

A London Year

There's always something going on in London at any time of the year.

Some events are traditional and date back hundreds of years, and some are fairly new – but they are all part of London's colourful and varied life.



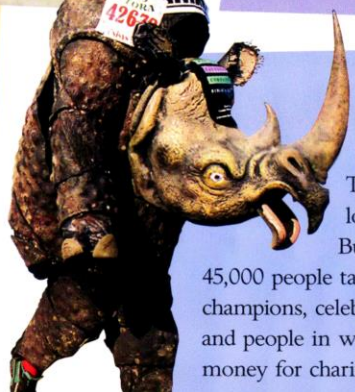
Chinese New Year

Gerrard Street, off Shaftesbury Avenue, is the centre of London's Chinatown. In late January or early February (depending on the year), Chinatown puts on a fantastic parade and festival. Events are free and there are dragon dancers (above), acrobats, theatre and lots of delicious food.



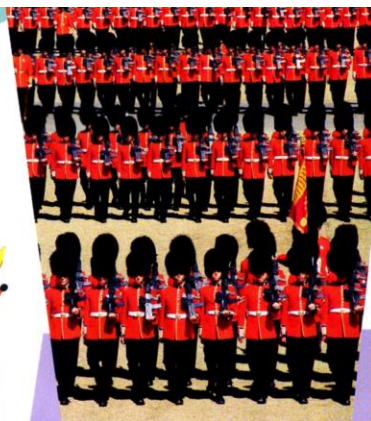
The Boat Race

On the Sunday before Easter, or on Easter Sunday itself, teams of rowers from Oxford and Cambridge Universities meet at Putney Bridge for a boat race. The race has been held every year since 1829 and thousands of people turn up to cheer the boats along. The race ends at Chiswick Bridge.



The London Marathon

This event happens around the end of April or early May. The run is 26.2 miles (42 km) long, from Greenwich Park to Buckingham Palace, and over 45,000 people take part, including Olympic champions, celebrities, people in fancy dress and people in wheelchairs. Most run to raise money for charities.



Trooping the Colour

This is one of the biggest royal ceremonies of the year. Held in June, it is the official celebration of the Queen's birthday (her actual birthday is in April). The Guards and Household Cavalry march past the Queen on Horse Guards Parade (page 19) and then escort her back to the Palace. There are marching bands, colourful uniforms, and beautiful horses.

In the evenings, during the week before the Trooping the Colour ceremony, the Royal Guards practise at Horse Guards Parade. It's like a small version of Trooping the Colour, without all the crowds.



Christmas on Ice

From mid-November through December, London is lit up with Christmas decorations. An enormous Christmas tree is put up in Trafalgar Square (left), and Oxford Street and Regent Street compete for the best lighting displays. Plus, some of London's most magical places ice up and turn into skating rinks. One of the first to do this was Somerset House (right) in the Strand. But now you can skate at the Tower of London, the Natural History Museum, Hyde Park, Hampton Court, Kew Gardens and elsewhere. See websites for details.

Notting Hill Carnival

Over the holiday weekend at the end of August, the streets around Portobello Road in Notting Hill are taken over by a mammoth Caribbean carnival. There are parades, fantastic costumes, dancing, live bands and hundreds of food stalls. Sunday is Children's Day and all the bands and performers on this day are under 21. The main Carnival, and the biggest day, is Monday.



The Lord Mayor's Show

This is held on the second Saturday in November. The Guilds of the City of London choose a new Lord Mayor every year, and for the past 800 years the new mayor has paraded through the City on the day he or she takes office. The parade is a huge event, with decorated floats (right), marching bands, fireworks and the Lord Mayor's golden coach.



And Don't Forget ...

- Changing the Guard at Buckingham Palace
- Swan Upping on the Thames in July
- Guy Fawkes Night on 5 November
- The State Opening of Parliament, in November

