

BRITISH MUSEUMS

The national museums and art galleries in London contain some of the most comprehensive collections of objects of artistic, archeological, scientific, historical and general interest. They are the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum, the National Gallery, the Tate Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the Geological Museum, the Natural History Museum.

The British Museum is the world's largest museum and was built in 1852.

It is officially described as being the Natural Library and Museum of History, Archaeology, Art and Ethnography. Its magnificent library has the right, by law, to one copy of every publication printed in Britain.

Among the treasures are the Rosetta Stone, found near the mouth of the Nile in 1799, which became the key to Egyptian hieroglyphs, the famous Marbles from the Pantheon at Athens, the first Egyptian and Greek manuscripts, Roman jewelry and many other rare historic relics.

The British Museum has a wonderful art gallery. It has unique collection of sculpture, ceramics, drawings and paintings of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese, Japanese and many other peoples.

Besides, the British Museum is a great scientific institution, generally known as Natural History Museum.

The Natural History Museum deals with past and existing animal and plant life and the crust of the earth in relation to life and fossil remains. The building was designed by Alfred Waterhouse and opened in 1881. The Dinosaur Gallery shows immense models and actual fossilized skeleton of many prehistoric monsters, reptiles and birds. The Whale Room has a full-size cast of a 90-foot long blue whale. The museum's research work is important - its reference library is one of the finest in the world.

The Science Museum contains discoveries and inventions through the centuries, including a 1907 Rolls Royce, the original vacuum cleaner (it was horse drawn) and a "Difference Engine" – an assemblage of wooden cog-wheels, built in 1820s, that was the fore-runner of the modern computer. Gas Gallery tells the story of gas production from the earliest times to the modern North Sea drilling platform Techniques. The Children's Gallery, with its dioramic history of the development of transport and power throughout the ages, fascinates parents as much as children/

The Geological Museum is primarily a museum for the students of geology and mineralogy, but of interest to anyone who wishes to understand the scenery of the world.

The major exhibition is "The Story of the Earth" relating the history of our planet from its cosmic origins to the earth as we know it today.

The National Gallery includes more than 2000 masterpieces, among them paintings by great British painters Hogarth, Constable, Turner, The portraits by Gainsborough, Reynolds as well as the world's greatest masters – Michelangelo, Raphael, Rembrandt, Holbein, Goya and many others. All great schools of painting are represented here: Italian, Spanish etc. There is also the National Portrait Gallery here.

The Victoria and Albert Museum has accumulated treasures and curiosities from all over the world.

Madame Tussand's is the world's best known waxworks museum. It is now London's most visited tourist attraction. The number of wax figures in the current exhibition has topped 400. Each one takes about six months to make at a cost 32000, according to the statistics. You can see the infamous chamber of Horrors there too.

The Tate Gallery houses the nation's major collection of British paintings of all periods, the nation collection of modern foreign paintings and the national collection of modern sculpture both English and foreign. It got its name from Henry Tate who offered his gift of 65 paintings and 2 sculptures to the nation in 1890. At present the collection contains over 4000 British paintings and drawings (by Turner, Gainsborough and many others), over 350 modern foreign paintings.