



# An interesting holiday in LONDON

England's capital London is rich in history, art and culture. It is a melting pot of diversity. There is so much to see and do on a visit to the UK's largest city.

Words: Alex Wright.

The London Eye at sunset offers marvellous views of the city's skyline.

I stood outside the Tower of London, the English capital's oldest landmark – a mini-village in the heart of the city complete with its own church, village green, doctor and, that old English tradition - a pub.

Guarded by the Yeoman Warders, more commonly known as Beefeaters because they were paid in beef, dressed in their distinct black hats, frilly white collars and finely patterned red tunics since 1485, I felt like I had stepped back in time.

Over the years it has served as a royal palace, fortress, execution site and prison, most famously for the Princes in the Tower.

Now, the Tower of London is home to the Crown Jewels of England, which I stopped to admire at length, and a native group of ravens, whom legend has it that if they ever leave, the kingdom will fall.

Continuing the Royal theme, my next destination was the current residence – Buckingham Palace, where I observed the Changing of the Guard marching in sequence in their pristine

uniforms, and took a leisurely stroll through the leafy road, The Mall and St James's Park.

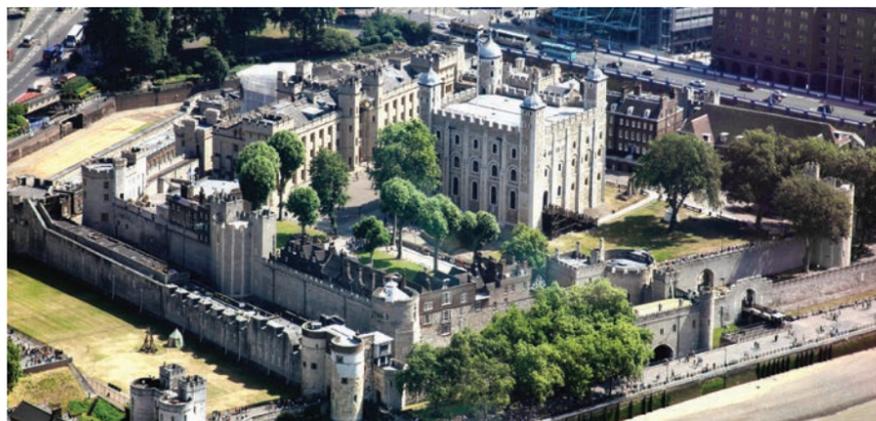
During the summer, the Palace's 19 State Rooms are open to the public. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. In total, the Palace has an amazing 775 rooms, including 52 Royal and guest rooms, 188 staff bedrooms and 78 bathrooms.

Having explored the Royal digs, I set off for Westminster to see

the ancient Westminster Abbey, and the iconic Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament.

The beautiful Gothic Abbey has staged its share of Royal weddings and burials, as well all the coronations held here since William the Conqueror in 1066.

I paid an extra amount for a personal behind the scenes tour from a verger and to learn about the Abbey's history before dropping in to marvel at the impressive collection of historical artefacts on show



The Tower of London is an iconic landmark.



Buckingham Palace's State Rooms are open to visitors every summer.



The Lyceum Theatre offers Disney's The Lion King, a musical treat.



The Houses of Parliament and Big Ben are popular attractions in London.



Trafalgar Square is home to Nelson's Column.

at the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries.

Then it was off for a close-up look at picture postcard Big Ben and a tour around the Royal Gallery and Chamber of Commons where MPs sit in the Houses of Parliament.

Sitting on the benches, you can almost feel like you're in the middle of a heated Brexit debate.

Following the history trail, I took a walk around the corner to Trafalgar Square, named after the British naval victory at the Battle of Trafalgar against the French in 1805, and admired Nelson's Column, where Lord Nelson stands proudly, sword in hand, looking out across the city.

From ancient history to modern architecture, I next visited UK's tallest building, The Shard, for lunch, taking in the beautiful panoramic views from level 31.

Suitably nourished, I returned to earth and made a beeline for the magnificently massive St Paul's Cathedral. Reconstructed after the Great Fire of London in 1666, it has hosted the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, and the funerals of Lord Nelson and Sir Winston Churchill, among others.

Across the River Thames was my next destination – The Globe Theatre, with its curved amphitheatre, where Shakespeare's plays are performed on the open-air stage all year round, just as they were six centuries ago.

Further along the river I dropped in at the Tate Britain, home of the Turner Prize, the most prestigious accolade in contemporary art. I stopped to ponder some of the exhibits, ranging from the brilliantly creative to the downright bizarre. There was just time to visit

one of the exhibitions at the British Museum, Science Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum or the Natural History Museum. I plumped for the latter, mesmerised by the 25-metre long blue whale skeleton towering over me as I entered the door.

And no trip to London would be complete without a visit to the London Eye, which I went up as the sun was setting, for a spectacular view of the city's skyline.

Collecting my ticket for an early evening performance of Disney's The Lion King, there was barely time to catch my breath as I set off for my last port of call - the Lyceum Theatre in the West End. Then it was off for a late dinner in trendy Covent Garden.

My visit to the City had been full of fun and a discovery of history, lifestyle and modernity of multicultural London. ☑