

# Jewish London

## CONTENTS

Jewish London Today : Focus on North London  
Backstory : Eating & Drinking : Kosher Specialities  
Bakeries : Culture : Places of Worship : Events

## MORE INFO

For more information on London's  
diverse international communities  
go to [visitlondon.com](http://visitlondon.com)

## TODAY

London's Jewish community is thought to number around 200,000 and embraces many cultures. The community falls mainly into the following groups: those of whom descend from Spain and Portugal, known as Sephardi, the Mizrachi from the Middle East, and those from eastern Europe, known as Ashkenazi.

Jewish communities in London are thriving, with **Barnet** boasting the largest Jewish population. Most of the community belong to the more traditional Orthodox synagogues, but there has also been a growth in the strictly orthodox community as well as the more progressive 'Reform' and 'Liberal' synagogues since the 1960s.

**Stamford Hill**, in Hackney, north London, has long established itself as the home of the strictly orthodox Jewish community, while today, the liveliest part of Jewish London is probably **Golders Green**; its cafés, restaurants and bars have become a magnet for many young people.

Jewish people in London can be found in all areas of the capital's life and make a strong contribution to the city's social, economic and cultural life, boasting many writers, journalists, artists and academics as well as leaders in the areas of business and finance.



Dizengoff's, Golders Green



Brick Lane Beigel Bar, Brick Lane E1

## FOCUS ON NORTH LONDON

Many examples of Jewish cultural life can be found in the north London boroughs of **Camden** and **Barnet**. The areas around **Camden**, **Hampstead** and **Swiss Cottage** have traditionally been the base for Jewish artists and writers.

Moving north to **Hampstead**, the **Freud Museum** (*Finchley Road tube*) is based in Sigmund Freud's last residence. Here, you can see his famous analysis couch and over 3,000 ancient figurines, all of which are now displayed in the museum. For a contemporary take on Jewish art head to the nearby **Ben Uri Gallery** (*St John's Wood tube*) which showcases modern Israeli and Jewish works.

Heading further north, **Golders Green** (*Golders Green tube*) is the focus of modern London Jewish life, with Golders Green Road boasting a stretch of lively cafes, restaurants, bookshops, kosher food stores and shops selling religious artefacts. Here you can find the famous **Blooms** restaurant (whose original premises was in the East End) serving up traditional fare such as chicken soup and fried fish. Also check out **Steimatzky**, one of many bookshops in the street specialising in books on Jewish history, current affairs, religion and culture.

Here, on a Friday morning you can spot people rushing to buy food and get ready for Shabbat. Once Shabbat arrives, on Friday night, the usually frantic road becomes noticeably calmer, as people stroll down the street in their best clothes on their way to synagogue or to visit friends.

**Freud Museum** 20 Maresfield Gardens, NW3 5SX (020 7435 2002) • **Ben Uri Gallery** 10a Boundary Road, NW8 ORH • **Blooms** 130 Golders Green Road, NW11 8HB (020 8455 1338/[blooms-restaurant.co.uk](http://blooms-restaurant.co.uk)) • **Steimatzky** 46 Golders Green Road NW11 (020 8458 8289)

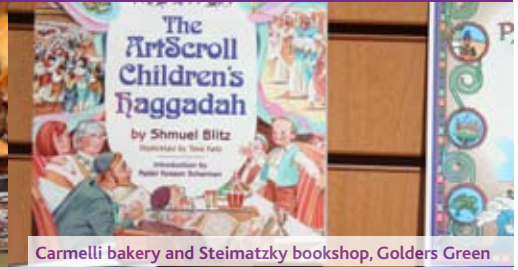


Freud Museum, NW3

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Stamford Hill is the most Orthodox Jewish area outside New York City and Israel.

# Jewish London



Carmelli bakery and Steimatzyk bookshop, Golders Green

## BACKSTORY

In medieval times there was a strong Jewish presence in London, with references to a Jewish quarter in the city dating back to the 12th century. However, in 1290 the Jewish community was expelled from England following years of persecution.

For over 350 years, until the reign of Oliver Cromwell, London had no official Jewish presence, except for isolated individuals who practiced Judaism secretly. While Cromwell never officially readmitted Jews to Britain, the small community which had taken up residence in London was allowed to stay. Just over 200 years later Jewish people were finally allowed to sit in Parliament.

From the late 1800s to just before World War II, thousands of Jewish people from Russia and Eastern Europe arrived in London, settling into the East End around **Whitechapel** and **Stepney**, close to where their ships had docked. Many people living in London today are descendants of these East End immigrants and they have had a lasting impact on the character of the area. The streets around Whitechapel thronged with Jewish cabinet makers, tailors, shoemakers and cigarette makers, who rubbed shoulders with actors, artists and musicians. Artists such as Mark Gertler and poets, including Isaac Rosenberg, emerged from the area's flourishing artistic scene, while Yiddish Theatre, Jewish newspapers and political organisations thrived.



Carmelli bakery, Golders Green

In the 1930s and '40s, London became a haven for Jews fleeing from Nazi persecution. After the war, the community became more integrated and prospered, and began to move out of the poor East End tenements, first settling in **Hackney**, and then to areas such as **Golders Green** and **Hendon** in the north and **Gants Hill** and **Goodmayes** further east.

More recently, the community has been joined by Jewish people arriving from a number of countries, including South Africa, India and Iraq, while today, Jewish life is enjoying a renaissance boosted by a steady trickle of young Israelis who have added a Middle Eastern flavour to London's Jewish cultural brew.

Since settling in London, the community has developed many social and political communal institutions, including Jewish Care, Norwood Ravenswood, the Board of Deputies and more recently the London Jewish Forum.

## EATING & DRINKING

Jewish food ranges from traditional eastern European to Middle eastern fare. Here are just some of the places you can sample it.

### Bevis Marks Restaurant

*Bevis Marks Synagogue, EC3A 5DQ (0207 283 2220). Aldgate tube.* London's most stylish kosher venue boasts a view of the adjoining 18th century synagogue. Food is a mix of European and Middle-Eastern influences.

### Dizengoff's

*118 Golders Green Road, NW11 8HB (020 8458 7003). Golders Green tube.* This busy Israeli restaurant serves up the best latkes (fried potato cakes) in London. For meat lovers there are hearty soups such as chicken or kooba (dumpling) as well as delicious stuffed artichokes, grilled meats and kebabs.

### Reuben's

*79 Baker Street, W1U 6RG (0207 486 0035). Baker Street tube.* This West End kosher deli is bustling at lunchtime when it's packed with office workers wanting a sandwich. In the evening, the basement restaurant offers a heartier choice of barley soup, grilled chicken wings, steaks, lamb chops and chips.

## KOSHER SPECIALITIES

These days kosher restaurants aren't just for traditional food – they offer everything from Italian to Sushi.

### The Burger Bar

*110 Regents Park Road, N3 3JG (0208 371 1555). Finchley Central tube.* A kosher hamburger? Yes, it exists at this US-style diner that serves up nineteen types of burger including sweet chilli, avocado and aubergine. Non-dairy milkshakes are also served.

### Met Su Yan

*134 Golders Green Road, NW11 8HB (020 8458 8088). Golders Green tube.* This kosher oriental restaurant serves sushi, a wide variety of fish, and an extensive choice of lamb, beef, duck and chicken.

### Kavanna

*60 Vivian Avenue NW4 3XH (020 8202 9449). Hendon Central tube.* London's first kosher curry restaurant specialises in tandoori delicacies, including charred chicken wings, chicken tikka masala – without real cream – and lamb biryani. Popular – and usually packed with locals.

## BAKERIES

Bursting with everyone from elderly Jewish 'bubbas' (grandmothers) to teenagers just hanging out, Jewish bakeries offer up a slice of Jewish life that probably hasn't changed much in 100 years – as well as selling wonderful varieties of bread and cakes, of course. Here are the pick.

### Carmelli

*128 Golders Green Road, NW11 8HB (020 8458 2074). Golders Green tube.*

### J Grodzinski

*9 Northways Parade, NW3 5EN (020 7722 4944). Swiss Cottage tube.*

### Hendon Bagel Bakery

*55-57 Church Road NW4 4DU (020 8203 6919). Hendon Central tube.*



## CULTURE

Over the last ten years there has been an explosion of interest in Jewish culture – on any given day of the week you can find activities, classes, lectures and performances on everything from Yiddish comedy to women's rights.

### Jewish Community Centre

[jewishcommunitycentre.org.uk](http://jewishcommunitycentre.org.uk)

The centre currently exists as a series of activities in different locations around London, with a focus on contemporary debate and culture.

### London Jewish Cultural Centre

*Ivy House, 94 - 96 North End Road, NW11 7SX (020 8457 5000/ [ljcc.org.uk](http://ljcc.org.uk)). Golders Green tube.*

Based in ballerina Anna Pavlova's delightful former house, the London Jewish Cultural Centre boasts a dizzying array of lectures, classes and community initiatives. There are courses in Yiddish, Hebrew, Jewish history and literature; lectures on all aspects of Judaism, as well as a Jewish film archive.

### Jewish Music Institute

*SOAS, University of London, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2NN (020 8909 2445/[jmi.org.uk](http://jmi.org.uk))*

Provides education, performances and information for musicians and the public on everything from religious chants to Yiddish hip hop.

### Jewish East End Celebration Society

*Clive Bettington (07941 367 882/[c.bettington@jeecs.org.uk](mailto:c.bettington@jeecs.org.uk))*

Organises walks, talks and events on Jewish heritage in the East End.

### Ben Uri Gallery

*108a Boundary Road, NW8 0RH, (020 7604 3991/[benuri.org.uk](http://benuri.org.uk)). St John's Wood tube.*

London Jewish Museum of Art presents exhibitions, publishes catalogues and organizes competitions, lectures and children's activities.



Simcha On The Square

## DIRECTORY

### Board of Deputies of British Jews

*Jewish Community Information, 6 Bloomsbury Square, WC1A 2LP (020 7543 5421/[bod.org.uk](http://bod.org.uk))* Helpline service providing information about all aspects of Jewish life in the UK, including local synagogues and cultural information. Provides a calendar of major events held throughout the country.

### Something Jewish and Totally Jewish

[somethingjewish.com/totallyjewish.com](http://somethingjewish.com/totallyjewish.com)

Websites listing cultural and social activities, as well as news and information on all aspects of Jewish life.

### Jewish Chronicle

[thejc.com](http://thejc.com)

The leading Anglo-Jewish newspaper, includes entertainment and cultural information and listings.



The New West End Synagogue

## PLACES OF WORSHIP

Try to visit London's synagogues during one of the festival times, such as Purim or Shavuot in the spring or Simchat Torah in the autumn, when there are often parties and family activities. For details of where to find London's synagogues, contact the following:

**United Synagogues**, [unitedsynagogue.org.uk](http://unitedsynagogue.org.uk); **Reform Synagogues** [reformjudaism.org.uk](http://reformjudaism.org.uk); **Liberal Synagogues** [liberaljudaism.org](http://liberaljudaism.org); **Masorti Synagogues** [masorti.org.uk](http://masorti.org.uk).

### Bevis Marks Synagogue

*2 Henage London, EC3A 5DQ (020 7626 1274) Aldgate tube.*

A hauntingly beautiful synagogue built in 1701 inside a courtyard, at a time when synagogues were not permitted on public streets. It is still in use and open for visits.

### The New West End Synagogue

*St Petersburg Place, W2 4JT (020 7229 2631) Bayswater tube.*

This Grade II\* Listed building boasts a soaring interior and stunning marbling. One of the most magnificent synagogue buildings in London.

### The West London Synagogue

*33 Seymour Place, W1H 5AU (020 7723 4404) Marble Arch tube.*

Opened in 1840, this elegant building is the oldest Reform synagogue in Britain.

### The Liberal Jewish Synagogue

*28 St John's Wood Road, NW8 7HA (020 7286 5181). St John's Wood tube.*

Founded in 1911, this is the oldest and largest of more than thirty congregations belonging to Liberal Judaism. A holocaust (Sho'ah) memorial by Anish Kapoor in polished black stone is in the front foyer.

## EVENTS

### Jewish Film Festival

[ukjewishfilmfestival.org.uk](http://ukjewishfilmfestival.org.uk)

Held every September, the festival introduces new films from Israel and the Middle East as well as showcasing films from around the world that touch on Jewish issues.

### Jewish Book Week

[jewishbookweek.com](http://jewishbookweek.com)

This annual spring event features a huge array of writers, often drawing in big names from around the world. There's also a book fair, workshops and performances.

### Jewish Culture and Heritage Day

[jewish-heritage-uk.org/jewishcultureineurope.org](http://jewish-heritage-uk.org/jewishcultureineurope.org)

Synagogues and Jewish heritage sites across London are opened up for this annual celebration of all things Jewish, held every September. There are also music and dance performances, lectures and workshops.

### Simcha On The Square

[london.gov.uk/mayor/culture/simcha.jsp](http://london.gov.uk/mayor/culture/simcha.jsp)

A major celebration of Jewish culture held in Trafalgar Square each year to mark the major contribution of London's Jewish community to the capital's cultural diversity.

### Yom Haatzmaut (Israel Independence Day)

[office@zionist.org.uk](mailto:office@zionist.org.uk) Large annual celebrations held in North and North East London.