

= Oxford Street =

Oxford Street is a major road in the City of Westminster in the West End of London . It is Europe 's busiest shopping street , with around half a million daily visitors , and as of 2012 had approximately 300 shops . It is designated as part of the A40 , a major road between London and Fishguard , though it is not signed as such , and traffic is regularly restricted to buses and taxis .

The road was originally a Roman road , part of the Via Trinobantina between Essex and Hampshire via London . It was known as Tyburn Road through the Middle Ages and was once notorious as a street where prisoners from Newgate Prison would be transported towards a public hanging . It became known as Oxford Road and then Oxford Street in the 18th century , and began to change character from a residential street to commercial and retail purposes by the late 19th century , also attracting street traders , confidence tricksters and prostitution . The first department stores in Britain opened on Oxford Street in the early 20th century , including Selfridges , John Lewis and HMV . Unlike nearby shopping streets such as Bond Street , it has retained an element of downmarket street trading alongside more prestigious retail stores . The street suffered heavy bombing during World War II , and several longstanding stores including John Lewis were completely destroyed and rebuilt from scratch .

Despite competition from other shopping centres such as Westfield Stratford City and the Brent Cross shopping centre , Oxford Street remains in high demand as a retail location , with several chains hosting their flagship stores on the street , and has a number of listed buildings . The annual switching on of Christmas lights by a celebrity has been a popular event since 1959 . However , the combination of a very popular retail area and a main thoroughfare for London buses and taxis has caused significant problems with traffic congestion , safety and pollution . Various traffic management schemes have been proposed by Transport for London , including a ban on private vehicles during daytime hours on weekdays and Saturdays , and improved pedestrian crossings .

= = Location = =

Oxford Street runs for approximately 1 @. @ 2 miles (1 @. @ 9 km) . From Marble Arch , where it meets Park Lane , Edgware Road , and its westward continuation Bayswater Road , it runs east past Vere Street , New Bond Street and Bond Street station , up to Oxford Circus , which is the junction with Regent Street .

Beyond Oxford Circus , it meets Great Portland Street , Wardour Street and Rathbone Place and ends at St Giles Circus , the junction with Charing Cross Road and Tottenham Court Road , next to Tottenham Court Road station . The eastward continuation is New Oxford Street , and then Holborn . The road is entirely within the City of Westminster .

The street is classified as part of the A40 , most of which is a trunk road running from London to Fishguard (via Oxford , Cheltenham , Brecon and Haverfordwest) , although like many roads in Central London that are no longer through routes , it is not signposted with the road number . It is within the London Congestion Charging Zone . Numerous bus routes run along Oxford Street , including 10 , 25 , 55 , 73 , 98 , 390 and Night Buses N8 , N55 , N73 , N98 and N207 .

= = History = =

= = = Early history = = =

Oxford Street follows the route of a Roman road , the Via Trinobantina , which linked Calleva Atrebatum (near Silchester , Hampshire) with Camulodunum (now Colchester) via London and became one of the major routes in and out of the city .

Between the 12th century and 1782 , it was variously known as Tyburn Road (after the River Tyburn that ran just to the south of it , and now flows underneath it) , Uxbridge Road (this name is still used for the portion of the London @- @ Oxford road between Shepherds Bush and Uxbridge) ,

Worcester Road and Oxford Road . On Ralph Aggas ' " Plan of London " , published in the 16th century , the road is described partly as " The Waye to Uxbridge " followed by " Oxford Road " , showing rural farmland where the junction of Oxford Street and Rathbone Place now is .

Despite being a major coaching route , there were several obstacles along it , including the bridge over the Tyburn . A turnpike trust was established in the 1730s to improve upkeep of the road . It became notorious as the route taken by prisoners on their final journey from Newgate Prison to the gallows at Tyburn near Marble Arch . Spectators drunkenly jeered at prisoners as they carted along the road , and could buy rope used in the executions from the hangman in taverns . By about 1729 , the road had become known as Oxford Street .

The street began to be redeveloped in the 18th century after many of the surrounding fields were purchased by the Earl of Oxford . In 1739 , local gardener Thomas Huddle began to build property on the north side . John Rocque 's Map of London , published in 1746 , shows urban buildings as far as North Audley Street , but only intermittent rural property thereafter . Buildings began to be erected on the corner of Oxford Street and Davies Street in the 1750s . Further development along the street occurred between 1763 and 1793 . The Pantheon , a place for public entertainment , opened on No. 173 in 1772 .

The street became popular with entertainers including bear @-@ baiters , theatres and public houses . However , it was not attractive to the middle and upper classes due to the nearby Tyburn gallows and St Giles , then a notorious rookery , or slum . The gallows were removed in 1783 , and by the end of the century , Oxford Street was built up from St Giles Circus to Park Lane , containing a mix of residential houses and entertainment . The Princess 's Theatre opened in 1840 , and is now the site of Oxford Walk shopping area .

= = = Retail development = = =

Oxford Street changed character from residential to retail towards the end of the 19th century . Drapers , cobblers and furniture stores began to appear on the street , and were later expanded into the first department stores . Street vendors began to sell tourist souvenirs on the street during this time . A plan of Oxford Street in Tallis 's London Street Views , published in the late 1830s , remarks that almost all the street , save for the far western end , was primarily retail . John Lewis started in 1864 as a small shop at No. 132 , while Selfridges opened on 15 March 1909 at No. 400 . Most of the southern side of Oxford Street west of Davies Street was completely rebuilt between 1865 and 1890 , allowing a more uniform freehold ownership . By the 1930s , the street was almost entirely retail , a position that remains today . However , unlike nearby streets such as Bond Street and Park Lane , there remained a seedy element including street traders and prostitutes . Aside from a number of fixed places on the street , there are no provisions for selling licensed goods on Oxford Street . The advent of closed @-@ circuit television has reduced the attraction of the area to scam artists and illegal street traders .

Oxford Street suffered considerable bombing during the Second World War . During the night and early hours of 17 to 18 September 1940 , 268 Heinkel He 111 and Dornier Do 17 bombers targeted the West End , particularly Oxford Street . Many buildings were damaged , either from a direct hit or subsequent fires , including four department stores : John Lewis , Selfridges , Bourne & Hollingsworth and Peter Robinson . George Orwell wrote in his diary for 24 September that Oxford Street was " completely empty of traffic , and only a few pedestrians " , and saw " innumerable fragments of broken glass " . John Lewis caught fire again on 25 September and was reduced to a shell . It remained a bomb site for the remainder of the war and beyond , finally being demolished and rebuilt between 1958 and 1960 . Peter Robinson partially reopened on 22 September , though the main storefront remained boarded up . The basement was converted into studios for the BBC Eastern Service . Orwell made several broadcasts here from 1941 to 1943 .

Selfridges was bombed again on 17 April 1941 , suffering further damage , including the destruction of the Palm Court Restaurant . The basement was converted to a communications base , with a dedicated line run along Oxford Street to Whitehall , and allowed British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to make secure and direct telephone calls to the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt . The

store was damaged again on 6 December 1944 after a V2 rocket exploded on nearby Duke Street , causing its Christmas tree displays to collapse into the street outside . Damage was quickly repaired and the shop re @-@ opened the following day .

In September 1973 a shopping @-@ bag bomb was detonated by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) at the offices of the Prudential Assurance Company on Oxford Street , injuring six people . A second bomb was detonated by the IRA on the street in December , injuring three people .

The human billboard Stanley Green began selling on Oxford Street in 1968 , advertising his belief in the link of proteins to sexual libido and the dangers therein . He regularly patrolled the street with a placard headlined " less passion from less protein " , and advertised his pamphlet Eight Passion Proteins with Care until his death in 1993 . His placards are now housed in the British Museum .

Centre Point , just beyond the eastern end of Oxford Street next to Tottenham Court Road station , was designed by property developer Harry Hyams and opened in 1966 . It failed to find a suitable tenant and sat empty for many years , eventually being occupied by squatters who used it as a centre of protest against the lack of suitable accommodation in Central London . In 2015 , the building began to be converted into residential flats , with development expected to finish in 2017 .

= = Notable buildings = =

Oxford Street is home to a number of major department stores and flagship retail outlets , containing over 300 shops as of 2012 . It is the most frequently visited shopping street in Inner London , attracting over half a million daily visitors in 2014 , and is one of the most popular destinations in London for tourists , with an annual estimated turnover of over £ 1 billion . It forms part of a shopping district in the West End of London , along with other streets including Covent Garden , Bond Street and Piccadilly .

The New West End Company , formerly the Oxford Street Association , is a group that oversees stores and trade along the street ; its objective is to make the place safe and desirable for shoppers . They have been critical of the overcrowding and quality of shops and started to clamp down on abusive traders , who have then been refused licences .

Several British retail chains regard their Oxford Street branch as the flagship store . Debenhams originally opened as Marshall & Snelgrove in 1870 ; in 1919 they merged with Debenhams , which had opened in nearby Wigmore Street in 1778 . The company was owned by Burton between 1985 and 1998 . The London flagship store of the House of Fraser began as D H Evans in 1879 and moved to its current premises in 1935 . It was the first department store in the UK with escalators serving every floor . Selfridges , Oxford Street , the second @-@ largest department store in the UK and flagship of the Selfridges chain , has been in Oxford Street since 1909 .

Marks & Spencer has two stores on Oxford Street . The first , Marks & Spencer Marble Arch , is at the junction with Orchard Street . A second branch between Regent Street and Tottenham Court Road stands on the former site of the Pantheon .

The music retailer HMV was opened at No. 363 Oxford Street in 1921 by Sir Edward Elgar . The Beatles made their first recording in London in 1962 , when they cut a 78rpm demo disc in the store . A larger store at No. 150 was opened in 1986 by Sir Bob Geldof , and was the largest music shop in the world at 60 @, @ 000 square feet (6 @, @ 000 m2) . As well as music and video retail , the premises supported live gigs in the store . Due to financial difficulties , the store closed in 2014 , with all retail moving to No. 363 .

The 100 Club , in the basement of No. 100 , has been running as a live music venue since 24 October 1942 . It was thought to be safe from bombing threats due to its underground location , and played host to jazz musicians , including Glenn Miller . It was renamed the London Jazz Club in 1948 , and subsequently the Humphrey Lyttelton Club after Lyttelton took over the lease in the 1950s . Louis Armstrong played at the venue during this time . It became a key venue for the trad jazz revival , hosting gigs by Chris Barber and Acker Bilk . It was renamed the 100 Club in 1964 after Roger Horton bought a stake in the venue , adding an alcohol licence for the first time . The venue hosted gigs by several British rhythm and blues bands , included the Who , the Kinks and the Animals . It was an important venue for punk rock in the UK and hosted the first British punk festival

on 21 September 1976 , featuring the Sex Pistols , the Damned and the Buzzcocks .

The Tottenham is a Grade II * listed public house at No. 6 Oxford Street , near Tottenham Court Road . It was built in the mid @-@ 19th century and is the last remaining pub in the street , which once had 20 .

The London College of Fashion has an Oxford Street campus , which is on John Prince 's Street near Oxford Circus . The college is part of the University of the Arts London , formerly the London Institute .

The cosmetics retailer Lush opened a store in Oxford Street in 2015 . Measuring 9 @,@ 300 square feet (860 m2) and containing three floors , it is the company 's largest retail premises .

= = Transport links = =

Oxford Street is served by many major bus routes and by four tube stations of the London Underground . From Marble Arch eastwards , these stations are as follows :

Marble Arch , on the Central line

Bond Street , on the Central line and Jubilee line

Oxford Circus , on the Central line , Bakerloo line and Victoria line

Tottenham Court Road , on the Central line and Northern line

The four stations serve an average of 100 million passengers every year , with Oxford Circus being the busiest .

Crossrail , a major project involving an east @-@ west rail route across London , will have two stations serving Oxford Street , at Bond Street and Tottenham Court Road . Each station will be " double @-@ ended " , with exits through the existing tube station and also some distance away : to the east of Bond Street , in Hanover Square near Oxford Circus ; to the west of Tottenham Court Road , in Dean Street .

= = Traffic = =

Oxford Street has been ranked as the most important retail location in Britain and the busiest shopping street in Europe . The street is often congested both on the pavements , due to the large number of shoppers and tourists , many of whom arrive at one of the tube stations , and on the roadway as a result of the many buses routed along the street .

There is heavy competition between foot and bus traffic on Oxford Street , which is the main east @-@ west bus corridor through Central London . Around 175 @,@ 000 people get on or off a bus on Oxford Street every day , along with 43 @,@ 000 further through passengers . Taxis are popular , particularly along the stretch between Oxford Circus and Selfridges . Between 2009 and 2012 , there were 71 accidents involving traffic and pedestrians . In 2016 , a report suggested buses generally did not travel faster than 4 @.@ 6 miles per hour (7 @.@ 4 km / h) , compared to a typical pedestrian speed of 3 @.@ 1 miles per hour (5 @.@ 0 km / h) .

There have been several proposals to reduce congestion on Oxford Street . Horse @-@ drawn vehicles were banned in 1931 , and traffic signals were installed in the same year . To alleviate congestion and help traffic flow of buses , most of Oxford Street is designated a bus lane during peak daytime hours , when private vehicles are banned . It is only open to buses , taxis and two @-@ wheeled vehicles between 7 : 00am and 7 : 00pm on all days except Sundays . The ban was introduced experimentally in June 1972 . It was considered a success , with an estimated increase of £ 250 @,@ 000 in retail sales . In 2009 , a new diagonal crossing opened at Oxford Circus , allowing pedestrians to cross from one corner of Oxford Street to the opposite corner without having to cross the road twice or use the pedestrian underpass . This doubles the pedestrian capacity at the junction .

= = = Pedestrianisation = = =

From 2005 to 2012 , Oxford Street was completely traffic @-@ free on a Saturday before Christmas

, which became known as VIP Day (for " Very Important Pedestrians ") . The scheme was popular and boosted sales by over £ 17m in 2012 . In 2013 , the New West End Company announced that the scheme would not go ahead that year as it wanted to do " something new " . In 2014 Liberal Democrat members of the London Assembly proposed that Oxford Street should be pedestrianised by 2020 .

In 2006 , the New West End Company and the then Mayor of London , Ken Livingstone , put forward proposals to pedestrianise Oxford Street with a tram service running end to end . However the next Mayor , Boris Johnson , elected in 2008 , announced that the scheme would not go ahead as it was not cost effective and too disruptive . In response to a request from Johnson , Transport for London undertook to reduce the bus flow in Oxford Street by 10 % in both 2009 and 2010 . Subsequently , the New West End Company called for a 33 % reduction in bus movements in Oxford Street .

In 2014 , Transport for London suggested that pedestrianisation may not be a suitable long @-@ term measure due to Crossrail reducing the demand for bus services along Oxford Street , and proposed to ban all traffic except buses and cycles during peak shopping times . Optimisation of existing traffic signals along the street , including Pedestrian Countdown signals , have also been proposed . Transport for London is concerned that in the long term traffic problems may affect trade on Oxford Street , which is now competing with shopping centres such as Westfield London , Westfield Stratford City and the Brent Cross shopping centre . In 2015 , while campaigning for election as London Mayor , Labour 's Sadiq Khan favoured the full pedestrianisation of Oxford Street , which was supported by other parties . After election , he pledged the street would be completely pedestrianised by 2020 , including a complete ban on buses and taxis .

= = Pollution = =

In 2014 , a report by a King 's College , London scientist showed that Oxford Street had the world 's highest concentration of nitrogen dioxide pollution , at 135 micrograms per cubic metre of air (?g / m³) . However , this figure was an average that included night @-@ time , when traffic was much lower . At peak times during the day , levels up to 463 ?g / m³ were recorded ? over 11 times the permitted EU maximum of 40 ?g / m³ . Because of the diesel @-@ powered traffic in the street (buses and taxis) , annual average NO₂ concentrations on Oxford Street are around 180 ?g / m³ . This is 4 @.@ 5 times the EU target of 40 ?g / m³ (Council Directive 1999 / 30 / EC) .

= = Christmas lights = =

Every Christmas , Oxford Street is decorated with festive lights . The tradition of Christmas lights began in 1959 , five years after the neighbouring Regent Street . There were no light displays in 1976 or 1977 due to economic recession , but the lights returned in 1978 when Oxford Street organised a laser display , and they have been there every year since .

Current practice involves a celebrity turning the lights on in mid- to late @-@ November , and they remain lit until 6 January (Twelfth Night) . The festivities were postponed in 1963 due to the assassination of John F. Kennedy and in 1989 to fit Kylie Minogue 's touring commitments . In 2015 , the lights were switched on earlier , on Sunday 1 November , resulting in an unusual closure of the street to all traffic .

The following celebrities have turned on the lights since 1981 :

= = Listed buildings = =

Oxford Street has several Grade II listed buildings . In addition , the facades to Oxford Circus tube station are also listed .

= = Cultural references = =

Oxford Street is mentioned in several works by Charles Dickens . In *A Tale of Two Cities* , the street (as Oxford Road) is described as having " very few buildings " , though in fact it was heavily built up by the late 18th century . It is also referred to in *Sketches by Boz* and *Bleak House* .

The street is a square on the British Monopoly game board , forming part of the green set (together with Regent Street and Bond Street) . The three streets were grouped together as they are all primarily retail areas . In 1991 , music manager and entrepreneur Malcolm McLaren produced *The Ghosts of Oxford Street* , a musical documentary about life and history in the local area .