to be confident in traffic

Nearest station

Start: Paddington Tube Station
End: Covent Garden Tube Station



[See this route on Google Maps](#)

See if you can spot the fake houses of Leinster Gardens, walk down the narrowest street in London and discover the interesting history of the Mandela Way Tank. Stepping away from the typical London tourist cliches reveals a rarely seen side of the city that will provide you with plenty of stories to pass on to your friends. This is a route best completed on a Sunday to take full advantage of the quiet square mile.



◀ **Mandela Way Tank** with the changing graffiti



The memorial to those buried in the **Cross Bones Graveyard** ▶



◀ Spot anything odd about these famous Lions?

Route description

The quirky side of London is first revealed near Paddington Station on a road called **Leinster Gardens**. Take a look around at all the houses, and see if you can spot which ones are fake. The fake houses were placed here after the extension of the London Underground, which required the existing houses to be demolished. The houses are at number 23 and 24 Leinster Garden. On first inspection you notice little difference, however, the darkened windows are the big giveaway. The fake houses are a firm favourite with pranksters who like sending taxi cabs and pizzas to the location.

The next interesting sight is the **Hyde Park Pet Cemetery**. It is a little hard to spot at first, but you will be able to see it from the outside of Hyde Park, looking in through the railings. The upper class Victorians were huge pet lovers, and when the little pets finally passed away they received a burial complete with tiny gravestones. Over 300 animals have their graves here, and that includes dogs, cats and even a monkey. You can get in touch with the Hyde Park Police to take a better look around.

Once the novelty of tiny pet cemeteries wears off (it takes a while) head on over to the **Thin House** which is through the Hyde Park, at the other side. The red brick house is not actually a house (it would have to be an architectural miracle if you could live in there). Instead, it serves as a facade to hide the railway behind.

The next stop to make is at a **cabbies hut**. The black cabs are a London icon (though as a London cyclist you may know them better as the occasional dangerous drivers you have to swerve to avoid). What may give you a little bit more respect for black cab drivers, is that they have to remember the name of every street within six miles of Charing Cross. The small hut serves as a place for cabbies to refuel their stomachs. Introduced in 1874, a few of these still remain and as a visitor you are welcome to grab some food from here. However, the seating inside is restricted to cab drivers.

From here make the short journey to **Trafalgar Square**. At the centre of the roundabout, the statue of King Charles I and a plaque mark the **centre of London**. From the roundabout, you can see the **lions of Trafalgar Square**. What is intriguing about these is that the sculptor of them had never, in fact, seen a lion. This is why there are a number of inaccuracies and the lions share a lot of similarities with cats and dogs. The square is also home to **Britain's smallest police station**. This is on the south-east corner. Today, this is simply used for storing cleaning equipment.

From the smallest police station, we move on to London's narrowest street. As you enter from the one side of **Brydges Place**, you will notice the street getting narrower and narrower. Eventually it is just 15 inches wide. Roughly enough to fit you and your bike through as long as you breathe in.

If you haven't become stuck in the narrow lane, head down the strand taking a short moment to appreciate the only road in the UK where you drive (or ride!) on the right, instead of the left. **Savoy Court** was designed this way to allow for the driver to open the passenger's door without having to leave the seat of the horse-drawn carriage.

The **Cross Bones Graveyard** is next, on the other side of the Thames. This was a graveyard for "ladies of the night" who were refused burial in church grounds due to being judged as sinners. The otherwise unnoticeable graveyard, is today marked by ribbons and other notes of sympathy that have been placed by locals. The slightly unnerving site is believed to contain the bodies of over 15,000 people.

After a short journey you will come across the **tank of Mandela Way**. The legend behind this is a particularly amusing story about Russell Gray, who applied for planning permission on the plot to build flats. The planning permission was refused and out of anger he put in a request to build a tank. Thinking he meant a septic tank the planning permission was granted. A disused Soviet tank was placed at the location with the turret pointing in the direction of the council offices, where planning permission was initially refused.

The next sight along the way is the **London Stone**, which it is believed that the Roman's used to measure all distances in Britain. Next, is **London's oldest church** of St Bartholomew the Great, which was originally founded in 1123. Nearby, the statue of the **little fat boy** who marks the spot where the great fire of London ended. There is also the **Hunterian museum** with curious displays of anatomical specimens.

The tour ends at **Neal's Yard**. This colourful nest in the heart of London is home to a number of quirky shops, including the Octopus shop. Near here is **Freud Bar**, serving incredible cocktails to a small crowd. The shop for coffee fanatics **Monmouth** is also situated here, which is a fitting place to end the journey.

Facade Houses



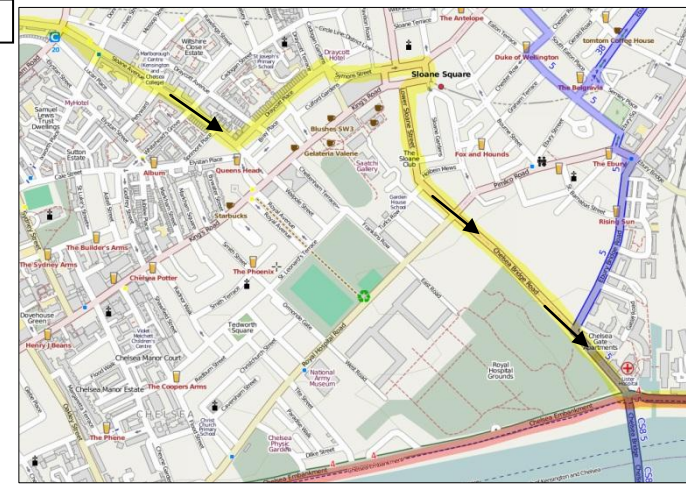
Pet Cemetery



Thin House



A



B

B



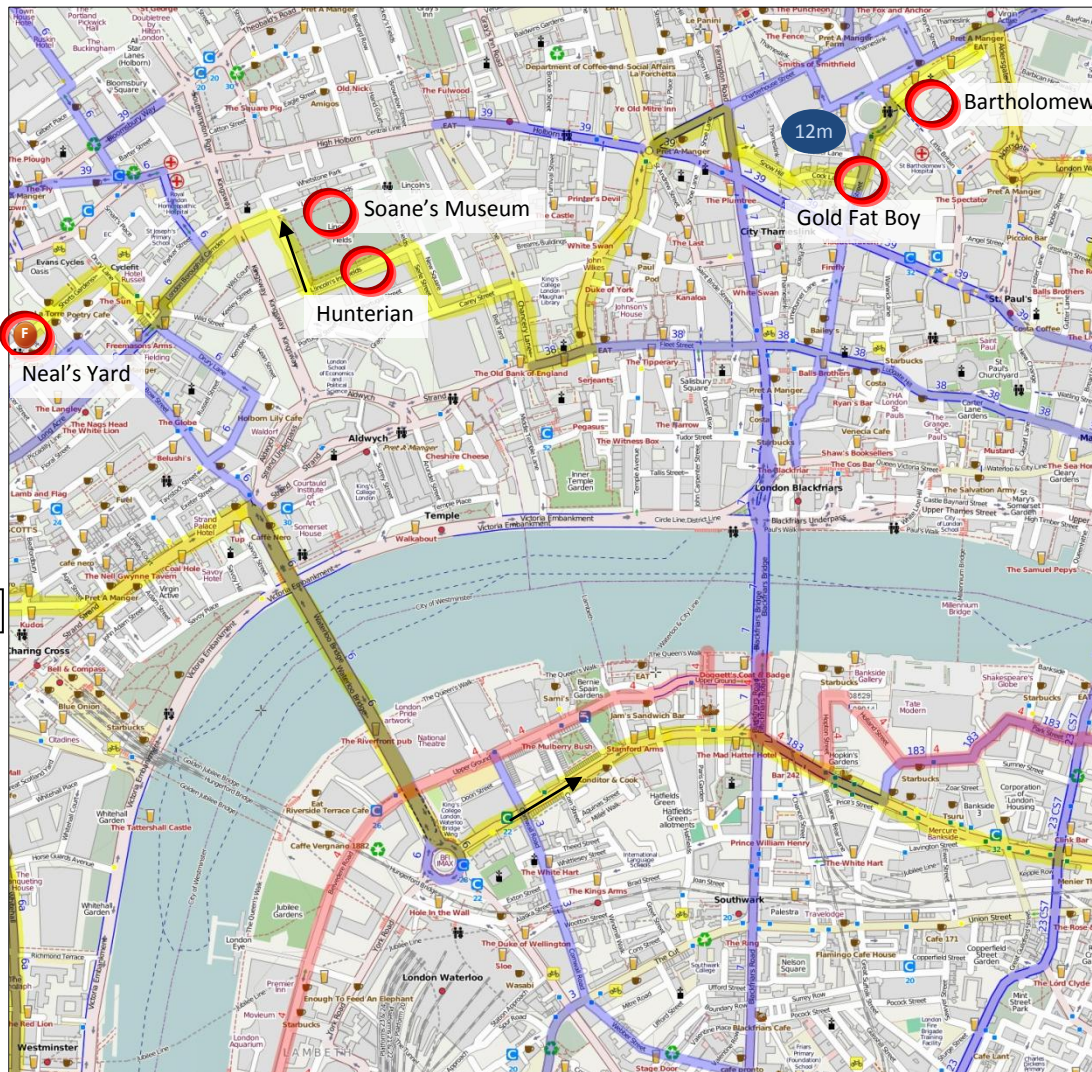
C

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D



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