

Best in **CLASS**

By Cathy Senecal

How to spark
a kid's scientific
mind in London



Being together with family in a new place changes the focus, wonderfully and necessarily, from tasks at home to new memories elsewhere. If your family includes older kids, London delivers with so many things to see and do. You can further narrow your focus to expose your teen and preteen to music or drama or, in my teen's case, science.

On a trip with Jasper, when he was 16, he chose places, such as the Science Museum and Tower Bridge, because he was keen on understanding how things worked. We added outdoor activities for a balance of seeing and doing. Read on for these and more ways to spark the interest of a teenager with a scientific mind.

GET THE ADRENALIN FLOWING

The Thames River has all kinds of boat tours, but speed is what it's all about with the Thames Barrier Experience. Besides the wild James Bond music pumping ride, your teen will marvel at the 21 sights you whiz past to reach the barrier, a fascinating piece of modern engineering. Massive silver piers raise and lower 10-metre steel gates that protect London from tidal flooding.

CELEBRATE SCIENCE UNDER ONE ROOF

A natural choice, the Science Museum's interactive possibilities never seem to end. We spent hours here. Start with *Wonderlab: The Equinox Gallery*, where lightning strikes



– literally and maybe figuratively – forces are at play, and everyday science is revealed again and again.

In the timely exhibition on *Our Future Planet*, your teen and preteen will learn about the technology scientists are developing to reverse climate change. Meanwhile, *Ancient Greeks: Science and Wisdom* exposes the debate this civilization underwent to understand the natural world. For more modern science explorations, *Hubble 3D (U)* explores the mystery of space on a massive screen in the museum's IMAX cinema, now with a next generation IMAX laser 4K projector.





FLAME-GRILLED BURGERS AT BOROUGH MARKET



CYCLE TOUR ACROSS LONDON

© FAT TIRE TOURS

DRAW THE LINE AT TOWER BRIDGE

What kid doesn't love a drawbridge? Time your visit to Tower Bridge with a bridge lift – an estimated 800 times a year – and watch the massive decks go up. High-level walkways give you a view down to the river through glass floors. Learn how steam engines worked in the engine room. Visuals and interactive displays make it real by telling the stories of the individuals who "drew" the bridge.

BIKE PAST BUCKINGHAM PALACE FOR A FRESH AIR BREAK

An early morning bike tour quickly put us in a great mood. We pedalled around London for a glorious three hours, seeing places such as Big Ben and Trafalgar Square, briefly but meaningfully. We zipped past the changing of the guards at Buckingham Palace – with a quick stop to peak over the fence – then on we sailed through leafy parks, and along the South Bank. We were as happy as dogs lolling out a car window.

THINK BIG AND SEE A SHOW

Blast the myth that rational thinkers are less creative and delight your logical teen with a ride back in time. *Back to the*

Future: The Musical, an adaptation of the blockbuster film, runs until spring 2022 in London's West End.

When an eccentric scientist builds a time machine – a DeLorean car – teenager Marty McFly finds himself back in 1955, and accidentally changes the course of history. Hilarity ensues as he races to fix the present, leave the past behind and get back to the future.

SUSTAIN YOUR BRAIN

Even young scientists require sustenance. Borough Market and Greenwich Market are great for handheld bites, but for a rich treat, head to SAID London, famous for chocolatey drinks and cakes. If your teen is social savvy, he or she will be snap happy here or at other Instagrammable cafés.

Whether or not Tower Bridge's cogs and Thames' locks inspired my son's pursuit of a master of science degree later on, it exposed him to feats of science and engineering that sparked his mind. Better yet, we created great memories recharging as a family in London.



THINK LIKE A SCIENTIST AT WONDERLAB: THE EQUINOR GALLERY

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