

21. fashion trips

Milan for business, Paris for style, New York for wearability. And London? The city has been the home of cutting-edge fashion since Biba's hedonistic heyday in the 1960s and – thanks to the talent emerging each year from its renowned fashion schools – it keeps its perfectly accessorised finger firmly on fashion's pulse. The world's style capital continues to evolve, though; and on this journey, as you ponder the influence of Browns, Savile Row and Zandra Rhodes on the London look, you'll see the city's various style tribes in all their resplendent glory. As you pass the beautifully coiffured citizens of the King's Road and the beyond-cool media types in Soho, it's tempting to think of the city as one giant catwalk.



Start point: Sloane Square tube

End point: London Bridge tube

Duration: 4.5 hours

- Come out of **Sloane Square tube**, turn left and catch the westbound **22** from the **Sloane Square Station** stop. This bus heads down the famous **King's Road**, which was one of London's earliest fashion destinations. This is where Mary Quant – inventor of the miniskirt – had her boutique Bazaar at 138A, a store that was instrumental in bringing the new innovative British fashion movement to the world's attention in the 1960s.

- The fashion industry, though, is about more than the designers and the clothes they make. Equally prominent in the public consciousness are the models who showcase the designs, and who can make or break a label. Jubilee Place, also on the right-hand side of King's Road, is the home of the **Storm Modelling Agency**, which has looked after the careers of some of the world's most famous models – including Carla Bruni, Cindy Crawford, Eva Herzigova and Kate Moss.

- Look out for number 430 on the right. Now designer Vivienne Westwood's World's End store, this was where Westwood and her boyfriend Malcolm McLaren had their infamous boutique **SEX** in the mid-1970s. Selling bondage gear and seditious T-shirts, the shop was instrumental in bringing punk fashion into the mainstream. Helped no end, of course, by the fact that The Sex Pistols, the band McLaren

managed, happened to be the most notorious punk-rock band in the world.

- Get off at the **Edith Grove/World's End** stop, walk back up King's Road and turn right into Beaufort Street. Catch the northbound **49** from the **Beaufort Street/King's Road** stop and get off at **South Kensington Station/Brompton Road**. Either take the tunnel that leads from the tube station or follow signs to the **Victoria & Albert Museum**. Once you're in the museum (admission is free), head straight for the Fashion Galleries. Showcasing European fashions, fabrics and accessories from the mid-18th century to the present day, these rooms have long been a source of inspiration for British designers. Even if you're not looking to reinvent the epaulette, they are a fascinating insight into an ever-changing sartorial world.

- Upon leaving the museum, catch the eastbound **74** from the **Victoria & Albert Museum** stop just outside its main entrance on Cromwell Gardens. The bus heads up Knightsbridge towards Hyde Park, passing this district's two temples to fashion – **Harrod's** and **Harvey Nichols**, both of which are renowned for their superb seasonal collections. Get off the bus at the **Portman Street/Selfridges** stop to visit **Selfridges**, another of the city's great department stores – famed for its innovative window displays, often put together in conjunction with some of the world's greatest fashion designers.

- When you've finished browsing through the hundreds of in-store outlets, exit onto Oxford

Street and catch the eastbound **6** from the **Selfridges** stop in front of the building. Look right as you approach Bond Street tube to see boutique-lined **South Molton Street** – where the city’s discerning shoppers bring their credit cards. Browns at number 27 on the right has, over the past 40 years, been perhaps the most influential in bringing cutting-edge British design to a wider audience. John Galiano, Alexander McQueen and Hussein Chalayan all owe their careers to this store and its buyers’ eye for talent.

● The bus then goes across the top of **New Bond Street** on the right. The city’s main fashion thoroughfare, this road has been associated with high-end luxury since the 18th century. Lined with branches of the major international fashion houses – from Armani to Zegna – it is a seriously glitzy destination, and the first port of call for Hollywood A-listers when they’re in town. The street is also where hairdresser Vidal Sassoon had his salon in the 1960s – and it was here that he created the five-point bob, the haircut that defined the Swinging London look.

● When the bus reaches Oxford Circus tube, look to the left for a glimpse of **The London College of Fashion** – which is situated behind the enormous H&M store. Though this college doesn’t quite have the pedigree of fellow London establishments Goldsmiths or Central St Martins in churning out world-beating design talent, it still has an impressive list of alumni – especially from its shoe-design faculty. Patrick Cox, Jimmy Choo and Emma Hope all studied here.

● Once the bus turns down Regent Street, get off at the **Conduit Street/Hamleys Toy Store** stop and cross the road. Bear right down New Burlington Street and turn right onto **Savile Row**, the centre of men’s tailoring in the UK. At the top of the road, turn left and then immediately right onto St George Street. When you reach Hanover Square, turn right and you’ll find yourself in front of **Vogue House** – the home of Condé Nast UK, where fashion bibles *Vogue* and *Tatler* are put together each month. Along with *Harpers Bazaar*, produced on the other side of Regent Street on Broadwick Street, these magazines are perhaps the most influential mouthpieces of the high-fashion world.

● Walk across the front of Vogue House and continue along Hanover Street, then cross Regent Street and walk down Great Marlborough Street. Look right for the iconic timbered facade of **Liberty**, every fashionista’s favourite London department store due to its expertly curated collections and impeccable good taste. Turn right immediately after Liberty and walk down **Carnaby Street**, which was famously the

heartbeat of London’s Swinging Sixties fashion scene, lampooned by The Kinks in their 1966 song *Dedicated Follower of Fashion*.

● At the bottom of Carnaby Street, bear left and continue walking down Upper James Street, through Golden Square, and down Lower James Street and Sherwood Street until you reach Piccadilly Circus tube. Turn right up Regent Street and catch the southbound **139** from the **Piccadilly Circus** stop. When the bus turns right and heads down Haymarket, look to the right for **Jermyn Street**, another centre of men’s tailoring known for the quality of its handmade shirts. Get off the bus at the **Southampton Street** stop and walk along the Strand to **Somerset House** – venue for all the showpiece events in the biannual London Fashion Week.

● Catch the southbound **188** from the **Aldwych/Somerset House** stop and take it all the way to the **Abbey Street** stop. Continue walking up Tower Bridge Road and turn left onto Tanner Street. Turn right up Bermondsey Street and walk up to the **Fashion & Textile Museum**, established by British designer Zandra Rhodes in 2003. The museum offers three major exhibitions each year on seminal fashion and textile design movements, as well as a fascinating permanent collection that includes 3,000 original garments donated by Rhodes herself.

● To get to the nearest tube, turn right upon leaving the museum. At the top of Bermondsey Street, turn left onto St Thomas Street and walk straight on to Borough High Street. Turn left here for **London Bridge tube**.

