

BRIEF HISTORY OF LONDON - KEY

ALMOST 2,000 YEARS AGO:

The Romans invaded Britain. They built a town beside the River Thames, and named it Londinium.

BY THE YEAR 200:

Londinium was the biggest town in Britain. It had a bustling market square, a bath for Roman soldiers, and an arena where savage gladiator battles were fought.

AROUND 400:

The Romans left Britain. Over the next 600 years, people called the Saxons, and then the Vikings, lived in London. During this time Westminster Abbey was built.

1066:

The Norman ruler William the Conqueror took control of England. He built the Tower of London as his royal palace. At that time, only around 15,000 people lived in London.

BY 1300:

London had grown into one of the world's biggest cities, with around 80,000 people. The south bank of the Thames was crammed with rowdy inns and London's twisting streets were alive with shops and stalls.

1665 - 1666:

The Great Plague ravaged London, killing around 100,000 people. The next year, the Great Fire of London broke out, destroying most of the city. Later, the Monument was built to remember those dark days.

IN THE 1700s:

London was quickly rebuilt after the fire. Elegant houses were laid around spacious gardens. St. Paul's Cathedral was built as well as the Bank of England and the British Museum. The city's population swelled to around a million.

EARLY IN THE 1800s:

London was the heart of the vast British Empire. The riverbanks were crowded with factories, and the population boomed to around 6 million. Parts of the city became miserable slums.

1863s:

The world's first underground train line opened in London. Around the same time, steam trains rumbled over London's bridges, bringing thousands of new people into the city.

1940s:

At that time, the city was devastated by a series of air raids known as the Blitz. Over 20,000 Londoners died, and millions were left homeless. As the bombs fell, the British government met in the secret underground Cabinet War Rooms.

LONDON TODAY:

London recovered from the war, and got bigger. Around 8 million people now live there. Striking new office buildings such as City Hall, the Lloyd's Building and 30 St.Mary Axe sit side-by-side with famous places from the past.