

Out & About: A London Dad's Guide

Getting out of the flat, exploring the city, and making the most of London with a baby or toddler

One of the best things about being a dad in London is the city itself. When you're on paternity leave or have a free weekend, there's genuinely nowhere better to have a baby or young child. Parks, free museums, soft plays, riverside walks — London is stacked with options. Here's where to go, how to get there, and what actually works with little ones in tow.

Getting Around: Practical Stuff First

The Tube

The Tube can be brilliant with a baby — and occasionally awful. A few things to know:

- **Step-free access** isn't universal. Before you go, check [TfL's step-free Tube map](#) — you'll need it. Some central stations (notably Bank, Covent Garden and Knightsbridge) have no step-free access at all
- Babies travel **free** on the Tube and bus
- Fold the buggy on the Tube if you can — peak hours with an open pushchair in a carriage is genuinely miserable for everyone
- The YOYO and similar compact buggies are the Tube dad's best friend

Buses

Buses are often **better than the Tube** with a baby. They're step-free, buggies go on without folding (priority space, first come first served), and you can see London going past — which babies love. Slower, but far more pleasant.

Bikes & Cargo Bikes

If you're a cyclist, London now has an excellent cycling infrastructure. A rear child seat works from around 9-12 months (once the baby can hold their head up). Cargo bikes are having a moment in London — hire one from [Peddle My Wheels](#) to test before buying.

The Best Parks for Dads with Babies & Toddlers

You'll spend a lot of time in parks. Here are the best, by area:

South London - **Battersea Park** — brilliant children's zoo (free), wide paths, café with buggy access, riverside walk. One of the best for babies - **Brockwell Park**, **Herne Hill** — brilliant lido, sandpit, toddler play-ground, community feel - **Crystal Palace Park** — giant dinosaur sculptures, great play area, accessible paths

North London - **Hampstead Heath** — vast, wild, excellent for older

toddlers; take the buggy-friendly paths, not the muddy ones - **Alexandra Palace & Park** — panoramic views, playground, café, great for weekend walks - **Highbury Fields, Islington** — local feel, good playground, lido in summer

East London - Victoria Park, Hackney — huge, well-kept, brilliant café at the pavilion, strong community feel - **London Fields** — popular lido, toddler playground, Lido Café

West London - Kew Gardens — world-class, buggy-friendly, brilliant for curious toddlers. Kids under 4 go free - **Richmond Park** — deer, wide open space, good cycle paths. Worth the journey

Central - Hyde Park / Kensington Gardens — the Diana Memorial Playground is one of the best in London (under 12s only). Wide, flat paths throughout, excellent for buggies

Free Things to Do (London is Brilliant for This)

London's national museums are some of the best free resources for parents in the world.

- **Natural History Museum** — free entry, the dinosaurs never get old, great baby changing facilities. Book a timed entry slot
- **Science Museum, South Kensington** — free, brilliant from toddler age, interactive galleries
- **V&A Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green** — reopened and reimagined, genuinely excellent for under-5s and older kids
- **Tate Modern** — free, huge, great café, excellent Thames views. Turbine Hall is brilliant for crawlers
- **National Maritime Museum, Greenwich** — free, beautiful grounds, good for little ones
- **London Zoo** — not free, but family tickets are worth it; book in advance at [zsl.org](https://www.zsl.org)

Dad & Baby Groups in London

Getting out and talking to other dads is genuinely good for your mental health during paternity leave. These groups are specifically for dads:

- **Being Dad - SE London Mind** — free groups (Zoom and in-person) for expectant and new dads in South East London
- **West London NHS Perinatal Service for Dads** — support and community for new fathers in West London
- **Dadsnet** — UK's largest dad community online, with local meetups
- **Andy's Man Club** — free men's groups every Monday across London, not baby-specific but highly rated

Most NCT groups also welcome dads, and many run events specifically for partners. Check your [local NCT branch](#).

Best Family Cafés in London (by Area)

You'll become a café expert remarkably quickly. These are some of the best in the city for dads with babies and toddlers — space for buggies, tolerant staff, decent coffee:

- **Gail's Bakery** — multiple locations, genuinely welcoming, good food
- **Ozone Coffee, Hackney** — excellent coffee, child-friendly, east London favourite
- **Pavilion Café, Victoria Park** — stunning setting, brilliant brunch, busy with local families
- **Fields Beneath, Kentish Town** — known for excellent coffee, decent space
- **Brickwood Coffee, Balham & Tooting** — consistently good, popular with SW London families
- **The Breakfast Club** — multiple London locations, family-friendly, all-day food

For soft plays and play cafés by area, check the [mummy.london listings](#) — comprehensive coverage across London boroughs.

Day Trips from London

Sometimes you need to escape the city entirely. These are all doable by train from Central London:

Destination	Time from London	Why Go
Kew Gardens	District line	World-class gardens, great for all ages
Hampton Court Palace	35 min from Waterloo	Incredible grounds, kids love the maze
Brighton	55 min from Victoria	Beach, rock pools, Sea Life Centre
Thorpe Park	40 min from Waterloo	For older toddlers upwards
Legoland Windsor	50 min from Paddington	Perfect from age 2+ — book well ahead
Whipsnade Zoo	50 min drive	Drive-through safari sections, huge open space

Destination	Time from London	Why Go
Bluestone Wales	3 hr drive	First-rate family resort, all weather

The App You Actually Need

TfL Go — live step-free route planning, real-time service updates. Essential for navigating London with a buggy.

What's On 4 Kids London — events and activities across the capital updated regularly.

Happity — find baby and toddler classes and activities near you, searchable by area.

Sources: *TfL Step-Free Guide* · *Royal Parks* · *Natural History Museum* · *Dadsnet* · *Andy's Man Club*