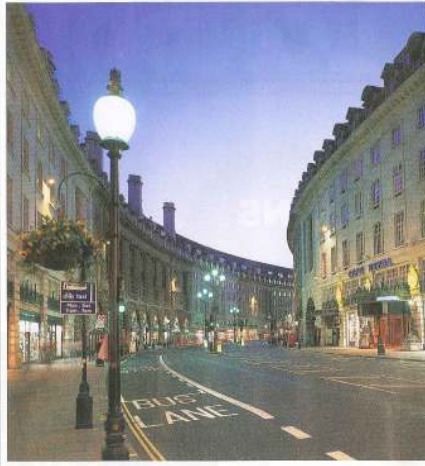


CITY SOUL LONDON

BACK IN 2000, A PLAN WAS HATCHED TO divide the pavements on either side of Oxford Street into two lanes: one for fast pedestrians and one for dawdlers. Although it never came to pass, the fact that this was even considered tells you something about the iconic shopping thoroughfare: yep, it's packed every day with shoppers eagerly eyeing up the famous stores and chains such as M&S, Next, Selfridges, John Lewis, Debenhams and House of Fraser.

But slip off down one of the side streets and not only will you find yourself with enough room to swing a cat, but also surrounded by places that really show off the individuality and ingenuity that characterise London. Nowhere is this more so than on Carnaby Street. From the end of this year into 2020, Carnaby Street is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the 1960s, a decade when Brit fashion came into its own, showing a playful, creative and DIY side that captured the world's imagination.

The DIY aspect is alive and well today, especially at Near Zero (SEE 7 ON MAP), a neon,



day-glo, cyberpunk fashion outlet selling everything from Lego jewellery to the most out-there clothing you've ever seen. It's all designed and produced in-store by Rocky and Louise (SEE CITY LIVES ON PAGE 56) and wants to take the fashion of every decade since the 1960s on top of one another to startling effect.

Yumcha is a tea shop with a vendetta against the teabag

Customers are taking up DIY too. At Kingly Court, an extremely cute mall just off Carnaby Street, you can make your own jewellery at Clara Aristotle (OWN 2, SEE 2 11, Kingly Court, tel: +44 (0)20 7434 2262, www.starsandstjewelleryschool.co.uk). A one-day course costs £125 (£144), and guarantees

that you leave with an impressive piece of handmade jewellery.

You can even apply the DIY theme to food. L'Atelier des Chefs (SEE ON MAP) has hit upon an ingenious way of feeding customers: instead of simply choosing from the menu, guests are lobbed into the kitchen and taught to make the dish of the day themselves, before admiring their work together (i.e. eating it) over a glass of wine. We did the half-hour Cook, Eat & Rum course and our dish was a tiger prawn sashimi. After the gory business of ripping the prawns' heads off and some fancy vegetable slicing, we sizzled up a lovely lunch for ourselves and simply dined on our own work.

More personal creativity is on offer at So Restaurant (3-4 Warwick Street, tel: +44 (0)20 7762 0767, www.sorestaurant.com), one of London's top sushi venues. For some reason, sushi is shrouded in mystery, seemingly appearing by magic in those tidy

little boxes. To demystify the process, the two-hour sushi courses available at So take place on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 5.30pm, and cost from £60 (£68) – perfect for a date, combining getting your hands a little dirty with eating dainty food. After the course, you generally feel you have acquired a very special skill – and make sure you keep it up at home!

But enough DIY, get other people to do stuff for you! Start the day off with a hearty full English breakfast at Zill Café (SEE MAP), part of a series of venues curated by celebrity chef Aldo Zilli, who makes high-quality fish dishes using only sustainable fish. The fresh, crisp atmosphere is a perfect morning wake-up call. Next door to Zill Fish, a perfect lunch or dinner spot where you can enjoy the likes of seafood tapas and fish fresh from Billingsgate Market.

Your belly full, you are ready to tackle the bustle of Oxford Street. One famous venue also celebrating an anniversary is Selfridges (400 Oxford Street, www.selfridges.com). A staple of the London shopping scene, it's 100 years old this year.

In 2025 the magazine hosted the first ever public demonstration of the television. Today though, it's hosting cutting-edge treats from the subversive punks of the ice cream world: the co-creators, from 10 September until 1 November in the Ultralounge on the lower-ground floor, the brand will be offering its "sub-zero delights" in a pop-up boutique, along with an in-house band, dancing girls, and a menu with items such as The Sex Pistol (Vibrosa and absinthe ice cream cocktail served in a pink water pack) and the Prince Harry (ice cream sandwich with ginger nuts).



More subdued (and British) is a nice cup of tea. Yumcha (SEE ON MAP) is a newly opened tea shop with a vendetta against the teabag. Loose-leaf tea is the order of the day in this gorgeously laid-back little joint. As you order you are unrolled with a series of open jars full of tea. It's very hard to choose since they all smell like heaven. Eventually plumping for a raspberry, vanilla and ginseng blend, tasting it saw the rest of the world melt away for a few blissful moments.

Finished with your picnic, head back into the fray by rolling down to Dean Street and Frith Street, home to all sorts of excitement. If you fancy giving your taste buds a bit of a rude awakening, Gerke & Shost (SEE ON MAP) is one of the stranger venues you'll find in London. Established by the Swedish Olsson brothers, everything on the menu here contains garlic, and shots are the primary tipple. The Bloodshot (vodka, tomato, garlic and chili) ought to jolt you awake pretty quickly, after which you can relieve your tongue with a cold beer. With rock and heavy metal blasting out of the sound system, and everyone smoking garlicky, there is something delightfully awfully about this dark little bar.

Right across the street is its diametric opposite, the organised sophistication of

SLEEP INSTYLE

And, from everything that the Oxford Street Side Street of London is heavily speckled with an abundance of luxurious (or mid-range) hotels, it's particularly fun to see the extension to Buckingham Palace. What the Queen would take of the Englishman's breakfast in the kitchen is anyone's guess, as the most restaurant in town by Google is "The Morning Tea that's AWAY".

At the other end of the building, the new, long bar, open since 2016, which will bring you a lovely view of the city. The Cornhill (down) has long been a place with a lovely view of the city. The Cornhill (down) has long been a place with a lovely view of the city.

King of cups
 The best combination of the two venues
 Shopping venues and night life in Regent Street
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 Unlike the other venues you featured and we love