

London

Basic information

London is the **capital city** of the UK and **cosmopolitan** city; there are people of many nationalities.

Its population is about **7 million inhabitants**.

London is situated on the river **Thames** in the southeast of England.

In the 19th century it was the largest and most influential city in the world although it belongs no longer to the world's most populous cities. London is still one of the **world's major financial and cultural capitals**.

London's climate is mild and damp.

History

The city was probably built 2,000 years ago. In 1599, Shakespeare opened a theatre called the **Globe**.

In 1666, there was the Great Fire which destroyed almost all the city because it was made of wood. After the fire the city was rebuilt and became a modern town.

Means of transport

London transport is one of quite high quality. People can have a ride one of the world-famous **red double-decker buses**. They were too old and therefore they can be found only in the historical parts. The fastest means of transport is underground or **tube**, as it is known in London. It's the oldest underground in the world. Traditional **black taxis** or **cabs** are another symbol of London. Also buses and coaches are other means of transport - London has an extensive bus network. Buses are the only possible way to travel after midnight. You can also travel by river buses. There are also 3 airports in London; the most important is **Heathrow** and Gatwick.

London and its metropolitan area

London's metropolitan area is divided into 33 political units. In the centre, there is the Central London. Most of Central London is located north of the Thames, including the City of London (the traditional heart of the city), the City of Westminster (the seat of national government) and some parts in the West End.

City of London

The City of London is the oldest and historical part known as the City.

Tower of London was a royal palace, a prison and a fortress. Today it is a museum of historical weapons and there are coronation jewels. There are ravens that mustn't leave it otherwise the Kingdom would fall apart, as the legend says. 37 Beefeaters guard the Tower.

The **Tower Bridge** is a symbol of London and opens in the middle and goes up when huge ships want to pass through.

St. Pauls Cathedral is one of the largest in the world and was built by the famous architect Sir Christopher Wren after the Great Fire. There was the wedding of Diana and Prince Charles. The Cathedral is known for its **Whispering Gallery**. The excellent acoustics brings any sound to the opposite side. Famous people are buried there.

City of Westminster

City of Westminster is known as the centre of political and administrative life.

The Houses of Parliament are the seat of Parliament. There is the **Victoria Tower**, the highest Gothic tower in the world and the **Clock Tower** with the famous bell **Big Ben**. The sound of Big Ben is used by BBC as a time signal.

Piccadilly Circus is the place with best known theatres, cinemas, shops, restaurants and night-clubs. There is a statue of Eros, the Greek god of love in the middle of the square.

In the middle of **Trafalgar Square**, there is a high column with the statue of Horatio Nelson. It is also very popular place for demonstrations and meetings. At Christmas time a big decorated Christmas tree stands there. There is the **National Gallery**.

Buckingham Palace is the official royal residence. The Changing of the Guards is one of the biggest London's spectacles and it takes place every day at 11 a.m.

Westminster Abbey is burial place of kings and the site of modern coronation. Inside there is the well-known Poet's Corner where greatest poets, artists, politics and famous British people are buried (e.g. Newton, Darwin, Dickens, Chaucer).

Downing Street number 10 is the residence of British Prime Ministers.

London is also the centre of culture:

Theatres - there are more than 100 theatres, the most important one are the **National Theatre**, the **Barbican Complex** and the **Globe** which is the faithful reconstruction of Shakespeare's original theatre. The **Royal Albert Hall** is the most important concert hall.

Galleries - there are lots of galleries, e.g. **The National Gallery**, **The Tate Gallery** or **The National Portrait Gallery**

Museums - The **British Museum** - the largest museum in the world with 4 km of galleries and 6,5 million exhibits from all historical periods and world's largest collection of all kinds of animals, minerals, rocks etc.

Madame Tussaud's Museum holds a collection of wax figures of famous people.

Sports

Sports are big business in London. Football is played at **Wembley Stadium**, tennis takes place on the grass courts at **Wimbledon** and **Lord's** is the home of English cricket.

Parks

The largest open space in central London is **Hyde Park**. It is also known for its **Speaker's Corner** where anyone is welcome to say freely what he or she wants except the Royal family. There is the **Serpentine Lake**, which divides park from the Kensington Gardens. It is a popular place for boating, sailing and bathing. Other major parks are **Kensington Gardens, Green Park, Saint James's** and **Regent's Park** (where London Zoo is located).

West End

West End is the shopping centre of Britain with many theatres, cinemas, hotels, restaurants and night clubs.

Other places of interest:

Greenwich has the **Old Royal Observatory** and the **National Maritime Museum** which has one of the world's biggest collections of boats and navigational equipment. You can stand on the **prime meridian** there.

The London Eye is the largest observation wheel in the world (150m high). It was built to celebrate the new millennium. The wheel never stops.

Covent Garden used to be a market, now it is the centre of entertainment. There are theatres around, you can stop and listen to the street buskers (pouliční zpěváci). The old market halls have been preserved and have shops there now.

Harrods is a department store especially popular with the rich and famous. Most people leave it with a typical huge green bag which carries anything you have just bought there. **Regent** and **Oxford Streets** contain a number of department stores - e.g. Selfridges, Harrods or major outlets of Marks and Spencer.

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London souvenirs are hoodies, aprons, tea towels, ashtrays, lighters, bags, purses, wallets, baseball caps, books, bottle openers, vests, car and cosmetic accessories, pendants, earrings, bracelet, clock, fridge magnets, jewellery, watch, London models and ornaments, money boxes (model telephone box), mouse mats, pencil sharpeners, pencil cases, sets pens, pencils, picture frames, mugs, plates, playing cards, postcards, bumper stickers, snowstorm globes, soft toys (e.g. bear policeman), tea gift sets, tins, teaspoons, Union Jack balls / clothing / party supplies / umbrellas... .

They are based on the symbols of UK or London - red double decker bus, Big Ben, royal family, guardsmen, telephone box, black cabs... .

5.

The main London's problem are the crime, traffic (traffic jams and overcrowding), noise, pollution, homelessness and unemployment.

Test

face

collection

observation wheel

wax

damp

coronation

populous

abbey

tower

department stores

equipment

sailing

wedding

spectacle

destroy

belong

globe

raven

preserve

market

except

take place

burial

rebuild

column

residence

guard