

TimeOut's London's Top Museums:

[British Museum](#)

One of the world's oldest museums, the British Museum is vast and its collections, only a fraction of which can be on public display at any time, comprise millions of objects. First-time visitors generally head for the mummies, the Rosetta Stone, Lindow Man, the Lewis Chessmen and the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial.

[V&A](#)

The V&A houses one of the world's greatest collections of decorative arts, in such varied fields as ceramics, sculpture, portrait miniatures and photography. Among the highlights are the British Galleries 1500-1900, which are arranged chronologically to trace the history of British design from the reign of Henry VIII to that of Queen Victoria.

[Natural History Museum](#)

The handsome Alfred Waterhouse building houses a collection that contains some 70 million plant, animal, fossil, rock and mineral specimens. The Natural History Museum's Life Galleries are devoted to displays on animal life, from creepy crawlies to the plaster cast of a Diplodocus that lords it over the Central Hall.

[Science Museum](#)

The Science Museum features seven floors of educational and entertaining exhibits, including the Apollo 10 command module and a flight simulator. The Wellcome Wing showcases developments in contemporary science, medicine and technology. The Medical History Gallery in the museum's attic contains a substantial collection of medical history treasures.

[National Gallery](#)

Founded in 1824 to display a collection of just 36 paintings, today the National Gallery is home to more than 2,000 works. There are masterpieces from virtually every European school of art. The modern Sainsbury Wing extension contains the gallery's earliest works: Italian paintings by early masters like Giotto and Piero della Francesca.

[Tate Modern](#)

This powerhouse of modern art is awe-inspiring even before you enter, thanks to its industrial architecture. Inside, the original cavernous turbine hall is used to jaw-dropping effect as the home of large-scale, temporary

installations. The permanent collection features heavy-hitters such as Matisse, Rothko, Bacon, Twombly and Beuys.

[National Maritime Museum](#)

On this Greenwich Park site you'll find the National Maritime Museum, the Queen's House and the Royal Observatory, founded in 1675 by Charles II. The museum's Maritime London gallery is a permanent exhibition exploring the importance of London's maritime heritage and its impact on world trade. Exhibits include wreckage from a Zeppelin shot down over the Thames estuary in 1916 and the original model for Nelson's Column.

[Design Museum](#)

Opened in 1989 (following its original incarnation as the Boilerhouse established in the V&A by Terence Conran), the Design Museum by Tower Bridge encompasses modern and contemporary industrial and fashion design, graphics, architecture and multimedia.

[London Transport Museum](#)

Among the vehicles on display at the London Transport Museum is the first underground electric train, which had no windows because there was nothing to see underground. The trouble was that no one could tell which stop they were at, a glitch resolved by employing an athletic announcer who ran to each carriage at every station, shouting out the stops. Dating from 1890, this is one of several museum exhibits you can board.

[Imperial War Museum](#)

Located in the stately 1815 building that once housed the Bethlem Royal Hospital for the insane (aka Bedlam), IWM London holds an important collection of twentieth-century art, much of it officially commissioned during WWI and WWII, examples of the machinery of war, official communications, manuscripts of war literature and other, more personal artefacts from the conflicts of the twentieth century.