

Visit guide: self-directed visits

Who are these materials for?

These materials are for ESOL, EFL, EAL or IELTS tutors who are planning self-directed visits to the museum. We have provided some background information about planning your visit as well as some tips for leading learners around the museum using some of the gallery objects we use on our General Introductory Tour of the Museum.

Why bring learners on a self-directed visit?

A self-directed visit provides you and your learners with the opportunity to take ownership of the content of your visit. You can plan together and choose which galleries to visit and create a visit planned at the pace and needs of your learners.

Be prepared - why is it beneficial to prepare learners in the classroom before your visit?

For many learners it will be their first visit to the British Museum. The success of your visit will depend on how the visit is integrated into your learners' classroom work. Pre-visit preparation is an essential part of the Museum experience.

It allows learners to become aware of:

- the purpose of the visit
- the anticipated outcome of the visit
- the idea that the visit forms an integral part of their language course
- to learn about what you will see beforehand, through pictures, research and discussion
- the ability to take ownership of their visit and plan independent visits

Download the 'Getting the most from your Museum visit pack' for pre- and post-visit activities

What practical arrangements do I need to consider for a self-directed visit?

Before the visit

- **Booking:** All groups over 10 should notify their intention of visiting the Museum via the Ticketing and Information Office. Email tickets@britishmuseum.org stating that you are coming on a self-directed visit.

- **Materials:** ensure that the learners bring writing materials, including a clipboard or suitable hard surface for writing on.
- **Cloakroom:** encourage learners to travel light – there is a charge to use the cloakroom.
- **Travel:** plan your travel arrangements ahead and allow plenty of time in case of delays on the day.
- **Access:** look at the access pages on the website if you have any learners in your group with mobility issues so that you can plan your visit accordingly, wheelchairs can be reserved in advance and there are folding stools in the Great Court (but they cannot be reserved).

During the visit

- **Children:** parents must be responsible for their accompanying children at all times
- **Food:** eating and drinking are not allowed in any Gallery areas
- **Mobiles:** mobiles and other electronic devices must be switched off or put on 'silent' while in the galleries
- **Photography:** photography is not allowed in certain areas of the Museum (usually special exhibitions)
- **Touching objects:** no objects should be touched unless you are specifically invited to do

On arrival at the Museum

- **Toilets and cloakroom:** Allow time for a toilet stop and bag deposit (there is a small charge at the cloakroom)
- **Maps:** Museum Maps for are available the learners from the stand next to the Information Desk (donation suggested).

How much do I need to include in a visit to the Museum?

- Remember - less is definitely more!
- Be guided by how much you think your learners can take in during the visit, and select accordingly.
- Use the 'Suggested visit outline' as a starting point and then take your learners off to explore the Museum.
- Be selective about what to look at on the visit – spending more time looking at a small selection of objects is more rewarding than trying to take in a large selection of objects in less detail.
- Avoid information overload - and leave something for the learners to come back and see on their next visit!

What questions should I get my learners to ask?

Objects provide a great stimulus for creating discussions and making personal connections. Encourage learners to talk to each other using question words – when, where, what, why, how and who. Use some of these questions to help you:

- a) What is it?

- b) When was it made / found / brought to the Museum?
- c) What does the object tell us about life in the past and the people who owned / used it?
- d) Why is the object important?
- e) What is the connection between the object, the country it comes from and Britain?
- f) Why is the object in the British Museum?

What resources are available to support self-directed visits?

- **Suggested visit outline:** In addition to these tutor notes, there is a 'Suggested visit outline' with a selection of suggested Galleries to visit to introduce your learners to the Museum and key information and key questions on selected objects for learners to consider.
- **Suggested galleries to visit:** whilst many learners are interested in looking at objects from their own countries and cultures, others wish to look at objects from Britain. The British Galleries provide a great resource for learners studying for their Citizenship Test. The Enlightenment Gallery is always a great place to start your visit at the space can give the learners an idea of the Museum c. 1800 and contains objects from all over the world.
- **Explore / the British Museum website:** Explore is a database of 5000 objects from the Museum's collection which can be searched according to culture, gallery, or theme. Use the Museum website to plan a tour around the Museum or visits to specific galleries. Be aware that certain galleries such as the Egyptian galleries on the Upper Floors (Rooms 62-64) get incredibly busy.
- **Worksheets for ESOL learners:** We have also provided some worksheets on Ancient Greece and Persia – allowing learners to compare these two civilisations.
- **Worksheets for schools visits:** some of these can be usefully adapted for ESOL / EFL / EAL / IELTS learners.
- **Multimedia guide:** a multimedia guide to the Museum is available for hire at a cost of £5 per adult or £4.50 concessionary rate.
- **Hands-on desks:** there are a number of hands-on desks around the Museum that your learners can use to find out more about the collection and you can include in your visit. Please bear in mind that space at each desk is limited to the desk is limited and that the learners should go up in groups of 3-4.

Suggested visit outline: Great Court, Enlightenment Gallery, Room 4

Location	Stopping point	Questions	Notes
Forecourt / South Colonnade	Enter the Museum from the South entrance. Encourage the learners to take in the exterior façade of building.	What can you see? What style has the British Museum been built in? Can you see the figures in the pediment (the triangle above the entrance)? Who are they?	The British Museum is built in the neo-classical style. The figures in the pediment represent the Muses.
Great Court	Stand in front of the Reading Room (between the Information Desk and the Kiosk) and look up.	Can you see when the Great Court was opened? What shape is the Great Court? What is the roof made of?	The Great Court is the result of a major restoration 1995 to 2000 Sir Norman Foster is the architect of the Great Court. He also designed the City of London 'Gherkin' + Hong Kong airport. It is the largest covered square in Europe!
The Reading Room	Stand in front of the Reading Room (between the Information Desk and the Kiosk)	Look at the building in the middle of the Great Court. What is it and what was it used for?	The British Library Reading Room was built about 1850. It was in constant use as a library from 1857-1997

			<p>The Room is now used for special exhibitions</p> <p>The first Director of the British Library was Antonio Panizzi – a refugee and from Italy.</p> <p>He retired as Sir Anthony Panizzi</p>
Go to the Enlightenment Gallery (Room 2)	Find the statue of Sir Hans Sloane (it is opposite the entrance to the Gallery)	<p>Who is this man? What is he wearing?</p> <p>When did he live? Where is Jamaica?</p> <p>Why is his statue (bust) in Museum?</p> <p>Who was the King at this time?</p> <p>Can you see any objects from his collection?</p> <p>Does anyone know of Sloane</p>	<p>Sir Hans Sloane was a doctor to the royal household, and to the Governor of Jamaica. He collected many books and other objects from across the world.</p> <p>When he died in 1753, he left his collection to the Government and the Government started the Museum.</p> <p>George II was king when the British Museum was founded – he gave the Royal Collection to the British Museum in 1757.</p> <p>There are lots of objects from Sir Hans Sloane’s collection in the Enlightenment Gallery – some are near the bust, others further away. Key objects include his collecting trays, which are further down the gallery near the objects from the natural world.</p> <p>Sloane Square and Sloane Street were</p>

		Square (named after Sir Hans Sloane)?	named after Sir Hans Sloane whose heirs owned the land in Chelsea. Sir Hans Sloane has a close connection with Chelsea and is buried in Chelsea Old Church.
Enlightenment Gallery (Room 2)	Look for the two plaques about the end entrances / exits to the gallery – these describe the room’s use as the King’s Library	Who did King George IV give his father’s books to? Which two languages are the two plaques in? What is the date on the plaques?	King George III accumulated a huge personal library, which his son King George IV gave to the nation. This collection became known as The King’s Library and is now housed in the British Library. The inscription is in English and Latin. The two plaques at either end of the Gallery, above the doorways, tell us the same thing – but in two different languages. The date is written in Roman numerals. MMDCCCXXIII MDCCC = eighteen, XX = twenty, III = three = 1823
Enlightenment Gallery (Room 2)	Find the replica of the Rosetta Stone	What material is it made from? Encourage students to touch the object. Is this the original Rosetta Stone?	The replica is made of plastic and you can touch this replica. It is mounted on the display mount the original was placed on. The original is now protected in a glass case in Room 4.

		<p>What is the Rosetta Stone?</p> <p>What languages can you see on the Stone?</p> <p>Why is it so famous and important?</p> <p>What is the subject of the text?</p> <p>What does the inscription say on the side of the replica?</p>	<p>The Rosetta Stone comes from Rosetta or Al Rashid in Arabic. It dates from 196BC.</p> <p>The Rosetta Stone is written in three languages – Ancient Greek, Hieroglyphs (Ancient Egyptian) and demotic.</p> <p>It enabled the decipherment of Hieroglyphics because the stone has the same text as the other languages.</p> <p>The text speaks about the achievements of the Pharaoh Ptolemy V; dated 196BC</p> <p>During the late 18th and early 19th century, Britain and France were at war (the French Revolutionary Wars). The British won key victories in Egypt, such as the Battle of the Nile (1798)</p>
Enlightenment Gallery (Room 2)	Ask the learners to look around the gallery and gather them together for a general discussion	<p>What types of objects have they seen?</p> <p>Where do the objects in the Museum come from? Which countries?</p> <p>How many objects do they think are display in the British</p>	The Museum has so many objects (about 8 million) that it can only display a small selection of them.

		Museum (not just the Enlightenment Gallery).	
Go to Room 4	Find the original Rosetta stone	Why is it in a glass case? What kind of glass is it?	It is the most valuable and most visited object in the Museum. The original is housed in bullet-proof glass.