

London Voices: Simon Lycett

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Continuing our London Voices series where we ask Londoners what makes them love London, Irene Caswell speaks to florist designer Simon Lycett.

Simon Lycett moved to the capital city at the age of 20 with the aim of working at a florist's for six months to develop some "sophisticated London ways", before returning to his home town of Warwick to set up a flower business. As a 'naive kid' Simon worked as a Junior for the late Robert Day at his Pimlico flower shop where he began working within some of London's smartest venues and private homes creating flowers for royalty and celebrities, and with budgets that he says 'made his eyes water'. Following time within Pulbrook and Gould, the revered Sloane Street florist, Simon started his own company specialising in flowers for films and TV. In 2020 he became one of the judges on new HBOMAX TV series, *Full Bloom*.

Simon thanks for agreeing to be one of our London voices, what do you love most about London?

Here you can do almost anything at any time, day or night, and truly be who you want to be. Few people care how you dress, speak or live. London is a wonderful diverse melting pot of amazing people, living in different areas that are like villages, which together make up this incredible capital city.



Floral designer Simon Lycett in one of his creations

When you're away from London what do you miss the most?

I miss the sense of history, the food and the weather, as well as the sense of humour. I am super-lucky to be able to dip into the glamour of Los Angeles and Hollywood, and time spent in the sun there is glorious. However, my eyes soon tire of relentless mirrored monolithic skyscrapers and soulless streets. It is the British weather that produces the incredible flowers and plants, parks and trees that make our city so green and glorious.

What's your top tip for new visitors to London to get the most from a trip to the city?

Grab an Open Top Tour bus to gain an "over-view" of the city before deciding which areas to explore in greater depth. Never underestimate the joy of just wandering and walking the streets and city squares. Having lived here over 30 years there are still new parts of London to discover.



The Tower of London: one of Simon's highlights of London

If visitors only had 24 hours to spend in London what would be your top 'not-to-be-missed' suggestion to see or do?

Walk from Trafalgar Square along Whitehall to Parliament Square to "see the sites". Take in Nelson's Column; Banqueting House at Whitehall, part of the ancient Palace of Westminster where Charles I was beheaded in 1649; 10 Downing Street; and the **Houses of Parliament**. Hop onto a river boat heading up to Greenwich to explore its quaint market, visit the Cutty Sark or walk around the Royal Naval College. Back in the heart of London take a tour of Kensington Palace or dip into the **Victoria and Albert** or the Design Museum.

Other highlights include: the medieval buildings of the **Tower of London** and the glamorous Jewel House; the ever-changing exhibitions at the **Royal Academy of Arts**; and the **Garden Museum** on the south banks of the Thames, for its archive of fascinating garden- and flower-related objects and art works.

Where is your favourite place to eat or drink?

The iconic **Claridge's** because it is quintessentially London. Despite its incredible pedigree and glamorous history it feels both classical and current. It is also relaxed enough to not care about stuffy dress codes and chic enough to feel unbelievably special.

Even for a first-time visitor the welcome from discreetly attentive staff makes you feel like a regular. The food is incredible and Claridge's Bar is perfect for a pre- or post-dinner cocktail accompanied by brilliant people watching.



Royal Opera House is one of Simon's favourite haunts ©2018 ROH. Photograph by Luke Hayes.

Where do you like to go in your leisure time to relax in London?

The **Royal Opera House** for both ballet and opera. Every production is exquisite and nuanced, with sublime music, impeccable stage design and world-class performers. It is also real "old school" London and being there feels deeply spoiling. I am fortunate to work with the house, creating floral décor for special events, spending time backstage amongst the incredible creatives who work there.

Where do you find the best view of London?

Walking or being driven at night across Waterloo Bridge looking to left and right at the city reflected in the Thames. The view takes in the ancient architecture of world famous buildings, including **Tower Bridge**, **St Paul's Cathedral** and **Houses of Parliament**, set amongst the monolithic new generation of landmarks, such as **The Shard**, The Leadenhall Building and **Tate Modern's Blavatnick Tower**.

If you were London Mayor for a day what would you change?

Urban Planting. I would urge every borough to back any and every gardening campaign and encourage "guerrilla gardening" and anything which just encouraged more people to Grow! Anything! Anywhere! From window boxes, pots and hanging baskets, to little gardens planted under trees and on roadside verges.



Simon Lycett

About Simon Lycett

You can follow Simon on Instagram @SimonLycett.

Main image: Simon Lycett with his floral red carpet at RHS Garden Wisley Flower Show near Woking, Surrey. RHS / Luke MacGregor.

Background image: The Great Hall at British Museum photo irene caswell hashtagtravelling