

CONTEXT LONDON: IN CONTEXT

Traveling to London "in Context" means embracing the soul of the city beyond its well-trodden paths. It's about diving into the heart of London, where every corner tells a story, every meal is a chapter in a long, flavorful history, and the true essence of the city is not just seen but felt.

At Context Travel, we guide you to the core of London, shining a light on hidden histories and local narratives, and connecting you with experiences that make the city eternally memorable. These recommendations are carefully curated by Context experts to bring you closer to the authentic spirit of London, celebrating its lesser-known treasures and profound cultural richness.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pg 2 | Bites of London

Pg 3 | London Neighborhoods

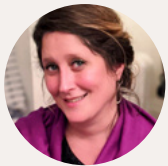
Pg 4 | Local Shops

Pg 5 | Family Activities

Pg 6 | Read, Watch & Listen

Meet Your Context Guides

Alice Venessa Bever
**FOOD WRITER AND MULTI-
HYPHENATE CREATIVE**



Alice has a background in Italian Studies and Theatre, and has worked in the US and Europe in various institutions and performance venues. She enjoys sharing her passion for food and culture, while highlighting the distinct and varied characteristics of the people, history, folklore and cuisine of the city. She is enthusiastic about creating unforgettable experiences for all who are part of her tours.

"The best way to see London is by river, land, and sky. Even if you have just a few days, really try to get up high so you can get a view, try to take an Uber boat, even if it's just one stop, because you will see such a different London."

Harry Clayton
**HISTORIAN AND
EDUCATOR**



Harry has lived in London for the past 35 years. He has a Master's Degree in Medieval and Modern History from the University of Liverpool. For over twenty years, he taught history in a central London independent school, taking advantage of the many local museums, galleries and palaces to help bring history to life for his students. He is a licensed Blue Badge Guide, and enjoys guiding in London's major tourist sites, as well as in the 'hidden gems' off the beaten track.

"I always enjoy taking visitors to local spots, places where you don't see other tourists around. It feels like true London, and we're surrounded by Londoners. After you've been to Buckingham Palace, it's exciting to see the real, everyday London."

Tim Barron
**HISTORIAN, MUSICIAN,
AND ACTOR**



After art college, Tim graduated in Environmental Sciences, then joined a rock band and later, moved into acting. Not surprisingly, Tim loves showing guests London's theatre history and musical heritage. Tim has also worked at, and regularly guides at, the museums of London, Science, and Transport, as well as the Royal Observatory Greenwich. He is fascinated by the 'very old stuff', London's Roman past and the out of town fascination of Stonehenge.

"I'm continually surprised by London. Everytime you go out, you'll find something new. To quote Samuel Johnson, 'When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life.'"

BITES OF LONDON

Discover mouthwatering dishes in London and the best places to savor them

Vintry and Mercer Rooftop

Experience a focus on fresh, seasonal ingredients in a rooftop atmosphere that delivers big on flavors, views, and friendly service.

[Google Maps →](#)

"I've had the sirloin before, which is wonderful, but the monkfish is unbelievable. The flavor is superb. You're also going to get quality, seasonal ingredients, many of which come from local producers. The food is great, but what makes it so attractive to me is its hidden location, a bit of a treasure."

- **Alice, Food Writer**

Schnitzel at The Wolseley

Enjoy an elegant lunch, dinner, or afternoon tea in an airy, art deco atmosphere.

[Google Maps →](#)

"I have long memories of family Sunday lunches here. It's beautiful, classy, and well situated. You might even spot a celebrity here. My favorite dish is the schnitzel, served with lingonberry compote."

- **Harry, Historian**

Chocolates at William Curley

Discover the rich flavors of traditional British chocolates or adventure into less typical chocolate creations, all of which are made with the finest ingredients.

[Google Maps →](#)

"It represents London at its best... It's tucked away in an old courtyard in Soho, and it's old, it's new, it's innovating. I've even seen William Curley washing dishes in the back when it was busy. Everyone here knows their chocolate and are very connected to the work they're doing. It's a contagious, happy place, and also... chocolate."

- **Alice, Food Writer**

Fish & Chips at Brown's

Sit down for a modern take on British cuisine or stop in for afternoon tea.

[Google Maps →](#)

"I know most Americans believe that we live on fish and chips. But fish and chips are actually quite a treat for me. So I like to order that here, or the steak pie. The waiters will treat you well. And you'll also find great beers here."

- **Tim, Historian and Musician**

Sausage and Mash at Mother Mash

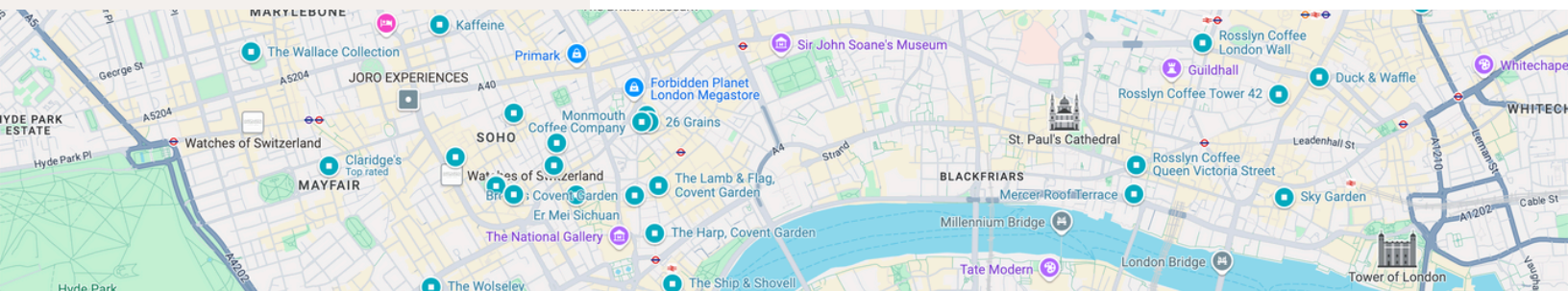
There's nothing basic about this destination for a British staple. Visit for classic mashed potatoes with a variety of toppings.

[Google Maps →](#)

"What could be more London? It's a great place with very traditional food and a delicious gravy. Perfect place for a quick bite if you're on the go."

- **Tim, Historian and Musician**

Get our full restaurant list →



FAVORITE LONDON NEIGHBORHOODS

Neighborhoods to explore when looking for an authentic slice of London life

Bermondsey

With its hidden pockets of medieval history and a string of breweries dotting the rail line, Bermondsey offers a vibrant blend of London's industrial past and modern-day creativity.

"Bermondsey is often associated with the Beer Mile. Of course beer and ale production existed prevalently all over London however there are still some historic breweries here. In recent years craft breweries have been drawn to the area, mostly tucked under the arches of the mile and a half stretch of railway. There are nearly twenty establishments along the route and it's not only been for beer – they've also produced mead, gin and now even sake.

It's also understated. The area is fairly central, is right on the river and in the past has been called the Larder of London. The first official tin can factory in the world was located just around the corner from my flat. It also was a significant pilgrimage route in medieval times.

There is a real mix of people and Bermondsey has got a neighbourhood feel. I love living here because I feel like I'm part of a welcoming community with a rich cultural and social heritage."

– **Alice Venessa Bever**

Shoreditch

A trendy yet historical quarter, ideal for those looking to explore London's vibrant contemporary culture amidst artistic flair.

"Historically, this area has been a melting pot of cultures, with influences from Huguenot and Jewish communities, though much of its Jewish past is no longer visible. Today, Brick Lane is home to a large Bangladeshi community.

Shoreditch is also known for the street art you can find mixed in amongst the history. Obviously Banksy is the best known, but you can find many different artists' works here. This neighborhood is a true reflection of the real London, a thriving, buzzing neighborhood filled with independent food shops, bars, and restaurants.

There's a real sense of excitement here—you never really know what you'll find around the corner."

– **Harry, Historian**

Clerkenwell

Historic charm meets modern creativity, offering a vibrant mix of trendy eateries, artisan shops, and a rich architectural heritage that tells the story of London's past and present.

"This area is rich in history, from the stories of Dickens, who lived between Clerkenwell and Holborn, to the bustling Smithfield Market, which Oliver Twist himself visited in the novel. You'll feel connected to Fagin's Den and other scenes Dickens set in this part of London.

The Huguenots, known for their watch craftsmanship, were prominent here. Clerkenwell sits next to the renowned jewelry quarter of Hatton Garden, a historic hub for jewelers, where the craft has thrived for centuries. Look up at the old buildings; you can still see the cranes and doors once used to lift goods into the workshops, a reminder of the area's industrial past."

– **Harry, Historian**

Brixton

Brixton is bursting with vibrant street art, a rich Caribbean influence, and a thriving food and music scene that reflects London's diverse culture.

"I love the market vibe in Brixton.

I love food, and I enjoy the accessibility you have here to different fruits and vegetables, fish and meat from all over the world.

You can find African and Asian ingredients, fresh fish coming from the UK... And there's always music, always conversations happening."

– **Alice, Food Writer**

Greenwich

This historic London neighborhood offers maritime heritage, stunning architecture, and key attractions, all set against the backdrop of the Thames.

"Greenwich is extraordinary. It's slightly off the beaten track, so not everybody knows about it, but there's so much going on. You can get there by boat, which is just magnificent.

Once you're there, you see Christopher Wren's beautiful buildings, the maritime heritage, Roman excavations, Anglo-Saxon burial mounds, and even the Royal Observatory, one of my favorite places on the planet. Every person I've taken there has said, 'My God, this is amazing!'"

– **Tim, Historian and Musician**

Covent Garden

Covent Garden is a vibrant London spot known for its rich history, variety of eateries, and lively street performances.

"Covent Garden was originally the convent garden of Westminster Abbey. It later evolved into a bustling fruit and vegetable market, but by the 1960s, the market was abandoned. Plans to demolish the area for developments were thwarted by local activists, preserving its charm.

Today, it's known for its street food, restaurants, traditional pubs, street performers, and attractions. I'm particularly a fan of the London Transport Museum."

– **Tim, Historian and Musician**

UNIQUE LOCAL SHOPS

Explore distinctive local shops that offer authentic London crafts, products, and histories

Donlon Books

Visit to browse this independent publisher and bookstore's curation of art, photography, cultural theory, and indie publications.

[Google Maps →](#)
[Website →](#)

"Bookstores are some of my favorite places to spend time in and I enjoy being immersed in them. Donlon's Bookshop stands out because it is eclectic and diverse while also being a small publisher. What they choose to print is quite selective but the through line amongst their works is the unique perspectives on various subjects and I appreciate that. It's also a community hub. It's easy to see they're doing something that's serving people in a unique and sincere way."

- Alice, Food Writer

Berry Bros & Rudd

Founded in 1698, this family-run shop sells over 5000 wines and spirits at every price point.

[Google Maps →](#)
[Website →](#)

"Churchill used to frequent Berry Bros for his wine and champagne purchases. If you have a sharp eye, you may spot the telegram from the White Star Company, to which the Titanic was registered, on one of the walls, informing the Berry Bros of their lost shipment. The staff is happy to talk with you about their selection; you can find thousands of wines and spirits from around the world here. Berry Bros has also earned 2 royal warrants in recognition of their role as a wine and spirit provider to the Royal Household."

- Harry, Historian

Lock & Co

Pay a visit to the oldest hat shop in the world for a bit of history, hospitality, and style.

[Google Maps →](#)
[Website →](#)

"Churchill bought his hats here, as did Jackie Onassis, Charlie Chaplin, and Princess Diana. Can you find the photo of Churchill wearing his Lock & Co top hat when he got married at St. Margaret's church in Westminster? The staff are lovely, they will naturally welcome you in."

- Harry, Historian

Matthew Foster Jewelry

Matthew Foster is one of the UK's leading dealers specializing in the acquisition and sale of Art Deco and Modernist Design collectibles and jewelry.

[Google Maps →](#)
[Website →](#)

"Matthew recently opened a wonderful art deco shop in Piccadilly Arcade with lots of beautiful jewelry. If you want something a bit different, this is quite special. It is appointment only, so call ahead."

- Harry, Historian

Wunjo Guitars

Whether you play or simply appreciate, this independent musical instrument shop has a tune for everyone.

[Google Maps →](#)
[Website →](#)

"I taught myself guitar after being trained on the cello, and I still play in a band. Wunjo's, in my humble opinion, is the best guitar shop in town. It's where I got my Lowden O50, and it's where I maintain all my instruments. I have an extremely good relationship with the staff, and the shop is on iconic Denmark Street, one of the great streets of London."

- Tim, Historian and Musician

Abbey Road Shops

Visit the shop at one of the most famous recording studios in the world and pick up a memento from this iconic destination for music, culture, and history lovers.

[Google Maps →](#)
[Website →](#)

"EMI bought a townhouse that became Abbey Road Studios, and the shop is right under the EMI Studios offices. They have exclusive merch, both Beatles themed and recording themed. They also have historic microphones and recording spools from Pink Floyd's "The Dark Side of the Moon" on show. If you are into music, especially Rock 'n' Roll, it's a 'fab' place to visit."

- Tim, Historian and Musician

Algerian Coffee Stores

This shop offers a large selection of coffees, teas, and confectionary in the heart of Soho, where it first opened its doors in 1887.

[Google Maps →](#)
[Website →](#)

"They've been able to keep a real soul. I also love that though it's known for its coffee, the shop offers nearly an equal amount of teas."

At the time the shop was started in 1887, tea was the prevalent hot beverage in for the British. The fact that there was a store dedicated to coffee helps you to understand that Soho was a big immigrant neighborhood. Algerian Coffee Stores was a supplier for the coffee-drinking folks who had come to make a life for themselves in London. It gives you a tiny snapshot of the living heritage of this place. You can also get an espresso or a cappuccino. It's the cheapest in London, and it's excellent."

- Alice, Food Writer

FAMILY FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES

The parks, museums, and kid-friendly places our experts recommend to keep young travelers engaged

Brigit's Bakery & Afternoon Tea Bus

Enjoy afternoon tea on a vintage double decker bus that winds through the heart of Central London.

[Google Maps →](#)

[Website →](#)

"How great is it that you can enjoy tea and cakes while being driven around London in an old double-decker bus? Kids love this one and it's a great way to get to see some sights and also have a family-friendly tea service."

- **Alice, Food Writer**

The Horniman Museum

From the famous overstuffed walrus to the beautiful gardens, this museum celebrates nature and cultures from around the world.

[Google Maps →](#)

[Website →](#)

"This oasis will require a little trek down to the southern part of London but is most certainly worth the trip. It has a petting zoo, butterfly house, aquarium and vast collections dedicated to the 350,000 objects ranging from shells to musical instruments. There are beautiful gardens to explore as well."

- **Alice, Food Writer**

The Underground Challenge

Fans for football will enjoy this underground exploration of the city.

[Resource →](#)

"Use the brilliant London Underground to visit, in one day, every football ground in London. Take a photo in front of the main stand and perhaps buy a memento from each shop. Football crazy kids LOVE this!"

- **Harry, Historian**

Diana Memorial Playground

Find teepees, treehouses, swings and even a pirate ship at this outdoor playground next to the palace.

[Google Maps →](#)

[Website →](#)

"This playground is located in Kensington Gardens and is always a favourite with younger children if the weather is kind."

- **Harry, Historian**

St. Paul's Cathedral

Explore the artworks and history inside this architectural and cultural landmark.

[Google Maps →](#)

[Website →](#)

"It always impresses. Kids love going up to the Whispering Gallery, and then on to the Golden Gallery at the top. You'll get great views of London, and a real adventure climbing inside of the dome. It's well worth the entrance fee. You may perhaps see the famous staircase too, if you ask nicely!"

- **Harry, Historian**

London Postal Museum

Discover a unique piece of London's heritage & ride through an underground tube network.

[Google Maps →](#)

[Website →](#)

"Who can resist riding on a hundred-year-old miniature underground system, designed to carry mail bags, across London? Our grandchildren, ages three and six, loved role playing in the recreation of the mail sorting and delivery offices. Plus, an Edward VIII post box! Need I say more?"

- **Tim, Historian and Musician**

London Transport Museum

Walk through over 450,000 items and explore the city's vintage trams, trains, and buses.

[Google Maps →](#)

[Website →](#)

"Visit for a chance to marvel at the capital's ancient horse, trolley and motor buses, plus, trams and tube trains. You can even 'drive' a tube train or a bus in the All Aboard play zone. There is also a great shop and cafe for a snack or memento."

- **Tim, Historian and Musician**

READ, WATCH, LISTEN

Books, shows, movies, and podcasts recommendations from our experts to enrich your travel experience

READ

Bizzare London

By David Long

[Buy Online & Support Your Local Bookstore →](#)

"It has stories about quirky little things and different places in London. London's earliest skyscrapers, for example, Ghostly London, boozy London, eccentric London, eating London... It's fun, and it has things you won't find in other guidebooks"

– **Harry, Historian**

Girl, Woman, Other

By Bernadine Evaristo

[Buy Online & Support Your Local Bookstore →](#)

"It's very much about the passage of time, and it touches on social and historical issues, including older history that I didn't know about. It also covers more recent history and covers what was here before, like what Kings Cross was before and what it is now. It's the most representative for me of a living London."

– **Alice, Food Writer**

Shrines of Gaiety

By Kate Atkinson

[Buy Online & Support Your Local Bookstore →](#)

"I devoured this book. It's such a great time capsule of Soho in the 1920s, and the author has done so much research to help you live in that world as you read. The entertainment value is high."

– **Alice, Food Writer**

Dickens

By Peter Ackroyd

[Buy Online →](#)

"Read this for a comprehensive look at Dickens' life, and life in London in general. You can trace his walks through the city and see references to various places that he saw along the way. He knew these streets, and this biography will help you know them as well."

– **Tim, Historian and Musician**

WATCH

The Crown

[Watch on Netflix →](#)

"The Crown is a great introduction to 20th-century Royal history. Anyone who's seen this tends to have a good head start in understanding modern British history in general."

– **Harry, Historian**

Ted Lasso

[Watch on Apple TV+ →](#)

"Watching this, you get a sideways look at the national obsession, football (or soccer, if you prefer). Then you can play 'spot the filming location' when you arrive. It also features the magnificent Hannah Waddingham, who I worked with several years ago."

– **Tim, Historian and Musician**

Fleabag

[Watch on Prime Video →](#)

"This limited series offers a sharp, witty glimpse into modern London life, blending humor with heartfelt moments. It's British comedy at its finest—though definitely for adults only. Much of season 1 was filmed around Kentish Town, showcasing a slice of authentic, off-the-beaten-path London. It's a perfect way to get a feel for the city's vibe before your visit."

– **Alice, Food Writer**

LISTEN

The Rest is History - London Week

[Listen on Spotify →](#)

[Listen on Apple Podcasts →](#)

"Dominic Sandbrook and Tom Holland do a London series on this podcast. In one episode, they walk from Trafalgar Square down Whitehall around Westminster Square, and they talk about all the statues and sites they can see. The series is five episodes, and they're all good."

– **Harry, Historian**

"London Girls" by Tori Amos

[Listen on Spotify →](#)

[Listen on Apple Music →](#)

"Though Tori Amos is not from the UK, for me this song has a real London feel to it. Perhaps it resonates with me because of the American connection as well. I also love how she revisits an old song and brings out new meaning by her interpretation of an ever-shifting London."

– **Alice, Food Writer**

Ladies Who London

[Listen on Apple Podcasts →](#)

"This is very casual and I dip into it every now and then. It's hosted by two Blue Badge guides, they share a lot of quirky and interesting stories about life in London and the history of the city."

– **Harry, Historian**

The Vernon Spring

[Listen on Spotify →](#)

[Listen on Apple Music →](#)

"This innovative jazz album by the London composer Same Beste captures the essence of London. It encapsulates the mood of a London which is mysterious, intricate and elusive."

– **Alice, Food Writer**