Once the brunt of many a culinary joke, London has transformed into a global dining destination. The sheer diversity is head-spinning: from Afghan to Zambian. Work it all off with our mapped-out walk.

**TOP PICKS**

**Europe**

**Baltic**

In a bright and airy high-ceilinged dining room with a glass roof and wooden beams, Baltic is travel on a plate: dill and beetroot, dumplings and blini, pickle and smoke, rich stews and braised meat. From Polish to Georgian, the flavours are authentic and the dishes beautifully presented. The wine and vodka lists are equally diverse.

**Canela**

This expanded café in the heart of Covent Garden serves tasty Portuguese dishes, such as feijoada (a bean stew with smoked meat) and bacalhau à brás (shredded salted cod, onions, thinly chopped fried potatoes and egg). There’s a good selection of vegetarian dishes, as well as a strong Portuguese wine list.

**Le Boudin Blanc**

Surely one of the best French bistros in the capital, with meat dishes such as pork cheek or chicken leg confit cooked expertly, sauces delectable and portions huge. The frites (chips) are the best you’ll find this side of La Manche. And with a whopping 600 wines to choose from, no wonder it’s always full.

**Mazi**

Where long-standing Costa’s Grill did business for decades, Mazi has shaken up the Greek tradition along pretty Hillgate St, concocting a lively menu of modern and innovative platters (many of sharing size) in a small, bright and neat setting, with a miniature back garden and an all-Greek wine list.

**Trullo**

Trullo’s charcoal grill churns out succulent Italian-style pork chops, steaks and fish. Their daily homemade pasta is a treat, as is the all-Italian wine list.

**Texture**

Housed in one of the finest Georgian buildings in London, this Michelin-starred restaurant can be found by following the birch trees that lead (literally) inside. The menu uses mostly fresh Scandinavian ingredients (Icelandic cod and lamb, Norwegian crab) imaginatively. The crab is in a coconut soup with lime leaf and lemongrass.

**Asia & Middle-East**

**Hoppers**

This pint-sized and enormously popular place specialises in hoppers, the Sri Lankan national dish that is a thin pancake of rice flour and coconut milk with spices. Eat them (or dosas) with various types of kari (curry) or kothu, a dish of chopped roti with spices and meat, shellfish or vegetables. The decor here is Old Ceylon, and the service swift but personable.

**Mamalan**

For handmade Beijing street food – dumplings, noodles and salads – this eatery is the

**Europe**

**Baltic**

(balticrestaurant.co.uk; 74 Blackfriars Rd)

**Canela**

(canela.cafe.com; 33 Earlham St)

**Le Boudin Blanc**

(boudinblanc.co.uk; 5 Trebeck St)

**Mazi**

(mazi.co.uk; 12-14 Hillgate St)

**Trullo**

(trullorestaurant.com; 30 St Paul’s Rd)

**Texture**

(texture-restaurant.com; 34 Portman Sq)

**Asia & Middle-East**

**Hoppers**

(hopperslondon.com; 49 Frith St)

**Mamalan**

(mamalan.co.uk; Brixton Village)

**Local knowledge**

Half-restaurant, half-dinner-party, supper clubs combine the quality of the former with the informality of the latter. Run by people with a penchant for cooking and catering for 10 to 20 people, supper clubs attract an eclectic clientele who come for the imaginative set three- or four-course menus (£20 to £45). Set up by a supper club host, Ms Marmite, supperclub.fangroup.ning.com is an excellent directory of London supper clubs. The London Foodie (thelondonfoodie.co.uk) blog features regular supper club reviews.
business. Try its beef noodle soup, and pork and Chinese leaf dumplings.

Mangal Ozbeki TURKISH ££ (mangal.com; 10 Arcola St) Mangal is the quintessential Turkish ozbeki (open-hearth charcoal grill, the mother of all barbecues); brightly lit, smoky and serving superb mezze, grilled vegetables, lamb chops, kebabs and a lip-smacking assortment of kebabs.

Miyama JAPANESE £ (miyama-restaurant.co.uk; 17 Godliman St) There’s the sense of a well-kept secret about friendly Miyama restaurant, tucked in a basement of a nondescript building. It offers something for everyone, from soba and udon noodles to sushi and bento boxes.

Palomar ISRAELI ££ (thepalomar.co.uk; 40 Rupert St) The buzzing vibe at this good-looking celebration of modern-day Jerusalem cuisine (in all its permutations) is infectious. The ‘Yiddish-style’ chopped chicken liver pale, the Jerusalem-style polenta and the ‘veto-hummus’ are all fantastic.

Roti King MALAYSIAN £ (rotting Индия; 40 Donn Way) The neon sign pointing you to this pocket-sized basement place doesn’t look too promising. Step inside the white tiled eatery, however, and you know you’re in safe hands. It’s all about roti canai, a flaky flatbread typical of Malaysia, served with fragrant bowls of curry or stuffed with tasty fillings.

Tallio JEE (tallio.com; 152–156 Shaftesbury Ave) One of colourful and very new breed of Indian restaurants serving ‘half plates’ (meaning share portions). The menu has been composed by the legendary Joe, who has travelled the length and breadth of India for regional dishes. Joe, who has travelled the length and breadth of India for regional dishes. Joe, who has travelled the length and breadth of India for regional dishes. Joe, who has travelled the length and breadth of India for regional dishes. Joe, who has travelled the length and breadth of India for regional dishes. Joe, who has travelled the length and breadth of India for regional dishes.

Ceviche PERUVIAN ££ (cevicheuk.com; 17 Frith St) This colourfully decorated bodega serves some of the most authentic Peruvian food in town. Start with causa (large creamy corn kernels) and move on to one of the signature dishes of ceviche (fish or shellfish marinated in lime juice with chillies, onion and coriander) or lomo saltado (steak stir-fry). Salads with guacamole and palm heart are excellent.

The Fat Bear AMERICAN ££ (£thefatbear.co.uk; 61 Carter Lane) A somewhat hidden restaurant near St Paul’s (hit the Rising Sun pub and go upstairs) that serves soul food inspired by the cuisine of America’s Deep South. All the classics are here, including buffalo wings, corn dogs and burgers.

Amercias & Africa Asmara AFRICAN ££ (326 Caledonian Lane) Unpretentious Asmara serves spicy chicken, lamb and beef stews and vegetable/vegan dishes that you scoop up with injera, a flat, slightly spongy sourdough bread that is an Eritrean dish.

Berber & Q AFRICAN ££ (berberandq.com; 338 Acton Mews) Smoked sub-Saharan moor comes loaded with garlic, sneaky and juicy bursts of pomegranate, and is served with charred pil pil. Lamb shawarma (kebab) is meltingly tender, while piquant treats include harissa hot wings, merguez (beef sausage), green chermoula chicken thighs and spiced beef kofta.

Buenos Aires Cafe ARGENTINE ££ (buenosairescafe.co.uk; 17 Royal Parade) As you would expect from an Argentinean eatery, the beef is superb but what seals it is the gorgeous decor (all wood furniture and oversize posters), the excellent wine list, stellar service and wonderful homemade pastas and pizzas.55% of today’s population in Argentina is of Italian origin, hence this delightful culinary heritage. Views of Blackheath get the thumbs-up too.

South Bank stroll

Start Westminster £ End London Bridge £ Length: 2.8 miles; 3½ hours

Counteract all the food you’ve been eating with an amble along one of the liveliest, liveliest paths to be found London: the South Bank. From Westminster tube station, cross the river on Westminster Bridge and admire the views of the Houses of Parliament. As you reach the South Bank, the first building you’ll pass is the sombre County Hall, seat of London’s government from 1922 until Margaret Thatcher dissolved the Greater London Council in 1986. The London Eye rotates gracefully next to it and the atmosphere on this stretch of river is always party-like, with ice-cream vans, street performers, dozens of visitors and Londoners on their lunchtime run. Push on past the Q Southbank Centre and pause to admire the acrobatics of teenagers in the graffiti skatepark underneath Queen Elizabeth Hall. Carry on strolling along the river, past the boutiques of Gabriel’s Wharf and the One Tower. After 20 to 30 minutes you’ll emerge in front of the imposing Tate Modern. Note the new extension at the back, which echoes the industrial brick architecture of the original power station. Opposite is the Millennium Bridge, Sir Norman Foster’s ‘Maiden right’. Just 100m past the Tate is the magnificently robust Shakespeare’s Globe. Walk under Southwark Bridge, which is beautifully at light, dozens of visitors and Londoners on their lunchtime run. Push on past the Q Southbank Centre and pause to admire the acrobatics of teenagers in the graffiti skatepark underneath Queen Elizabeth Hall. Carry on strolling along the river, past the boutiques of Gabriel’s Wharf and the One Tower. After 20 to 30 minutes you’ll emerge in front of the imposing Tate Modern. Note the new extension at the back, which echoes the industrial brick architecture of the original power station. Opposite is the Millennium Bridge, Sir Norman Foster’s ‘Maiden right’. Just 100m past the Tate is the magnificently robust Shakespeare’s Globe. Walk under Southwark Bridge, which is beautifully at light, dozens of visitors and Londoners on their lunchtime run. Push on past the Q Southbank Centre and pause to admire the acrobatics of teenagers in the graffiti skatepark underneath Queen Elizabeth Hall. Carry on strolling along the river, past the boutiques of Gabriel’s Wharf and the One Tower. After 20 to 30 minutes you’ll emerge in front of the imposing Tate Modern. Note the new extension at the back, which echoes the industrial brick architecture of the original power station. Opposite is the

To market

The boom in London’s eating scene has extended to its markets, which come in three broad categories: 1) Food stalls that are part of a larger market and appeal to visitors keen to soak up the atmosphere (Spitalfields and Camden). 2) Specialist food and farmers’ markets selling organic produce and artisanal products (Borough, Broadway, Maltby Street and Marylebone). 3) General markets where the oranges and lemons come from who knows where, and the barrow boys and girls speak with perfect Cockney or Caribbean accents (Brick Lane, Ridley Road, Portobello Road and Berwick Street).
**Sleeping**

**Hazlitt’s**
Best for an impressive heritage
(hazlittshotel.com)
This Soho gem was the home of essayist William Hazlitt. Rooms have panelled walls, mahogany beds and antique desks.

**Hotel La Place**
Best for reliable comfort
(hotellaplace.com)
Eighteen impeccably cared for rooms come with orthopaedic mattresses, and a 24-hour wine bar on the ground floor.

**Hoxton Hotel**
Best for a fashionable postcode
(thehoxton.com)
Book long ahead at this sleek hotel in the heart of Shoreditch for great deals. Breakfast comes in a bag delivered to your door.

**Sohostel**
Best for London on a budget
(sohostel.co.uk)
An unbeatable location in the middle of Soho, this place has nice communal areas including a Hawaiian-themed roof garden.

**South Place**
Best for 007 atmosphere
(southplacehotel.com)
This boutique hotel impresses at every turn: there’s an art-filled lobby and an espionage-inspired theme (a Russian spy ring was once located in this area).

**St Christopher’s Village**
Best for beds from the future
(st-christophers.co.uk)
This 230-bed party-zone hostel has futuristic pod beds and two popular bars.

**FURTHER READING**
Pick up our London guide
(£13.99) for more dining recommendations. London is also on our Guides app, free to download from app stores.