**London**

London is the [capital](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_city) and most populous city of [England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/England) and the [United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom). Standing on the [River Thames](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Thames), London has been a major settlement for two millennia, [its history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_London) going back to its founding by the [Romans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire), who named it [*Londinium*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Londinium). London's ancient core, the [City of London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_London), largely retains its 1.12-square-mile (2.9 km2) [medieval](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages) boundaries and in 2011 had a resident population of 7,375, making it the smallest [city](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_status_in_the_United_Kingdom) in England. Since at least the 19th century, the term *London* has also referred to the metropolis developed around this core. The bulk of this conurbation forms [Greater London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_London), a [region of England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions_of_England) governed by the [Mayor of London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mayor_of_London) and the [London Assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Assembly). The conurbation also covers two [English counties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counties_of_England), the City of London and the county of Greater London,[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London#cite_note-12) though historically it was split between the City, [Middlesex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middlesex), [Essex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essex), [Surrey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Surrey), [Kent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kent) and [Hertfordshire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hertfordshire).

London is a leading [global city](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_city), with strengths in the arts, commerce, education, entertainment, fashion, finance, healthcare, media, professional services, research and development, tourism, and transport all contributing to its prominence. It is one of the world's leading [financial centres](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Financial_centre)  and has the [fifth-or sixth-largest metropolitan area GDP in the world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_by_GDP) depending on measurement. London is a world cultural capital. It is the world's most-visited city as measured by international arrivals and has the [world's largest city airport system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World%27s_busiest_city_airport_systems_by_passenger_traffic) measured by passenger traffic. London is the world's leading [invest ment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_direct_investment)destination, hosting more [international retailers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Retail#Global_top_ten_retailers)and [ultra high-net-worth individuals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ultra_high-net-worth_individual) than any other city. London's 43 universities form the largest concentration of higher education institutes in Europe, and a 2014 report placed it first in the world university rankings. According to the report London also ranks first in the world in software, multimedia development and design, and shares first position in technology readiness. In[2012](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Summer_Olympics), London became the first city to host the modern [Summer Olympic Games](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Summer_Olympic_Games) three times.

London has a diverse range of peoples and cultures, and more than 300 languages are spoken within Greater London.  The [Office for National Statistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Office_for_National_Statistics) estimated its mid-2014 population to be 8,538,689, the largest of any [municipality in the European Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Largest_cities_of_the_European_Union_by_population_within_city_limits), and accounting for 12.5 percent of the UK population. [London's urban area](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_London_Built-up_Area) is the second [most populous in the EU](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Largest_urban_areas_of_the_European_Union), after [Paris](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris), with 9,787,426 inhabitants according to the 2011 census.  The [city's metropolitan area](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_metropolitan_area) is one of the [most populous in Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_metropolitan_areas_in_Europe) with 13,879,757 inhabitants, while the [Greater London Authority](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_London_Authority) states the population of the *city-region* (covering a large part of south east England) as 22.7 million. London was the [world's most populous city](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World%27s_largest_cities) from around 1831 to 1925.

London contains four [World Heritage Sites](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Heritage_Site): the [Tower of London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_of_London); [Kew Gardens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kew_Gardens); the site comprising the [Palace of Westminster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palace_of_Westminster), [Westminster Abbey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Abbey), and [St Margaret's Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Margaret%27s,_Westminster); and the historic settlement of [Greenwich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich) (in which the [Royal Observatory, Greenwich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Observatory,_Greenwich) marks the [Prime Meridian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Meridian), 0° [longitude](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Longitude), and [GMT](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwich_Mean_Time)). Other famous landmarks include [Buckingham Palace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace), the [London Eye](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye), [Piccadilly Circus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piccadilly_Circus), [St Paul's Cathedral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Paul%27s_Cathedral), [Tower Bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_Bridge), [Trafalgar Square](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trafalgar_Square), and [The Shard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Shard). London is home to numerous [museums](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_museums_in_London), galleries, libraries, [sporting events](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sport_in_London) and other cultural institutions, including the [British Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum), [National Gallery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Gallery), [Tate Modern](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tate_Modern), [British Library](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Library) and 40[West End](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_End_theatre) theatres. The [London Underground](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Underground) is the oldest underground railway network in the world.

London is a popular centre for [tourism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_London), one of its prime industries, employing the equivalent of 350,000 full-time workers in 2003,while annual expenditure by tourists is around £15 billion. London attracts over 16 million international visitors per year, making it Europe's most visited city. London attracts 27 million overnight-stay visitors every year. In 2010 the ten most-visited attractions in London were: [British Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Museum), [Tate Modern](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tate_Modern), [National Gallery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Gallery), [Natural History Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_History_Museum,_London), [Imperial War Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_War_Museum), [Science Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_Museum_(London)), [Victoria and Albert Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_and_Albert_Museum), [Madame Tussauds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madame_Tussauds), [National Maritime Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Maritime_Museum), [Tower of London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_of_London).