

## LONDON

London is the capital of Great Britain, its political, economic and commercial centre. It is one of the largest cities in the world and the largest city in Europe. Its population is about 8 million.

London is one of the oldest and most interesting cities in the world.

Traditionally it is divided into several parts: the City, Westminster, the West End and the East End. They are very different from each other and seem to belong to different towns and epochs.

The heart of London is the City, its financial and business centre. Numerous banks, offices and firms are situated there, including the Bank of England, the Stock Exchange and the Old Bailey. Few people live here, but over a million people come to the City to work. There are some famous ancient buildings within the City. Perhaps the most striking of them is St Paul's Cathedral, the greatest of English churches. It was built in the 17th century by Sir Christopher Wren. The Tower of London was founded by Julius Caesar and in 1066 rebuilt by William the Conqueror. It was used as a fortress, a royal palace and a prison. Now it is a museum housing The National collection of armour and the Crown Jewels.

Westminster is the historic, the governmental part of London.

Westminster Abbey has more historic associations than any other building in Britain. It dates back to 1049. Nearly all English kings and queens have been crowned here. Many outstanding statesmen, scientists, writers, poets and painters are buried here: Newton, Darwin, Chaucer, Dickens, Tennyson, Kipling, etc.

Across the road from Westminster Abbey is Westminster Palace, or the Houses of Parliament, the seat of the British Parliament. The Clock Tower of the Houses of Parliament is famous for its huge hour bell, built just over a century ago and known as "Big Ben".

Buckingham Palace is the official residence of the Queen.

The West End is the richest and most beautiful part of London. It is the symbol of wealth and luxury. The best hotels, shops, restaurants, clubs, and theatres are situated there. There are splendid houses and lovely gardens belonging to wealthy people.

Trafalgar Square is the geographical centre of London. It was named in memory of Admiral Nelson's victory in the battle of Trafalgar in 1805. The tall Nelson's Column stands in the middle of the square.

On the north side of Trafalgar Square is the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery. Not far away is the British Museum – the biggest museum in London. It contains a priceless collection of ancient manuscripts, coins, sculptures, etc, and is famous for its library.

To the east of the City is the Port of London. Here, today, are miles and miles of docks and the great industrial areas that depend upon shipping. This is the East End of London, unattractive in appearance, but very important to the country's commerce. There are a lot of factories, workshops and docks here. The streets are narrow, the buildings are unimpressive. The East End is densely populated by working class families.

The capital has 14 bridges, the famous London Bridge being the biggest among them.