

## LONDON

**London** is the capital of the UK. It is the largest city in the country. London is situated on the river Thames, in the south of England, not far from the east coast.

### **London transport**

In London there are four different means of transport: **bus, train, underground or taxi**. The typical bus in London is the red double-decker bus, you can travel on the top deck and see the sights of London. The first buses in London started running in 1829.

London has the first world's underground. It opened in 1863, there are ten underground lines with 273 stations.

You can also take a black taxi car. The taxis have a yellow light on top of them, if the light is off it means the taxi is busy, with the passengers on board, if the light is on it means the taxi is free. London is also well connected to the rest of the country by train. There are twelve main railway stations in London. London also has four airports: Stansted, Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton.

**The Tower of London** is an old fortress built by William the Conqueror in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. At the moment it is a museum where visitors can admire the crown Jewels. The tower is guarded by 38 wardens called **beefeaters** who wear traditional uniforms. In the Tower there are also black ravens with clipped wings. There is a legend about the Tower which says that if the ravens fly away the monarchy will disappear.

**Tower Bridge** is the most famous bridge in the world. It's one of the symbols of London. It's near the Tower of London and it can be raised to let ships pass. Inside the bridge there is an interesting museum on its history, design and operation.

**Buckingham Palace** is the official London residence of the Queen and her family. When the Queen is in the palace the Royal flag flies on its roof. The Queen lives in a small part of the 600 rooms. There are state apartments, royal offices, a private cinema, a swimming pool, a gymnasium and the Queen's private rooms. Almost every morning at half past eleven you can see the changing of the guard in front of the palace. Thousands of visitors come to watch it and take photographs.

**The houses of Parliament** are on the north bank of the river Thames. This is where the House of Lords and House of Commons meet to discuss laws. The palace was built in 1830.

**Big Ben** is the most famous landmark of London. Big Ben is the name of the bell in the clock tower next to the Houses of Parliament and it comes from his maker, Benjamin Hall.

**Westminster Abbey** is one of the oldest churches in London and the most important for the whole country. All the kings and queens of England are crowned and buried here.

**Saint Paul's Cathedral** is in the centre of the city of London. It is one of the biggest Christian cathedrals in the world. Inside there is the famous Whispering Gallery (the name comes from the fact that a person who whispers facing the wall on one side, can be clearly heard on the other, since the sound is carried perfectly around the vast curve of the Dome).

**The British Museum** is one of the biggest museums in the world and it contains every kind of artworks from all over the world. Its collections, which number more than seven million objects, illustrate and document the story of human culture from its beginnings to the present.

**The Victoria and Albert Museum** is an enormous building which contains everything: ceramics, glass, textiles, costumes, silver, ironwork, jewellery, furniture, medieval objects, sculpture, prints and printmaking, drawings ... There is always a special exhibition that attracts a lot of visitors every year.

**The National Gallery** is on the north side of Trafalgar Square. It is the biggest art gallery in the country. It contains collections of paintings from the XIII<sup>th</sup> century up to today.

**Trafalgar Square** owes its name to the national Nelson's victory over Napoleon in the battle of Trafalgar in 1805. In the centre there is a column with the statue of Nelson on the top, in the centre of the square. This is to commemorate the victory. The statue shows Nelson with one arm and one eye, because he lost them in the battle. Trafalgar Square is a meeting point for many Londoners.

**Piccadilly Circus** is the centre of the London's night life and entertainments. The area is full of theatres, cinemas, restaurants, discos and night clubs. There is a fountain with a statue of Eros in the middle of the square. There are a lot of lights around the square which make it lovely and colourful.

**Docklands** is a very modern area to the east of London on the north bank of the Thames. It's the centre of business, a lot of European businesses have moved their offices here.

**Canary Wharf** is a modern tower office complex in the Docklands area. It is the tallest building in Britain. Inside there are mainly offices.

The **Docklands railway** is a new public transport in London. It is officially opened by the Queen in 1987. It runs in the Docklands area where there are no undergrounds or trains. There are red, white and blue trains that run every ten minutes.

**Theatreland.** London is famous all over the world for its night life and in particular for its theatres. In the west end of London there are more than forty theatres. Most of them are situated in Leicester Square. They offer many different kinds of plays, shows, musicals and concerts. There are usually six shows the week in the evenings and the majority have afternoons shows twice a week. People find information about theatres and shows in a free magazine called the London Theatre Guide.

**Covent Garden** was originally a fruit, flower, and vegetable market. The market moved to the south of London in 1974 because there was no enough space. Today in Covent Garden you can find boutiques, bookshops, gift and craft shops, stores, restaurants, wine bars, cafes and pubs. There is also a lot of street theatres to see with clowns performing and different artists. In the courtyard singers and quartets frequently give concerts.

**Shopping.** London is an international shopping centre where you can find everything you want to buy. **Oxford Street** is one of the most popular shopping area for tourists. There are a lot of large department stores and the most famous is **Selfridges**. Oxford Street is always very crowded especially when there are the generally sales. **Harrods** is one of the world's most famous department store. It offers everything, from food to fashion. There are also restaurants serving every kind of cuisine. At night the store is illuminated by 11.500 light bulbs. It is in an exclusive area called Nightsbridge. In **Portobello Road Market** there are a lot of stalls offering everything from fruit and bread to posters, clothes, ceramics and music. The main market days are Friday and Saturday.

**London Parks.** London has a lot of parks where people can relax, walk, have picnics, feed the squirrels or lay down for a sleep on the grass. **Saint James Park** is the oldest park, it's near Buckingham Palace. There is a lake in the middle where you can feed the ducks. **Hide Park** is near Saint James Park. It's the people's park, it's used for public occasions. In the middle there is a lake called the Serpentine where you can sail a boat. **Kensington gardens** is near Hide Park. This is where Lady Diana lived in Kensington Palace. **Regents Park** is the place to go if you like animals. Here you can feed the ducks and watch the pelicans. You can also visit the largest zoo in the country, The London Zoo.

**London eye.** This is the world's biggest observation wheel and it stands on the south bank of the river Thames. It was opened in 2000. It is 135 metres high. It offers an incredible view of London in all directions. Passengers travel in 32 high-tech capsules and a trip on the wheel lasts 30 minutes. Each capsule has a maximum of 25 people.