

## WALKING TOURS 4

### South to Soho and Chinatown

Walk down Tottenham Court Road until it reaches the junction with Oxford Street. Turn right onto Oxford Street and stay on the south side. Turn left on to Soho Street, which leads into Soho Square.

On the right in the corner is the French Huguenot Church. While on the left, the red brick tower is part of the Chinese Catholic Church. These two buildings are clues to the history of Soho - home to a rich and diverse culture expressed in some of London's most fascinating buildings, shops, clubs, bars and restaurants. Oh, and the area is renowned (notorious?) as the Capital's red light district.

Crossing the square, there may be a scrum of reporters and camera crews on the left - they will be standing outside the headquarters of the Football Association, waiting for a statement from an England official! Carry on down to Greek Street and note the Gay Hussar, a long-established Hungarian restaurant that's the old home of Britain's left-wing historians, writers and union officials. Also spotted there is Ian Hislop, the Editor of the satirical magazine 'Private Eye' - worth reading to find out what's really going on in the country. Also note 'Milroy's', a shop specialising in whiskies and fine wines, for souvenirs perhaps. Under the arch next to the Pillars of Hercules pub can be spied the signage for 'Borders' on Charing Cross Road, which is famous for its scores of book and music shops.

At the next junction, turn right onto Old Compton Street - London's gay capital. It's a great street for those who like trendy shoes and clothes. For those who haven't breakfasted, or who fancy "elevenses", pop into Patisserie Valerie, which since 1926 has served the finest coffee and pastries. Carrying on to the end of Old Compton Street, there is Wardour Street, the base for Britain's film and TV industries. Sex shops are in plentiful supply around here, but also nearby is the open-air food market in Berwick Street, and in the adjoining streets, tailors, fabric shops and several specialists in vinyl records.

Soho is an area to explore, and even sometimes get lost in its shady alleyways. Going back along Old Compton Street, look out for the turning right on to Dean Street and a pub called the French House. It gained its name as the unofficial headquarters of the Free French during World War II. Carry on down this street and cross Shaftesbury Avenue. Go past the Dutch pub De Hems on the left and you will be entering Chinatown - signposted by the red and gold of its street furniture. The main place for eating and shopping is the pedestrianised Gerrard Street.

Retrace your steps back up to Soho and turn right on to Romilly Street. On the corner is Kettners, one of London's oldest restaurants; it also has a fabulous Champagne Bar. This is a great place to stop with a glass in hand and think about how to spend the evening - at a show, play or opera, dancing, or if it's Summer, just finding a table outside a cafe or restaurant and watching the world go by.