



Credit: Carole Edrich



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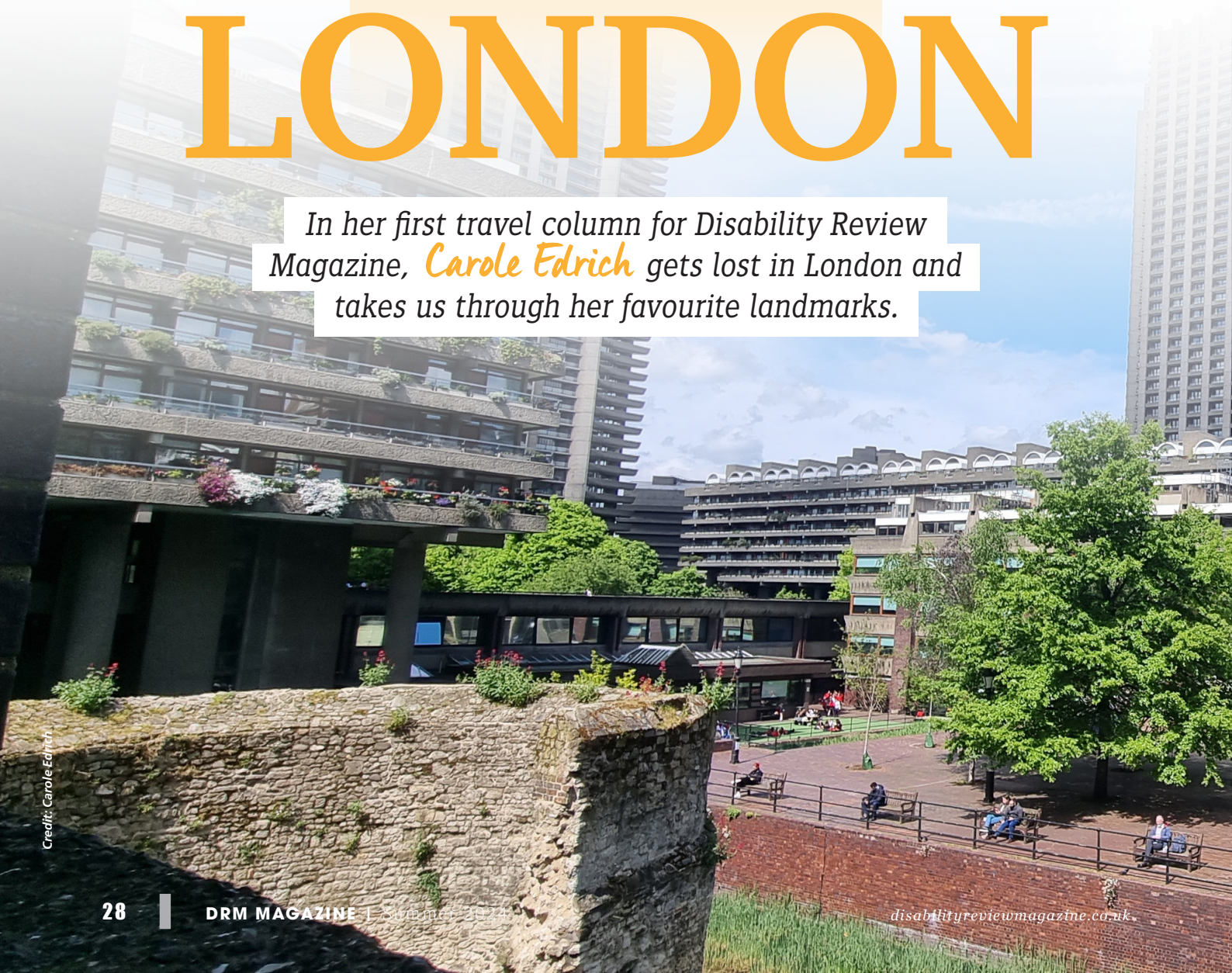


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# *Lost in* LONDON

In her first travel column for Disability Review Magazine, *Carole Edrich* gets lost in London and takes us through her favourite landmarks.



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“To be lost is to be fully present, and to be fully present is to be capable of being in uncertainty and mystery” wrote Rebecca Solnit. I love getting lost, and thought that sharing how I do that in my home town of London would make a good start for my new column. London is a big place. Ten million people speak 300 languages here, and there are more ways to get lost than you could possibly count.

### Canary Wharf

Canary Wharf is super-accessible, full of declarative buildings, interesting businesses, muddling malls, extraordinary eateries and so many people. There's lots to do here, including the annual light festival, live jazz and outdoor film screenings. People watching is immersive here. Everyone rushes around, intent on what they're doing. There are seats aplenty (great for ME flare-ups), lots of security guards for when I need directions and Boisdale hosts great live music for special occasions.

Badiani Gelato is one of the few chains my Italian relatives like visiting. Their new corner shop in Cabot Place is minutes from the Jubilee line, and its comfortable seats make it an ideal place to recharge. Sticklers for the old gelato-making traditions, they change their flavours according to the season. [Boisdale.co.uk](http://Boisdale.co.uk), [Badiani1932.com](http://Badiani1932.com)

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### Somerset House

When not well enough to go abroad I look for equivalent experiences in London. Paro, a restaurant in theatre-land, is an example. A gastronomic ode to Calcutta, it's all sumptuous tigers, hanging plants and happy colours. There's more to explore nearby in Covent Garden, the restaurant is wheelchair accessible, and staff spoil my friend's toddler.

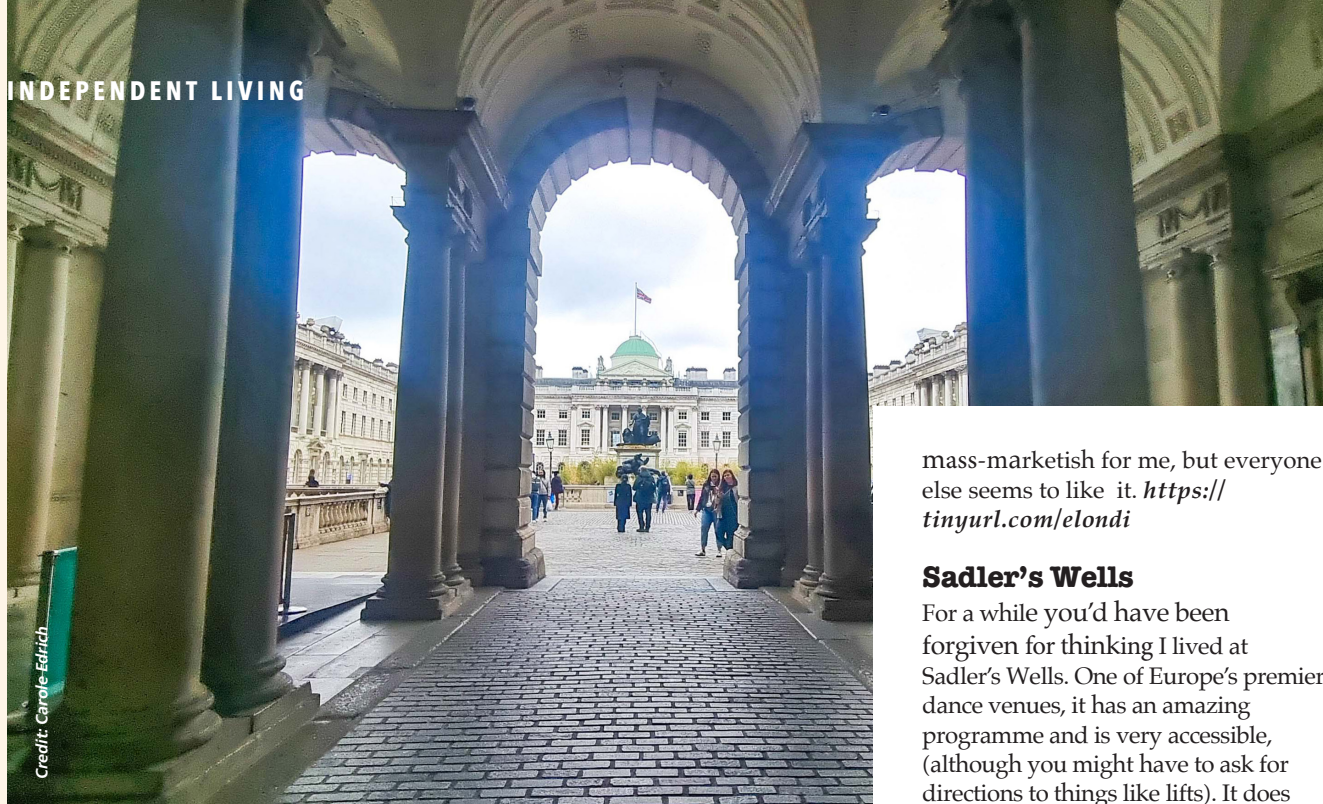
Paro's children's menu includes chicken nuggets made out of proper chicken breast, and adults can loose themselves in the rich flavours and textures of food served in dark, artistic bowls. Try the korma, the Brick Lane Biryani and the Dadi daiquiri and ask for a table that will allow you to people watch through the huge street-level windows. [paroindian.com](http://paroindian.com)



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Walk from Paro towards Somerset House and you'll come to Bush House at the junction of High Holborn and the Aldwych; probably the best place for motion blur photography of London buses. Somerset House is a huge neoclassical complex that overlooks the River Thames. There's a trendy al fresco bar on the embankment side, and a lovely Georgian quadrangle on the other. You can walk from quadrangle to Thames in about 30 steps, yet still get wonderfully lost in the side corridors, especially if on wheels and looking for a short cut from the quadrangle to bar (we've never found one). The quadrangle has an accessible café, summer fountains, festivals, galleries and installations. Before the pandemic we found a totally inaccessible bar too, although it might now have been updated. Avoid at all costs during London Fashion Week unless you like queuing, crowds, tempers and restricted access. [somersethouse.org.uk](http://somersethouse.org.uk)

### The Barbican Centre

I used to love getting lost around the Barbican but sadly know it too well now. It has more than 80 entrances, over 130 different types of residential apartments, was built on a bomb site

and takes up a whopping 5% of the city of London. Its eclectic style of brutalist-but-friendly architecture is madly photogenic as most people know after Harry Styles' video for "As It Was".

The Barbican has the type of programme and all the accessible options and relaxed screenings that you'd expect the largest performing arts complex of its kind in Europe,

along with cocktail bars, places to eat, drink, rest, and hog the wifi.

I'd recommend their curated exhibitions or the resident hip-hop dance theatre Boy Blue Entertainment.

It's close to public transport with good

parking. I'm told everyone gets lost here, but the stewards can help with directions. [Barbican.org.uk](http://Barbican.org.uk)

### Westfield Stratford

Elondi (East London Dining, get it?) serves light, complex, superbly fresh food in perfect sized portions. A little haven in the madness, it doesn't feel East End-ish at all. I love pretending I'm elsewhere in the subtle stylish elegance of this restaurant. You can find it in the Hyatt and you'll love its wheelchair-accessible light airy bar, open air terrace and warmly helpful staff. Westfield itself feels too

mass-marketish for me, but everyone else seems to like it. <https://tinyurl.com/elondi>

### Sadler's Wells

For a while you'd have been forgiven for thinking I lived at Sadler's Wells. One of Europe's premier dance venues, it has an amazing programme and is very accessible, (although you might have to ask for directions to things like lifts). It does really cool touch tours, audio described performances, has a disabled artists development program, and the nicest loos in the building are the wheelchair-accessible ones. [Sadlerswells.com](http://Sadlerswells.com)

### Wanstead

I have great memories of playing on the swings, along the rough paths of the bluebell woods and in the rushing River Roding as a child. I loved getting lost in Wanstead's green spaces. As I got older I liked that it was easy to escape, being conveniently near to Stansted, Southend and London City Airports. Now I like Wanstead for the community, the coffee bars, the urban beach by Whipps Cross pond, and the nearby wheelchair accessible, less muddy paths around Hainault and Epping Forests. When not wandering in foreign climes, you might still find me working at City Place Café. Wanstead's only fully wheelchair accessible café (although other places are partially accessible) has great facilities for children, lovely staff and reliably good food and coffee.

When I'm not even well enough to lose myself in London, I remember what Marcel Proust wrote; "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but seeing with new eyes." I prefer to do both.



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