

London

Situated in the south-east of England and crossed by the river Thames, London is the capital of the UK and one of the most important cities in the world. It is among the oldest and most cosmopolitan cities in the world, too. It has been considered the centre of the world for several centuries and nowadays it still boasts a large political and economic influence worldwide. By far Britain's largest metropolis, it is also a leisure and cultural centre.

Population and administrative structure >

London is a multicultural global city, the most urbanised area in the United Kingdom and one of the most populous cities in the EU. Greater London (London's urban area) is home to almost 9 million inhabitants, over 3.5 million of which were born outside the UK. The metropolitan area of Greater London includes 33 boroughs and is divided into Inner London – the central part made up by 14 boroughs – and Outer London – constituted by 19 suburban boroughs. The City, one of the central boroughs, is London's financial centre, home to many banks and holding companies.



Transports > London is connected to the rest of the country and to Europe by an efficient network of transportation. It is served by six major airports, all of them very well connected to central London by frequent train, bus, or underground services. Ten train stations offer connections to more than



2,000 domestic destinations, and high-speed trains connect the city to Europe: it takes 2 hours and 20 minutes to reach Paris. To get around the city the underground is the cheapest, quickest, and easiest way; also, the iconic red buses are comfortable but sometimes slow because of the heavy traffic. The service of more than 20,000 black taxi cabs is very efficient but may be expensive.

What to see > Traditional landmarks include the **Big Ben**, the world-famous symbol of London and clock tower of the **Houses of Parliament**, seat of the Parliament of the UK; **Westminster abbey**, London's oldest religious building and traditional venue for coronations and royal weddings; **Buckingham palace**, the residence of the Royal family; **Trafalgar Square**, dominated by a tall column dedicated to the British naval hero Horace Nelson and traditional location of public events or manifestations; and **Piccadilly Circus**, a historic central square surrounded by plenty of dining and shopping options and nightlife. The most visited museums are free of charge and are the **British Museum**, which hosts one of the largest exhibitions of antiques in the world, and the **National Gallery**, a huge collection of world paintings from the 13th to the 20th century.



1 PAIR WORK Take it in turns to ask and answer questions about London.

2 Match places and descriptions.

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|---------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1 British Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> | a Around it are many renowned London's entertainment and leisure venues. |
| 2 Piccadilly Circus | <input type="checkbox"/> | b Here testimonies from all the civilisations of the world are exhibited. |
| 3 Buckingham Palace | <input type="checkbox"/> | c Queen Victoria was the first sovereign to choose it as her residence. |
| 4 Big Ben | <input type="checkbox"/> | d It is almost 100-metre high and is located beside the river Thames. |
| | | e Not to miss are the Ancient Egyptian and Middle East galleries. |
| | | f It has 775 rooms divided between staff, royal family, offices, and guests. |
| | | g In the middle of the square there is a fountain. |
| | | h The Great Clock is accurate to within one second. |

3 READING SPEAKING Find the best option to go to London from your hometown.