

CITY WALK
Plagues, Pestilence & Pathology

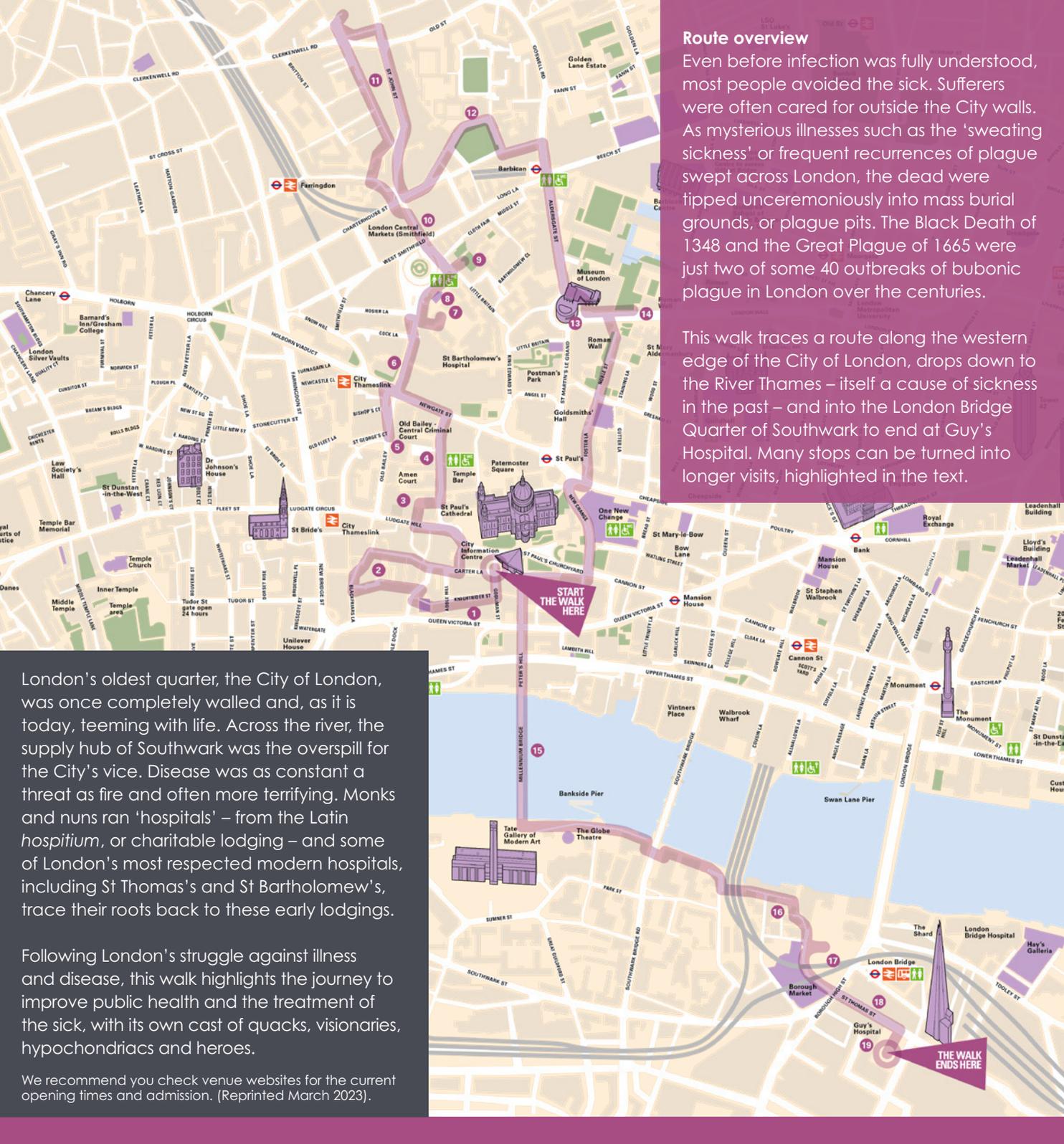


Plagues, Pestilence & Pathology

Dissect London's medical history and explore streets once plagued by death and disease.



London
Bridge
Revealed



Route overview

Even before infection was fully understood, most people avoided the sick. Sufferers were often cared for outside the City walls. As mysterious illnesses such as the 'sweating sickness' or frequent recurrences of plague swept across London, the dead were tipped unceremoniously into mass burial grounds, or plague pits. The Black Death of 1348 and the Great Plague of 1665 were just two of some 40 outbreaks of bubonic plague in London over the centuries.

This walk traces a route along the western edge of the City of London, drops down to the River Thames – itself a cause of sickness in the past – and into the London Bridge Quarter of Southwark to end at Guy's Hospital. Many stops can be turned into longer visits, highlighted in the text.

London's oldest quarter, the City of London, was once completely walled and, as it is today, teeming with life. Across the river, the supply hub of Southwark was the overspill for the City's vice. Disease was as constant a threat as fire and often more terrifying. Monks and nuns ran 'hospitals' – from the Latin *hospitium*, or charitable lodging – and some of London's most respected modern hospitals, including St Thomas's and St Bartholomew's, trace their roots back to these early lodgings.

Following London's struggle against illness and disease, this walk highlights the journey to improve public health and the treatment of the sick, with its own cast of quacks, visionaries, hypochondriacs and heroes.

We recommend you check venue websites for the current opening times and admission. (Reprinted March 2023).

START THE WALK HERE

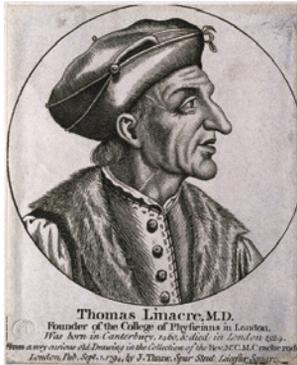
THE WALK ENDS HERE

From the City Information Centre, keeping your back to St Paul's Cathedral, walk down Peter's Hill, turning right on Knightrider Street. Walk along until you reach the Faraday Building on your left and a rectangular blue wall plaque.

Original site of the Royal College of Physicians 1

Thomas Linacre, humanist, scholar and physician to King Henry VIII, founded the Royal College of Physicians on this site. Once the royal charter had been issued in 1518, only its members could practise medicine in the City. Linacre qualified as a doctor in the great medical centres of Italy, was a devout Catholic and friend to Thomas More and Erasmus and, after 11 years as Henry's

physician, resigned to become a priest. After several moves, the College built premises in Regent's Park in the 1960s. It works to improve diagnosis, patient care and general health in the UK and abroad.



Thomas Linacre, physician to King Henry VIII and founder of the Royal College of Physicians



The original site of the Royal College of Physicians. It has moved six times since

Continue along to Wardrobe Terrace, leading to the church of St Andrew-by-the-Wardrobe. Turn right at the church and walk behind the building, crossing St Andrew's Hill to the Cockpit pub (note the plaque to Shakespeare on the next building up: he owned a property here.) Turn left & walk along Ireland Yard, and through Playhouse Yard. Turn right up Black Friars Lane. On your right is Apothecaries' Hall.



Apothecaries' Hall 2

The Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London is one of over 100 City Livery companies that started as trade guilds and whose members wore badged attire, or livery. The hall, on the former site of Blackfriars' Priory, has been much rebuilt since the Great Fire of 1666. Over the door you'll see Apollo, the god of healing, slaying the



dragon of disease. Above him is a rhinoceros, whose ground horn was thought to have curative properties. The hall once had its own 'Laboratory' for drug manufacture.

Top: Apothecaries' Hall, engraving by J. Hinchcliff from a drawing by Thomas Shepherd, 1831 (courtesy of the Royal London Hospital Archives)
 Above: Apollo slays the dragon of disease above the hall's entrance

Continue uphill, turning right onto Carter Lane. Take the third left into Dean's Court. With St Paul's Cathedral ahead, turn left to cross at the lights, left again down Ludgate Hill and right into the alley signposted 'Stationers' Hall'.

Stationers' Hall 3

This livery hall also succumbed to the Great Fire, being rebuilt in 1673. The word 'stationer' comes from the stations or stalls set up in nearby St Paul's Churchyard by medieval scribes and illustrators. The round slate plaque with a sun motif commemorates Wynkyn de Worde, journeyman to the printer William Caxton. He printed over 400 books here in the late 1400s. The stationers also produced medical textbooks; from pop-up anatomy guides to cheap students' books known as 'crammers.' Today, 90% of the 900 members of the Stationers' Company work in the modern publishing equivalents of communications and content.

Exit the far side of the yard, emerging opposite two spectacular ventilation outlets created by Thomas Heatherwick, who also created the 2012 Olympic Cauldron. Turn left on Ave Maria Lane, later Warwick Lane, and walk up to the redbrick Cutlers' Hall, just after the entrance to Warwick Square.



Cutlers ply their trade in this frieze, with weapons giving way to cutlery and surgical instruments

Cutlers' Hall 4

Look up at the terracotta frieze along this fine 1888 livery hall. The sculptor, Benjamin Creswick, came from Sheffield, home of the steel industry. It shows cutlers plying their trade, originally the manufacture of knives, swords and other cutting blades, switching to surgical instruments and domestic tools as demand for weapons diminished. The Cutlers are one of the older livery companies, chartered by Henry V in 1415. To the left is a blue plaque: the Royal College of Physicians stood here from 1674 to 1825 and, in their pre-Great Fire building at Amen Corner, William Harvey first demonstrated the systemic circulation of the blood.

The Cutlers' arms show crossed swords and elephants, possibly to reflect the ivory used in handles and hafts



Walk up Warwick Lane and turn left onto Newgate Street. Across the road is a plaque to Christ's Hospital (not a hospital, but a school for disadvantaged boys). Stay on this side, passing a plaque to Newgate Prison (demolished 1777) and crossing Old Bailey. Walk down the far side, stopping opposite the dramatic entrance of the Central Criminal Court of England & Wales.



A golden statue of Justice holding her scales on the dome of the Old Bailey

The Old Bailey 5

This was the site of Newgate Prison, so famed for its hangings that nearby inns advertised 'hanging breakfasts' until public executions ceased in 1868. The first 16th-century courthouse by the gaol was replaced in the 1670s by a structure with one side open to the air to reduce the incidence of 'gaol fever'. This was an epidemic form of typhus, easily spread in crowded places like prisons where sanitation was poor.

Famous defendants include murderers John Christie and Dr Crippen – the first criminal caught by use of the wireless telegraph – Oscar Wilde and London gangsters the Kray twins. This building opened in 1907, with an extension added in the 1970s.

Attend the Public Galleries at the Old Bailey
www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/about-us/law-historic-governance/central-criminal-court

Retrace your steps to Newgate Street, crossing to St Sepulchre's church on the corner. Walk up Giltspur Street, stopping beside the stone Watch House set into the churchyard wall on your left and dated 1791.

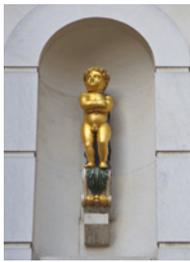
Watchmen were employed by parishes such as St Sepulchre to raise the alarm on signs of suspicious behaviour or graves being disturbed

St Sepulchre Without Newgate 6

Also known as Holy Sepulchre London. Imagine an unholy trinity: body snatchers helping themselves to St Sepulchre's graves; surgeons over the road at St Bartholomew's Hospital needing bodies for dissection; and buyers, sellers and bodies coming together at

the Fortune of War pub up the road (now no longer a pub but an office building marked by the statue of a golden boy). No wonder they needed to keep a 24-hour watch over the graves, until





body snatching ended with the Anatomy Act of 1832. This gave freer licence to doctors, teachers of anatomy and bona fide medical students to dissect donated bodies. Walk up the same side of the street to see the 'Golden Boy at Pye Corner,' symbolising the gluttony held by some to have attracted God's anger in the form of plague and fire in the 1660s and marks the spot where the Great Fire of London ended.

The Golden Boy... angel or devil?

Mighty King Henry VIII straddles the arch to Bart's Hospital



At the top of Giltspur Street, cross to a gated archway on your right, topped by a rare public statue of King Henry VIII. This is the entrance to St Bartholomew's Hospital, or 'Barts'. Walk in and go into a second arch, turning immediately left to enter the Hospital Museum.

St Bartholomew's Hospital Museum **7**

This busy hospital is London's oldest medical foundation, operating on the same site for nine centuries. When Rahere, courtier to Henry I, fell ill on a pilgrimage to Rome, a feverish dream directed him to set-up the Priory and Hospital of St Bartholomew. He did so in 1123, just outside the walls of the City of London. Four centuries later, when Henry VIII's religious reforms threatened the hospital, the King himself granted it to the citizens of London, at their request. What we see today is built around the 18th-century square designed by James Gibbs. Visit the museum for 900 years of history and fine staircase paintings by the artist William Hogarth. Going out the way you came, don't miss St Bartholomew the Less, just inside the entrance arch, the only parish church physically situated within a hospital. www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/bartsmuseum

The Hogarth Stair [below] was painted in the 1730s by William Hogarth, who was born practically next door. They are in fact canvases, not murals



The site of William Wallace's gruesome execution, now a memorial and source of Scottish pride

Turn right as you leave, and look across to the circular space of West Smithfield, or 'Smooth Field'. Follow the hospital facade on your right to get to the William Wallace memorial.

Smithfield Execution Site **8**

William Wallace, or 'Braveheart', a Scottish warrior who rebelled against King Edward I, was brutally executed here in 1305. His body was quartered and sent to four towns in the north; his head spiked on London Bridge as a warning to others. Smithfield has a long association with death: it was a known plague pit and Catholic 'Bloody Mary' Tudor is said to have watched the executions of Protestant martyrs from the priory church gatehouse; their memorial is a few metres further on. For over 700 years it was the site of wild merrymaking during the annual Bartholomew Fair.

Continue in the same direction, passing through the brick and half-timbered gatehouse into the precincts of St Bartholomew the Great.

The Priory Church of St Bartholomew the Great **9**



Benjamin Franklin: American printer, inventor and politician

Founded as an Augustinian Priory, this church has been in continuous use since 1143. All that remains of the once immense building is the former canons' choir, but it is one of London's most charming places, with its chequerboard walls, peaceful churchyard and collegiate-style sideways pews. Benjamin Franklin, the American polymath and later inventor of bifocal lenses worked in the print shop set up in the Lady Chapel in the 1720s. His lenses were a revolutionary design that changed the need for visually-impaired people to have multiple pairs of glasses. www.greatstbarts.com

Leave through the church gatehouse, turn right and cross the road to walk up through the Grand Avenue separating the western and eastern sections of Smithfield Market.

Smithfield, or London Central Markets **10**

Admire the elaborate Victorian ironwork as you walk through London's only remaining meat market. Every weekday at 2am trucks rumble in with cargoes of cut meat. Until the 1850s, livestock arrived on the hoof, hence nearby road names such as Cowcross, but



Livestock for sale at Smithfield outside St Bartholomew's Hospital, c.1840. (Courtesy of St Bartholomew's Hospital Archives)

the live market then moved to Islington for public health reasons. Surrounding pubs open in the early hours for meat porters and clubbers alike. Come here for an English breakfast or to spot the Tower of London's Raven Master, who buys fresh meat for his ravens here every week.

Monthly tours bookable via www.cityoflondonguides.com

Exit the market, crossing the traffic triangle into Cowcross Street. Follow this road and as it curves left turn right into tiny Peter's Lane, then left on St John's Lane. Walk up to the gateway at the far end.

St John's Gate and the Museum of the Order of St John ¹¹

An earlier version of this gate led into the vast complex of the Order of St John, or Knights Hospitaller. It was founded in Jerusalem in the 11th century to give medical help to pilgrims, only later becoming military. Enter the large museum via the door in the gateway. It also includes the Priory Church and crypt over the road in St John's Square. The order still exists as the St John Ambulance (1887), the UK's leading first aid charity, whose volunteers wear the eight-pointed cross worn by early knights, and the Rome-based international medical charity the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta. museumstjohn.org.uk



The gate is 19th century but the Order of the Knights Hospitaller is far older



Through the brick arch is the charming Charterhouse, where 40 brothers 'of limited means' still live

Leave the museum via St Johns Square and cross Clerkenwell Road. Walk through the columned entrance on your right to reach the Priory Church. After viewing the church, retrace your steps to turn left on Albemarle Way and right down John Street. At the bottom, turn left on Charterhouse Street and left again, walking up to Charterhouse Square. The Charterhouse gateway is after the hotel on your left.

The Charterhouse, formerly Sutton's Hospital in Charterhouse ¹²

This land was a 14th-century plague pit and is one of London's most significant medieval burial sites. It later housed a Carthusian monastery and school, closed down by King Henry VIII. In 1611 Thomas Sutton, the 'wealthiest commoner in England,' left a bequest for the founding of an almshouse for 80 pensioners or 'Brothers' and 40 scholars or 'gownboys'. The school moved in 1872 and its land was given to the Medical College of St Bartholemew's Hospital, now part of Queen Mary University of London. The almshouse and the Brothers remain.

Check website for details of tours thecharterhouse.org

Continue around the square. Turn left on Carthusian Street and right at the junction with Aldersgate, using the zebra crossing to reach the far side. Turn right and follow the wall of the Barbican development towards the Museum of London roundabout.

Museum of London ¹³

The Museum of London at London Wall closed in December 2022, in preparation for its upcoming relocation to West Smithfield. Find out more on the Museum's website: www.museumoflondon.org.uk/west-smithfield

Turn right onto London Wall and follow the pavement level until a view opens up on your left – you'll see the Barbican development. Cross a curved access road to a car park then turn left and stay on the narrow pavement alongside it. When you reach a remnant of the old City wall turn right in front of it, onto a pathway through a grassy area. Continue straight ahead to get to the back of the yellow-brick Barber-Surgeon's Hall and a sign for The Barbers' Physic Garden.



Barber-Surgeons' Hall ¹⁴

A livery hall has stood here since the 1440s. Today's hall dates from 1969 but retains many treasures, including a Holbein portrait of Henry VIII, during whose reign the roles of the Barbers and Surgeons separated (though both were still allowed to pull teeth!) The Barbers' surgical role dates from a 13th-century ban on persons in holy orders practising medicine, so monastery barbers, accustomed to blades, undertook minor procedures. Today this is the home of the Worshipful Company

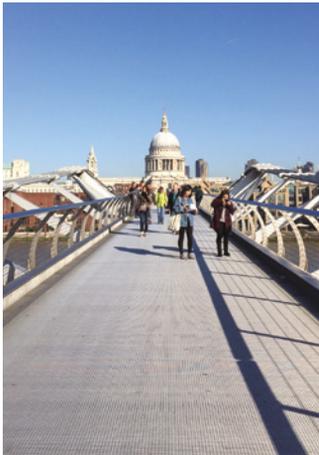
of Barbers. At the back of the hall, alongside the ruins of the Roman City Wall, is the Barbers' Physic Garden. This contains a wide selection of plants and replaces the original garden that existed before the Great Fire of London in 1666.

Today's Barber-Surgeons' Hall dates from the 1960s but stands on a much older site

Retrace your steps back to the main road (London Wall). Turn left and go up the staircase to get onto the High Walk. Turn right and then left to cross the bridge over London Wall and descend to ground level. Turn right and right again down Noble Street, past a fragment of the City's Roman wall. Cross Gresham Street, passing Goldsmiths' Hall. The road, now Foster Lane, passes the church of St Vedast, restorer of sight. Cross to New Change, and keep St Paul's Cathedral on your right. At the end, cross over Cannon Street, then follow Distaff Lane down and right to Peter's Hill. Turn left towards the Millennium Bridge.

Millennium Bridge ¹⁵

Crossing the Thames, look left to Tower Bridge at the southeast corner of the City, and right to Blackfriars Bridge at its western edge. The river beneath you became so clogged with effluent in the 1858 'Great Stink' that Parliament could no longer sit. Joseph Bazalgette, chief engineer to the Metropolitan Board of Works, embanked both sides of the river, building mighty sewers, making a major contribution to public health and becoming perhaps one of London's greatest unsung heroes.



The Millennium Bridge soars across the Thames, connecting St Paul's and Tate Modern

As you double back off the bridge, with Tate Modern behind you, turn right onto Bankside, passing Shakespeare's Globe and following the walkway under Southwark Bridge. Continue past the Anchor Pub, bearing left into Clink Street and the dark alleys of Southwark, London's medieval 'Sin City'. Walk until a replica of Sir Francis Drake's ship, the Golden Hinde II, comes into view and stop by the sunken remains of a palace on your right.



The Bishop of Winchester's Great Hall

Bishop of Winchester's Palace ¹⁶

Now in ruins, this Great Hall with its prestigious rose window and contemporary planting once buzzed with guests of the Bishop of Winchester, whose palace precincts included a wharf and the Clink Prison. The Bishop took a percentage of revenues from the shadowy activities taking place down here, including prostitution. The women were nicknamed 'Winchester Geese' and had, it is said, their own burial ground on unconsecrated ground at Redcross Way, a short walk south of here.

Keeping the Golden Hinde II on your left, follow the road around to the west end of Southwark Cathedral. Bear left to enter by the modern doorway.

Southwark Cathedral ¹⁷

This exterior is largely 19th century, but the church occupies the site of the ancient parish of St Mary Overie ('over the river'). It has some wonderful monuments and a busy schedule of services. Walk up the nave, turning left at the crossing. On the back wall of the North Transept is a tomb topped by a bewigged figure. This is Lionel Lockyer, physician, and on his death in 1672 he was celebrated thus: 'His virtues and his PILLS are soe well known../ That envy can't confine them vnder stone../ But they'll survive his dust and not expire/Till all things else at th'universall fire...'
cathedral.southwark.anglican.org

The pinnacles and square tower of Southwark Cathedral peek out from between modern buildings on Bankside



herbs in this tower, which later became an operating theatre. The 1820s surgical table, with its observation gallery, is the oldest of its type in Europe. Don't miss the Pathology Trail and amputation kits.
oldoperatingtheatre.com

Exit the museum and cross the road. To your right is a blue plaque to the poet John Keats, who trained as a surgeon-apothecary at Guy's Hospital. Turn left, walking along the road before turning right into the hospital gates and grand front courtyard.

Guy's Hospital & Chapel 19

Guy's Hospital is named after Thomas Guy, who founded a hospital for 'incurables' on land owned by St Thomas's. Walk up the steps of the 1720s building ahead, passing the wood and glass doors of a room known as 'The Spit' (it may once have been a tuberculosis ward where patients spat blood). In the grassy courtyards beyond, a statue of Keats sits in an alcove from old London Bridge on your left, benefactor Lord Nuffield stands on your right, and a blue plaque states that the philosopher Wittgenstein worked here in the 1940s. Return to the front courtyard, turning left into the 1780s hospital chapel with its glorious mosaics and stained glass.

The door to Guy's charming hospital chapel, run by the King's College chaplaincy



Across the Courtyard from the Chapel is the Science Gallery London – a place to grow new ideas across art, science and health. There's an exhibition and event space, a theatre and a café
london.sciencegallery.com

The charming 18th-century red brick tower of St Thomas' Church is dwarfed by the gleaming glass of the Shard

From the Cathedral's south door, turn left on Cathedral Street and into Borough Market. This modern food market has an ancient history and exceptional range of British and international produce. Continue along Bedale Street to Borough High Street, crossing to St Thomas Street opposite. After 20 metres, turn left into the church.



The Old Operating Theatre, Museum and Herb Garret 18

This 18th-century church was once part of St Thomas's Hospital. 'Tommy's', as it is affectionately known, is now further west in Lambeth, but was founded here by Augustinians in order to look after the poor and sick. The hospital apothecary dried his

Thank your lucky stars it's not you on the slab, with sawdust underneath to catch any blood...



This publication has been produced by the City of London Corporation a uniquely diverse organisation with three main aims: to support and promote the City as the world leader in international finance and business services; to provide local services and policing for the Square Mile; and to provide valued services to London and the nation.



As a custodian of London's heritage, the City provides stewardship for a huge collection of books, archives, pictures, photographs, prints and other materials, which constitute a major part of the recorded memory of London, including Londinium.

www.cityoflondon.gov.uk



Team London Bridge, an organisation aimed at enhancing London Bridge, has partnered with the City of London Corporation to produce this publication.



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