Vibrant and truly multicultural, London is a megalopolis of people, ideas and energy. With nearly 8 million people, it is the largest city in Western Europe and the EU. It is an amazing place to visit and offers infinite choices in entertainment and dining. Did we mention London restaurants were awarded a total of 66 stars in the Michelin Guide 2012?

Let’s get the obvious out of the way: Does it rain all the time? London has an unfair reputation for rain, but actually enjoys a dry and mild climate on average. But just in case, always come prepared with a brolly! Summer is a great time of year for visiting with long daylight hours (as late as 10pm) and mild temperatures. In fall and winter, you can happily be indoors enjoying London’s unique pub culture and vibrant nightlife.

London is one of the great “world cities,” and remains a global capital of culture, fashion, finance, politics and trade. This guide highlights sights, activities, restaurants, and shops for you to explore while visiting. London is a huge city, and we couldn’t possibly include everything here. Hopefully this overview of our club members’ favorites will get you started.

As we say here, Keep Calm and Fight On!

Walter Ladwig ’98
President, USC Alumni Club of London

Special thank you to Priya Kapoor for providing the brochure text
GETTING THE LAY OF THE LAND

Our suggestion is that you first get your bearings and hit many of the city’s major highlights all at once, before deciding which ones to go back and visit. The best way to do this is to take a bus ride. Here are two options:

The Original Tour:
London Sightseeing-Yellow Route
www.theoriginaltour.com

The advantage of this tour is the double decker bus (go on top if it’s not raining) and that it has a live guide, as opposed to a recorded commentary. You can get it near Buckingham Palace (amongst other places) and it’s about £23 if you are over 16. If possible, go on a weekend day, as the traffic will be a little lighter. This tour has a river boat option, which we suggest taking from Tower Hill to Westminster.

Number 11 Bus
www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/gettingaround/maps/buses

For a less pricey and more DIY option, you can take the Number 11 (red double decker) London Transport Bus from Sloane Square to Liverpool Street. On this route, you will pass the following locations:

- The Royal Hospital
- Westminster Cathedral
- Westminster Abbey
- Houses of Parliament
- Whitehall
- Downing Street
- Trafalgar Square
- Nelson’s Column
- The National Gallery
- St-Martin’s-in the Field
- The Strand
- The Savoy Hotel
- The Old Bailey
- Fleet Street
- St Paul’s Cathedral
- Bank of England
- City of London

Arriving at the Liverpool Street Station, you can take the tube anywhere. The price of this DIY tour is £1.30 if you have an Oyster Card, or £2.60 if you just pay the driver.
What is an Oyster Card and how do you get one?
www.tfl.gov.uk

The Oyster Card is the travel pass for the London Transport System. You can get one at any tube station or order one in advance of your visit. There is a £3 deposit for the card and then you can either buy a weekly pass or top up your pre-paid card. We suggest putting £20 on it at a time (in case you lose it), and you can top up at any tube station. You can also use the Oyster Card on London buses, but you cannot buy or top them up there (unless you set up an account, which only U.K. credit card holders can do), so keep an eye on your balance, which you can do at any tube station. Ask the staff for help.

Time Out Magazine-Guide to London
www.timeout.com/london

This magazine can be purchased at any newsagent or newsstand. It is the pinnacle guide to what is going on in London that week, including theatre, clubs, exhibits and so much more. The reviews can be trusted.
SIGHTS WORTH SEEING

Buckingham Palace
www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/buckinghampalace
Green Park / St James’s Park / Victoria Tube Stations

Buckingham Palace is the working headquarters of the Monarchy, where The Queen carries out her official and ceremonial duties as Head of State of the United Kingdom and Head of the Commonwealth.

Changing the Guard at Buckingham Palace encompasses colourful spectacle and British pageantry. The ceremony lasts about 45 minutes and takes place daily at 11:00 a.m. from May until the end of July, and on alternate days for the rest of the year, weather permitting.

Westminster Abbey
www.westminster-abbey.org
Westminster Tube Station

Kings, queens, statesmen and soldiers; poets, priests, heroes and villains — the Abbey is a must-see living pageant of British history.

London Eye
www.londoneye.com
Westminster Tube Station

The London Eye is a giant Ferris wheel situated on the banks of the River Thames. Views are amazing, but be warned — only go on a clear day and never when it is raining. Order your tickets in advance to secure a time slot and a discount.
Tower of London  
www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon
Tower Hill Tube Station

Her Majesty's Royal Palace and Fortress, more commonly known as the Tower of London, is a historic castle on the north bank of the River Thames. Building started towards the end of 1066 as part of the Norman Conquest of England. The White Tower, which gives the entire castle its name, was built by William the Conqueror in 1078. The Tower has served as an armoury, a treasury, a zoo, the home of the Royal Mint, a public records office and now the home of the Crown Jewels.

Covent Garden  
www.coventgardenlondonuk.com
Covent Garden Tube Station

Covent Garden restaurants, pubs, shops, opera, theatre and street performers make it a dynamic entertainment centre of London. You can also take a tour of the Royal Opera House.  
http://www.roh.org.uk/whatson/tour.aspx

MUSEUMS & PARKS

Tate Modern  
www.tate.org.uk
Southwark / Mansion House / St Paul’s Tube Stations

Tate Modern is Britain’s national gallery of international modern art. It is the most-visited modern art gallery in the world, with around 4.7 million visitors per year. It is based in the former Bankside Power Station, just south of St Paul’s Cathedral. The Tate holds the national collection of British art from 1500 to the present day and international modern and contemporary art.
The Victoria and Albert Museum (often abbreviated as the V&A), is the world’s largest museum of decorative arts and design, housing a permanent collection of over 4.5 million objects. Named after Prince Albert and Queen Victoria, it was founded in 1852, and has since expanded to cover 12.5 acres and 145 galleries. Mostly FREE.

The Gallery was founded in 1856 to collect portraits of famous British men and women. Explore over 175,000 portraits from the 16th century to the present day. Mostly FREE.

The National Gallery is an art museum on Trafalgar Square. Founded in 1824, it houses an amazing collection of over 2,300 paintings dating from the mid-13th century to 1900. A must-see for art lovers. Mostly FREE.

The RA owns a major collection of works by Royal Academicians past and present. Its special collection is generally superb, and a must-see for art aficionados.
London Transport Museum
www.ltmuseum.co.uk
Covent Garden Tube Station

The London Transport Museum, based in Covent Garden, seeks to conserve and explain the transport heritage of Britain’s capital city. Interactive stuff, old carriages, buses and tubes for kids, but also very informative for adults. A good way to get a real feel for the expansion of the city. One of our favourites!

Natural History Museum
www.nhm.ac.uk
South Kensington Tube Station

The museum is home to a vast and fascinating collection of life and earth science specimens. The museum is particularly famous for its exhibition of dinosaur skeletons, taxidermy rooms and its ornate architecture.

Kew Gardens
www.kew.org
Kew Gardens Tube Station

Explore glasshouses, landscapes and 250 years of history at one of the world’s most famous gardens. Climb to the treetops, delve into a rainforest and discover more on a guided tour.

St James’s Park
www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/st-jamess-park
St. James’s Tube Station

St. James’s Park is the oldest royal park in London and is surrounded by royal buildings, including Buckingham Palace to the west, The Mall and St. James’s Palace to the north, Horse Guards to the east, and Birdcage Walk to the south. The park has a small lake, with two islands and a sweet bridge. Well worth “a walk in the park.”
EATERIES

There are loads of places to eat in London, and this list is nowhere near exhaustive. You can also ask your hotel concierge, consult *Time Out* or just see what takes your fancy.

**The Golden Dragon**  
[www.timeout.com/london/restaurants/venue/2%3A1049/golden-dragon](www.timeout.com/london/restaurants/venue/2%3A1049/golden-dragon)  
Piccadilly / Leicester Square Tube Stations

Dim Sum in Chinatown. They do not take reservations and can get quite busy on the weekend, but the wait is usually not long, and well worth it.

**Wagamama’s - All locations**  
[www.wagamama.com](www.wagamama.com)

Wagamama’s food is inspired by Japanese noodle bars and Asian flavours with an exciting and casual dining experience in a stylish and contemporary setting.

**Sal e Pepe**  
[www.salepepe.co.uk](www.salepepe.co.uk) | +44 (0)20 7235 0098  
Knightsbridge Tube Station

Fast-paced, moderately priced, delicious Italian in the middle of Knightsbridge.

**Portes des Indes**  
[www.laportedesindes.com](www.laportedesindes.com) | +44 (0)20 7224 0055  
Marble Arch Tube Station

Upmarket Indian, with French influence. Cool interior. The Sunday brunch buffet is outstanding.

**Borough Market**  
[www.boroughmarket.org.uk](www.boroughmarket.org.uk)  
London Bridge Tube Station

London’s most renowned food market features a range of fresh items from domestic and international producers, including fish, meats, vegetables, ciders, cheeses, breads, coffees, cakes and patisseries. Open to the public Thursday, Friday and Saturday.
Maze Grill
www.gordonramsay.com/mazegrill
+44 (0)20 7592 1228
Bond Street Tube Station

Inspired by a modern townhouse kitchen, Maze Grill’s warm wood interior, comfortable banquets and views out onto Grosvenor Square create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere.

Scott’s
www.scotts-restaurant.com | +44 (0)20 7495 7309
Bond Street Tube Station

Scott’s in Mount Street, Mayfair, is a seafood restaurant offering the finest oysters, fish and crustacea. Seasonal game, meat and vegetarian dishes also featured. The fish are responsibly caught from sustainable sources.

Hakkasan, Mayfair
www.hakkasan.com/mayfair | +44 (0)20 7907 1888
Green Park Tube Station

Further setting the standard for modern Chinese cuisine in London, this is Hakkasan’s second restaurant here. The diverse menu features upscale Asian Fusion cuisine.

Delfino Pizzeria
www.finos.co.uk/delfino
+ 44 (0)20 7499 1256
Bond Street Tube Station

Pizza, pizza, pizza! Situated in an imposing Victorian building which has been in the family for 55 years, Delfino was converted in 2003 to a buzzy pizzeria in the Grosvenor Square area.
Fortnum and Mason
www.fortnumandmason.com
Green Park / Piccadilly Tube Stations

Fortnum & Mason, often shortened to just "Fortnum's" is located at 181 Piccadilly, where it was established in 1707 by William Fortnum and Hugh Mason. Fortnum and Mason is recognised internationally for its high-quality goods and as an iconic British symbol. It has held many Royal Warrants (suppliers to the royal family) over the past 150 years. The branding and packaging is spectacular and a must-see. Also a great place to buy presents for friends and family back home. Reservations are recommended and can be made online.

Claridges Hotel
www.claridges.co.uk/london_afternoon_tea.aspx
+44 (0)20 7107 8872
Bond Street Tube Station

This hotel is in the heart of Mayfair and has been at this location since the late 19th century. Would recommend this tea over a much pricier one at The Ritz. Reservations are required.

The Wolseley
http://www.thewolseley.com/afternoon-tea
+44 (0)20 7499 6996
Green Park Tube Station

This space was originally designed as a car showroom for The Wolseley Car Company in 1921, and is quite impressive. The tea service is very elegant but a little less stuffy than some hotel options. Again, reservations are required.
SHOPPING

Of course, most shops in London can also now be found in the U.S., but there are some local gems to be found amongst the chains. Here are some suggestions for areas or streets.

Kings Road
www.streetsensation.co.uk/kr_intro.htm
Sloane Square Tube Station

The curved facade of the Peter Jones department store marks the start of the King’s Road at Sloane Square. Nearby, on the opposite side of the road, are the Duke of York pedestrian precinct and the Saatchi Gallery. The further away from Sloane Square you walk, the greater the number of smaller, independent clothes and shoe shops, plus a good selection of contemporary furnishing stores.

Portobello Road Market
www.portobellomarket.org/
Notting Hill Gate Tube Station

Portobello Market in West London is one of the most famous street markets in the world. Very crowded on the weekend, but you will find all sorts of treasures, both old and new, at this open-air market.
Marylebone High Street
www.streetsensation.co.uk/marybone/mh_intro.htm
Bond Street Tube Station

Marylebone is the area to the north of Oxford Street. You are more likely to find one-off British fashion and home goods. There is also an eclectic mix of restaurants and pubs.

Bond Street
www.streetsensation.co.uk/mayfair/bs_intro.htm
Bond Street / Green Park Tube Stations

Bond Street in Mayfair is home to the most elegant and expensive shops in London and more Royal Warrant holders than anywhere else in the city.

Camden Lock Market
www.camdenlockmarket.com
Camden Tube Station

Camden Lock is one of London’s most vibrant shopping and entertainment areas. With live music and comedy venues, and cafés and bars, it’s a brilliant place to meet up with some of the city’s most creative people. Many stalls are open all week, but it is most “happening” on the weekends. This will particularly appeal to the hip younger adult and budget-minded student.
THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS

If you are coming at a busy time, we suggest that you book your theater tickets before you arrive, especially for the popular shows.

However, if you want to get last-minute and up to ½ price-off tickets, go to:

**TKTS**

www.tkts.co.uk
Leicester Square Tube Station

Here you will find information on (some) availability for the day, but you will still have to go to Leicester Square and queue for tickets. Best to just go down there at 10:00 a.m. (11:00 a.m. on Sundays). Go to the official TKTS office right on the square — other sellers nearby advertise, but are not able to offer the same ½ price tickets.

**Southbank Centre**

www.southbankcentre.co.uk
Embankment / Waterloo Tube Stations

Southbank Centre is a complex of artistic venues on the South Bank of the River Thames, just over Waterloo Bridge. It is comprised of three main buildings (the Royal Festival Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Hayward Gallery), and is Europe’s largest centre for the arts. Well worth listening to something in one of the concert halls.

**Cambridge Theatre**

www.cambridgetheatrelondon.co.uk
Covent Garden / Leicester Square Tube Stations

Opening in 1930, this is one of the youngest and most attractive theatres in the West End. Currently home to *Matilda the Musical*. 
National Theatre  
www.nationaltheatre.org.uk  
Embankment / Waterloo Tube Stations

Commonly known as “The National,” it is one of the U.K.’s most prominent publicly funded theatre companies. Works from the National regularly get transferred to the West End. Such acclaimed plays as War Horse and One Man, Two Guvnors have gone from the National to Broadway!

The Royal Court Theatre  
www.royalcourttheatre.com  
Sloane Square Tube Station

The Royal Court Theatre is Britain’s leading national company dedicated to new work by innovative writers from the U.K. and around the world. The theatre’s pivotal role in promoting new voices is undisputed —the New York Times described it as “the most important theatre in Europe.”

Thank you for visiting.  
We hope you have fun! Fight On!

Visit the USC Alumni Club of London on the web at:

london.uscalumniclubs.org

www.facebook.com/groups/usclondonalumni
KEEP CALM AND FIGHT ON!