

Saint Paul's Cathedral is one of the most impressive landmarks in London. A must-see for everybody who visits this city.

Watch this video and read its transcript to learn much more about it.



Saint Paul's Cathedral. There's no deny that is a beautiful building. Especially when you view it from the **Millennium Bridge**, across the River Thames. Here you get an uninterrupted view, the only one left between those two modern pieces of architecture. This is my favorite building in London and I can't wait to explore it. And to do that, we've got to get to the very heart of the building.

And I know today we can just barely **scratch the surface** of its history, but **let's make a start** to something.

There's been a place of worship devoted to Saint Paul on this site, north of the River Thames, ever since the year 604. This is in fact the fourth cathedral to be built on this site and it's just celebrated its 300 year anniversary (**that was in 2011**). And as part of the festivities and essential maintenance, it's had a **thorough cleanup** inside and outside.

So come with me. Let's take a closer look inside.

This panel here of stonework is an example. And it's been left to show you how dirty the building has got over the last three hundred years. And it's not really surprising, with the amount of pollution in London. But it would have been particularly bad during the industrial revolution and shortly afterwards, with all the smoke and **soot** (*black powdery or flaky substance consisting largely of amorphous carbon, produced by the incomplete burning of organic matter*) in the air penetrating the very fabric of the stone. And this is what it looks like years later. The stone has now been cleaned up, at a cost of around 40 million



pounds, but it's been given a new **lease of life** (*a chance to continue living or to become successful or popular again*). The building is starting to breathe again, so now we can appreciate the original vision at the cathedral's architect, **Sir Christopher Wren**.

Wren was a clever man, an **achiever**. His early projects as an architect included the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford and the Royal Greenwich Observatory. Both feature a **dome** design, a trademark element, some might say. **He was commissioned to design a new Saint Paul's Cathedral in 1668**, two years after the **Great Fire of London** had destroyed its predecessor. The process of getting the designs approved took a long time.

This magnificent **scale model**, which is constructed of oak, is an incredible six meters in length, and it shows us what Wren had in mind for the architectural outline of the new cathedral, when it was still in its planning stages, although an earlier design was rejected for featuring a Greek cross as the footprint of the Cathedral.



This is another representation of one of his designs and it really is truly incredible. He commissioned to join us to make this. Took him a year to do, at a cost of six hundred and fifty pounds. Now ,that is a staggering amount of money back then, equivalent of a very smart London townhouse. And quite fittingly this model is known as the **Great Model**.

I'm just admiring the level of **craftsmanship** that has gone into this. You take a closer look and you look in there. You can just see the incredible amount of work. I'm surprised it only took a year for two men. And I'm thinking these guys have created the work of art that historians and architects are still marvelling at the centuries later.

This model's design was turned down by the Dean and Chapter. So it wasn't until 1675 that a new Warrant Design was given the Royal **Seal** (*sello*) of Approval. So if it took seven years to get the plans approved, how long do you think it took to build it?

This building project took 35 years from start to finish. And although the cathedral was open to the public halfway through, in 1697, there were tweaks and changes made to the design until its completion in 1710.

Wren by then was an old man, but was still heavily involved And he was even reached up to the higher floors, so we could inspect the **latter** (*occurring nearer to the end of something than to the beginning*) stages of the construction.



Now, I've been wanting to show you this.

Up here, in the **Whispering Gallery**, you can really appreciate the complexity and the skill of Wren's design for the dome. Just look at that! When you look up there, towards the windows, or should I say the heavens, because you just gravitate outwards

and you look up there **in amazement** (*with a feeling of great surprise or wonder*). And **wonder** (*ask yourself*) how these craftsmen have managed to construct such a **huge** (*enormous*) architectural feature.

The inner height of the dome is 225 feet. Now, there are three **layers** (*capas*), three tiers to this construction. The inner one, which we're looking at now, and then there's a middle one, a supporting brick skin and then the outer layer which is a construction of wood covered in **lead** (*plomo*). That's what's visible from the London skyline. Add all that together and it's an incredible 64 thousand tonnes in weight.

There's a more quirky feature to this **mezzanine** (*a low storey between two others in a building, typically between the ground and first floors; entresuelo*) balcony. And it's called the **Whispering Gallery**, because if you sit here and **whisper something facing the wall your voice will travel all around there and somebody over the other side there** (which is a distance of around a hundred feet) **will be able to hear it**. They can just pick it up. And I know it

works because as a young **lad** (*boy*) I came here on a school trip and **tried it out**.

Once the **fabric** (*the walls, floor, and roof*) of the building had been agreed, the pressure was on how to make the interior of the building as impressive. Hidden from public view is this **mind-boggling** (*extremely surprising and difficult to understand or imagine*) geometric staircase used by the Dean of the Cathedral.

In the heart of the building is the **choir**, which features an impressive organ,



with over 7,000 pipes, as well as exquisite decorations by respected **wood carver** (*a person who makes attractive objects by shaping wood with a sharp tool*) to the royals, **Grinling Gibbons**.

There have been many modifications to the cathedral over the last 300 years since it was finished. And that's mainly due to national events like the **funeral of Lord Nelson** and the **marriage of Prince Charles to Lady Diana**. And also other leading monarchs have wished to leave their mark on this incredible building. So what we see today, here looking in the nave, isn't exactly how Wren's work would have been when he finished it.

A century later, when **Queen Victoria** came to visit, she was said to be not too impressed with the interior **decor**. It was rather **dreary** (*dull and lifeless; depressing; triste, lúgubre, sombrio*)



So, as a result of that visit, this is what you see today. **Wonderful brightly coloured mosaics**, in the inner dome and all on the surfaces of the nave, drawing your eye right down there into that perspective.

Bright color mosaics look depicting prophets and saints. Also **gilding** (*the process of applying gold leaf or gold paint*) everywhere. Not just on the images, but on all

the architectural details. Just highlighting it, **picking it out**. Making it dazzle, making it spark.

Above all else, Saint Paul's Cathedral remains a place of **worship**, with prayers every hour, several services of the day. It's the common refuge for many people, not just from this country but from all over the world.

Sir Christopher Wren paid tribute to the significance of this site by building this incredible catedral. And, in turn, the people who come to visit the cathedral can respect and enjoy his achievements in architecture, and **just marvel at that ever familiar dome on the London skyline.**