

LONDON'S BEST BITS



By **Liz Tray**
Who knows when to go out,
stay in, get things done.



IF YOU ONLY DO ONE THING...

Pick up a couple of bottles, scale **Primrose Hill** and pretend you're in Blur's 'For Tomorrow' video (kite optional).

Regent's Park Road Primrose Hill, NW1

→ ↻ Chalk Farm.

YOU CAN'T AFFORD to live here, that's the first thing to know. There won't be much change out of £5m for a house, but that doesn't mean you can't strut around like you own the place. Regent's Park Road, which stretches across the bottom of Primrose Hill and finishes as Chalk Farm becomes Camden, is a bit famous for its celeb residents – everyone from Sylvia Plath to Gwen Stefani has shacked up round here. It also has a brilliant villagey strip of restaurants and shops to fall in love with.

There's an optician, chemist, Post Office, hairdresser, florist, pet shop and no less than three wine merchants (Bottle Apostle, Nicolas, Bibendum). Pop by for dinner, then walk to the top of Primrose Hill and marvel at the stunning view of the whole city. London doesn't get much more romantic.

The village vibe even comes with a charming local legend. For decades, a pink-painted house at number 60 had a rocking horse in the downstairs window and urban myth held that it was a condition of sale to keep it on display. Owners in the '90s sold the gaff to Stanley (dad of Boris) Johnson but took the beloved wooden landmark with them. Johnson had another made but did the same when he sold up. The current owners don't have a horse in the window, but they still get Valentine's and Christmas cards addressed to the nag. Aww.

Drink this

A couple of jars at **The Queen's** pub, while taking in its gorgeous balcony view of Primrose Hill.

A pre-Roundhouse gig pint at **The Pembroke Castle**, on Gloucester Avenue a few yards away. It also hosts retro gaming and vinyl nights.

A wake-up shot at **Chloe's Espresso** to steel yourself for some Camden Market shopping – or try one of their fresh juices.

A silky flat white at **The Little One**, a tiny indie café run by coffee nerds. All bakery products are cooked onsite and there's plenty for vegans.

Buy this

A good read from **Primrose Hill Books**, which is crammed with all kinds of rare and out-of-print tomes and supports the local literary community with passion.

Toys and games for little ones, plus party supplies, at **Cachao**.

High-end vintage homewares, lighting and unusual gifts from **Tann Rokka**, which also offers furniture restoration.

Do this

Stretch and sweat out the working week at **Fierce Grace**, the studio that brought bikram yoga to London.

Volunteer at **Mary's Living & Giving Shop** (as in Mary Portas), to support Save the Children.

Check out a gig at **Cecil Sharp House**, the beautiful home of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. It's much, much cooler than it sounds. ■

Eat this

The crisp chicken wing and curried cauli at **Odette's**. Finish off with ten-week caerphilly and pear chutney.

The eggs and hollandaise on sourdough: worth tripping over all the buggies for at **Greenberry Café**.

Black ink tagliolini at **La Collina** on nearby Princess Road. It's cosy, authentic and run largely by women.

Delicious moussaka or lamb souvlaki at **Lemonia**. It's always packed for a reason.

Winning veggie bangers and mash at **Manna**, which just celebrated 50 years in business, round the corner on Erskine Road.



Lemonia

PRIMROSE HILL: DUNCAN MCKENZIE; LEMONIA: MING TANG EVANS

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