



TRAVEL

# A VISIT TO MERRY MARYLEBONE

THE NEXT TIME YOU TAKE A TRIP TO LONDON, BE SURE TO CHECK OUT **MARYLEBONE HIGH STREET** FOR A SLICE OF GENTEEL VILLAGE LIFE — A STONE'S THROW FROM BUSTLING OXFORD STREET!

BY MONICA KAPILA



**W**hen I first moved to Marylebone in the late 1980s, it wasn't called Marylebone Village — it didn't even have its famous Waitrose then. Wind the clock forward 20 years or so — the Waitrose clock, if you like — and Marylebone Village rivals (and probably exceeds) Mayfair as a hugely desirable place to hang around in for as long as possible.

So, where is it exactly? I'm not talking about Marylebone station but Marylebone High Street that is in between Baker Street and Regent's Park stations, just off Marylebone Road in central London. The high street and the roads off it allow you to experience a slice of genteel London village life literally a stone's throw away from busy, bustling Oxford Street and the iconic Selfridges.

## STREET BITES AND SIGHTS

Take your pick from any number of artisanal cafés in Marylebone for your daily cuppa. There are some chains like Le Pain Quotidien, Eat and Pret a Manger but be sure to check out places like Ole & Steen on St Christopher's Place or have a cinnamon bun with your coffee at the Nordic Bakery on New Cavendish Street. I enjoy trips to Boxcar Baker & Deli on Wyndham Place en route to yoga in the summer. It's right next to the Swedish church in London, and a great place to sit on the pavement and do some people watching or pick up a packet of Knacker brood from the delicatessen. Imagine being totally Swedish on Crawford Street.

The well-stocked Waitrose right on the high street makes it easy for you to buy everything you need to eat al fresco while exploring the area, but you don't have to go as far as Regent's Park for your picnic. Turn in to Paddington Gardens on Paddington Street and sit on a bench or the grass. They have a small play area for younger children too. It's open from 7am till dusk and was originally a closed churchyard.

If you do venture into Regent's Park, about a 10 minutes walk away depending on which entrance, then I suggest Queen Mary's Gardens located within to check out all the varieties of roses in bloom from June till late August. There is a café (aptly called The Garden Café) in this part of the park that's perfect for a coffee and a catch-up or even a main meal. A free-range

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poached egg on toast costs about £3 or Dh18!

Don't leave this bit of the park without looking at what productions are playing at the Open Air Theatre if you're there during the summer.

Time your visit so you can have a wander around The Holme, in the inner circle part of Regent's Park. It's a four-acre garden complete with rock pools, lakeside lawns, an arbor and the Holme itself, a mansion built in 1818 within the garden. The garden and grounds are open to the public on certain days in June and August in collaboration with the National Gardens Scheme UK. Entry to the garden costs £5 or Dh30, well worth it.

Another historic building to check out is the Hertford House on Manchester Square. I took my kids to workshops at the Wallace Collection where they learnt to look at art in a fun, but grown up way, made models based on paintings they saw and even got to dress up in medieval clothing.

The kids' activities get booked up quite quickly but do make some time to wander around this free-to-enter, national museum displaying works of art from the 18th and 19th century. This is far from a typical museum though; it's a stately home, with a royal atmosphere right behind Oxford Street. Interestingly none of the exhibits are ever allowed to leave the building, not even for a loan or on a temporary basis, so you always know what to expect. They offer a free highlights tour most days of the week.

## RETAIL THERAPY MADE EASY

I know that Marylebone High Street is just behind Oxford Street but it's easier to shop in here (if you're happy to give Primark a miss!). Mainly, but not exclusively, single, independent boutiques and homeware shops are well worth a solid browse and some wallet-flexing especially during sale time (from late June to mid July).

I always buy gorgeous remnants of fabric from Designers Guild that are easy to turn into cushions or to cover that favourite chair back home in Dubai! The Natural Kitchen, next door, is a great spot for a cuppa.

Pop into Aesop, the Australian skincare company from Melbourne that uses high-quality plant-based ingredients. They incorporate parsley seeds, camellia nuts and Moroccan Neroli oil into their products, so while it's tempting to buy gifts here, you'll find it hard to give them away! The same goes for candles at Diptyque next door, I loved the Figuiier - Fig Tree scent. Would make a fabulous Eid gift if you are planning to visit sometime soon. The Sandro sale is always good as is the Spanish Bimba Y Lola for picking up something a bit more unique.

And for bookworms, Daunt Books is a must-visit. This is an original Edwardian bookshop with long oak



PHOTO: MONICA KAPILA

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OFFBEAT LONDON: 1. The cobble streets of Marylebone; 2. The charming Boxcar cafe right next to a church; 3. A roaring fireplace at the Durrants hotel lobby; 4. Breakfast at Roux at The Landau; 5. A cinnamon bun from Ole & Steen; 6. The Waitrose clock; 7. Sunset at Marylebone

More articles on London and beyond in can be found in the author's blog [DoinDubai.com](http://DoinDubai.com)

galleries and graceful skylights. They have a great collection of books from all over the world and the quality of service is several cuts above the rest.

Pick up a colour chart from Farrow and Ball and get some inspiration to paint your walls back home. Check out Skandium and The Conran Shop for more home inspiration before you head off to Durrants hotel for a cozy, early evening drink.

## A PLACE TO REST YOUR HEAD

If you want to stay in Marylebone, then choose be-

tween the quiet revolution of boutique hotels, depending on your preference and budget. We're familiar with them all. A winter escape screams out for Durrants hotel on George Street with its roaring fires and solid wooden floors with country cottage-type rooms.

In need of a bit more luxury? It's not a boutique, but The Langham in Portland Place is the place to be. Simply book one of its club rooms that includes breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and light suppers in your room rate. More fireplaces here and breakfast at Roux at the Landau is worth a stay alone. It also

has a marvelous all-weather swimming pool in the old wing.

The Marylebone Hotel is another place to check out. While the rooms are small compared to our parts of the world, the style and cool hum from London's trendy set are worth staying for. Ask to check out the party suite with the retracting roof!

So, the next time you're in London, ditch the hustle and bustle of central London for a more leisurely trip to good ol' Marylebone. [W](http://W)

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