

Tradition vs Modernity

by Roberto Galea

Some cities are distinctly monochromatic, with a certain element dominating the colour scheme of that particular metropolis. London, on the other hand, bursts at the seams with all the hues of the rainbow. It is a lively and vibrant city, unlike any other in Europe or beyond.

Political London

London is the seat of politics in the UK, where all the decision-making is done, mainly within the Houses of Parliament, officially known as Westminster Palace. This impressive Gothic building sits impressively on the north bank of the Thames and is open to the public for guided tours. Visitors can walk around several areas of the building, including the famous Commons Chamber, which is at the heart of British politics.

However it's not necessary to book a £25 tour just to see the inside of the building. Whenever the House of Lords or the House of Commons is in session, visitors can sit in the public gallery and



get a bird's eye view of all the action. Who knows? Perhaps you could witness a session which goes down in the history books!

After you're done being awestruck by the splendid architecture of the palace, head north for a five minute walk to a little alley called Downing Street, home to one of the most important men in the world. The street itself is closed to the general public, as the police keep a very close eye on security. However, if you stand at the gates of Whitehall, you can catch a glimpse of the iconic black door which opens only from the inside.

Ironically, there is much more to London politics than those related to the UK. Many international political figures have made London their home over the years. These include Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, who gave lectures in a room above the Red Lion pub, in London's Soho district.

Marx was also a regular of the British Museum Library, where he would sit for hours ruminating on the concept which would eventually germinate into the Communist Manifesto.

Other luminaries who had a card at the library included Lenin (who

o **colour scheme** 'kɒlə(r) ski:m | kolorystyka
on the other hand | z drugiej strony
to burst at the seams | pękać w szwach
hue | kolor, odcień
vibrant | tu: dynamiczny

1 **seat** | siedziba
mainly | głównie
bank | brzeg
guided tour | wycieczka z przewodnikiem
including | włącznie

Commons Chamber 'kɒmənʃ 'tʃeɪmbə(r) | sala obrad Izby Gmin
to book sth | za/rezerwować coś
the House of Lords | Izba Lordów
the House of Commons | Izba Gmin
to get a bird's eye view of sth | uzyskać widok z lotu ptaka na coś

2 **to witness sth** | być świadkiem czegoś
to go down in the history books | zostać zawartym w podręcznikach do historii; przejść do historii

awestruck 'ɔ:stɹʌk | oniemiały z wrażenia
to keep a (very) close eye on sth | bacznie obserwować coś
to catch a glimpse of sth | dostrzec coś
3 **related to sth** | powiązany z czymś
to include sb | obejmować kogoś
to give lectures | dawać wykłady
to ruminate on sth | myśleć nad czymś
eventually | w końcu, ostatecznie
to germinate into sth | przerodzić się w coś
luminary | sława

signed in under the name Jacob Richter), as well as **novelists** Bram Stoker and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Royal London

The world is **aflutter** with excitement about a new member of the British Royal Family. Charlotte will be **joining** three other generations of monarchy who are at the heart of British life. Their principal residence and workplace is Buckingham Palace, an impressive Neoclassical structure, which is visited by **hordes** of tourists every month.

The Palace not only serves as a home to the Royal Family, but also a **hub** for the British nation to **gather** in times of rejoicing. Iconic elements of the Palace are the Queen's Guards: members of the British Army whose job it is to protect the Family.

A tour of the royal sights in London would not be complete without a visit to the Tower of London, an **imposing** edifice which **covers** 12 acres of land in the middle of the city. The palace has a **dreadful** past as a prison which **housed** many people who were key to the history of the UK. These included Thomas More, a philosopher and **statesman** who opposed Henry VII's position as the head of the Protestant church in England. More was **imprisoned** for a year in the Tower before he was **beheaded**. His body is **buried** behind the walls of the crypt of St Peter Ad Vincula.

Many of the four million tourists who visit the Tower **on a yearly basis**, do so to

see the famed **Crown Jewels** – a collection of **precious** stones so impressive that will leave the visitor **speechless**. Among the jewels of the collection (no **pun** intended) are several crowns and diadems which have been worn by the British monarchy throughout the ages.

Another traditional element of the Tower are the **ravens**, which are meant to protect the Tower of London. **According to lore**, "If the Tower of London's ravens are lost or **fly away**, the Crown will **fall** and Britain with it." Therefore it is **imperative** to keep a **handful** of black birds around the Tower, just in case. And with the ravens, comes the famed Ravenmaster – perhaps one of the best jobs in the United Kingdom. He once said that it's hard work **keeping** the birds **in check**. They eat a lot of meat, as well as biscuits **soaked in** blood. They sometimes also get the odd **roadkill** which the Ravenmaster **comes across** on the side of the road. If "it's not been too badly **mangled**!"

Following this **hearty** dose of culture, why not **take a stroll** in St James's Park, a 57-acre space **slap-bang** in the middle of the city. Very much like Central Park in New York, St James's (as it is **affectionately** known) offers London's residents a much-welcome **respite** from the **hustle and bustle** of the city.

The park includes two small islands. One of these, Duck Island, **bears this name** after the lake's collection of water fowl, ►

Did you know?

Crown Jewels

The oldest piece of **regalia** **dates back to** the 12th century and is a gold spoon used to **drizzle** holy oil on monarchs.

One of the major pieces of the collection is St Edward's Crown. It weighs in at a **hefty** 2.23 kg and is decorated with **scores** of diamonds, rubies and other precious stones. It was last used during the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

regalia | insygnia
regalia
to date back
to X | sięgać
do X
to drizzle |
spryskiwać
hefty | ciężki
score | tu:
sznur



- 4 to sign in | zapisać się
novelist | powieściopisarz
aflutter with sth | poruszony, pobudzony
to join sth | dołączyć do czegoś
horde | chmara, stado
hub | centrum
to gather | gromadzić się
imposing | imponujący, olśniewający, robiący wrażenie
edifice | budynek
to cover sth | tu: rozciągać się na czymś
dreadful | straszny, okropny
to house sb | gromadzić kogoś, zakwaterować kogoś
statesman | rzecznik

- imprisoned | uwięziony
beheaded | ścięty
buried | pochowany
on a yearly basis | corocznie
5 Crown Jewels | kraon 'dʒu:əls | klejnoty koronne
precious | 'preʃəs | cenny
speechless | oniemiały
pun | gra słów
intended | zamierzony
raven | 'reɪvən | kruk
according to sth | według czegoś
lore | tu: wierzenia ludowe
to fly away | odlatywać
to fall | upadać, tu: kończyć się
imperative | nadrzędny

- handful | garstka, tu: stado
to keep sb/sth in check | mieć kogoś/coś pod kontrolą
soaked in sth | nasączony czymś
roadkill | przejechane zwierzę
to come across sth | natykać się na coś
mangled | zmiażdżony, pogruchotany
hearty | obfity
to take a stroll | spacerować się
slap-bang | pot. bezpośrednio
affectionately | czule
respite | ulga, wytchnienie
hustle and bustle | 'hʌsl ən 'bʌsl | krzątanina
to bear the name after sb/sth | nosić imię po kimś/czymś
fowl | faʊl | ptactwo

London in Numbers

- 11 the number of different lines in the city's metro network, lovingly called 'the Tube'.
- 43AD the year the area was first settled by Romans.
- 32 the number of boroughs in London.
- Over 300 the number of languages is spoken in London.
- 8.2 million is the number of people who live London (2011 census).

to settle | *tu:zasiedlać*

borough | 'bʌrə / 'bɜ:roʊ | dzielnica

census | spis ludności



which include a colony of pelicans which were first gifted to the park by a Russian ambassador in 1664.

The Tiffany fountain is situated to the south of Duck Island, and creates jets of water up to eight metres high. The main aim of this feature is to aerate the water and make it a better medium for fish to grow in, but the effect is also aesthetic. At night the fountain is illuminated with a crafty LED system providing an enchanting view of Buckingham Palace in the backdrop.

And with all this talk of royals in the British capital, one cannot miss Westminster Abbey, the church which

has hosted the coronation of almost every English (and later British) Monarch since 1066.

When You Tire of London, You Tire of Life

Perhaps more than any other European capital, London has it all, and is at the forefront of things with distinct districts paying tribute to different life pulses - a throbbing financial centre that sets the pace for other major markets; cutting edge journalism around Fleet Street; packed theatres playing out life's fare in the West End, while nearby Soho is

a nostalgic reminder of the City's hedonistic days

In short, whatever you are looking for, you can find in London, the epicentre of world culture, finance and society. The Royal family might be somewhat controversial, but let's admit it, over the last centuries, it has built, or bought or established things that now enchant tourists from all over the world!

In the words of Samuel Johnson, who wrote the first dictionary of the English language: "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford." ■

6 gifted | *tu:sprezentowane*

jet | strumień

to aerate sth | napowietrzać coś

crafty | zmyślny, przemyślny

enchanting | urzekający

in the backdrop | w tle

7 to host sth | gościć coś

to pay tribute to sth | oddawać czemuś hołd

throbbing | pulsujący, tętniący życiem

to set the pace for sth | wyznaczać tempo

cutting edge | najnowocześniejszy

life's fare | *tu:chleb powszedni, życie codzienne*

8 reminder | pamiątka, pozostałość

to admit sth | przyznawać coś

to establish sth | ustanawiać coś, zakładać coś

to enchant sb | oczarowywać kogoś

to afford | *tu:oferować*

