

Paddington Station: London's Railway Cathedral [B2]

Costruita seguendo il progetto dell'ingegnere più famoso della Rivoluzione Industriale, l'importanza simbolica di questa stazione londinese per la società dell'epoca l'ha portata ad essere paragonata alle cattedrali del Medioevo. Appena rinnovata, la sua attività frenetica non si ferma mai.



When Paddington Railway Station [opened](#) in 1854, it was called a modern [marvel](#). Its designer, the engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, was a giant of Victorian society, although in reality he was [tiny](#) and tried to compensate for his diminutive [height](#) by wearing enormous hats. Paddington was one of the London stations built during the 19th century's [Golden Age of Steam](#), which began in the 1830s. Connecting the capital with the city of Bristol to the west, it was considered the [finest](#) station in London.

[STUNNING ARCHITECTURE](#)

The station began life as a [gas-lit](#) construction of iron and glass, inspired by medieval religious buildings. Some of Britain's most [stunning](#) architecture can be found in railway stations, and Paddington is a perfect example. As

one 19th-century journalist commented: “Railway [termini](#) are to the 19th century what monasteries and cathedrals were to the 13th century.”

ATMOSPHERIC STATION

Paddington saw important updates in the 1870s, 1910s and 1960s, but Brunel’s original design is still clearly recognisable. Queen Victoria adored steam trains and frequently used the station to travel to Windsor Castle. She even had her own luxurious royal waiting room, which is now the first-class passenger [lounge](#).

LUXURY HOTEL

Non-royalty who had [to catch](#) an early train could spend the night in the Great Western Hotel (now the Hilton), which also [opened](#) in 1854. The largest and grandest hotel in London, with 103 bedrooms, it began the tradition of luxury hotels [fronting](#) large railway stations. The 1870s saw another important addition to the station, when enormous, [multi-storey](#) stables were built to accommodate the horses — all six hundred of them — used to deliver packages to their destinations as well as fresh milk in thousands of [churns](#) to [dairy](#) companies around London.

LONDON UNDERGROUND

The station also played an important role in the development of the London Underground. The city’s first trains, on the Metropolitan Line, [set off](#) from Paddington in 1863. Today, one hundred and sixty years on, the station now has two [tube](#) stations providing connections to the Bakerloo, Circle, District and Hammersmith & City Lines, plus the recently-finished, [state-of-the-art](#) £22 billion (€25.6 billion) Elizabeth Line. Brunel would have been [delighted](#) to learn that the Paddington area has recently been the beneficiary of the largest local regeneration [scheme](#) in London of the last fifty years, and his creation, Paddington Station, received part of the £10 billion (€11.5 billion) budget to give it a [facelift](#) making it [worthy](#) once more of being one of the historic [gateways](#) to the city of London.

A BEAR CALLED PADDINGTON

On Christmas Eve, 1956, author Michael Bond spotted a teddy bear in a shop close to the station. He could not bear (sorry!) to leave it there and took it home as a present for his wife. Inspired, he started writing A Bear Called Paddington, which was published in 1958. Now one of English literature's most popular creations, Paddington is also one of London's most cherished mascots, as witnessed by the statue surrounded by admirers on platform 1.

Glossary

- **stunning** = straordinario
- **lounge** = sala d'attesa
- **worthy** = degna
- **gas-lit** = illuminata a gas
- **scheme** = programma
- **gateways** = porte
- **tube** = metropolitana
- **delighted** = felice
- **height** = altezza
- **termini** = stazioni
- **multi-storey** = di vari piani
- **spotted** = individuare, notare
- **opened** = inaugurare
- **to catch** = prendere (un treno)
- **dairy** = latticini
- **cherished** = care
- **marvel** = meraviglia
- **finest** = migliore
- **fronting** = essere di fronte a
- **Golden Age of Steam** = anni d'oro del vapore
- **bear** = sopportare
- **state-of-the-art** = d'avanguardia
- **churns** = zangole (per il burro)
- **set off** = partire
- **Christmas Eve** = vigilia di Natale
- **tiny** = piccolissimo
- **facelift** = lifting