

## Sports and shopping in the UK's capital

As the capital city of the United Kingdom, London not only plays host to a plethora of top-level sporting events, but also provides an ideal base for participants and spectators alike of many sporting disciplines. So whether you're running the London marathon, watching football at Wembley Stadium, playing tennis at the All-England club or having a flutter on equine action at Sandown Park, London is sure to have something to offer.

Since its inception in 1981, the London Marathon is now widely recognised as one of the top five international marathon races and attracts runners from all over the globe to compete over the 26 miles 385 yards course that winds its way around the city. Starting from Blackheath on the south side of the River Thames, crossing Tower Bridge and finishing in The Mall, the race encapsulates some of London's best known sights including the historic ship 'Cutty Sark', the Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace amongst others. Despite being a serious athletic event with a large prize money offering, the London Marathon is perhaps more closely associated with club and fun runners who participate in the race - often dressed in bizarre fancy dress costumes - for charity, and the race is now the premier annual fund raising event in the world according to race organisers, having amassed over £315 million for good causes.

The annual FA Community Shield football match returned to Wembley stadium this year after a seven-year stint at Cardiff's Millennium stadium. The match, played as the traditional curtain-raiser to the new football season is a major charity fundraiser featuring the winners of the previous season's league tournament and FA Cup, although with six Premier League clubs as well as ten lower-league clubs in and around London, football enthusiasts are never far away from a match. Wembley stadium also hosts numerous international matches throughout the football season as well as a number of music concerts, often featuring globally-renowned artists.

Although actually in Esher, Surrey, Sandown Park is easily accessible from London's public transport network. Sandown Park hosts regular race meetings throughout the year, for both Flat and National Hunt racing and several high-profile races are run over the course in both disciplines, including the Coral Eclipse Stakes, Tingle Creek Chase and the Whitbread Gold Cup, now known as the Betfred Gold Cup. Each year the course also holds an annual Variety Club charity meeting which is among the course's most popular and high-profile events. The Variety Club event draws a host of celebrities to the track, so celebrity-spotting makes for an added bonus to the day.

However, shopping is perhaps London's best known sport and the capital is world-renowned for its shopping areas and famous shops and boutiques. For those more interested in this discipline, participants are certainly spoiled for choice. Oxford Street lies in the heart of central London's busiest shopping district and with over 300 shops is Europe's largest high street, running for around a mile and a half from Marble Arch to St. Giles' Circus. Home to such stores as Selfridges, Marks & Spencer, John Lewis, Debenhams and Primark, Oxford Street forms a veritable shoppers' paradise. Or for something a little more 'alternative', take a wander around Covent Garden or Camden Market where you'll be sure to pick up something out of the ordinary.

With an abundance of [hotels in London](#), you're sure to find an ideal location from which to indulge your sporting passion, either as a participant or a spectator. And with an abundance of museums, theatres, art galleries and other attractions, there's a lot more to London besides sports on a London city break - if all else fails, there's always shopping!

### About the Author

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