

# 7. global london

London is a city of immigrants. While many of those – this writer included – came from Britain’s provinces in search of work and greater opportunities, there are almost as many people living in the city who were born under a foreign flag, and raise families that strive to keep their community’s identity alive. The most visible groups in London are the African, Caribbean, Asian and Jewish populations (all covered in more detail elsewhere in this book), but there are countless other smaller communities – from the Portuguese in Stockwell to the Greeks in Palmers Green – that make up the capital’s vibrant cultural patchwork. Different countries and continents shape the unique atmosphere in every London postcode, so why not go around the world on your travelcard?



**Start point:** Stockwell tube

**End point:** Palmers Green overground

**Duration:** 4.5 hours

● Come out of **Stockwell tube**, cross the road and walk around the front of The Swan pub onto Stockwell Road. Catch the northbound 2 from the **Stockwell Gardens** stop, a few metres further down the road. The bus takes you along **South Lambeth Road** – known as Little Portugal. Portuguese immigrants first arrived here in the 1960s and 1970s to escape poverty and being conscripted to fight unpopular wars in their country’s African colonies. The streets around South Lambeth Road are home to the largest Portuguese community outside Portugal, and the brightly decorated cafés, tapas bars and social clubs, many flying the national colours of red and green, reveal the strong Latin influence in this formerly run-down part of south London. To sample some of the best custard tarts in the area, stop off at Lisboa Patisserie at number 147; if you’re passing through at lunchtime, check out Grelha d’Ouro, the locals’ restaurant of choice, at number 151.

● Once the bus crosses Vauxhall Bridge and passes Hyde Park, get off at the **Marylebone Station** terminus. Continue along Melcombe Place and Harewood Row, then turn right up Lisson Grove. After a few metres, turn left into Bell Street and walk right to the end, passing the first few Middle Eastern businesses – cafés, grocers, travel agents that specialise in trips to the Hajj – which hint at this district’s ethnic make-up. Arabs started

settling around **Edgware Road** in the late 19th century as Britain strengthened its trade links with the Ottoman Empire; and further immigration followed in the 1950s – when many Egyptians arrived – and the 1970s and 1980s, after the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon and the overthrow of the Shah in Iran. Turn left onto Edgware Road and walk down the road to the **Sussex Gardens** bus stop. Catch the eastbound 7, which takes you down Edgware Road, past the Lebanese restaurants, financial institutions and shisha cafes that make this section of old Roman road feel like a suburb of Beirut or Cairo. If you’re hungry, pick up a shawarma-filled flatbread from Ranoush Juice at number 43; or stop for kofte (and perhaps a few moments with a hookah pipe) at Abu Ali at 136 George Street, just off Edgware Road.

● After the bus passes Oxford Circus tube, get off at the **Wardour Street** stop. Cross the road, bear left and walk straight down Wardour Street – itself a centre of immigration in the 1950s, when Italians and Greeks set up the cafés and coffee bars here, and in the surrounding streets. Cross Shaftesbury Avenue and you will find yourself in **Chinatown** – which has existed here in central London since the 1970s. London’s traditional Chinese district is Limehouse in the east but, after much of the area was destroyed in World War II, many of the city’s Chinese community decided to relocate here to join the large numbers of newly arrived immigrants from Hong Kong. Continue walking down Wardour Street and turn left into Gerrard Street, which is

Chinatown's main thoroughfare. You will see restaurants – there are more than 80 within half a kilometre of here – Oriental supermarkets and businesses, and hear Cantonese spoken all around you. The best dim sum experience is to be found at New World at 1 Gerrard Place (turn left at the far end of Gerrard Street), where dishes are brought to you on a trolley. If you want a bigger meal, New Fook Lam Moon at number 10 serves some of the district's best Cantonese and Malaysian cuisine.

● Walk along Gerrard Street, turn left up Gerrard Place and recross Shaftesbury Avenue. Bear right and catch the eastbound **38** from the **Gerrard Place/Chinatown** stop. This bus takes you through Clerkenwell and Islington to the cultural crossroads of **Dalston**, where you should get off at the **Dalston Junction Station** stop, continue up to the junction and turn left up Kingsland Road. **Ridley Road Market**, which begins opposite Dalston Kingsland overground station, is a microcosm of the diverse communities that live here. There are stalls serving Caribbean and African customers with yams and breadfruit, tilapia and snapper; and at the back of the market, Turkish and Kurdish traders hawk vegetables, fish and grisly-looking cuts of meat.

● Walk through the market and turn left up St Mark's Rise, then cross the road and catch the eastbound **236** from the **Ridley Road Market** stop to **Hackney Town Hall**. As the bus turns up **Mare Street**, you'll start to see Vietnamese cafés, restaurants and other businesses on both sides of the road. The Vietnamese community started settling in the area from 1975 – after the end of the Vietnam War – and are a small but significant presence in this part of east London. For excellent Vietnamese food along the bus route, including some wonderful stews and sturdy soups, stop off at Tre Viet at 247 Mare Street.

● Catch the northbound **106** from the **Hackney Town Hall** bus stop, and head along Clapton Road – lined with Turkish and African businesses – to **Stoke Newington**. Get off the bus at the **Stoke Newington High Street/Brooke Road** stop and continue up to Stoke Newington High Street; home to one of the biggest Turkish communities in the UK. The businesses – from wedding shops, patisseries and supermarkets to social clubs and, of course, restaurants – that line the lower part of the high street were first established in the 1970s, when immigrants from Turkey's rural regions arrived in London to work in restaurants established by Turkish Cypriots several years earlier. One of the area's best *ocakbasis* (inexpensive grill houses specialising in deliciously tender meat) is 19 Numara Bos Cirrik II at 194 Stoke Newington High Street; Testi, a fair walk down the road at number 38, is also superb.

● Turn right along Stoke Newington High Street, then left up Stoke Newington Church Street. Walk the length of this road – which is considerably more gentrified than the high street – and, immediately after passing Clissold Park, turn right. Cross the road and catch the northbound **141** from the **Green Lanes/Stoke Newington Church Street** stop. The bus heads up **Green Lanes**, which is home to two separate Cypriot communities. The southern section up to Turnpike Lane tube is where most of the UK's Turkish Cypriots have settled. There are as many signs in Turkish here as in English. And, as in Stoke Newington, there's great eating to be had – check out Hala at 29 Grand Parade on Green Lanes, where the house speciality of beef-filled *manti* is prepared by two women sitting in the front window.

● Get off the bus at **Wood Green Station** and catch the northbound **329** from the same stop. This heads up the northern section of Green Lanes, where you will see the Greek alphabet taking over from Turkish Latin and Cyrillic characters on the signs. It was around here and **Palmers Green** – known locally as Palmers Greek – that Greek Cypriots began to settle in London from the 1930s onwards, after Cyprus was made a British colony. Palmers Green, just beyond the North Circular road, is home to the largest community of Greek Cypriots outside Cyprus. Finish your journey here by getting off the bus at **Palmers Green/The Triangle** and turning left up Aldermans Hill to the overground station. If you're hungry, head to local favourite Babinondas, a little further up Green Lanes at number 598, for meze and a fabulous selection of Greek and Cypriot dishes.

