London

The Crown of Europe

Famous for red double-decker buses and phone boxes, London, the capital of the United Kingdom (UK), is the most visited city in the world. With a population of around 18,000 people 1,000 years ago, London is now home to approximately 12 million people from all over the world.

Getting to know all of the London's charms is a daunting task, but even a short visit will be an unforgettable experience for every tourist.

A Brief History of London

Although the Romans named the city Londinium during their conquest of Britain, settlements had existed on the site of the city for thousands of years before.

The royal history of England starts in the 9th century with the House of Wessex (the name of the royal family), and continues until today with the currently reigning House of Windsor. Under Anglo-Saxons, London emerged as a great trading city, and it eventually replaced Winchester as the capital of England.As Britain grew as a supreme maritime power, London drew people from all over world, which boosted its economy.London was heavily bombed during World War II, and soon after, the decline of the British Empire followed.Still, London managed to grow in size and influence and maintain its status as a global center of culture and finance.

Attractions

Buckingham Palace

Queen Elizabeth II is probably the most famous reigning monarch in the world, having held the position for more than 55 years. The Queen and her family reside in the Buckingham Palace, which was built in the 19th century. The palace, now a focal point for the British people for both national celebrations and mourning, had Queen Victoria as its first resident.

Located in Westminster, this grand palace has 775 rooms, and one of the largest private gardens in the world. Tourists are welcome to visit some state rooms, which are normally used for official meetings, in August and September.

Tower Bridge

Standing tall over the Thames River, Tower Bridge is one of the iconic symbols of London. While the bridge is freely accessible to both pedestrians and vehicles, there is an admission charge to enter its twin towers.

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Currently blue and white, the bridge had previously been painted red, white and blue for Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee, that is, the 25th anniversary of her accession to the throne. To allow large ships to pass, the bridge is raised around three times a day. During those times, all the traffic stops or is redirected to a different bridge.

British Museum

British Museum's permanent collection, which counts as many as 8 million art pieces and artifacts, will overwhelm you. The collection originates from all continents, and it illustrates the story of human civilization, history and culture from the very beginning.

This museum hosts more than 6 million tourists each year. This is where you can see Elgin Marbles, taken from the ancient Greek temple of Parthenon in Athens, and Rosetta Stone, one of oldest writings of Ancient Egyptian literature, carved on a stone. Like with all other public museums in London, the entrance to the British Museum is free.

London on Film

Sherlock Holmes, the most famous fictional detective, is from London. According to the book, the movies and the series, his residence is on 221b Baker Street. If you go to this address, you will find a small museum dedicated to Sherlock Holmes and an inevitable long queue of tourists waiting to enter.

According to the best-selling book, Harry Potter and his wizard friends leave to Hogwarts, the school of magic, from the King's Cross station in London. The secret passage to their world of magic is on the 9 ¾ Platform, which tourists can actually see if they visit the station.

James Bond, a famous British movie spy, often needs to carry out missions around London. If you are fan, you might want to check out Thames House, the headquarters of Bond's secret service MI5, and many other city locations which have featured in James Bond movies.

Exercises

Vocabulary Questions

1. What does "reign" mean?

   A. to own a palace

   B. to rule as a monarch

   C. to be from a wealthy family

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2. What does "maritime" mean?

    A. located on the beach

    B. done very quickly

    C. connected with the sea

3. What does "focal" mean?

    A. very powerful

    B. the center or the most important part

    C. well-known

4. What does "boost" mean?

    A. help increase or improve

    B. cause to explode

    C. decline rapidly

5. What does "overwhelm" mean?

    A. have a strong emotional impact on something

    B. cost a lot of money

    C. require much time

Collocation Questions

6. Getting to know all of London's charms is a _____ task.

    A. intimidating

    B. daunting

    C. challenging

7. In the medieval times, London _____ as a trading city.

    A. emerged

    B. appeared

    C. unfolded

8. British Museum's collection _____ from all continents.

    A. derives

    B. arises

    C. originates

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9. The Silver Jubilee marked the anniversary of Queen's _____ to the throne.

    A. elevation

    B. accession

    C. assent

10. Rosetta Stone contains important Egyptian writings _____ on a stone.

    A. written

    B. engraved

    C. carved

11. Many city locations _____ in James Bond movies.

    A. featured

    B. starred

    C. promoted

12. Today, London is a _____ center of finance and culture.

    A. universal

    B. world

    C. global

13. The 9 ¾ Platform is a _____ passage to Hogwarts.

    A. secret

    B. hidden

    C. covert

14. The collection _____ as many as 8 million art pieces.

    A. equals to

    B. counts

    C. incorporates

15. James Bond often _____ missions in London.

    A. accomplishes

    B. carries out

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C. executes

Wh Questions

16. **How** does Harry Potter access his school of magic?

A. across the Tower Bridge

B. through the King's Cross station

C. in the Thames House

17. **Why** was Tower Bridge painted red, blue and white?

A. to celebrate the Olympic Games

B. to celebrate British independence

C. to celebrate Queen's Silver Jubilee

18. **When** did the British Empire start to decline rapidly?

A. after World War II

B. after World War I

C. in the 1990s

19. **What** is the House of Windsor?

A. the place where the royal family lives

B. the name of the current royal family

C. Queen Elizabeth's summer house

20. **Who** was the first queen to live in the Buckingham Palace?

A. Queen Victoria

B. Queen Elizabeth

C. Queen Catherine

Evaluating Statements

21. Based on the information in this lesson, which statement is **true**?

A. Tourists can visit some of the rooms in the Buckingham Palace on most months.

B. Tourists can visit some of the rooms in the Buckingham Palace on certain months.

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22. Based on the information in this lesson, which statement is **false**?

    A. You can still cross the Tower Bridge on foot while large ships are passing under it.

    B. You cannot use the Tower Bridge while large ships are passing under it.

True or False?

23. Based on the information in this lesson, is the following statement true or false?

"London has always been the capital of England."

    A. True

    B. False

24. Based on the information in this lesson, is the following statement true or false?

"There are no admission fees for any public museum in London."

    A. True

    B. False

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