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Eating Out In London

By Pauline Wapping

London is without doubt the restaurant capital of the UK. Immigrants of all nationalities have brought their own exotic flavours and culinary culture to the city, making London an exciting and cosmopolitan place to eat out. Here's a guide to some of the best restaurants area by area.

Covent Garden

Covent Garden is an attractive area with a covered piazza complex at its centre. It's popular with tourists but can be pricey. If you're looking for an inexpensive meal in this area your best bet is to try out some of the large bar/restaurants such as Wagamama and All Bar One, where you'll find reasonable quality food in stylish surroundings at affordable prices.

If you want to experience a traditional London restaurant, try Rules on Maiden Lane. It's rather expensive but it's worth it. Reputed to be the oldest restaurant in London, it has a beautiful vintage interior and serves old London favourites, from oysters and eels to pies and puddings.

Another famed London restaurant and popular hang-out of the rich and famous is The Ivy on West Street. You'll need to book a table weeks in advance to savour its wonderful modern and luxurious British cuisine - shepherd's pie, leek tart, kedgeriee and the deliciously decadent sticky toffee pudding.

South Bank

Urban redevelopment has seen lots of `gastro-pubs' pop up in this area - chic and trendy bars serving high quality food in informal surroundings and at reasonable prices.

For fabulous modern European cuisine, try Festival Square on the ground floor of the Royal Festival Hall. It's a relaxing café-bar serving everything from light snacks to filling main course dishes.

Another popular gastro-pub is the award winning Anchor and Hope on The Cut. In contrast to many of the bars in this area, its décor is traditional, with oak panelled walls, but its food is most definitely up-to-date. Try the beetroot and goat's cheese salad or the lamb shank with minted beans.

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Bloomsbury

Bloomsbury is home to many of London's top academic institutions such as University of London, University College London, Birkbeck College and the British Museum. It's always bustling with students and as a result there's a great choice of good but cheap café-bars and brasseries as well as some more upmarket restaurants.

The Coffee Gallery on Museum Street, next to the British Museum, has an eclectic range of organic and vegetarian dishes, from sandwiches to salads and pastas.

One of the best ethnic eateries in the city is Hakkasan, London's first Michelin-starred Chinese restaurant. It's chic and sophisticated, with inventive dishes and a fashionable cocktail bar.

Knightsbridge and Chelsea

Two of the most fashionable and exclusive parts of London, Knightsbridge and Chelsea are dotted with upmarket and Michelin-starred restaurants.

Celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay has London's only restaurant with three Michelin Stars. Named simply Gordon Ramsay, it's on Royal Hospital Road near Chelsea Embankment.

Founded in the 1950s, the Troubadour on Old Brompton Road is an eclectic café-bar with a prestigious live music heritage. Bob Dylan, Charlie Watts and Jimi Hendrix are among the stars who have performed here. The epitome of London bohemia, this West London institution has a deli, club and café, and it's great place to hang out for food, drinks and music.

Camden

Camden is young, hip and trendy and there's nowhere better in London for a lively night out. There are restaurants of all sorts interspersed between vibrant bars and clubs.

For excellent French cuisine, try Le Petit Train on Chalcot Road, or Belgo Noord on Chalk Farm Road for hearty Belgian cooking and great beer. The best tapas can be enjoyed at the Spanish themed Bar Gansa on Inverness street.

Soho/Chinatown

Soho is probably one of the best places to eat out in London in terms of quality and value for money. Most of the restaurants offer fabulous cooking at reasonable prices, especially in Chinatown, where there are some great Szechuan, Thai, Cantonese, Japanese, Indonesian and Vietnamese restaurants. Try Imperial China Cantonese restaurant on Lisle Street, Kulu Kulu Japanese restaurant on Brewer Street, Busaba Eathai Thai restaurant on Wardour Street or Saigon Vietnamese restaurant on Frith Street.

Brick Lane

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London's large Asian population is concentrated in the East End, especially around Brick Lane. Lined with Indian and Bangladeshi restaurants, it's earned the nickname the 'Curry Mile'. Monsoon is one of the hippest modern Indian restaurants, with contemporary Tandoori dishes as its speciality, whereas Sweet and Spicy gets back to basics, serving top-notch Indian food in modest surroundings. One of the most stylish Bengali restaurants is Café Naz, a sleek café-bar with modern wood and steel décor and atmospheric lighting. Its fish and seafood dishes are delicious. Preem is another good Bengali restaurant with a fantastic range of balti dishes.

Islington

Once a run-down residential area, this inner-city suburb in the north of London has been given a new lease of life in the last few decades. The beautiful Victorian townhouses have been renovated and it's now a trendy and fashionable part of London with an air of bohemian chic. The restaurants are a varied mix of stylish and quirky. The Elk in the Woods, for example, is reminiscent of an old lady's living room. It's a small and cosy place on the lovely cobbled Camden Passage. Just like the décor, the food is inventive and unusual - with a modern European influence. Flaming Nora is a great burger restaurant

and takeaway, but it's not a typical fast food joint. The burgers are all made from the freshest, highest quality meat and fish, chargrilled to perfection. Aberdeen Angus, lamb and tuna burgers are the specialities, and it also does a great line in skewers and kebabs.

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Use London for your company's big meetings

By David Wilson

There are lots of reasons why you should use London for your company's big meetings, and here are three of the most obvious:

1. London is one of the world's most vibrant and exciting cities
2. London is well served by international and local travel links
3. London has a plethora of world-class venues; from basic rooms in big hotels to large custom-built, state-of-the-art conference centres.

London is considered a world leader for business; as a result the facilities that the city has to offer are tailored to the discerning business traveller. So, if you opt to use London for your company's big meetings you won't be far from anything that you would need, either professionally or for leisure.

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There are almost 94,000 hotel rooms in London and over 6,000 eating establishments, so finding somewhere to stay or have dinner is never a problem! With accommodation to match every corporate budget and with many establishments offering an all-in rate including meeting rooms, London is an ideal venue for any company's big meetings!

There is no doubt that because of its fantastic transport links – two major international airports at Heathrow and Gatwick plus three smaller ones, major motorway and road links, a major Eurostar hub and extensive public transport – the capital is easy to get to from most parts of the world. And once in London the excellent integrated public transport system allows easy, cost-effective travel from hotel to venue and vice versa.

After business is concluded why not treat your company's employees to a taste of the superb London nightlife? With restaurants offering every type of cuisine and a superb theatre district in the capital's West End there's always somewhere to go and something fabulous to do! There are 150 theatres, 200 nightclubs and over 3,800 pubs in London. So, after the big meeting is concluded there are a multitude of leisure and entertainment options for you and your fellow employees.

Put your employees in the sort of bustling, energetic environment offered by England's capital are they are bound to be inspired before they even set foot in London for your company's big meeting; they'll be enthused and energised by the city itself.

London is fast-moving towards a 24 hour, seven days a week culture so regardless of the time of arrival of your delegates or the time of your big meeting then there are facilities to cater for them. Certain hotels offer early riser breakfasts from 4 a.m. in the morning, or alternatively later riser breakfasts until 12 noon. With so much going for the capital you should really consider using London for your company's big meetings.

Article by David Wilson

<http://www.venue team.co.uk>



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