



ONE WOMAN'S ALTERNATIVE GUIDE TO FEMINIST LONDON

I decided to write this guide to feminist spots in London, as I found it incredibly frustrating trying to find one myself! This one from [London Calling](#) was actually quite interesting and gave me a couple of extra ideas, but it's far from comprehensive. What I set out to do is to highlight the lesser known spaces which are run by and for feminists, and often missed by mainstream guides, even those on feminist spaces.

So I hope you enjoy it and find it useful (and please do send me other ideas if you think I'd missed something important!):

1. **Feminist Library** – I thought it deserved the number one spot, as I spend a ton of my time there, and as I've heard it described to me recently, it's an absolute haven for feminists in London. It is a large collection of feminist literature – and the largest independent one in London – its origins dating back to 1975, the height of the Women's Liberation Movement, commonly known as the second wave in the UK. As it grew over the years, the Feminist Library collections became too big for its own premises to house everything, and [Bishopsgate Institute](#) now holds most of the Feminist Library archival and ephemeral collections, while the [Wellcome Library](#) is home to the Women's Health Library, originally given to the FL after its closure. The FL is much more than just a library, it's also a bookshop, as well as a meeting and event space used by many feminist groups for organising, education, creativity and guilt-free, feminist fun. The Feminist Library also regularly organises feminist tours of the local area.



Theory and fiction rooms at the Feminist Library

2. **Holloway prison** – the recently shut prison, which used to house many famous suffragettes back in the day, is in the process of being transformed. An amazing group of local community activists, **Reclaim Holloway**, came together following the closure, with a mission to transform it into a space that would be worthy of its herstorical heritage, including a space for a women’s building – with services, meeting space, a museum, and more. Aside from their incredibly inspiring campaign, they also organise community events, transforming the open section of the space into a community gathering hub.
3. **East End Women’s Museum** – a feminist-led alternative to more mainstream, institutional women-focused exhibitions, like the suffrage section of the **Museum of London**, **LSE’s Women’s Library** and the linked centenary exhibition or the **Florence Nightingale Museum**. Even though the museum is not yet officially open, it was a massive success story for feminists in London when we heard that they have actually found a space, after a long search campaign. Though the physical museum is still in the making, the group is very busy organising exhibitions around London and community events locally in Barking & Dagenham, so check out their events page for info on all the latest.
4. **Luminary Bakery** – a feminist project as much as it is a bakery. Set up with a mission to empower disadvantaged women, it provides skills and training to women affected by domestic violence, the criminal system, poverty and homelessness.
5. **Tonight Josephine** – a cocktail bar for women, inspired by Joséphine de Beauharnais, an infamous French party girl (and Napoleon, her husband, often gets a mention in her story, but I was in two minds about it), which was seen as very outrageous in her time. Just so happens that it’s also based down the road from the Feminist Library, so you can visit them both on the same day, and maybe even squeeze in a trip down the LSE Women’s Library’s suffrage exhibit or to...
6. **Women’s Art Library** at Goldsmiths University – is part of the academic collection, but staffed by the incredibly knowledgeable and helpful special collections librarian, Althea Greenan. If you give her a call and make an appointment ahead of going, you should be able to get your own private tour of the collection. Also recently partly digitised – you can now download [an app](#) to browse parts of the collections and stories of selected artists.
7. **Her Noise archive** – this one is part of the special collections at the University of Arts. So another one just down the road from the Feminist Library – it seems all the feminist roads lead to it! You can arrange a [visit](#) it by getting in touch by phone or email. Or just browse their extensive online collection if you’re not local.
8. **She Soho** – if you fancy continuing your feminist day into the night, a short bus ride away is She bar and club night in Soho. Open to women and their male guests.
9. **2 Girls’ Café** – lovely vegan food, zero waste. Set up and run by two women on a mission to promote vegan food and local art. Available for events hire too.
10. **Persephone Books** – a hidden gem in the heart of London. This bookstore brings you a range of literature classics written by women. Beautifully packaged too – you can get some gorgeous wrapping paper to take your haul away in, making it the perfect gift shopping destination for feminists.

11. **Chickpea Sisters** – an amazing restaurant and project. Eat and support empowerment of vulnerable women while you're at it.

With no dedicated spaces, but regular events – comedy, gigs, conferences and film – run by women and with women at heart:

1. **Who Run the World** – is an independent, feminist-run live music night, focusing on showcasing women-fronted bands. It doesn't have a dedicated space, so events happen all over London. Celebrating its 3rd birthday this weekend!
2. **BBZ London** – do a similar thing, but with DJs and focusing on women of colour. It's also an exhibition, art show and generally a very cool project highlighting the experiences of women of colour in music.
3. **Debbie** – is a female fronted pop, rock & disco night. Everyone welcome.
4. **Gal-dem** – one of the most inspiring feminist projects on the London scene right now. Primarily a magazine with a focus on women of colour, but also a group that runs events, including exquisite club nights.
5. **Funny Women** – bringing female comedians together and stand up nights for good causes in London and all around the UK.
6. **For Books' Sake** – on a mission of bringing out writing by women. They run regular events, showcasing female writers and writing, in collaboration with some very cool spaces, projects and women.
7. **London Feminist Film Festival (LFFF)** – an annual celebration of feminist films and one of my personal favourite gatherings of the year. With some events happening in between the festivals.
8. **Club des Femmes** – a queer feminist film collective, bringing you a diverse range of feminist films. Work with the London Feminist Film Festival and Rio Cinema, which is also home to the LFFF.
9. **Birds Eye View Film** – runs not just a range of film events, with a focus on women in filmmaking, but also a training programme on bringing female and BAME voices into filmmaking.
10. **Directed by Women** – you could call it a feminist film festival. But they prefer to call it a 'film viewing party', which does make it sound better, doesn't it. Especially considering it's a month-long party!
11. **FILiA** – the biggest, grassroots-led feminist conference in London (this year moving up to Manchester, for the first time), bringing together thousands of feminists from around the globe every October.
12. **WoW London** – the biggest festival focused on women in London. At the Southbank Centre, which is also a frequent meetup space for feminist groups – it's free to use, with cafe and bar space, and a range of creative type activities running in the background (although there's no guarantee you will find a table, as it gets busy, especially on evening and weekends).

Feminist shopping!:

1. **Birdsong London** – ethical shopping, bringing together female makers. Events all around London. Get your wardrobe updated, without guilty conscience.
2. **House of Tammam** – the only 'green' Atelier in London. Eco, vegan, hand made couture and bridal wear.
3. **Bread & Roses** – a Hackney based social enterprise providing flowers and helping refugee women 'flourish through employment', in their own words, which is a really great tagline, if you ask me.

And some not explicitly feminist hangouts that do enough stuff of the feminist persuasion to deserve a spot on the list:

1. **Treadwell's** – the witchiest bookstore in London. It might not be explicitly feminist, but it's a must-see for any women interested in feminism, witches and their interconnected herstories.
2. **The Book Club** – despite the fact that it's not a dedicated feminist venue, it plays host to some great feminist events, including one at which I found out about it – Herstory evenings run by one Alice Wroe of Herstory UK, a former fellow Feminist Library volunteer – and That's What She Said, spoken word nights for and by women.
3. **DIY Space for London** – is not just a feminist space, but it's run by an amazing independent collective of community organisers and activists, and often runs feminist events, including gigs. It is also a part of a larger [network](#) of autonomous social centres in London and the UK, which includes event and meeting spaces,

bookstores, libraries, archives and cafés – many of them with at least a feminist focus in approach, if not an array of feminist events and resources. And it's just a stone's throw away from 2 Girls' Café, and a ton of other fun, cool spaces in Peckham – which is becoming a growing community organising hub for London – such as [The Field](#) and [Bussey Building](#).

4. **Housmans bookshop** – a radical bookseller in the heart of London, it holds one of the largest selection of feminist books of all London bookstores – independent or otherwise. It also holds regular events, many of them feminist, including the opening night of the [Feminist Book Fortnight](#) this year.
5. **Black Cat Cafe** – it calls itself an anarchist cafe, but considering it's got amazing vegan food and a range of feminist anarchist books, I am not surprised that it's a go-to destination for feminists in London and a regular hangout for those based in or around Hackney.
6. **Rio Cinema** – a short walk away from Dalston stations, it has a beautiful history, linked to the local community and London activism more generally. Screens a range of beautiful, independent films, and is also home to the London Feminist Film Festival, and a number of other feminist film events throughout the year.
7. **The Canvas** – probably my favourite cafe in London. Part of the aptly named Love Cafe project. Again, not a specifically feminist venue, but host to a multitude of wonderful, including feminist events.

There is also a growing number of women's members' clubs around London, but, as they are set up by and for moneyed women, these do tend to grab a lot more press attention than any of the ones listed above, so I didn't think they need particular attention here, as I wanted to highlight the often overlooked locations. Not to mention that class is also a feminist issue, if you ask me...

Apart from the currently open spaces, which are happily growing in popularity and number again, with the resurgence of the feminist movement at the moment, there are tons of historical spots worth a visit and guides to the history of women's London, such as [Our Sisters' London](#), a series of walks focusing on women who lived and worked here, which I recently discovered at the Feminist Library, and the more recently published, [Women's London](#). I also recently wrote on my [Herstory Diary](#)blog about the story of the Feminist Library spaces.

SHARE THIS:



RELATED

Bumps and bruises, and learning to love the bumpy road...

Food, Spaces & Feminist Places Herstories

Feminist Spaces in Crisis

Posted on [August 11, 2018](#) by [angelsandwiches](#)

Bookmark the [permalink](#).
