

London Day Trip with Kids on a Budget

A realistic low-spend one-day itinerary packed with museums, hidden gems, iconic sights and fun food stops.



Museums



Picnic



Big Ben



Tunnel



Borough



Tate



St Dunstan



Hamleys



Selfridges



Dinner

Today's mission

See dinosaurs and the giant blue whale.
Eat a picnic in Kyoto Garden.
See Big Ben and the London Eye.
Explore Leake Street Tunnel.
Try a Borough Market treat.
Find Warhol at Tate Modern.
Finish with one or two child-led shopping stops.

Timing reality

This is a fast-paced itinerary built around the 19:30 Stansted Express. Protect the return train and airport buffer. If you are running late, shorten a stop or choose just one evening shop.

How to use this itinerary

Consider this a menu of options, not a checklist. You do not need to do everything on the list. Pick the stops that suit your children's ages, interests and energy levels. The full route simply gives you an idea of how much can fit into one very busy day.

1) Morning: Museums, food pick-up and Kyoto Garden picnic

Time	Stop	Plan
07:30	Land at Stansted	Aim for a Stansted Express around 08:15 after arrivals.
09:00-09:45	Liverpool Street to South Kensington	Take the Tube and walk to the Science Museum.
09:45-10:00	Arrive before opening	Use the few minutes to get organised. The Science Museum opens at 10:00.
10:00-11:00	Science Museum	Allow 1 hour for a focused visit. Pick highlights only: space, flight and the most interactive areas.
11:00-11:05	Walk to Natural History Museum	The museums are around 5 minutes apart; there was no separate entry buffer on our visit.
11:05-12:00	Natural History Museum	Allow 55 minutes for key highlights: the blue whale in Hintze Hall and the dinosaur gallery.
12:00-12:20	Walk to M&S;	Allow around 18-20 minutes.
12:20-12:30	M&S; picnic treats	Buy drinks, crisps, fruit and sweet treats.
12:30-12:40	Wasabi sushi	The Wasabi branch is beside High Street Kensington station.
12:40-12:55	Walk to Kyoto Garden	Allow around 12-15 minutes.
12:55-13:25	Kyoto Garden picnic	Eat, enjoy the waterfall and koi, then leave on time for Westminster.



Navigation addresses

M&S; Kensington

113 Kensington High Street
London W8 5SQ

Wasabi High Street Kensington

Unit 123C, Kensington Arcade
Kensington High Street
London W8 5SF

The two stops are only around 2 minutes apart.

Kyoto Garden destination

Holland Park

Ilchester Place
London W8 6LU

Use the High Street Kensington entrance if that is the route your phone suggests.

2) Afternoon: Westminster, the London Eye and Leake Street Tunnel

Time	Stop	Plan
13:25-13:35	Walk to Holland Park station	Allow around 10 minutes.
13:35-14:05	Tube to Westminster	Central line to Bond Street, then Jubilee line to Westminster.
14:05-14:20	Big Ben and Westminster	A quick photo stop for Big Ben, Parliament and Westminster Bridge.
14:20-14:25	London Eye photos	Take a quick riverside photo rather than stopping for a long visit.
14:25-14:35	Walk to Leake Street Tunnel	Around 8-10 minutes behind Waterloo.
14:35-14:50	Leake Street Tunnel	Explore the colourful graffiti and take photos.



Keep this section moving

Westminster, Big Ben and the London Eye are quick photo stops rather than long visits. The aim is to reach Leake Street by about 14:35 and begin the South Bank walk by 14:50.

Best photo moments

Big Ben outside Westminster station.
The middle of Westminster Bridge.
The London Eye from the South Bank.
A colourful wall inside Leake Street Tunnel.

3) South Bank, Borough Market and Tate Modern

Time	Stop	Plan
14:50-15:10	South Bank walk	Walk east along the river. Keep a steady pace and enjoy the views.
15:10-15:45	Borough Market	Allow 35 minutes for a tasting stop. Choose one or two treats to share. Hard leave: 15:45.
15:45-15:58	Walk to Tate Modern	Around 12-13 minutes, passing Shakespeare's Globe.
16:00-16:25	Tate Modern highlights	Turbine Hall and one or two pre-chosen artworks. Hard leave time: 16:25.



Borough Market plan

Treat this as a tasting stop, not a meal. Let each person choose one item to share. That keeps the stop fun, affordable and fast.

Tate Modern mission

1. Enter through the Turbine Hall.
2. Ask staff where Andy Warhol is displayed.
3. Choose one additional artwork or gallery.
4. Skip the viewing terrace unless you are ahead of schedule.

Why this is realistic

A focused Tate visit protects time for the evening. A full museum visit can take several hours, so decide what you most want to see before you arrive.

4) Evening: Millennium Bridge, St Dunstan, Hamleys and Selfridges

Time	Stop	Plan
16:25-16:35	Millennium Bridge	Cross the bridge and enjoy the view of St Paul's ahead.
16:35-16:55	Walk to St Dunstan	Go directly there. St Paul's can be your bridge-view photo rather than a separate stop.
16:55-17:10	St Dunstan in the East	A short but worthwhile hidden-gem stop.
17:10-17:35	Travel to Hamleys	Use live directions for the quickest Tube route to Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus.
17:35-17:55	Hamleys	Enjoy the demonstrations and displays. Treat it as an attraction and agree a spending limit before going in.
17:55-18:10	Walk to Selfridges	Walk north along Regent Street and west along Oxford Street.
18:10-18:30	Selfridges	Browse or make one specific child-led stop, such as football stickers.
18:30-18:55	Travel to Liverpool Street	Use the quickest live route and keep the final train buffer protected.
18:55-19:10	Quick dinner near Liverpool Street	Eat quickly or take food away for the journey.
19:10-19:20	Walk to the platform	Allow time to find the Stansted Express and board calmly.
19:30	Stansted Express	Train back to Stansted with a comfortable airport buffer.



Dinner idea

itsu Bishopsgate Plaza

150 Bishopsgate
London EC2M 4AF

Close to Liverpool Street station and useful for a quick eat-in or takeaway dinner.

Evening reality check

Both shopping stops fit only if the rest of the route stays close to time. Keep each visit short, check live travel times and protect the 19:30 Stansted Express.

If you are behind schedule

Skip one or both shopping stops and head straight to Liverpool Street. Do not sacrifice the 19:30 return train or airport buffer.

Challenge checklist

☐ Blue whale	☐ Dinosaur	☐ Kyoto Garden picnic
☐ Big Ben	☐ Leake Street Tunnel	☐ Borough Market snack
☐ Found Warhol	☐ Crossed Millennium Bridge	☐ St Dunstan
☐ Hamleys	☐ Selfridges stop	☐ Avoided airport food

Have the BEST day!