

LGBTI HERITAGE WALK OF SOHO AND COVENT GARDEN

Soho – So Gay!

- In a 60 minute walk from Cambridge Circus to Piccadilly you'll learn
- How Harry Potter and erotic Sapphic dancing are connected
- What gay filmmaker's secret lies in a Soho church
- It was devised and written by Andy Kirby.

Directions - Go back to Shaftsbury Avenue, turn left and head for Cambridge Circus junction.

Stop 1 - Palace Theatre - Maud Allan



Dancer Maud Allan's erotic dance *Vision of Salomé* based on Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, was notorious and she performed it here. In January 1918, Noel Pemberton-Billing MP claimed she was one of 47,000 Britons named as 'sexual perverts' in a German Black Book and were open to blackmail because "in Lesbian ecstasy the most sacred secrets of State were betrayed". He claimed Allan was involved with Margot Asquith, wife of former PM Herbert Asquith. Allan sued him for libel. In June 1918 the defence claimed Allen's lesbianism was proven because she knew the word 'clitoris'. She lost her case and continued performing until 1934, and taught dance at her Regent's Park home where she lived with her secretary and lover, Verna Aldrich.

Directions - continue down Shaftsbury Avenue, turn right into Greek Street opposite fire station.

Stop 2 – Parton Books, Greek Street and Kettners



David Archer ran a bookshop Parton Books here and he gave jobs to many young writers such as Colin Wilson, published Dylan Thomas and supported Colin McInnes, Christopher Logue, and Bernard Kops. He gave away all his money to friends, hard-up writers and his boyfriend, John Deakin, the photographer. When the money was all gone, Archer ended up in a hostel for the homeless, where he died leaving £1 10s. His boyfriend John Deakin was described by George Melly as "a vicious little skunk of such inventive malice and implacable bitchiness that its surprising he didn't choke on his own venom., He worked for Vogue and made many iconic images of Soho's luminaries. Kettners' over the road when a restaurant was a favourite of Oscar Wilde.

Directions - Go back to Shaftsbury Avenue, turn right, look for Dean Street on right.



This was a gay pub for many years. In the eighties it had hinged cubicles under the benches where homeless rent boys used to leave their possessions between tricks. It was here in January 1981 that serial killer Denis Nilson met an "18 year old blue-eyed Scot" who wore a green tracksuit top and trainers who he invited home for a drinking contest and then killed and dissected. This is thought to be the ninth of 12 young men Nilson killed between 1978 and 1983. He was imprisoned for life and died on 12 May 2018.

Stop 3 – The Golden Lion, 51 Dean Street

Directions - continue into Old Compton Street, turn left

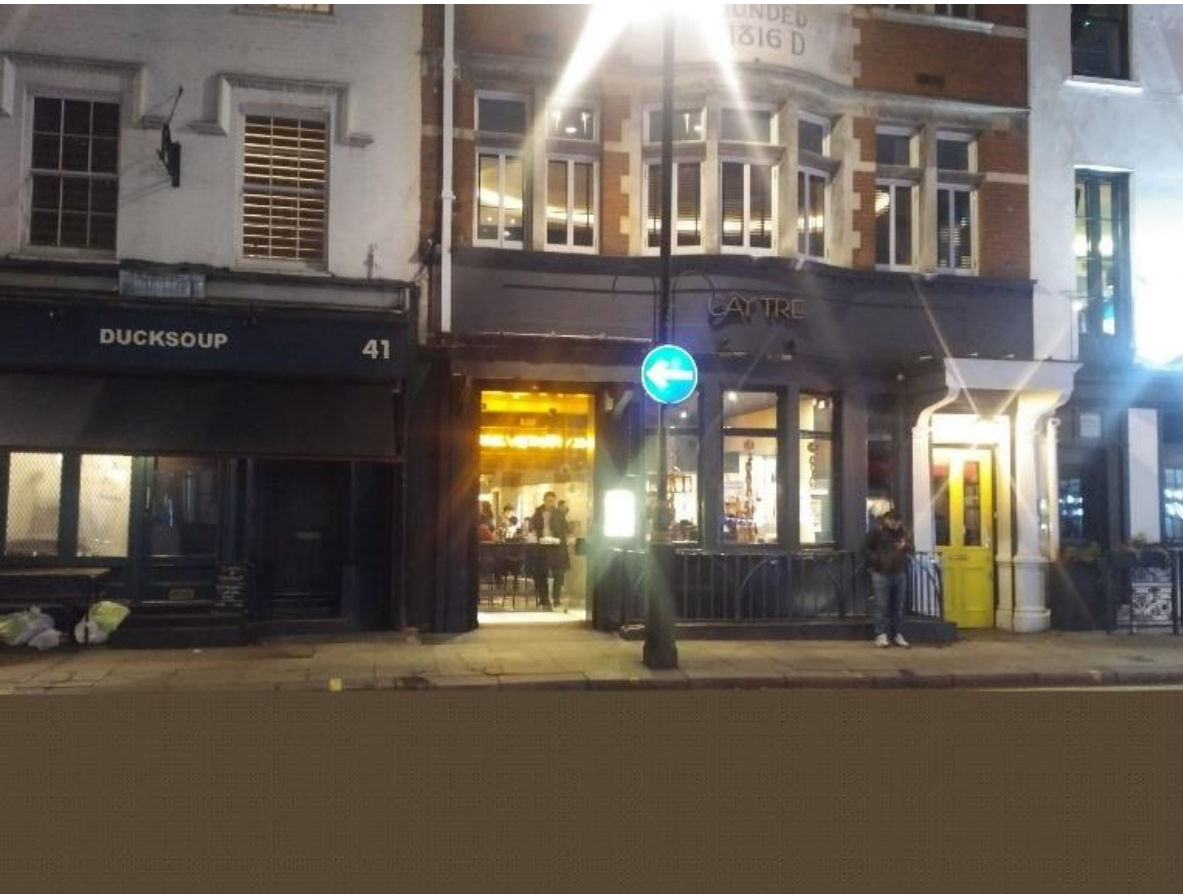


One of the oldest pubs in Soho, this was the scene of one of three nail bomb attacks carried out by a neo-Nazi, David Copeland, on 30 April 1999, killing three people and injuring some 70. The Met Police maintained a crime scene van outside the pub to take witness statements and gather evidence staffed entirely with openly gay and lesbian police officers. There are memorials to the deceased in the pub and the nearby churchyard. The pub was reopened nine weeks to the moment after the bomb went off. Copeland was imprisoned for this outrage and two earlier nail bombings of Brick Lane and Electric Avenue.

Stop 4 – The Admiral Duncan, 54 Old Compton Street

Directions – Go back to Dean Street, turn right look for 41 on right.

Stop 5 – 41 Dean Street The Colony Room



The Colony Room was a haunt of Soho's bohemians from 1948. The owner Muriel Belcher paid Francis Bacon £10 a week and drinks to bring new members in. Her Jamaican girlfriend Carmel brought many gay clients. Gay patrons included Noel Coward, E M Forster, William Burroughs, Tallulah Bankhead, Charles Laughton, and Lionel Bart. Belcher ran the club until her death in 1979 and it closed in 2008. Daniel Farson described "a smallish room with a faded air at the top of some shabby stairs. It was a place where you could drink in the afternoons after the pubs had closed. It was also known as Muriel's. Bacon came to love her and the place and was a habitué for more or less the last 40 years of his life."

Directions – continue, looking for Meard Street on left.

Stop 6 – The Gargoyle and Mandrake Clubs, Meard Street



The Gargoyle was a private members' club on the upper floors of 69 Dean Street on the corner with Meard. It opened on 16 January 1925 attended by Somerset Maugham, Noël Coward, Virginia Woolf and Duncan Grant. It was designed and hung paintings by Henri Matisse and the decor included a fountain on the dance floor, log fires and wooden gargoyle lanterns. The painter John Minton in the 50s would often be found there, accompanied either by sailors or his RCA students. In the 1950s Boris Watson opened the Mandrake, knocking together basements beneath though the address was 4 Meard Street. It later became the Batcave and was frequented by Marc Almond among others.

Directions - continue down Meard Street, left into Wardour, right into Old Compton Street until it becomes Brewer Street. Look on left.

Stop 7 - Knaves Acre St James Residences 23 Brewer Street



In 1742 George Kedger was tried for sodomy with Edward "Ned" Courtney, 18. Ned alleged Kedger had chatted him up at the Yorkshire Grey in Bloomsbury. Ned later lodged with Thomas Orme who had a molly house the Red Lyon in Crown Court, Knaves Acre here. Kedger claimed he visited the place because he went to school with Orme. He had pretended an injury to fend off the insistent Ned. Ned lost his job and allegedly accosted Kedger again threatening "he wanted money and money he would have by hook or by crook and if I would not help him to some he would swear my life away". Kedger was found guilty and afterwards acquitted. Ned is named in other similar cases. Marc Almond lived nearby opposite the Escape.

Directions - Go down Rupert Street, cross Shaftsbury Avenue and look for Dansey Place on left

Stop 8 - Clarkson's Cottage Dansey Place



"Willy" Clarkson (1861 - 12 October 1934) was a British theatrical costume designer and wigmaker who also made disguises for Scotland Yard and for criminals. His premises were at 41-3 Wardour Street and the clock remains. He was an accomplished fraudster, the other 11 of his 12, all insured against fire, burning down. He died in mysterious circumstances while these were being investigated. The public toilet in Dansey Place opposite was called "Clarkson's Cottage" and was notorious for sexual encounters and blackmailer making sexual advances. When the toilet was removed after WWII it was said that an American millionaire had dismantled it and reassembled in his New York garden as he had spent so many happy times there.

Directions – Continue down Wardour Street, left into Lise Street and right into Leicester Place



This church was built in 1861 incorporating the iron dome of Burford Panorama, a tourist attraction. It was wholly rebuilt after WWII and in 1959 gay writer and filmmaker Jean Cocteau painted three murals of the Lady Chapel that depict scenes in the life of the Virgin, Mary. They are the only works of their kind outside of France. The Roman soldiers in the Crucifixion scene have quite distinct and shapely bulges front and back of their uniforms.

Stop 9 – Notre Dame de France, 5 Leicester Place

Directions - Continue down into Leicester Square and turn left to end of square until you can see the theatre.

Wyndham's Theatre hosted plays by queer writers and with queer characters during the late 1950s and 1960s. These included Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* (1959), Joe Orton's *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964) and Mart Crowley's *The Boys in the Band* (1969). The first was the first play in which a coloured man and a queer boy are presented naturally; the second benefitted from a secret investment by the closeted Terence Rattigan and the third was a pioneering American gay play. All three were later filmed. Picture is Joe Orton, Dudley Sutton, Madge Ryan rehearsing "Entertaining Mr Sloane".



Stop 10 –Wyndhams Theatre

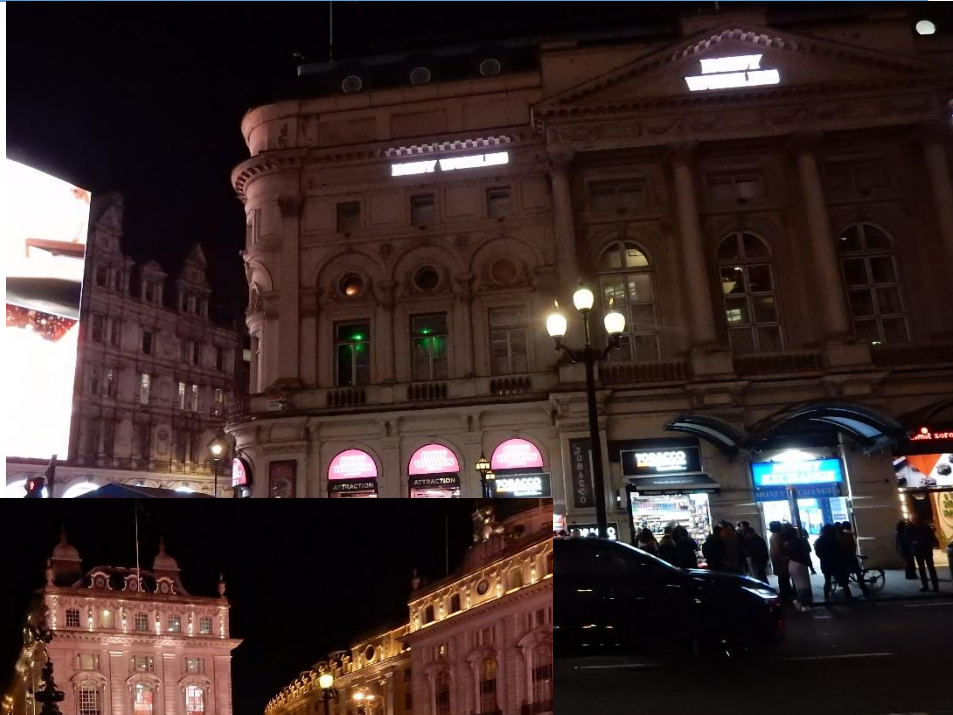
Directions – return to Leicester Square and face the Odeon.



The famous black Odeon is on the site of the Alhambra Theatre. Refurbished Moorishly in 1884 it was where Boulton and Park, better known as Fanny and Stella, used to lean over the balcony to tease the men below. Freddie Atkins and James Burton would pick men up here and blackmail them in their Northumberland Avenue hotel; and it was famous enough to feature in the Victorian gay novel Teleny as a place of seduction. Close by Subway nightclub opened in 1981, claiming to offer London's first American-style cruise club. It had an over-21's and strict men-only door policy and a back room. Leather and uniform were the order of the day. The Comedy Store took over the site.

Stop 11 –The Alhambra and Subway

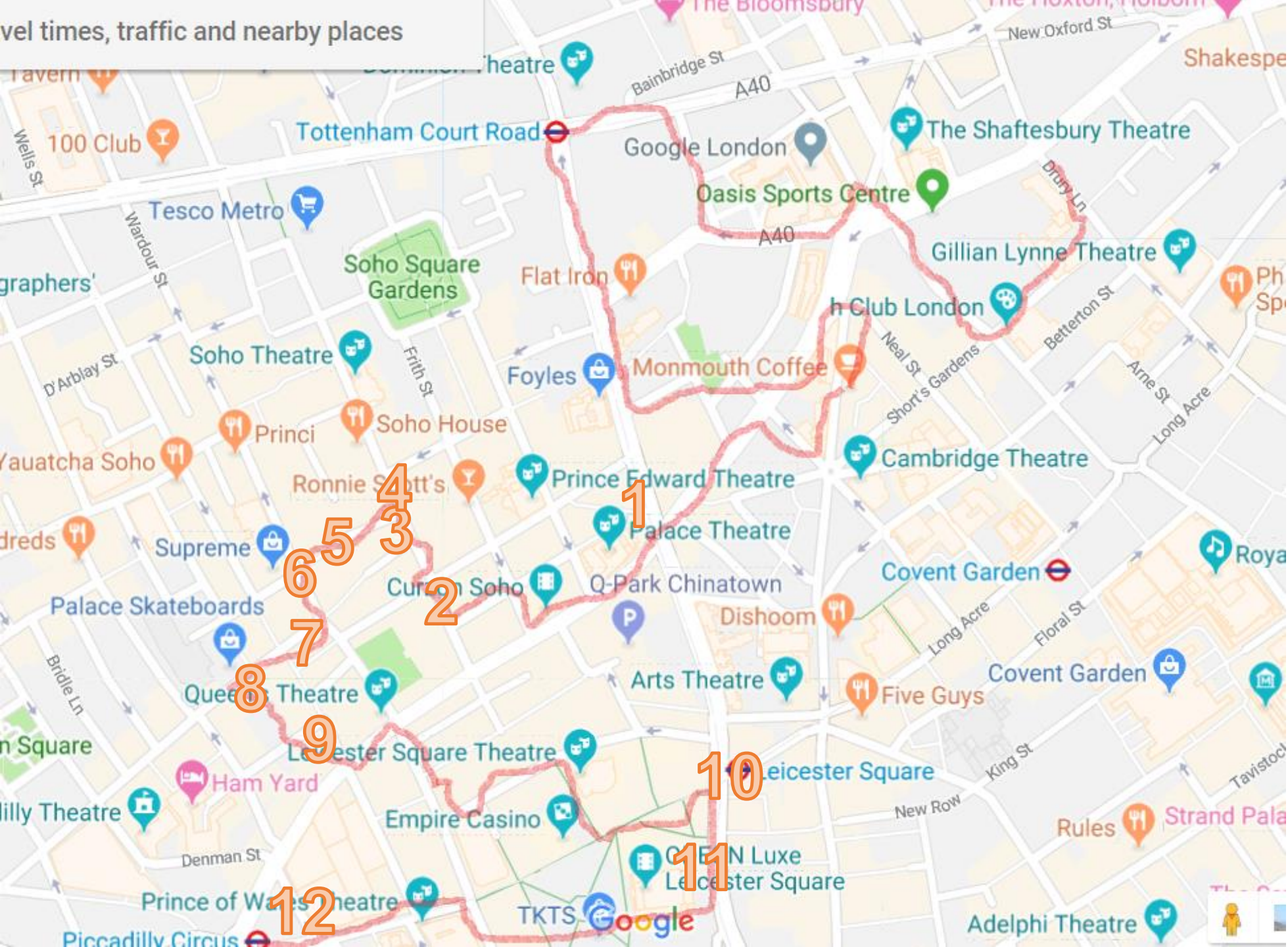
Directions - go to the north side of Leicester Square, turn left and continue to Piccadilly Circus.



Trocadero's Long Bar was a magnificent bar opened by Lyons in 1896 on the corner of Shaftesbury Avenue and Piccadilly Circus. Lyon's ran the successful Lyon's Corner House chain. The Trocadero, as well as many of the Corner Houses, was popular with gay men. It was called "the most famous bar in London... It was all marble with pillars supporting arches down each side and it had a kind of mosaic roof. The bar ran the entire length and there were plenty of tables." Opposite in the 1890s part of the Criterion was discreetly kept free by the staff for single men. Piccadilly Circus was the focus of "Dilly Boys" from the 1890s to the 1980s brought to an end by CCTV.

Stop 12 - Piccadilly Circus, Trocadero, Criterion Bar

vel times, traffic and nearby places



1. Palace Theatre – Maud Allan
2. Parton Books – David Archer, John Deakin
3. Golden Lion – Denis Nilson
4. Colony Room – Muriel Belcher, Francis Bacon
5. Admiral Duncan
6. Gargoyle and Mandrake Clubs – John Minton
7. Knave's Acre
8. Clarkson's Cottage
9. Notre Dame – Jean Cocteau
10. Wyndhams Theatre – Joe Orton
11. Alhambra, Subway
12. Piccadilly Circus, Trocadero