



Great Pub Crawls of London

WESTMINSTER AND EMBANKMENT

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COVER IMAGE

The front cover shows St. Stephen's Tavern exterior sign.

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INTRODUCTION

London is one of the greatest cities in the world, its history, architecture, shopping, museums, parks, monuments, sights, arts and music scenes second to none, not forgetting, of course, its pubs, so what better way to see this fabulous city than through its most magnificent, impressive and memorable pubs, inns and taverns, by far the greatest collection of watering holes in the world, in both quality and quantity. The Great Pub Crawls of London is a series of comprehensive guides to enable you to do just that. The pub crawls in these guides will introduce you to many of the very best pubs in the most memorable and fascinating parts of London, and will describe the locales, monuments, architecture, history and other points of interest.

The capital of the United Kingdom and of England, and once of the British Empire, London has two thousand years of history, centuries of famous, and infamous, characters, great monarchs, political shenanigans, bloodshed, crime, culture, fashion, music, arts, you name it—in London, the history is a living thing, you can feel it all around you. As with so many things, it all started with the Romans who founded the settlement of Londinium two thousand years ago, at the lowest point on the Thames where they could ford the river but still use it as a port, roughly where the modern City of London now stands. Subsequently, this is where monarchs since Anglo-Saxon times, for a thousand years, have been crowned, where much of the long and so often bloody drama of English and British monarchy took place, where Shakespeare wrote and performed his plays, and where Jack the Ripper committed his grisly crimes. Among its very darkest moments were the Great Plague that was followed just a year later in 1666 by the Great Fire of London. Later the German bombing in the Second World War known as the Blitz, and the attacks by literally thousands of V1 and V2 rockets seemed to threaten complete destruction and caused great loss of life. Happier times followed, especially the Swinging Sixties, when London seemed to be the centre of the world. And not forgetting Dickens, of course, who deserves a paragraph of his own (but he's not getting one)—what would London be without him, he defined our image of Victorian London, and his ghost not only still haunts the metropolis, but also the pages of these guides. He will appear more than once, having been a connoisseur of inns, taverns, public houses, hostelries and other fine establishments, if the evidence of his writings is to be believed.

It has to be admitted that the title of this work, Great Pub Crawls of London, may be partly a misnomer. Rather than the typical British pub crawl, which can involve frantically consuming as much alcohol in as many pubs as possible, what are described here should be more civilised and sedate affairs. Perhaps the terms pub walks or tours, would be more appropriate, each comprising about half-a-dozen or so first-rate pubs. However, one part of the name is accurate—to describe these pub crawls as great is not being immodest, the establishments and routes described here really are the very best, designed by a long-standing self-acknowledged master of the craft, and field-tested by experts. You could take anyone on one of these pub crawls and they would feel that they have had an interesting and worthwhile day out.

Now, on the basis that people rarely read over-long forewords I'll stop waffling and let you move on to what is really of interest to you—the Great Pub Crawls of London.

Glenn Martin
Still Thirsty After All These Years

WESTMINSTER AND EMBANKMENT

Covering the historic centre of political and military power in Britain, this pub crawl includes many of London's most fascinating locations and attractions, with several of its most famous historic sites, stately architecture, a walk along the Thames with several points of interest, some terrific pubs, and a chance to see the political elite at play.

Westminster has been the royal seat for over a thousand years, from the days of the Anglo-Saxon Kings through the Danes, Normans, Plantagenets, Tudors, Stuarts and Hanoverians to the modern-day House of Windsor. Westminster has also become a metonym for Britain's parliament, government and civil service, such is the concentration of the nation's offices of state here. Its stretch of the River Thames, the Victoria Embankment, is one of the most scenic, with superb views and some very interesting monuments.

Starting near Trafalgar Square in the best pub on Whitehall, with a wonderfully cool tiled interior, then south along Whitehall passing many statues and government offices to the Prime Minister's local, this pub crawl then continues past the Churchill War Rooms to a lovely little pub which is Westminster Abbey's local. It then passes the abbey itself and through Parliament Square to the Houses of Parliament and Big Ben, to a pub which is Parliament's local, and then proceeds down the Victoria Embankment, taking in some very interesting monuments, and finishing on a paddle steamer moored on the Thames.

The total distance is only about one mile, but it requires fine weather, as much of the time will be spent outside to appreciate the sights and locations, and there will be many points of interest.

THE OLD SHADES

37 Whitehall, London SW1A 2BX. Tel 020 7839 8577.



The Old Shades Interior

The Old Shades was taken over by a chain, Faucet Inns, who gave it a highly distinctive makeover. The unremarkable narrow frontage—narrow because of the high property values—conceals a relaxing and attractive wood and tiled interior, which is a haven away from the hustle and bustle of Whitehall, and on a hot summer's day the green tiles do seem to have a cooling effect. It is the only one of our pubs actually on Whitehall, and is the best one at this end—the others seem to work on the assumption that a dark interior and dark wood are all that's required to create an old pub atmosphere. It isn't, but fortunately we have The Old Shades, with its own, individual character.

On leaving The Old Shades turn left on Whitehall, named after the Palace of Whitehall, which in turn got its name from the white stone used in its construction. The main royal residence from 1530 to 1698, when it burnt down, it grew to over 1,500 rooms, and was larger than the Vatican and Versailles. It was home to most of the Tudor and Stuart dynasties, including Henry VIII, Elizabeth I and Charles I. It was so large that it covered the entire area between Northumberland Avenue, which is just behind The Old Shades, and Derby Gate, which is where our next venue is.

On your left, a narrow street called Great Scotland Yard was once the world-famous headquarters of the Metropolitan Police. The main entrance itself was on Whitehall Place, the next street down, but the public entrance was a plain door on this nondescript little backstreet. They moved to the iconic New Scotland Yard, in Victoria, in 1890, and moved again to the Thames Embankment in 2016, but the name Scotland Yard is still synonymous with the Metropolitan Police.



Horse Guard of the Household Cavalry

Proceeding down Whitehall, on your left is the wide and elegant Horse Guards Avenue, used as the location of the Ministry of Magic in the penultimate Harry Potter film. This, of course, is fictional—portrayed as an efficient hive of activity, it can't possibly be a real department of government.

Just after this on the left is the only remaining part of the Palace of Whitehall, the Banqueting House, a magnificent grade I listed building open to the public. It was on this very spot on a cold January morning in 1649 that King Charles I was beheaded for treason after he and his Cavaliers had lost the Civil War against the Parliamentarians, or Roundheads, led by Oliver Cromwell.

In the centre of the road is a mounted statue of Earl Haigh, commander on the western front during World War I. On the opposite side is Horse Guards Parade, where the Household Cavalry may be on guard, on foot or on horseback. Comprising the Life Guards, in red tunics, and the Blues and Royals in blue, not all their duties are ceremonial—when abroad, they are heavy armour. You may choose to cross over to take the obligatory photo.

Further down Whitehall, on the left, is a large building set back from the road, the Ministry of Defence. In front of it are statues of three outstanding Second World War commanders, General Bill Slim, the highly popular commander of British land forces against the Japanese in the Far East, followed by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Churchill's right hand man, the now little-known Field Marshall Alan Brooke, one of the architects of the British and Allied victories, and finally Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery, the nemesis of Rommel's Afrika Korps, and British forces commander in the Allies' invasion of Western Europe.

In the centre of the road is a monument to the Women of World War II, reflecting the major role they played. Further on is the Cenotaph, originally a First World War monument, but now a memorial to all the dead of all wars. This is where the televised laying of wreaths on Remembrance Sunday, the nearest Sunday to November 11th, Armistice Day, commemorates the end of the slaughter on the Western Front.



The Cenotaph

THE RED LION

48 Parliament Street, Whitehall, London SW1A 2NH. Tel 020 7930 5826.

Continuing along Whitehall, on the opposite side of the road you may notice an otherwise unremarkable street blocked by large steel gates and guarded by armed police. This is Downing Street, and behind the most famous door in the world, Number Ten, is the official residence of the British Prime Minister. There isn't really much to see here, so continue south down Whitehall until you reach Parliament Street, and on the left on the corner of Derby Gate, The Red Lion.

This pub has a fantastic location, with a view back down Whitehall. Also, having had a major refurbish in 2014, its plain old Victorian interior has been replaced with an attractive fresh light wooden look, with teak panelling, still in keeping with its essential character. But its real attraction is that it's a Fullers pub, which means you should get a delicious pint of full-flavoured English bitter, and of course, scrumptious pies.



The Red Lion and Whitehall

This is the Prime Minister's local, but don't expect to see him (or her) there in these security-conscious times, not even for a photo opportunity. However, this pub does claim to have served every prime minister up until Edward Heath in the early nineteen-seventies. You may see a few M.P.s, so the pub has a division bell, which rings to call M.P.s back to the House of Commons for a vote, when there is a division into the ayes and the noes.

On leaving The Red Lion, cross Parliament Street and pass under the arches onto King Charles Street. At the end you will see the Churchill War Rooms. This was the bunker that sheltered Winston Churchill and his government during the worst days of the Blitz in the Second World War. Now part of the Imperial War Museum, it is open to the public.

THE WESTMINSTER ARMS

9 Storey's Gate, London SW1P 3AT. Tel 020 7222 8520.



The Westminster Arms Exterior

From the Churchill War Rooms turn left onto Horse Guards Road, and at the end cross Birdcage Walk, the site of the Royal Menagerie and Aviary in Stuart times. Turn left, and immediately on your right is Storey's Gate. Halfway down this short street, on the right, is The Westminster Arms.

This popular little pub, owned by Shepherd Neame, is Westminster Abbey's local, but don't expect any of its permanent residents to show up here, not even Charles Dickens, who did like his pubs—Westminster Abbey is one of the capital's two main burial sites for the great and good in Britain (the other being St. Paul's Cathedral). Dickens himself was interred at Poet's Corner, which was against his wishes—he wanted a quiet burial in Rochester.

However, the Westminster Arms has served many famous living people, such as Bill Clinton, Desmond Tutu, Angelina Jolie, in addition to conference goers, civil servants, and Members of Parliament, which explains the division bell. You may see Nigel Farage here, largely responsible for the UK's departure from the European Union, who enjoys a good pint, and being a patriotic Man of Kent he likes to imbibe the excellent Kentish ales sold here. Apparently he has a liking for the Spitfire, which should come as no surprise.

Leaving the Westminster Arms, turn right and at the end of Storey's Gate is Westminster Abbey on the opposite side of the road. In fact, the Westminster Arms used to have a superb view of the abbey, until the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre was built in the way. Prince Charles, that earnest critic of architecture, would probably describe it as a "monstrous carbuncle", even if it is named after his mum. Cross Victoria Street, turn left and continue past Westminster Abbey.

Westminster and Embankment



Westminster Abbey

Formally titled the Collegiate Church of Saint Peter at Westminster, Westminster Abbey is the site of almost all the coronations of English and British monarchs for over a thousand years. This mainly Gothic structure has been around for a long time, in one form or another. It predates the Norman conquest of 1066, though much of what you see was built later—the present building was started by Henry III in 1245, and the dominating western towers weren't built until the early-eighteenth century. It was an abbey until Henry VIII assumed direct control in 1539, granting it the status of a cathedral by charter. This was to avoid its destruction, as was happening elsewhere in this period, in the sometimes violent Dissolution of the Monasteries. Technically, it is now neither a cathedral nor an abbey.

Walk past the abbey, towards the Houses of Parliament, cross the road and turn left. You are walking round Parliament Square, and on the central green and around the square are many statues of eminent leaders, such as Winston Churchill, Britain's greatest prime minister, who led the nation to victory against Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Among the others are David Lloyd George, the last Liberal prime minister, and one of the most notable, who led the country to victory in the First World War, and Benjamin Disraeli, Britain's only Jewish prime minister and one of Queen Victoria's favourites. Not all the statues are of Britons, for example, Abraham Lincoln and Nelson Mandela.

Parliament Square is also the main site for protests and demonstrations in the capital. There have been many here, some long term, reflecting this country's general tolerance of peaceful protest.

At the next junction, turn right onto Bridge Street. St. Stephen's Tavern is a short way down on the other side of the road, opposite Parliament.

ST. STEPHEN'S TAVERN

10 Bridge Street, London SW1A 2JR. Tel 020 7925 2286.



St. Stephen's Tavern and Big Ben

St. Stephen's Tavern is part of the family-owned brewers Hall & Woodhouse estate, selling their first-rate cask-conditioned ales. First opened in 1873, it was closed for fifteen years before being rescued and refurbished in 2003 by the Dorset brewers. The interior and exterior have beautiful, ornate fittings, matching the originals from its early days in the Victorian era. There is also a staircase lined with political images and portraits, a mezzanine, and of course, an excellent view.

It is another pub with a division bell, which is hardly surprising as this is effectively Parliament's local. The attraction of this small pub, apart from its location opposite Big Ben, is that it seems to get more than its fair share of political types—Members of Parliament, civil servants, etc.—and it's possible to get a feel of the political establishment by listening to some of the conversations around you.

St. Stephen's Tavern has a prime location opposite the Houses of Parliament and the clock tower, what was St. Stephen's Tower, but renamed as the Elizabeth Tower in 2012 to honour Queen Elizabeth II in her Diamond Jubilee Year, the sixtieth anniversary of her accession to the throne. This rebranding makes little difference—the iconic tower has always been incorrectly referred to as Big Ben, although that is in truth the name of the large bell in the clock tower, and there is no reason for this to change. But it's not just the Elizabeth Tower that is misnamed by the public—the entire Parliament building is officially the Palace of Westminster, and is home to the House of Commons and the House of Lords, from which it gets its usual name of the Houses of Parliament.



Boadicea



The London Eye and County Hall

From St. Stephen's Tavern, turn left and cross the Victoria Embankment to the statue of Queen Boadicea, an ancient Celtic Briton of the Icenii tribe. She gave the Romans a run for their money after they unwisely went out of their way to upset her. They soon learnt that maybe they should have taken her more seriously after she massacred rather a lot of them, which was understandable if just a tad excessive.

On the opposite bank of the Thames is what was County Hall, the seat of the Greater London Council. In the nineteen-eighties it was occupied by a succession of raving lefties, culminating in Red Ken (Livingstone) until the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, simply abolished it. He and his ilk were described as the loony left in those days, but in these politically-correct times we now call it political correctness. The statue of Boadicea reminds me of Mrs Thatcher in her prime. One landmark you can't miss, adjacent to County Hall, is the London Eye, once the largest ferris wheel in the world.

Walking along the river you will come to the Battle of Britain Memorial. This stunning bronze sculpture shows scenes from the battle, and the structure mounted on the top has the same cross-section as a Spitfire's wing. The statue commemorates The Few, those airmen and other personnel who fought off Hitler's attempted invasion of Britain by giving the Luftwaffe a defeat from which they never fully recovered. This was Hitler's first ever military failure, and without air superiority Nazi Germany couldn't invade Britain, preserving this nation as a base for the eventual invasion of the continent on D-Day.



The Battle of Britain Memorial



The Royal Air Force Memorial

As Winston Churchill said in one of his greatest orations in the House of Commons, "Never, in the field of human conflict, has so much been owed by so many to so few", or something like that.

Further along the embankment is the Royal Air Force Memorial, a large gold eagle with the motto of the RAF, "Per Ardua Ad Astra" (Through Adversity to the Stars). Erected in 1923 as a memorial to the fallen airmen of The First World War, it now commemorates all RAF personnel. The statue is gilded with gold leaf, which can be beaten thinner than paper. It therefore requires surprisingly little for even a large monument like this, costing no more than a few hundred pounds.

Go past the memorial towards the railway bridge (Hungerford Bridge), and just before it is moored the Tattershall Castle.

THE TATTERSHALL CASTLE

King's Reach, Victoria Embankment, London SW1A 2HR. Tel 020 7839 6548.

The Tattershall Castle is a paddle steamer occupying an idyllic spot on the Thames. It used to cross the River Humber in northern England between Hull and Lincolnshire, carrying passengers, goods and vehicles, and was one of three still operating in the nineteen-seventies, the other two being the Lincoln Castle and the Wingfield Castle. However, with the building of the Humber Bridge, then the largest single span in the world, they were no longer needed. Being flat-bottomed and not suitable for the open sea, it was difficult to find a use for them other than as floating pubs, the fate of all three of them at some stage.



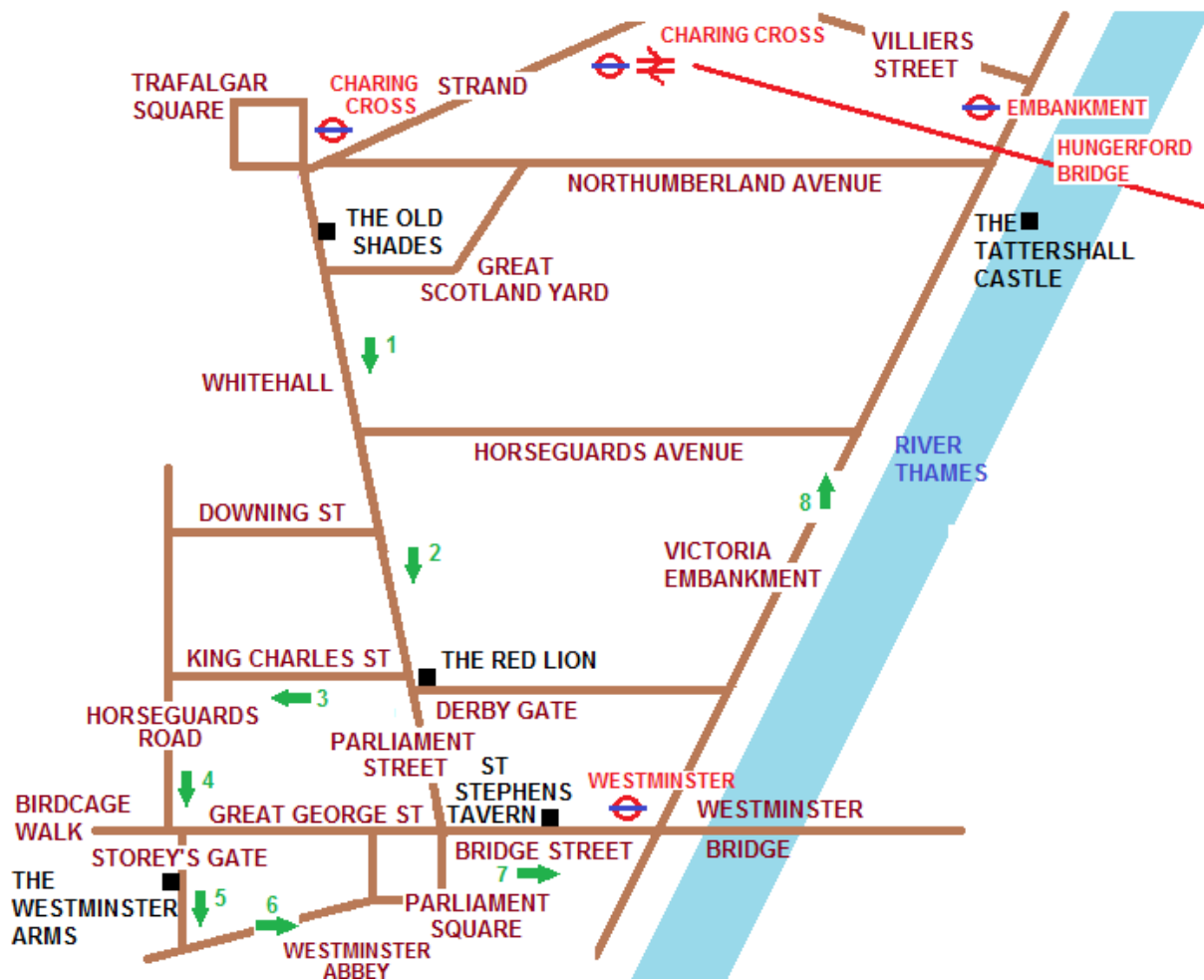
The Tattershall Castle

The Tattershall Castle has all you would expect of a land-based pub and more, including jazz and comedy shows, quiz nights, excellent food, wine and cocktails, even cask-conditioned beers—they are Casque Marque Approved, which means the beer is good—although it must be difficult to roll traditional barrels down a gangplank (or up one for that matter). And in addition to all this, The Tattershall Castle enjoys a striking location with fantastic views.

This entire stretch of the riverside, from Westminster Bridge to Blackfriars Bridge, is the Victoria Embankment. Constructed between 1865 and 1870 by Joseph Bazalgette, famous for building London's sewers, it was actually the tidal foreshore of the river before this. They built an underground railway tunnel and sewers first, before covering them over with the road.

Our pub crawl is now finished. Embankment underground station is just on the other side of the road, and from there you could walk up Northumberland Avenue to Trafalgar Square, near to Charing Cross Station, or up Villiers Street to the station itself.

DIRECTIONS AND MAPS



The Old Shades, 37 Whitehall, London SW1A 2BX. Tel 020 7839 8577.

Walk down Whitehall from Trafalgar Square. The Old Shades is a short distance down on the left. [\[MAP\]](#)

The Red Lion, 48 Parliament Street, Whitehall, London SW1A 2NH. Tel 020 7930 5826.

From The Old Shades, turn left and continue south down Whitehall about four hundred yards until you reach Parliament Street. The Red Lion is on the left, on the corner of Derby Gate. [\[MAP\]](#)

The Westminster Arms, 9 Storey's Gate, London SW1P 3AT. Tel 020 7222 8520.

From The Red Lion, cross the road, walk down King Charles Street to the end, left on Horse Guards Road, cross the road and down Storey's Gate. The Westminster Arms is a short distance away on the right. [\[MAP\]](#)

St. Stephen's Tavern, 10 Bridge Street, London SW1A 2JR. Tel 020 7925 2286.

From the Westminster Arms, turn right. At the end of Storey's Gate cross Victoria Street, turn left and walk round Parliament Square to the junction with Bridge Street and turn right. St. Stephen's Tavern is a short way down on the other side of the road, opposite Parliament. [\[MAP\]](#)

The Tattershall Castle, King's Reach, Victoria Embankment, London SW1A 2HR. Tel 020 7839 6548.

From St. Stephen's Tavern, walk west to the river, turn left onto Victoria Embankment. Walk north along the river and the Tattershall Castle is shortly before Hungerford (railway) Bridge. [\[MAP\]](#)

Leaving the Tattershall Castle, cross Victoria Embankment, and walk up Northumberland Avenue to Trafalgar Square, or up Villiers Street to Charing Cross Station.

PUB DETAILS

The Old Shades, 37 Whitehall, London SW1A 2BX. Tel 020 7839 8577.

Opening:	Pub	Food
Monday–Saturday	12:00–23:00	12:00–20:00
Sunday	12:00–18:00	12:00–17:00

<https://www.oldshades.co.uk/>

The Red Lion, 48 Parliament Street, Whitehall, London SW1A 2NH. Tel 020 7930 5826.

Opening:	Pub	Food
Monday–Friday	11:00–23:00	11:30–22:00
Saturday	11:00–21:00	11:30–19:30
Sunday	11:00–20:00	12:00–19:30

<https://redlionwestminster.co.uk/>

The Westminster Arms, 9 Storey’s Gate, London SW1P 3AT. Tel 020 7222 8520.

Opening:	Pub	Food
Monday–Tuesday	12:00–22:00	12:00–18:00
Wednesday–Friday	12:00–23:00	12:00–18:00
Saturday	12:00–18:00	Closed
Sunday	Closed	Closed

<https://www.shepherdneame.co.uk/pubs/london/westminster-arms>

St. Stephen’s Tavern, 10 Bridge Street, London SW1A 2JR. Tel 020 7925 2286.

Opening:	Pub	Food
Monday–Saturday	11:30–22:30	12:00–21:00
Sunday	11:30–21:30	12:00–21:00

<https://ststephentavern.co.uk/>

The Tattershall Castle, King’s Reach, Victoria Embankment, London SW1A 2HR. Tel 020 7839 6548.

Opening:	Pub	Food
Sunday–Thursday	11:00–23:00	11:00–22:00
Friday–Saturday	11:00–02:00	11:00–22:00

<https://www.thetattershallcastle.co.uk/>

ORGANISING A PUB CRAWL

There is a derogatory phrase in Britain, “couldn’t organise a piss-up in a brewery”, meaning—well, exactly what it says, a piss-up being a crude term for a drinking session. It’s a comment on someone’s organisational and managerial skills (or lack of), and maybe we could equally say “couldn’t organise a pub crawl in London”. After all, there is this guide, and if I can do it then it must be easy—it isn’t, but nor is it very difficult.

Use the map (and directions) provided. I believe that this is simpler than a traditional map, easier to follow, and appropriately looks a bit like the London Underground maps. It also has the advantage of having cost nothing to produce except time—fortunately I like drawing with crayons, in fact it’s all they let me have in my current abode. But seriously, do take a smartphone or other device with internet access and use the map links supplied in the guide, or if not then even a London A to Z just in case you do get lost—written instructions can only be limited in scope.

Determine timings in advance and keep an eye on the time—it does slip by surprisingly quickly when you’re enjoying yourself. Allow about thirty minutes for each venue, and a further fifteen for transit between them. Have one person who has the responsibility for this. But do remember the timings can only be approximate, if not downright wishful thinking, so ensure that all invitees have that person’s mobile number. Also, check whether the pubs are open. Especially in the City of London, pubs may close at weekends. Also, details provided can only be guaranteed to be accurate at the time of publication. Phone numbers are included in the guide for this.

Don’t get drunk, well not early anyway. The surprising fact is that on a pub crawl like this, it’s very difficult to get inebriated unless you try. But if that’s what you want, why go on one of these ventures. Surely any pub will do, or stay in the comfort of your own home and make a proper job of it. These pub crawls are generally not lads’ nights out, so feel free to bring a partner or friends.

Be flexible. If you are in a pub where people really do want to stay, then stay there, but don’t be swayed too easily. Remember you are out to enjoy yourself, this is not a race, not a competition, and there is no compulsion to complete the crawl.

Consider mobility. The young and fit can walk these—literally. Still, the distances involved, rarely more than half a mile, and therefore fifteen minutes or less on foot, may be too much for the elderly, infirm, or the terminally lazy. Also, it wastes drinking time. As you are in London, you may consider just getting a cab between venues. There’s nothing wrong with that—I must admit to being a bit of a humbug myself, as it’s what I frequently do. However, be assured that I have done dry(ish) runs on all these pub crawls, and many have been field-tested by willing expert volunteers

Be realistic. Some of the larger pub crawls can take several hours, and even be almost all-day affairs if you wish. If time is limited, be ready to do just a few, a subset, you don’t want to be rushing between them. Conversely, I’m sure there will be some lunatics adventurous souls who will even consider concatenating some of these pub crawls.

If you especially like one of the pub crawls, consider further exploration. These pub crawls are only an introduction to the area. Just because a pub doesn’t appear in this guide doesn’t mean it’s not worthy—it may just be difficult to fit it into the specified route. Or of course, I may not even know about it, or I’ve been barred. You could even try designing your own. It can be challenging, but it’s always fun. Obviously the internet is indispensable for research. And, if you want to write a guide like this you must acquire a decent camera, somehow, and learn how to use it (i.e. not just idiot mode). You may also have some writing ability and a mildly amusing tone, but I have found that isn’t absolutely vital.

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