

London

- London is situated in south-east England along the River Thames. It is the capital of England and of the United Kingdom. Its population is about 8 million people.
- London's climate is mild and damp
- London is divided into 33 political units - 32 boroughs and the City of London.
- London is a commercial, political and cultural centre.
- It is the seat of the British royal family, the Government and the Supreme Court.
- There are two cities in the centre of London: - the City of London
- the City of Westminster.

The City of London is the traditional heart of London and it is the oldest part of the city. The City of Westminster is the seat of the government. East of the City of London is the East End, where the docks are situated and west of the City of London there is the West End which is famous for its shops, cinemas and entertainment.

Places of interest in the City of London

- There are lots of interesting sights in London.
- In the City of London, which is known as the „City“, we can find these interesting places:
- **Threadneedle Street** – it is the financial area in London and here we can find the Bank of England, the Royal Exchange and the Stock Exchange. Not many people live here but a lot of them commute here every day.
- **Barbican centre** – it is the only residential area of the City.
- **Saint Paul's Cathedral** – it is the most famous cathedral which was built by Christopher Wren. It was built to replace the original cathedral which burnt down during the Great Fire of London in 1666. This cathedral is famous for its Whispering Gallery with its interesting acoustics. When standing on this gallery you can hear what is whispered against the wall on the opposite side. During the WWII the cathedral was damaged by bombs.
- **Tower of London** – it was built in the 11th century and it served as the home of the royal family, as the prison, execution site, royal mint, royal zoo and the observatory. Now it is a museum where people can see the Crown Jewels. The tower is guarded by the Yeomen Warders (called Beefeaters) who still wear the uniform worn at Tudor times. Six ravens are kept here to protect the whole Kingdom. The legend says that the Kingdom will stop existing if the ravens leave the Tower.
- **Tower Bridge** – it stands next to the Tower of London. It was built in the 19th century. The bridge opens in the middle and can let large ships to go through it.
- **The Monument** – it is not far from the Saint Paul's Cathedral and it commemorates the Great Fire of London in 1666. It is a column where there are more than 300 steps which lead to a terrace where people can have a beautiful view of the city.

The City of Westminster and its places of interest

- **The Houses of Parliament** – it is the political centre of the United Kingdom, it is the home of the UK Parliament. The UK Parliament consists of 2 parts – the House of Commons (green leather benches) and the House of Lords (red leather benches). People can visit the House of Commons and listen to the debates of the members of the Parliament (MPs).
- **Big Ben** – it is the name of the bell of the clock on the Houses of Parliament. The bell is named after Sir Benjamin Hall, who was one of the ministers and who had it made. Big Ben was the nickname of Sir Benjamin Hall, as he was very tall and stout. The sound of the bell is well known as it is used as the BBC time signal

- **Westminster Abbey** – it is the most important church in the country. It is the place of royal weddings, royal coronations and burials since the 11th century. Famous British writers, poets and dramatists are buried here in the Poets' corner.
- **Buckingham Palace** – it is the permanent residence of the British royal family in London. It was built in the 18th century by the Duke of Buckingham and the first monarch who lived here was Queen Victoria in the 19th century. Since 1993 some parts of the Buckingham Palace are open to public. Outside the Buckingham Palace the Changing of the Guard takes place. In front of the Buckingham Palace there is Queen Victoria Monument. There are 775 rooms in Buckingham Palace and 188 out of them are for servants. In the Palace there is also a chapel, post office, swimming pool, a dining room for servants and a doctor's surgery and a cinema. There are more than 350 clocks and watches and 2 full-time clockmakers who look after them. The monarch welcomes here state visitors, new ambassadors, chosen celebrities and they also organize a famous Garden party.
- **10 Downing Street** – it has been the official residence of the Prime Minister since the 18th century.
- **11 Downing Street** – it has been the official residence of the Minister of Finance
- **221B Baker Street** – the home of fictional character Sherlock Holmes
- **Trafalgar Square** – it is from the 19th century and it commemorates the naval victory of Admiral Nelson over the French and Spanish navy at Spanish Cape Trafalgar in 1805. In the middle of the square there is Nelson's Column with his statue on the top. There are also two fountains around the Column, some other monuments and a lot of pigeons ☺ During Christmas there is the Christmas tree in this square. The Christmas tree is given to the British people by people from Norway, they express their gratitude for the British help during the Second World War
- **National Gallery** – it is in the Trafalgar Square. There is the greatest collection of paintings from the 13th century up till now. Next to the National Gallery there is the National Portrait Gallery.
- **Piccadilly Circus** – it is not far away from Trafalgar Square, it is the busiest and noisiest place in London. 3 underground lines cross under this square. It is also famous for entertainment – night clubs, theatres, restaurants, cinemas, shops.
- **Covent Garden** – it used to be a vegetable and fruit market which was later rebuilt into a covered shopping area.
- **Soho** – the main entertainment attractions are placed here. Built in 17th century, used as residential areas, now home to shops, theatres, street entertainment
- **Oxford Street in West End** – the busiest shopping area with large department stores such as Selfridges, John Lewis and Marks and Spencer.
- **Knightsbridge** – another busy shopping area with Harrod's department store
- **Madame Tussaud's** – it was founded in 1835 by French wax sculptor Marie Tussaud. It displays waxworks of famous and historical figures. It has its subsidiaries in Prague, Vienna, Amsterdam, Istanbul, Sydney, Hong Kong....
- **Royal Albert Hall, Barbican Hall** – they are some of the classical music centres in London. People interested in pop or rock can visit London Arena in Docklands or Wembley Arena.
- **Royal Opera House**
- **National Theatre**
- **British Museum**
- **British Library**
- **The Victoria and Albert Museum**
- **Tate Gallery**
- **London University**
- **Wembley** – sports (stadium) and cultural centre
- **Wimbledon** – the place of the famous Tennis Championships
- **Stamford Bridge** – stadium of FC Chelsea
- **St James's Park** – it is the oldest park in London.

- **Hyde Park** – the most popular park among tourists. Famous for **Speakers' corner**, which is the place where everyone can speak in public without the threat to be arrested for their opinions
- **Kensington Gardens** – here we can find Albert Memorial
- **Kensington Palace** – some of the rooms are open to public, tourists can see the private rooms of Queen Victoria and the collections of uniforms, court dresses and even the wedding dress of Princess Diana.
- **Regent's Park** – London's most elegant park with beautiful gardens, lakes and a zoo.
- **London Eye** – it is a giant wheel which is situated on the bank of the River Thames. It is the tallest wheel in Europe. It has 32 air-conditioned passengers cabins from which you can have a beautiful view of the city. It was built in 1999.
- **The Gherkin**, officially known by its street address 30 St. Mary Axe, is a 41 story skyscraper built in 2004 in the financial center of London. The building received several awards for its unique design.
- **The Millennium Bridge** was built in 2000 across the river Thames. The pedestrian bridge connects the St. Paul's Cathedral with the Tate Modern Gallery on London's South Bank.
- **The Globe Theatre** - it is a reconstruction of the original 16th century theatre building which was known for its connection with Shakespeare and burnt down in 1613.

Transport in London

- The Port of London on the River Thames is said to be one of the best in the world.
- **riverbuses** – they are the latest means of transport, they run on the river Thames between Chelsea and Docklands and City Airport.
- There are 6 **airports** in the area of London. Inside London there are 3 airports (**Heathrow**, **London City** and **Biggin Hill**). Outside London there are 3 more airports (**Gatwick**, **Stanstead** and **Luton**). The largest airport is Heathrow, the second largest is Gatwick, the third one is Stanstead, the fourth one is Luton and the smallest ones are London City and Biggin Hill.
- **Underground** – the quickest and cheapest means of transport in London
- There are 3 types of buses: **red double deckers**, **quick single deck Red Arrow buses**, **Green Line buses** (that connect the City with many interesting places in London area).
- **Taxis** – famous black taxis
- **Coaches** – long distance buses which leave from Victoria Coach Station.
- **Hop-on hop off sightseeing buses** - these buses cover five different routes with more than 60 stops. You can hop on and off as many times as you want, giving you the chance to explore areas and attractions in more detail.

London's environs

- **Greenwich** – here people can visit the Old Royal Observatory and it is the place where there is the Prime Meridian which is marked by metal strips on the ground.
- **Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew** – situated between Richmond and Kew, there are many special plants in greenhouses and trees. These gardens were given on the list of UNESCO sights in July 2003.
- **Windsor Castle** – it can be found on a chalk hill above the river Thames. It is the largest inhabited castle in the world. It was originally built in the 11th century but nothing remained as it was made of wood. During the centuries the castle was rebuilt and made of stone and now it is one of the official residences of the British royal family
- **Eton College** – it is said to be the most prestigious English Public school, it was founded in the 15th century. It's a pre-university boarding school for boys near Windsor. Prince William and Prince Harry studied there.