

LONDON – THE CITY ON THE THAMES

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FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, LONDON IS SPECIAL IN MANY WAYS. WITH A POPULATION OF ABOUT 7 MILLION, IT'S ONE OF THE MOST DENSELY POPULATED AND BIGGEST CITIES IN EUROPE, AND FOR CENTURIES IT HAS BEEN THE CAPITAL OF GREAT BRITAIN.

London has an excellent transportation system to get you where you need to go. The London Underground, or tube, is the world's first underground railway for passengers, beginning service in 1863. The city's bus line is known for its famous red double-decker buses. If you sit on the top deck, you will get a nice view of the sights on your journey.



London's beautiful parks cover almost one third of the city and once were defined as the lungs of London. **Hyde Park** is the largest one, mainly famous for its Speaker's Corner. Here, people, often standing on chairs or boxes, could make speeches on anything they wanted. **St. James's Park** is one of the oldest green spaces in the city. In the 16th century, Henry VIII transformed this unhealthy and marshy area into a hunting domain. Today, the park has a lake, black swans, squirrels, colourful flowerbeds and borders Buckingham Palace.



One of the most famous palaces in the world, **Buckingham Palace** (or "Buck House" as Londoners sometimes call it) has been used as a royal residence since 1837 when Queen Victoria ascended the throne. **Queen Victoria Monument**, made of marble and bronze, was erected in front of the palace. The statue of the queen

herself is surrounded by allegorical statues representing Victorian virtues such as Maternity, Justice, Truth and Courage.



The clock tower on the northwest corner of the Houses of Parliament has become the very symbol of the city itself. Finished in 1858, at almost 100 metres high, it is believed to be one of the most accurate clocks in the world (it loses only two tenths of a second every 118 days). The large bell, weighing 13 tons is widely known as **Big Ben** in honour of Sir Benjamin Hall, who was responsible for the work when the clock was installed.



Tower Bridge is a characteristic landmark of London. Built between 1886 and 1894, it is named after the Tower of London that stands next to it. Two fixed sections unite the towers to the river bank

and a hydraulic mechanism can raise and lower the bridge in less than two minutes to permit the passage of high ships.

St. Paul's Cathedral has dominated the City of London for almost 14 centuries. The present building is the fifth to bear



the name of the patron saint of London. It was this church that Londoners tried to save during the Great Fire of 1666. After the fire, the great architect Christopher Wren reconstructed it into a cathedral which, today, is second in size only to St. Peter's in Rome.

Together with **Piccadilly Circus**, the intersection which has no exact geometric appearance but is generally felt to be the centre of London, **Trafalgar Square** is the busiest part of London. Large crowds gather there to see **Nelson's Column**, named after Lord Nelson's victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.



The **National Gallery**, located on Trafalgar Square, has one of the greatest collections in the world, showcasing paintings from Early Renaissance to the Post-impressionists. The **Tate Modern** is the other end of the artistic spectrum, offering modern art. Originally a power station, the museum only opened in 2000. Its collection focuses on important moments in international modern art, and has been very popular with both the British and tourists alike.

