

LONDON AND OTHER BRITISH CITIES

LONDON

London is **the capital** of the United Kingdom. It is also **the largest city in the UK**. Its population is **more than 8 million people**. London is situated on **the river Thames** in **southern England**. It is the seat of the **British Parliament**. The **British Prime Minister** and the **British Queen** live there.

History

The history of London is **almost 2,000 years** old. The **Romans**, who invaded Britain in the first century AD, established a city called **Londinium**. In the third century, the city had **more than 50,000 inhabitants**.

The population became smaller after the **Anglo-Saxon invasion** but the city still remained very important. When **William the Conqueror** and his men became the masters of England in **1066**, they **made London their residence**.

The city grew and in **William Shakespeare's time**, its population was **about 100,000 people**. Like other European cities at that time, it was **not very clean**. There were **a lot of rich businessmen** but also **a lot of poor people**.

In **1665**, there was a huge **plague epidemic** in London. The population of London was **between 350,000 and 500,000 people** at the time. The epidemic **killed one fifth of the people** living in London. In **1666**, the **Great Fire of London** took place. It started in a **baker's shop**. About **one third of London was destroyed** by the fire. It took nearly 50 years to rebuild the burnt area.

In **1800**, London had **more than 1 million inhabitants**. It was the **centre of the Industrial Revolution** and people from other parts of England continued moving there. During the **19th century**, it became **the largest city in the world**. In 1901, **4.5 million people** lived there (6.5 million if you count the suburban areas).

Famous places

Buckingham Palace

Buckingham Palace is **the London residence** of the **British king or queen**. It was built in the 19th century. A popular tourist attraction is the **Changing of the Guard**. The guardsmen wear **red coats** and **silly large hats**. Tourists can also go inside Buckingham Palace when the Queen is away.

The Tower

The Tower of London is a **castle** in London. It was used as a **prison** for a long time. Some of the most famous prisoners who were kept there are for example **Elizabeth I** and **Guy Fawkes**. You can see the **Crown Jewels of England** in the Tower.

The Tower Bridge

The Tower Bridge is a bridge across the river Thames located **near the Tower of London**. It is a symbol of London. It was built at the end of the 19th century. There are **two tall towers** on each side of the bridge. When a large ship is coming, the bridge **opens in the middle**.

St Paul's Cathedral

St Paul's Cathedral is **the largest and most famous church in London**. It was built after the Great Fire of London and it was designed by **Sir Christopher Wren**. For a long time, it was **the tallest building in London**. The wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer took place there.

Hyde Park

Hyde Park is the most famous park in London. There are **two lakes** and **a lot of trees**. You can **have a picnic** in this park and **large concerts** sometimes take place there. The most famous place in Hyde Park is the **Speaker's Corner**. You can go there and say anything you want but you must not insult the Queen.

London Eye

London Eye is one of London's most famous tourist attractions. It is **the tallest observation wheel in Europe**. It was opened in **2000** and you can see all of London from its top. The ride takes **30 minutes** and you often spend more time in the queue for the ticket than in the glass capsule itself.

The British Museum

The British Museum is **one of the largest museums in the world**. It is full of the things that the British stole from the countries they invaded. You can see **Egyptian mummies, Greek sculptures, Chinese pottery**, and other old things there.

Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament

Big Ben is the nickname of **a famous bell** located inside the Elizabeth Tower in **the Palace of Westminster**. The sound of the bell can be heard **before the beginning of the news on the BBC**. During World War Two, it was the magic sound of freedom for people living in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Piccadilly Circus

Piccadilly Circus is **one of the two most famous squares** in London. The word square is not really the right one because the place, as its name suggest, is rather **circular**. There are a lot of **neon signs** and a **fountain**. The **Piccadilly Underground Station** is right under the Piccadilly Circus.

Trafalgar Square

Trafalgar Square is named after the **Battle of Trafalgar** where **Horatio Nelson** beat the French and the Spanish during the **Napoleonic Wars**. In the middle of the square stands **Nelson's Column**, a 50 metres tall monument with a statue of admiral Nelson at the top.

Westminster Abbey

Westminster Abbey is the place where most **British kings and queens** were **crowned** and the place where they are **buried**. Many other famous British people are buried there. One part of the abbey is known as the **Poet's Corner**. Famous British writers are buried there or at least have there a monument or a memorial floor stone.

Tate Gallery

There are actually **two Tate galleries** in London – **Tate Britain** and **Tate Modern**. In Tate Britain, you can see some of the best pictures painted by British painters from about 1500 up to the present. There are pictures by **John Constable, Thomas Gainsborough, Joshua Reynolds**, and others. In Tate Modern, you can see modern pictures from many countries.

Covent Garden

Covent Garden is a part of London famous for its **markets and shops**. You can buy souvenirs and hand-made things there. The area is also the location of the **London Transport Museum** and the **Royal Opera House**.

10 Downing Street

10 Downing Street is the residence of the **British Prime Minister**.

221B Baker Street

221B Baker Street is the address of the fictional detective **Sherlock Holmes**.

The City

The **historic centre of London** is known as the City. Many famous monuments, for example **St Paul's Cathedral**, are located there. The City is **the financial centre of Britain** and one of the most important business areas in the whole world. The **Bank of England** is located in the City.

East End

The East End of London was traditionally a **poor area** where **people who worked with their hands** lived. It is the place where many **immigrants** who came to Britain settled. The area was rebuilt after World War Two and it is not as overcrowded as it used to be.

West End

The West End is the part of London famous for its **businesses, theatres, shops, and other places of entertainment**. Famous shopping streets such as **Oxford Street, Regent Street, and Bond Street** are located in the West End.

Transportation

London is famous for its **red buses** with two floors, which are called **double-deckers**, and its **black taxis**. They are very popular with tourists. If you want to become a taxi driver in London, you have to pass a hard test and **remember about 25,000 streets**. London is also the home of **the oldest underground system in the world**. Londoners call it **the Tube**. There are also **trams, trains, and river buses** – ships that travel on the Thames. You can see a lot of the most famous places in London from the river. You can also **hire a bike** in London or you can **just walk**. There are **several airports** in London. The largest of these airports is **Heathrow**. It is one of the busiest airports in the world.

Shopping and food

There are many famous shops and shopping centres in London. One of the most famous shopping streets in London is **Oxford Street**. There are **more than 300 shops** there, including the legendary **Selfridges department store**. Another famous department store in London is **Harrods**. It has **seven floors** and **330 departments**. There are also 27 restaurants. Another London area with a lot of expensive shops is **Mayfair**.

London is a place where you can find **food from all over the world**. Like elsewhere in Britain, **Indian restaurants** are especially popular. There are also many **traditional English pubs**.

Sport

There are **six Premiere League football clubs** in London – **Arsenal, Chelsea, Crystal Palace, Fulham, Tottenham, and West Ham**. David Beckham, one of the most famous footballers in the world, was born in London.

The third **Olympic Games** place took place in London **in 1908**. The Summer Olympic Games took place in London again **in 1948 and in 2012**.

Tennis is also a very popular sport in London. The oldest and most famous tennis competition in the world, **Wimbledon**, takes place in London.

EDINBURGH

Edinburgh is the **capital city of Scotland**. Its population is **almost half a million people** – it is the second largest city in Scotland. It is the seat of the **Scottish Parliament** and the **Bank of Scotland**. One of its nicknames is "**the Athens of the North**" because it used to be one of the centres of European intellectual life. Famous thinkers such as **David Hume** and **Adam Smith** lived and taught there.

The skyline of Edinburgh is dominated by the **Edinburgh Castle** which used to be the home of Scottish kings and queens. The city is also famous for its festivals. **The Fringe** (= the Edinburgh Festival Fringe) is **the largest arts festival in the world**. Another famous festival that takes place in Edinburgh is the **Edinburgh International Festival**.

CARDIFF

Cardiff is the capital city of Wales.

BELFAST

Belfast is the **capital city of Northern Ireland**. Its population is **almost 300,000 people**. It is famous for **shipbuilding** and **fighting between Catholics and Protestants**. The **Titanic** was built in Belfast.

BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham is the **second largest city** in Great Britain. **More than 1 million people** live there. It is the centre of the part of England known as the **Midlands**. The city became important during the Industrial Revolution. There are **more than 500 parks** in Birmingham. The two most famous football teams from Birmingham are **Aston Villa F.C.** and **Birmingham City F.C.** People from Birmingham are called **Brummies**.

GLASGOW

Glasgow is **the largest city in Scotland** and **the third largest city in the United Kingdom**. The population of Glasgow is **about 600,000 people**. The city was really important during the Industrial Revolution, especially because of the shipbuilding which took place there.

LIVERPOOL

Liverpool is a large city in **North West England**. About **half a million people** live there. The city is famous as the birthplace of **the Beatles** – one of the most overrated music bands in history. The most famous **horse race** in Europe, **the Grand National**, takes place in Liverpool. The city is also the home of **the oldest black community** in Britain and **the oldest Chinese community** in Europe.

MANCHESTER

Manchester is a large city in northern England. Its population is **about half a million people**. During the Industrial Revolution, it was one of the centres of the British **textile industry**.

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

Oxford and Cambridge are rather small cities, by British standards. The population of Oxford is **about 150,000** and the population of Cambridge is **about 120,000** people. However, they are very important because of their universities. The **University of Oxford** is **the oldest university in Britain** and the **University of Cambridge** is **the second oldest university in Britain**. They are **among the ten best universities in the world**. Oxford is situated on **the river Thames**. The part of Thames that flows through Oxford is called the **Isis** (for real). Cambridge is situated on **the river Cam**. The architecture of both cities is really nice and they look like places from some fairytale.

YORK

York is a historic city located in the **north of England**. It is about halfway between London and Edinburgh. The city of York is famous for its **cathedral**, which is called **York Minster**. It is **the largest Gothic church** in England.

BATH

Bath is a historic city in **southwestern England**. It is the most famous **spa resort** in Britain. The city is famous for its **hot springs** and its **18th century architecture**. The writer **Jane Austen** lived in Bath for some time and some of her book take place in this city.

WORCESTER

Worcester is a city situated **about 50 kilometres from Birmingham**, not very far from Wales. The word "Worcester" is pronounced "Wooster", not "Worechester", as Czech people who have not been there tend to do. The population of Worcester is **about 100,000 people**. It is a nice and green city situated on **the river Severn**.

The **Worcester Cathedral** is amazing and the people from Worcester are **generally friendly**. If you are a **farm worker** there, you can **go to the toilet at the local university or at the municipal library**. It is great because the toilets provided by some farms are absolutely inadequate. The **university toilets are better than the library toilets** and there are **more of them**.

About **ten years ago**, there lived a **Czech woman** who was **responsible for dealing with Czech people** working on the **Temple Laugherne Farm** in Worcester. Maybe she still lives in Worcester, maybe she has returned home. I will not write her name here but her initials are **Š. P.** I would like to warn you: she is an **absolute bitch**.

This overview is largely based on the following articles and websites:

- <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/london-population/>
- <https://www.londoncitybreak.com/history>
- <https://www.britannica.com/place/London>
- <https://www.britannica.com/place/London/History>
- <https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/shakespeares-london>
- <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/visit-the-city/our-history/Pages/timeline.aspx>
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- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tower-of-London>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_of_London

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_Bridge
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Paul%27s_Cathedral
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyde_Park,_London
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Ben
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palace_of_Westminster
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piccadilly_Circus
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Trafalgar
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- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nelson%27s_Column
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Abbey
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- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tate>
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