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Hatton Garden: Where London Gets Engaged

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Although Hatton Garden has been the center of London's jewelry industry since medieval times, the treasured spot remains off the tourist circuit map.

If the royal wedding has inspired you to plan a special date of your own, there is a hidden gem in London where you are sure to find the perfect engagement ring: Hatton Garden.

Within the area of just a few blocks there are over 300 jewelry showrooms and workshops, making Hatton Garden the largest cluster of jewelry retailers the UK has to offer. From vintage stones to cutting-edge masterpieces, every style, cut, color and era is represented.

"We're totally divorced from the city," jokes Stephen Berman, the manager at [Arlington & Co.](#), a vertically integrated jewelry shop in Hatton Garden.



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In 1981, [Arlington & Co.](#) made replicas of the famous diamond-and-sapphire engagement ring Prince Charles gave to Princess Diana – the ring that is now on Kate Middleton's finger. Berman says only a handful of the ring replicas were made, and 30 years later he is "glad to say [he] finally sold the last replica."

"The most popular ring is perfectly plain," reports Berman, who says about a third of the guys who come into the showroom are surprising their girlfriends with an engagement ring and are completely "scared stiff" about the process. Still, he believes catching a woman off guard with a ring is the best way to propose. "It's romantic," he says.



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Down the street at the much more contemporary [Nicholas James](#) (pictured above), store representative Stuart

Hutchinson says sales on sapphire engagement rings have boosted 60-70% since Prince William presented Kate Middleton with Lady Di's conventional 18-carat blue sapphire ring that is rimmed with diamonds.

But the organic designs showcased at Nicholas James are anything but traditional. "People see our store and come in if they're looking for something more contemporary," says Hutchinson.



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If you're jewelry shopping for something uniquely London, stop by the not-for-profit showroom [Platform](#) (pictured above), where a team of experts handpicks jewelry from a range of UK designers.

Meri Tukala, a representative from the store, describes the Platform team's taste as "vintage with a modern edge."

She says the busiest time in Hatton Garden is on Saturday, when a surge of couples and unescorted men can be seen "going from shop to shop." Those who stop in Platform have found a good place to start: each showcase is different, allowing ring shoppers to look at a variety of options and get an idea of where to go next if they aren't already sold on a ring.



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Kevin Caruth, the founder of the private tour group [Urban Gentry](#), knows just how daunting the task of jewelry shopping can be; he estimates there are around 125 storefronts and jewelry shops in Hatton Garden, with an additional 200 jewelry workshops and industry-related properties in the area.

If you're interested in buying a piece of jewelry and don't know where to start, consider organizing a tailor-made tour with an insider at [Urban Gentry](#). The guide can do some research on what type of jewelry you are looking for and then introduce you to store owners and help you shop around.

On the other hand, if you're just looking to get to know the history of Hatton Garden, get in touch with the [London Greeters](#). The Greeters are a volunteer team of tour guides who are ready and willing to lead visitors through their favorite neighborhoods – and they are so passionate they do it at no cost.

In the end, if the engagement doesn't end up going as planned, there's a place for that in Hatton Garden, too: [The Bleeding Heart Tavern](#) (pictured below), a French restaurant named in honor of the bloody murder of Lady Hatton in 1626, who is said to have been "torn limb from limb with her heart still pumping blood into the cobblestones" by her jealous lover.

