



The British Museum was founded in 1753 and opened its doors in 1759. It was the first national museum to cover all fields of human knowledge, open to visitors from across the world.

Enlightenment ideals and values – critical scrutiny of all assumptions, open debate, scientific research, progress and tolerance – have marked the Museum since its foundation.

The Museum is driven by an insatiable curiosity for the world, a deep belief in objects as reliable witnesses and documents of human history, sound research, as well as the desire to expand and share knowledge.

In 1753, an Act of Parliament created the world's first free, national, public museum that opened its doors to 'all studious and curious persons' in 1759. Initially, visitors had to apply for tickets to see the museum's collections during limited visiting hours. In effect, this meant entry was restricted to well-connected visitors who were given personal tours of the collections by the museum's Trustees and curators.

From the 1830s onwards, regulations were changed and opening hours were extended. Gradually, the museum became truly open and freely accessible to all and we now welcome more than 6 million local and international visitors to the museum every year. Our extensive touring exhibition and loans programme means that millions of people also see the museum's collections at venues across the UK and worldwide.