

Clerkenwell Creative Juices

Bring a hearty appetite for Dickens, fresh meat and designer cocktails on this vibrant walk through Clerkenwell's famous markets, historic squares and artistic café culture.

Time

30 mins

Distance

2.2km/1.4 miles

Start

Farringdon Station

Finish

Farringdon Station

Getting there and back

Circle, Metropolitan, Hammersmith & City Line, National Rail, Bus 55, 153, 243

Highlights

- ③ Clerkenwell Green
- ⑤ Exmouth Market
- ⑦ Smithfield Market

Tip

Sample the area's proliferation of good bars and restaurants, notably at Exmouth Market and Smithfield Market



Snapshot of Clerkenwell The quality of the water in Clerkenwell led to the development of local breweries and gin distilleries, which sparked the arrival of slums there by the mid 19th century. Much of the area was destroyed in WWII and it wasn't until the mid 1990s that it became popular again as a magnet for London's design and artistic talent and a young fashionable crowd.

As you exit Farringdon Station, turn left into Turnmill Street and then first right – watch out for the stream of traffic racing down the hill – into narrow **Benjamin Street** ①. The quiet garden on your left was an overflow burial ground for St John's Church. Up ahead on the corner of Britton Street is the somewhat unusual house Janet Street-Porter commissioned from architect Piers Gough. Street-Porter, Vice President of the Ramblers Association, lived in the house from 1986-2001. Walk left along **Britton Street** ② and, a little way along, stop to admire the frieze of the Booth's Gin Factory designed by E Mountford. The quaint looking Jerusalem Tavern on the other side of the street dates back to 1720. Turn left into Clerkenwell Road, cross over at the lights and walk up into **Clerkenwell Green** ③. This richly historic square is lined with notable

buildings, as well as housing many city businesses and a popular watering hole. Look north to see St James' Church dating from 1792. The imposing building on the west side is the former Sessions House dating from the early 18th century, now the London Masonic Centre. At number 37, the Marx Memorial Library has been housed since 1993 in this impressive building, whose history reflects the square's tradition of radicalism. It was also here that Charles Dickens found inspiration for a pickpocketing scene



How do you get to work?
Cycle from Arsenal

Best thing about the area?
A good balance of quality and variety – and interesting people

Favourite place to eat?
The Ambassador

Favourite bar?
The Eastern

Takako Copeland, owner
⑤ Family Tree
Handcrafted accessories,
interior products and stationery
53 Exmouth Market



Clerkenwell Workshops, Clerkenwell Close
Street furniture on St John's Square

described in *Oliver Twist*, when the artful dodger gets the better of Mr Brownlow. Have a wander around the square to take it all in. To skip forward to more recent times, it's worth noting that this was where graffiti artist Banksy unveiled his monument protesting against the British legal system in 2004. The Lesley Craze Gallery housed in Cornwell House, the semi-circular building on the corner, is also worth a look for its contemporary jewellery design. From the Green, walk through

Clerkenwell Close and peak into the Clerkenwell Workshops to see the range of bright, modern office and workshop space that is home to many of the area's craft and design businesses, as well as new media and architectural companies. Note also the

Hugh Myddleton School building ④, now converted into flats, which stands on the site of the Clerkenwell House of Detention, whose cells remain below. Continue up Northampton Road, through Spa Fields and then turn left into the quirky and eclectic **Exmouth Market** ⑤. Here in the centre of Clerkenwell you'll find this pedestrianised street, with its urban village feel packed with lively cafés, bars, restaurants, small designer boutiques, and long-standing traditional shops. If you're in the mood for lunch, here you can find everything from a Michelin starred restaurant to a humble pie and mash café. After the market, walk down Myddleton Street, past the vegetarian café and turn right onto St John Street. Walk down and turn right into Sekforde Street. Look ahead to the white building at the top of the street and you'll see where Charles Dickens used to bank, Finsbury Savings Bank. Continue until you reach Aylesbury Street and turn left and then immediately right through **Jerusalem Passage** ⑥. This would have been a covered way into the Priory of Knights of St John of Jerusalem. Though it was destroyed in WWII, you can see the circular shape of St John's Church from 1140 preserved in



Exmouth Market
Janet Street-Porter House, Britton Street
Smithfield Market

the paving. Try out the strange assortment of chairs littered around the square. Cross over the busy Clerkenwell Road, walk down St John's Lane opposite and out onto St John's Street. Turn right and walk straight down to the end of the road where you'll see the famous **Smithfield Market** ⑦. Meat has been bought and sold at Smithfield for more than eight hundred years, making it one of the oldest markets in London. Famed for its quality, 85.000 tons of produce pass through this market each year including meat, poultry, cheese, pies and savouries. It most likely takes its name from the 'smooth field' on which it was built and before 1868, when the building was designed by Horace Jones, it was a large open space used for public events like jousts, tournaments and executions. Queen Mary I had 300 protestants burned at the stake here earning her the nickname 'Bloody Mary'. If you're in the mood to end your walk with a steak, the excellent pubs and restaurants around the market offer some of the choicest meat in London. To head home, wander down Cowcross Street back to Farringdon Station.