

London in November 2026: What You Need to Know Before You Go

With **Tracy Collins** · Released Thursday 29 October 2026

Tracy talks through London in November 2026: the weather and the early dark afternoons, what to pack, Bonfire Night, Remembrance Sunday and the Lord Mayor's Show, the Christmas lights switch-on dates, what's on, and what to book now if you are coming for Christmas or New Year.

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TRACY

The Christmas lights go on, Bonfire Night fireworks light up the parks, and a gold coach rolls through the city at the end of a three-mile procession. If you're visiting London in November, this is what's on, what to book and what to pack. Hi, I'm Tracy from UK Travel Planning, and this is London in November.

Hi, and welcome to our monthly London bonus episode, brought to you by our sister brand, London Travel Planning, and this month by City Cruises. If you're new here, Doug and I are two Brits who know the UK and London inside out, and every month we go through what's actually happening in the city so you can plan around it. Let's get started.

THE WEATHER

So let's start with the weather, because us Brits love talking about the weather, and I'm a bit of a statistics nerd too. The averages for November in London: a daytime high of around 12 degrees, that's 54 degrees Fahrenheit, and a low of about 7, so 45. Rain on roughly 10 days of the month, so one in three, exactly the same as October.

The difference is that it's noticeably cooler, and it's damp rather than freezing. Snow in London in November is rare. Now, what the Met Office is actually saying at the time I'm recording this: the long-range outlook has early November more settled and drier, especially in the south and east, with chilly nights and some morning fog. Then into the middle of the month, a better chance of it turning unsettled again, with more frequent spells of rain and some windy days. Past that they can't see yet, so check the long-range outlook the week before you fly.

The thing that catches people out in November isn't the cold, it's the dark. The clocks went back on the 25th of October, so at the start of November the sun sets at around half past four, and by the end of the month it's just before four. It's properly dark by half past four. You still get around

nine and a half hours of daylight at the start of the month and a bit over eight by the end, so there's plenty of time, you just have to plan it.

So do outdoor things in the morning, then do museums, galleries, afternoon tea and theatre in the afternoon and evening. And of course, the lights look their best after dark.

WHAT TO PACK

So what should you pack? Here's what I'd recommend. A warm waterproof jacket, not your heaviest winter coat, because the Tube and museums are heated to the point where you'll be peeling it off, and it is easy to overheat. Believe me, I know.

Layers. Like Charley said in the last few months, dress like an onion: a jumper over a T-shirt and the jacket on top, so you can take a layer off indoors. Also take a day pack with you to store them in.

Waterproof, comfortable shoes. I always say comfy shoes are the key at any time of year, and in November make sure they're waterproof too. A hat and gloves are essential for the second half of the month, especially if you're going to be out for an evening looking at the lights. And a small fold-up umbrella or raincoat in your bag; take it with you every day.

KEY DATES

Now, key dates. There are a handful of dates that change the feel of the city in November, so get these in your diary.

Bonfire Night is Thursday the 5th of November. As we say, remember, remember the 5th of November. On the 5th of November 1605, Guy Fawkes was caught in the cellars under Parliament with gunpowder, ready to blow up Parliament and the King. Ever since, we've marked it with bonfires and fireworks.

The big London displays are on the weekend after, so Alexandra Palace on Saturday the 7th at eight o'clock and Sunday the 8th at six o'clock. The Sunday's earlier, so it's a family-friendly event. Battersea Park runs on both nights too.

Remembrance Sunday is Sunday the 8th of November. The service is at the Cenotaph on Whitehall, with a two-minute silence at 11 o'clock and the royal family laying wreaths. You don't need a ticket, but the spots along Whitehall are gone well before 10, and Westminster and Embankment stations are heaving that morning. And on Wednesday the 11th, Armistice Day, the whole city stops for two minutes at 11am: shops, stations, offices. If you've never seen it, it is quite something.

Now, the Lord Mayor's Show is Saturday the 14th of November. It's 800 years old, and it's completely free. The Lord Mayor rides in a gold coach dating from 1757, with around 6,500 people, 250 horses and more than 50 floats, from Mansion House, past St Paul's to the Royal Courts of

Justice, setting off at around 11 o'clock.

And this year there's something new. For 400 years the show was on the river, and in 2026 it's back there. The Lord Mayor leaves Westminster by boat in the morning with a flotilla, passes under London Bridge, and then joins the procession. Very exciting.

ON THE RIVER WITH CITY CRUISES

This month's episode is brought to you by City Cruises, and November is when the river comes into its own. It's quieter than summer, the light is low and golden in the afternoon, and once the sun's gone the whole skyline is lit up: Tower Bridge, the Shard, Parliament and the London Eye. And you're looking at it from the water with a cup of tea or a drink in your hand, rather than from a cold pavement.

I say a cup of tea because the one I'd book is the afternoon tea cruise. It's 90 minutes from Tower Pier at half past three, so you're on the water as it gets dark, which in November is the best time to be there. Sandwiches, a warm scone with jam and clotted cream, four little cakes, unlimited tea and coffee, and commentary as you go.

Sinead from our team sailed on it at the end of September as a guest of City Cruises. She is very picky about her afternoon teas, and she said it was one of the best she's ever had. You can read her full review on the London site.

And City Cruises have given our listeners 10% off. The code is UKPLAN10 at checkout. You need to book and travel by the 31st of December. It's on the standard afternoon tea ticket, not the upgrades, and it doesn't cover the festive or special event cruises. The link's the first thing in the description.

Two more things on the river while I'm here. If you just want to get out on the river for the day, their one-day River Pass is £9 at the moment. What a deal. That's hop on, hop off between Westminster and Greenwich, and in November that's the warmest sightseeing place to be in London.

And if you're going to be here for Christmas Day or New Year's Eve, they run a Christmas Day lunch cruise and a whole set of New Year's Eve cruises with the fireworks from the water. Those sell out every year, so I'll come back to them in a minute when we talk about what you need to book ahead.

THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Now, the question I get asked more than any other about November: will the Christmas lights be on? Yes. London does not wait for December. So let's give you this year's switch-on dates. I'm very excited about this.

Carnaby Street is Wednesday the 4th of November. The theme this year is Press Play on Christmas, all 1990s nostalgia. Regent Street, with the angels and 300,000 lights, switches on on Thursday the 5th, with the entire street closed to traffic from 5 till 9 that evening, and St James's goes on the same night. Covent Garden is Thursday the 12th. Very exciting. I love Covent Garden at Christmas.

Oxford Street is the one everyone's waiting on, because this year the lights are Harry Potter themed, tied to the new television series that starts on Christmas Day. The date hadn't been announced when I recorded this; it's usually the first week of November. But two things are confirmed. There's a new Harry Potter flagship shop opening on Oxford Street on the 4th of November, and from the 26th of October the stretch of Oxford Street from Selfridges to just past Oxford Circus is traffic-free, which is the first phase of the permanent pedestrianisation. So the lights walk this year will be a lot nicer on foot. You will not have to contend with any traffic.

If you want to see all the big displays lit, arrive from the 12th of November onwards. The switch-on nights themselves are the most crowded evenings of the season, so unless you want to see the switch-ons, I'd recommend going the night after.

We've got a lights walk on the London site that takes in all of them, with a free map and instructions too. Find the link below or in the show notes.

WHAT'S ON IN NOVEMBER

Now, what's on? There's far too much on in London to cover all of it here. The full list is in our Events in London article. These are the ones I'd plan a day around.

Christmas at Kew opens on Friday the 13th of November and runs to the 3rd of January. It's the big light trail, and I love it. It's closed on the 16th, 23rd and 28th of November, so check the dates before you book. There are adult-only evenings on the 3rd and 9th of December. Book it now, because those December weekends are already going.

Ice rinks. Skate at Somerset House, the beautiful one in the courtyard, opens on the 11th of November and runs to the 10th of January, and it's the one to book early. Leicester Square's opens from the 31st of October, Battersea Power Station's from the 6th, the Queen's House in Greenwich from the 18th, and then Hampton Court Palace from the 20th.

What about Christmas markets? The Southbank Centre Winter Market along the river opens on the 2nd of November, Trafalgar Square's from early November, and Kingston's on the 12th. They're on until January, and they're all free to wander around. And new last year and back from the 25th of November is the Chelsea Winter Village at the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

Now, for Harry Potter fans, Hogwarts in the Snow at the Warner Bros. Studio Tour runs from the 14th of November to the 17th of January, with the Great Hall dressed for Christmas and the castle model covered in snow. It's in the standard ticket, but the November dates do sell out fast.

Theatre in November. November is one of the busiest opening months of the year. Ian McKellen is playing Lear, a new adaptation at the Yard in Hackney Wick, from the 17th of November. It's a 220-seat theatre, it's already sold out, and it's returns and day tickets only now. So it is literally the hardest ticket in London to get this month. One Day the Musical, from the David Nicholls book, opens at the Garrick on the 17th as well. Just remember to take tissues.

Exhibitions in November. Agatha Christie at the British Library opens on the 30th of October, with her typewriter, her notebooks and a recreated Orient Express carriage. And Van Eyck: The Portraits at the National Gallery from Saturday the 21st, with all nine of his known portraits in one room for the first time ever.

And the one you keep asking me about: the Bayeux Tapestry at the British Museum is completely sold out for the rest of 2026. The tickets for January to March next year went on sale on the 21st of October, and they've gone too. If you're coming back in 2027, it's the April to July tickets you're waiting for. Doug and I are waiting for those too, and they're released early in the new year.

And Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style, the late Queen's wardrobe exhibition at Buckingham Palace, runs to the 18th of April, with January onwards your best bet for tickets.

WHAT TO BOOK IN NOVEMBER

Now, if you're coming in December or over Christmas and New Year, these are the things that need booking in November or you'll miss them.

Christmas Day and New Year's Eve on the river. City Cruises run a Christmas Day lunch cruise from Westminster Pier, with a traditional Christmas lunch and carols on the Thames. There's also a Christmas Day sightseeing cruise if you just want an hour on the water that day.

On New Year's Eve they run six cruises from Tower Pier, all on the water for the fireworks at midnight: from the Stargazer, which boards at 10, so you can eat in London first, to the glass-roofed Celestial for families, the Galaxy Plus with a DJ, and the adults-only gala dinner on the Diamond. Wow. The Mayor's firework tickets for the riverside went on sale on the 23rd of October, and the first release sells out every year, so the boats are one of the very few ways left to see them from the river, and they sell out every year too. We've got guides to both the Christmas cruises and the New Year's Eve cruises on the London site.

The Ceremony of the Keys at the Tower of London. December's tickets are released on Monday the 2nd of November at 1pm UK time on the Historic Royal Palaces website, and they go very quickly, so set an alarm.

Christmas at Kew: the December weekends. I've said it once already and I'll say it again: if you want to do it, book it. Hogwarts in the Snow for a December date. The theatre, if you want a particular show on a particular night, especially the week before Christmas. And restaurants for Christmas Day itself, because most of London is shut, and the ones that are open on Christmas Day tend to be booked out by the middle of November.

If you want all of that in one place, we've put together a Festive London Planning Guide this year: the whole festive calendar, what to book and when, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve, and a map for your phone with the lights walk, the markets, the rinks, the pubs and the afternoon teas all pinned on it. The link is below, or if you're listening on the podcast, in the show notes.

THAT'S A WRAP

Well, that's a wrap on London in November. Thank you to City Cruises for sponsoring this month's episode. The code again is UKPLAN10 for 10% off the afternoon tea cruise; book and travel by the 31st of December.

For planning the trip itself, head to londontravelplanning.com, where you'll find our guide to visiting London in November and our full list of events in London in November, with every date I've talked about.

If you found this useful, do subscribe, because I'll be back on Thursday the 26th of November with London in December, which will include Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and what London actually feels like in the festive season. But until next time, happy UK travel planning.

For show notes and links, head to uktravelplanning.com/london-bonus-november-2026.

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