

# HIDDEN LONDON

Think you know all there is to know about our capital city? Well think again! You may have visited the Tower of London, taken a stroll around Hyde Park and craned your neck to look up at the tops of all those skyscrapers, but some of the city's hidden gems are just that... hidden! Shall we sniff some out?

## Underground worship

Also known as the Temple of Mithras, the **London Mithraeum** is one of the city's oldest surviving temples. It is dedicated to the Roman god Mithras and it's located right at the heart of the city – a mere stone's throw from the London Stock Exchange. Like all of Mithras' temples, the Mithraeum was built underground; it was always meant to be a dark, private and windowless space. When the Romans left Britain it lay forgotten for centuries until it was rediscovered after World War II. Today the London Mithraeum can be found underneath a modern office building. In a city as ancient and as important as this, the old and the new have to make room for each other.

Other surviving bits of Roman London (or should I say *Londinium*), include the amphitheatre where gladiators fought. Today it's a ruin buried beneath the Guildhall. Gladiator swords must be left at the door.

## Where did I leave it?

Sure, we've all misplaced a wallet or a pair of gloves, but have you ever lost a **WHOLE RIVER**? How about several? Yes, the Thames is well loved and hard to miss, but there was a time when lots of other rivers flowed into it. As time passed and the city grew, some of these waterways were covered up. Now to find the rivers **Fleet, Tyburn and Neckinger**, you'll have to look underground!

## Clown jewels

If clowns aren't your thing you **MIGHT** want to avoid All Saints Church in Haggerston around the time of their annual Grimaldi Service. Held to commemorate the life and times of famous clown **Joseph Grimaldi**, it welcomes clowns from around the world, who gather to honour their founding father. *(What a lovely jester. No? Grimaldi would've found that funny! Ed)* The church also houses a collection of clown faces painted onto eggs. This is how clowns register their make-up so that no one copies their look. *(Yes, it's eggcentric, but what do you eggspect? Sorry. I'll stop now.)*

## A fun day in the cemeteries

The Victorians **LOVED** a good graveyard (*who doesn't? Ed*). Highgate Cemetery is where some of the most famous Victorians are currently pushing up daisies, but some people think one of the local residents might not be *entirely* dead. Back in the 1970s a mob of 100 people went to Highgate Cemetery on the hunt for a vampire – but no monsters were ever found. We do understand that wild garlic grows there in abundance, so perhaps the bloodsucker just... moved on?

## FUN FACT TRUMPET

London has a population of nearly 9 million and attracts around a whopping 30 million visitors each year (*pre-pandemic, obv*s).

## Pick your favourite

London boasts some of the most exciting street art in the world. Brick Lane is a multicultural centre in the city, and it's also home to some huge and brightly coloured murals. But how about spotting some truly teensy works of art in other parts of London?

The smallest and cutest sculpture in the city must be the mice of Philpot Lane. No one knows for sure why someone sculpted these mice fighting over a piece of cheese, not even eminent art historians, who no doubt studied it very *caerphilly*. LOLZ.

Even old rubbish can be art in London. On Millennium Bridge the chewing gum that gets stuck to the ground has been painted with tiny designs.

In 1997, dozens of plaster noses suddenly appeared on buildings across London. The noses were made and installed by an artist named Rick Buckley, as a protest against the rise of CCTV in the city. Painted the same colour as the walls they appear on, you'll have troubling picking these noses out, but you'll be very happy you did.

Can you find all 19 hidden concrete noses?!