

Only in London: All reviews

Matt Brown (www.londonist.com):

Author Duncan JD Smith knows his stuff. He's selected more than 100 locations all of which harbour peculiar stories or features. There's plenty of meat here for those who've yet to discover the city's idiosyncracies.

www.visitinglondonguide.com:

In the last decade or so, there have been a large number of guidebooks that have followed a similar format exploring secret or hidden London. However, this book is more concerned about telling the 'stories' behind the location. Therefore we have a series of imaginative titles such as Pickled Toads and Dodo Bones, Foundlings and the Messiah, and Walking on Greta Garbo. In many of these 'stories', the author considers the historical, cultural and social context to understand a building, object or location. It is this level of detail that takes this book to a different level in comparison with its competitors. The author impressively weaves the past and present together to give a sense of change in the capital but also highlights the sense of continuity in London.

Stuart Forster (www.go-eat-do.com):

The book is a joy to read. The tone is knowledgeable yet accessible. The pages are packed with useful information and dotted with a host of quirky facts, which can add value to a visit to the United Kingdom's biggest city.

Mari Nicholson (Travel writer):

Rumours of the death of the guide book continue to appear, but as long as books like "Only in London" are produced, the genre will continue to thrive. As a Londoner, I thought I knew the capital well but after reading this I realised how much of it had passed me by. Now, armed with "Only in London", weekends will see me engaged in finding out more about this city I call home. How many people knew there was still one private street in London that is locked every night at 10 o'clock? I didn't for one. The Oldest Synagogue, Harry Houdini's Handcuffs, The Mystery of Baker Street, and much more is documented here. This is not a guidebook that recommends hotels and restaurants. This is a book that deals with the permanence of London. This is a book that will never go out of date, any more than the statues, the buildings and the history of these streets. Read it for yourself: you don't even need to visit London, it's a book for dipping into and marvelling at, a reservoir of fascinating facts about one of the world's oldest cities.

Julie Benz (Reader):

Duncan Smith's book is stuffed with tales of the unexpected, engagingly-titled places, backed up with extensively researched historical details. Alongside clear photos, every entry of the book comes alive... I intend to use the book as a skeleton to explore and understand the capital on future visits. Highly recommended.

Tim Hale (Reader):

London is rich in places to see and this new guidebook to one of the major cities in the world will certainly help the reader identify some unusual and worthwhile hidden gems. Highly recommended!

Celeste Miles (www.discoveringsecretlondon.co.uk):

Fab new read, jam packed with London secrets & hidden gems.

Simon Byrne (Reader):

Having been brought up in London I thought I had a fair knowledge of the city. How wrong! This book gives a brilliant insight into its hidden gems, whilst giving a fantastic historical background on each place to visit. An absolute must for those who don't want to spend all their time standing in queues outside the normal tourist spots... a genuine insight into the history of the city from Roman times right up to the present.

Terri Fogarty (www.europeupclose.com):

Did you know that below the bronze lions guarding Nelson's column on Trafalgar square are buried some real lions? I certainly didn't until I read Duncan JD Smith's fascinating "Only in London". More than a guidebook, it tells you about the hidden corners and unusual objects of London. I also like that he has put together abbreviated tours such as a stroll through Bloomsbury's squares.

Gavin Darvell (www.sketchesintravel.co.uk):

An accessory to take on every trip to the capital, not just a one-off visit. "Only In London" provides you with information from unusual museums to crazy cafes, opulent homes to ghost underground stations. A book to dive in and out of at your pleasure. Duncan clearly spends a lot of time on these books and that labour of love is well rewarded. "Only In London" will be travelling with me on every trip to the big city, ready to educate and inform me on the bizarre to the magical.

Adam Candassamy (The View from the Shard):

Well done on creating a great guidebook!

Solange Haddo (www.amazon.co.uk):

This is a fascinating guide, written in such a clear easy-to-read style you simply forget the enormous amount of research that went into it. The book is clearly set out, revealing over 100 quirky places and objects, in short yet adequate bursts, organised into five sections according to geographical location. There are attractive illustrations, explanatory notes and all the practical details a visitor would need but this never slows down the pace and you just feel whizzed off your feet.

I loved the headings, for who could resist "holding a bar of gold" or meeting "the alternative royal family"? I found myself rushing ahead to follow the "lost London river", "the ghost stations on the Piccadilly Line" or enjoy the "view from the Shard". From "hotels with history" to "a pint and a play with Shakespeare," it's wow all the way, whether it's about science, history, traditions, worship or modern times.

Truth is, I was so excited that within a few pages, I just wanted to get out there and see it all.

Terry Marsh, travel writer & photographer (www.terrymarsh.com):

The trouble with London is that it has such a wealth of fascinating and popular tourist 'must see' sights that it takes many visits just to get round them all – I've been trying since 1963. And then, when finally you think you've 'done' London, up pops "Only in London", destined to set you off again in search of all the places missed previously.

What makes this latest in the excellent series of 'Only In' titles so outstanding is the way it unearths places you've probably never heard of, and almost certainly never thought of visiting. Take, by way of examples, Tyburn near bustling Marble Arch, where many of London's public executions were carried out until the late 18th century, or Doctor Johnson's House in Gough Square, or where you can go to hold a bar of gold, or visit a Buddhist temple, or see the famed Ashes of cricketing fame. It's all here, and so much more.

It's only when you start delving into this well-designed, produced and illustrated book that you begin to realise what you've been missing. Written in an easy style, with abundant historical background, this guide should be the one 'essential' guide to London. Throw away the conventional tourist guides to London, and follow this instead...you will see so much more.

Simon Laffoley (Reader):

Such a well-written and well-researched book, this blows the other "off the beaten track" style books out of the water! Duncan's easy-going, informative style of writing is infectious; his enthusiasm oozes out of every page as he guides you through, in and around every nook and cranny of the UK's capital city. Glorious photographs, maps and a Tube map make this the complete reference book for the visitor (or even the local) who feels that they may have already seen it all, but still wants a bit more.

James Dickinson (Reader):

A terrific book...a stand-out guide amid what must be hundreds available. You learn something new every day with "Only in London". Today, the connection between coaching inns and Elizabethan theatre design.

Hidden Europe:

We've much enjoyed browsing through "Only in London", with which you did a marvellous job.

Abigail White (Ernest Journal):

Thanks so much for your wonderful book, jam-packed full of fascinating things.

Idriss Bennani (Reader):

A must-have, fun and hands-on travel companion for anyone heading to London.

David Iliff (Photographer):

Your book really gives the reader a good sense of the personality of London beyond the touristy facade.

Nigel Norman (Reader):

It does exactly what I wanted it to do, allowing me to discover hidden parts of the city whenever I have a little free time there. A fascinating insight into some hidden corners of the great city that is London. Duncan Smith's enthusiasm and delight in describing the hidden treasures contained in this guide leaps off the page.

Peter Matthews (Museum of London):

Good, with interesting content.

Jack Ashby (Grant Museum of Zoology):

A really nice publication and we are pleased to have been featured.

The Goldsmiths' Company:

My colleagues and I really like "Only in London" so many thanks for sending a copy. We've been recommending it!

Ryan de Oliveira (The Attendant café):

It is a wonderful book.

CuChullaine O'Reilly (The Longriders' Guild):

Duncan writes so well that he could transform a telephone book into a fascinating read.