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CITY SAFARI

Escape the summer hordes and discover more of your home city. **Tim Jepson** reveals little-known gems, while **Melanie Backe-Hansen** leads a tour of Chelsea

Photography by Elisabeth Hoff

No one needs to be directed to London's greatest parks, museums and monuments, and at the height of summer, the chances are that locals and tourists alike will want to avoid the crowds that besiege the British Museum, the Tower of London and the capital's other leading attractions. But if you have an idle August afternoon to spare, or a quiet evening to fill, where might you visit among the plethora of London's smaller, quirrier sights? Here are ten ideas to get you started.

Pets past

The great, good and not so good are remembered in London's cemeteries – Highgate, West Norwood, Brompton, Bunhill Fields – but don't overlook the 300 internments that took place on the north side of Hyde Park from 1881 to 1903, in the pets' cemetery in the gardens of the Victoria Gate Lodge. Among them are Ba-ba, Bibi, Chin Chin, Chips, Dolly, Drag, Fattie, Freeky, Sir Isaac, Orphie, Pomme de Terre, Pupsey, Jim, Minnie, Scam, Scamp, Snap, Smut, Ruff, Tally-Ho, To-per and Wee Bobbit. Visitors must book an appointment through Hyde Park police. The nearest Tube station is Baker Street.

Secret gardens

Among London's wealth of smaller, lesser-known green spaces are the glorious walled gardens of Fenton House, part of a 17th century merchant's house in Hampstead (nationaltrust.org.uk/fenton-house). One of their many beauties is the fact that they have remained cultivated but virtually unchanged for 300 years, not least the rose garden, kitchen garden and historic



SECRET CITY Clockwise from top: The Garden Museum; Apsley House; the pets' graveyard in Hyde Park; Maltby & Greek founder Yannis Hadjiioannou



LONDON UNSEEN Clockwise from top: Wimbledon Windmill; The Dove in Hammersmith; the gardens at Fenton House



Windy Wimbledon

The Greater London area once had more than 300 windmills, including mills in such unlikely locations as Bond Street, Chelsea (in Tothill Fields) and The Strand. Several of them survive to this day, including one on Wimbledon Common (wimbledonwindmill.org.uk) that dates from 1817, when it was built to serve local residents. It ceased working in 1867 and became a home for six families, but today, with its sails restored, it is a working mill once more, complete with a wonderful little museum (Sat 2–5pm and Sun 11am–5pm).

The house as history

Many Londoners are aware of Sir John Soane's Museum and Dennis Sever's House in Spitalfields, former homes that have been preserved as museums. Fewer will know of Dr Johnson's House (drjohnsonshouse.org), once

home to another writer, Samuel Johnson; and Handel House Museum (handelhouse.org), home of composer George Frideric Handel.

Aristocratic Houses

Most Londoners will have passed 18th century Apsley House

(english-heritage.org.uk) on Hyde Park Corner – formerly known as Number 1, London – unaware that it was once the home of the Duke of Wellington and is open to the public. Its glittering interiors contain more than 3,000 paintings, silverware, porcelain and other gifts given to the hero of Waterloo. August also sees the only annual opening to the public of Clarence House (royalcollection.org.uk), which is now the home of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall.

A green-fingered oasis

Peel off from the multitudes visiting Tate Modern and make instead for the nearby Garden Museum (gardenmuseum.org.uk), a beautiful little oasis centered on the previously abandoned church of St Mary's Lambeth, burial place of John Tradescant (1570–1638), Britain's first great documented gardener and plant hunter. The

orchard, home to more than 30 varieties of apple tree.

Gastronomic pilgrimage

Portobello, Camden, Brick Lane – you can barely move for summer visitors in London's best known general markets. Much the same

goes for Borough Market, which is arguably the city's most celebrated food market, where some of the founding stall-holders have long since moved on, first to nearby Maltby Street (maltby.st) – itself increasingly compromised by its own popularity – and now to the

still little-known Spa Terminus (spa-terminus.co.uk). Many of the like-minded artisanal producers here are wholesalers, but most of them open to the public on Saturday morning, and they represent an essential point of pilgrimage for food-lovers.

AGENTS' TIPS FOR SUMMER IN THE CITY

Hugo Headlam, associate director, John D Wood & Co in Belgravia
Take advantage of the free kids' tickets offered by the West End Theatre Company (1–31 August). A child aged 16 or under can get a free ticket to any participating show when accompanied by an adult paying full price. You can also buy two extra children's tickets at half price. Plays include *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (right), *Matilda*,



Phantom of the Opera, *Wicked*, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *Stomp* and more. kidsweek.co.uk; 0844 238 5151.

Alex Oppenheim, associate director, John D Wood & Co in Battersea
Explore Battersea Square, a less well-known enclave of restaurants, bars and cafés which has a very continental feel in summer, with tables and chairs on the cobbled pavements and people

enjoying coffee and drinks al fresco. Gordon Ramsay's London House is here, as is a fantastic authentic Italian restaurant, Melanzana.

Stephen Lovelady, sales manager, Foxtons Pimlico and Westminster
Visit the Grenadier pub in Belgravia – a hidden gem behind Wilton Crescent which used to be a pub for officers at Knightsbridge Barracks. Also, St George's Square in Pimlico – a garden



square open to the public – is the only river-facing garden square in London.

James Blackler, sales manager, Foxtons West End

Wander down to the Strand where you can find the most impeccably kept church called St Clement Danes. Not only is this place steeped in history, it was rebuilt after significant damage during the war. It's been fully restored by the RAF. From here you can take a

short walk down to Middle Temple Courts and their gardens, which were built in 1562 and retain their period charm. Round the day off at the American Bar at the Savoy and enjoy the Art Deco architecture whilst enjoying an Old Fashioned.

Richard Bernstone, director, Aston Chase
Lunch at Ceconi's, in Burlington Gardens followed by a tour of

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HANDEL HOUSE The museum at 25 Brook Street was home to the baroque composer George Frideric Handel from 1723 to 1759

museum has amassed over 6,000 objects spanning 400 years of gardening in Britain, covering the history, culture and design of gardens, and embracing both grand country house gardens and humble small back yards.

Open wide

Don't like going to the dentist? Well, the horribly compulsive museum of the British Dental Association (bda.org/museum) in Wimpole Street won't help, but force yourself to visit anyway. Its 30,000 artifacts – which are arranged in to categories including extraction, conservation, cleaning, prophylaxis, surgery, fine arts, anaesthesia, diagnosis, prosthetics orthodontics, as well as archives and photography – offer a fascinating account of all things dental. They range from the

horrifying instruments of the distant past to the extraordinary technology of the present.

The right note

London echoes to music on a grand scale during the summer, from the iconic Proms to the vast festivals in Hyde Park. But in Green Note (greennote.co.uk) you can hear music in a much more intimate setting, a tiny club that has just seen off many more famous names to win the title of *Time Out's* best London live music venue. You can see why, as it's the sort of place you dream about finding but so rarely do – cosy, friendly, candlelit and with the sort of eclectic but accessible (and largely acoustic) music which means you can be sure of hearing something interesting and often outstanding every night.

A small drink

You may not want to make special visits to see London's smallest house (it's at 10 Hyde Park Place, W2, and is 3ft/95cm across), nor its smallest statue (two mice fighting over a piece of cheese on the cornice of the building at the corner of Philpot Lane at Eastcheap, EC3). But you may be inclined to visit London's smallest bar room, which is 4ft 2ins by 7ft 10ins (1.27m by 2.39m) and is found at The Dove (dovehammersmith.co.uk) in Hammersmith. Several claimants, note, fight for the title of the capital's smallest single pub, including The Rake in Borough Market and The Cask and Glass in Palace Street, SW1. ■

Tim Jepson is the co-author of the National Geographic London Book of Lists (£14.99)

THE ROUTE TO FOLLOW

From Sloane Square Tube station **1** turn left down Sloane Gardens with its tall red-brick homes, built in the 1880s, crossing Lower Sloane Street and turning into **Turks Row**. Follow the gardens of Burton Court to St Leonard's Terrace, and half way along look right to the tree-lined Royal Avenue towards King's Road. To the left, the Grade I listed **Royal Hospital Chelsea** **2** one of Chelsea's greatest landmarks and London's most iconic buildings – will come into view.

This is the home of the Chelsea pensioners, who in their scarlet coats inspire great respect. Founded by **Charles II** in 1681, the doors opened to the first 476 retired soldiers in 1692. The front section features the Great Hall to the west and the Chapel to the east, separated by the octagon vestibule with cupola, all designed by **Sir Christopher Wren**. Beyond, towards the river, is Figure Court (named for the statue of Charles II by Grinling Gibbons) and the gardens, the setting for the **RHS Chelsea Flower Show**, held here since 1913. You can visit the hospital free of charge or pre-book a tour led by a **Chelsea Pensioner**.

Continuing along **St Leonards Terrace**, you will pass No 18, which features a blue plaque marking the former home of **Bram Stoker**, the author of *Dracula* **3**. Eventually you will reach one of the lesser-known garden squares, **Tedworth Square**. It was built during the 1880s and has had a number of notable former residents, including the actresses, **Lily Langtry** **4** and Mrs Patrick Campbell.

Following the square around to Tite Street, No 23 features a blue plaque to **Mark Twain** **5** author of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, in 1896-1898. **Tite Street's** lower section features a number of tall red-brick homes, with large windows, built specifically for artists during the late 19th century, including **John Singer Sargent** at No 33 (and No 31), and **James Abbott McNeill Whistler** at No 35. Artist, Augustus John also lived here during the 20th century, and No 34 features a blue plaque for the playwright **Oscar Wilde** **6**.

When half way down Tite Street,



turn right into Royal Hospital Road to **Chelsea Physic Garden**, **7** a hidden gem tucked away in the residential streets. It was established in 1673 by the **Society of Apothecaries** and is the second oldest botanic garden in England. It features the oldest rock garden in England, Grade II* listed, with Icelandic lava provided by **Sir Joseph Banks** in 1772. The café is a great spot for lunch or tea and cake.

Before reaching **Cheyne Walk**, look right to **Flood Street**, and for a short detour walk up to the former home of **Baroness Margaret Thatcher**, **8** who was living at No 19 when she

became Prime Minister in 1979.

Cheyne Walk has some of the oldest houses in Chelsea. Built in the 1700s, it has been the home of Rolling Stones guitarist **Keith Richards**, **9** author **George Eliot**, prime minister **David Lloyd George** and composer **Ralph Vaughan Williams**. No 16 is one of the oldest houses, but features an additional window by **Edwin Lutyens**. In 1862-1882 it was the home of artist **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** and his brother William, poet **Algernon C. Swinburne** and writer **George Meredith**. Rossetti kept unusual animals including

parrots, and peacocks. **10**

Crossing **Oakley Street**, you pass **Albert Bridge** **11** which crosses over to Battersea. This part of **Cheyne Walk** has been the home of **Mick Jagger** and **Marianne Faithfull**.

On the corner of Lawrence Street, is **Carlyle Mansions**. Nicknamed The Writer's Block, it has been home to **T.S. Eliot**, Henry James, Somerset Maugham and **Ian Fleming**. **12**

Turning into Cheyne Row, the houses on the east side were built in 1703. No 24, is the former home of writer **Thomas Carlyle** **13** and his wife Jane, who welcomed famous

writers, including **Dickens**, **Thackeray**, Darwin, and Tennyson. You're still required to pull the door bell that those literary icons would have used upon entering.

Cheyne Row leads into Glebe Place, with No 35 built in 1869 by Philip Webb for artist, **George Price Boyce**. **14** No 48 was the home of architect, **Charles Rennie Mackintosh**, and the unusual No 50 was designed by **John Lowe** in the 1880s. Glebe Place features 19th century artist's studios at numbers 53-58, and 60-61, known as **Glebe Studios**.

AGENTS' TIPS FOR SUMMER IN THE CITY

Mayfair's best art galleries, including the recently opened Phillips Gallery in Berkeley Square. Head for the theatre for a top show such as *Book of Mormon* or *Les Misérables*, which are more likely to have availability in August. Then drinks at Soho's Ham Yard Hotel.

Charlie Smith, managing partner, London Real Estate Advisors LLP
The Royal Academy on Piccadilly.

Surprisingly it's always quiet. And if you are a Barclays Premier customer you get in for free.

Paul Sulkin, director, Kay & Co
Camley Street Natural Park is an amazing place. Two acres of stunning green space behind St Pancras Station (right). The Ivy has always been really difficult if not impossible to get a table, but it's easier in August when so many Londoners are out of town.

