

OFFICIAL VISIT GUIDE 2026

the Tower of London

London · From 42.80€

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History & Experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

Origins of Power and Prison

GOOGLE 4.7 ★★★★★ 119 605 reviews

TIQETS 4.7 ★★★★★ 4 303 reviews

The Tower of London stands as a monumental testament to over **900 years** of British history, originating from the Norman Conquest. In **1078**, William the Conqueror ordered the construction of the White Tower, a massive stone fortress designed to intimidate the local Saxon population and assert absolute royal power. This initial structure was not merely a residence but a symbol of oppression, dominating the skyline of medieval London and controlling the vital river traffic on the Thames. The complex evolved through centuries of expansion under kings like Richard I and Edward I, transforming into an impregnable stronghold with concentric walls and moats that defined military architecture for generations.

Beyond its role as a fortress, the Tower served multifaceted purposes throughout the ages. It functioned as a royal palace, an armory, a treasury, and even a menagerie housing exotic animals gifted by foreign dignitaries. However, its most infamous reputation stems from its use as a prison during the Tudor period. High-profile figures, including **Elizabeth I** before her coronation, were held within these walls, creating an aura of mystery and dread. The expression 'sent to the Tower' became synonymous with imprisonment, reflecting the site's pivotal role in political intrigue and the suppression of dissent during the 16th and 17th centuries.

Contrary to popular myth fueled by propaganda, executions inside the Tower were surprisingly rare, with only seven occurring within the walls before the 20th century. Most public executions took place at **Tower Hill**, just outside the gates, where 112 people met their fate over four centuries. Despite this, the psychological impact of the Tower as a place of judgment and death remained potent. During both World Wars, it resumed its role as a prison for spies, resulting in twelve executions, bridging the gap between medieval tyranny and modern conflict in a chilling continuity of state security.

In the 19th century, architects Anthony Salvin and John Taylor undertook a significant restoration project to return the Tower to its medieval appearance. They removed later structures that had cluttered the site, aiming to preserve its historical integrity. Today, recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 1988, the Tower is no longer a place of fear but a museum of national heritage. It houses the Crown Jewels and continues to attract millions of visitors annually, offering a tangible connection to the dramatic narratives of monarchy, war, and survival that have shaped England.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping through the West Gate, you are immediately transported back in time. The air feels heavier here, charged with the weight of centuries. Sunlight filters through the ancient stone arches, casting long shadows across the uneven cobblestones. The sheer scale of the **White Tower** looms above, its white limestone facade gleaming against the grey sky, a stark reminder of Norman dominance. The atmosphere is one of solemn grandeur, where every brick seems to whisper secrets of past prisoners and powerful monarchs who once walked these same paths.

As you move deeper into the complex, the sounds of modern London fade, replaced by the echo of footsteps on battlements and the distant cry of ravens. The layout reveals itself as a labyrinth of courtyards and chapels, each corner holding a piece of history. Whether admiring the glittering **Crown Jewels** or gazing out over the Thames from the inner wall, the experience is immersive and profound. You are not just observing history; you are standing within its very heart, feeling the pulse of a city that has survived wars, plagues, and revolutions.



PREPARING FOR YOUR VISIT

Practical Information

ADDRESS

Tower Hamlets · Metro: Tower Hill (DL) or London Bridge (J/N). Exit towards the park.

OPENING HOURS

Hours vary by season and school holidays. Check specific hours for the Jewels when booking.

PRICING

Free child entry depending on age (check variants). Book online to skip the lines.

VISIT DURATION

Allow at least 2h30 to 3 hours to comfortably explore the White Tower, the battlements, and admire the Crown Jewels without stress.

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed in most outdoor and indoor areas, but prohibited in the Crown Jewels room for strict security reasons.

AUDIENCE

Site suitable for families and history enthusiasts. Beware of steep stairs in the White Tower for toddlers or people with reduced mobility.

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & Transportation

Bus

: Minories — 6 min à pied

Victoria Station (28 min) · Tower Gateway (9 min)

Car

Victoria Station (20 min) · Tower Gateway (4 min)

Santander / Bike

Victoria Station (25 min) · Tower Gateway (3 min)

On foot

Tower Gateway (4 min) · London Bridge (9 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve the Tower of London ?



📍 St Katharine's & Wapping — EC3N 4AB London

🌐 51°30.487′ N, 0°4.557′ O



ORGANIZATION

Navigating the Fortress Layout

Inner Ward & White Tower Base

Start your journey in the Inner Ward, home to the majestic White Tower. This central keep houses the Royal Armouries collection, featuring suits of armor worn by Henry VIII and other monarchs. The ground floor also contains the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, where many executed prisoners were buried. Explore the lower levels to understand the defensive mechanisms and daily life within the fortress.

Battlements & Outer Walls

Climb to the upper levels of the White Tower and walk along the outer battlements. These elevated walkways offer breathtaking views of the River Thames and the City of London. You can spot the famous ravens flying freely in the courtyard below. This level provides context for the Tower's strategic importance and allows for some of the best photographic opportunities, capturing the interplay of light and stone.

Jewel House & Crypt

Located in the Waterloo Block, the Jewel House is the highlight for many visitors. Here, the Crown Jewels are displayed in secure cases, showcasing the immense wealth and symbolism of the monarchy. The crypt beneath houses additional exhibits related to the history of the jewels and the Tower. Note that photography is strictly prohibited here due to security reasons, so take time to absorb the spectacle with your eyes alone.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Accessibility for people with reduced mobility**

Partial access with adaptations for the White Tower, but limitations due to medieval stairs.

👪 **Families**

Family-friendly site with playful activities, but caution required on stairs and ramparts.

🎧 **Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Unmissable Historical Treasures

01 Jewel House

The Crown Jewels

The ultimate symbol of British monarchy, the Crown Jewels include the Imperial State Crown and the Sovereign's Sceptre with Cross. Admire the intricate craftsmanship and the sparkling diamonds, including the Cullinan I. The display is designed to reflect the glory and authority of the crown, making it a visually overwhelming experience.

> 💡 The **Black Prince's Ruby** is actually a red spinel, misidentified for centuries. It is said to have been taken from the crown of King Peter of Castile.

02 White Tower

The White Tower

As the oldest part of the castle, the White Tower dominates the complex. Its thick walls and imposing height speak to its original purpose as a fortress. Inside, the Royal Armouries collection displays weapons and armor spanning centuries, illustrating the evolution of warfare. The chapel within adds a spiritual dimension to this martial structure.

> 💡 William the Conqueror built it in **1078** to intimidate the locals. It was originally painted white to make it stand out, hence the name.

03 Various Locations

Yeoman Warder Tour

Guided by the Yeomen Warders, known as Beefeaters, this tour brings history to life. These guards share anecdotes about prisoners, ghosts, and daily life in the Tower. Their stories are often humorous and macabre, providing insights not found in guidebooks. Booking in advance ensures you get a spot on these free tours.

> 💡 Beefeaters must serve **22 years** in the armed forces to qualify. They are living links to the Tower's military past.

04 Inner Courtyard

Tower Ravens

Spotting the ravens is a magical moment. Legend says that if the ravens leave the Tower, the kingdom will fall. These birds are cared for by a dedicated Ravenmaster. Watching them fly freely in the courtyard connects you to a living tradition that has persisted for centuries.

> 💡 Their wings are clipped to prevent them from flying away, ensuring the **kingdom remains safe** according to superstition.

05 White Tower

Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula

This small chapel within the White Tower holds deep historical significance. Many high-profile prisoners, including Anne Boleyn, were baptized and buried here. The graves are marked by simple crosses, reminding visitors of the human cost of political ambition. The atmosphere is somber and reflective.

> 💡 Anne Boleyn's grave is unmarked, but she is believed to be buried among the **royal martyrs** here.

06 River Entrance

Traitors' Gate

Enter via Traitors' Gate, the entrance used for prisoners arriving by boat from Westminster. The low ceiling forced captives to bow their heads, a symbolic act of submission. This dark, damp passage sets the tone for the Tower's history as a prison. It contrasts sharply with the grand entrances used by royalty.

> 💡 It was through this gate that **Richard III** entered to claim the throne, adding to its ominous reputation.

07 Inner Ward

Bloody Tower

Associated with the disappearance of the Princes in the Tower, Edward V and his brother Richard. Though no definitive proof exists, this tower remains shrouded in mystery. Visitors can imagine the fear and uncertainty that gripped the young princes. It is a poignant reminder of the dangers of royal succession.

> 💡 The princes vanished in **1483**, leaving behind one of history's greatest unsolved mysteries.

08 Historical Exhibit

Royal Mint

Learn about the Tower's role as the home of the Royal Mint for centuries. Coins struck here circulated throughout the empire. Exhibits show the tools and techniques used by mint workers. This aspect highlights the economic importance of the Tower beyond its military and penal functions.

> 💡 Counterfeiting coins was punishable by **death**, emphasizing the value placed on currency integrity.

TIPS

Essential Tips for Your Visit

TIMING

Arrive 15 minutes before opening to beat the crowds. Queues at the West Gate can reach 60 minutes during peak hours. Early morning light is also ideal for photography.

BILLET

Book online in advance to skip lines and guarantee access to Beefeater tours. Check for combined tickets with Tower Bridge to save time and money.

PARCOURS

Start with the White Tower to understand the layout, then explore the outer walls. Visit the Jewel House last, as it often opens later (around 10 AM).

PHOTO

Take photos from the Inner Wall for the best view of the White Tower and Tower Bridge. Remember, photography is prohibited in the Jewel House.

PAUSE

There are limited seating areas inside. Consider visiting Borough Market afterwards for a meal. Bring water as buying drinks inside can be expensive.

ENFANTS

The site is family-friendly with activities, but beware of steep stairs in the White Tower. Supervise children closely near the moat and battlements.

AUDIOGUIDE

The audio guide is available in multiple languages and provides detailed context. However, the Beefeater tours are often preferred for their engaging storytelling.

CONFORT

Wear comfortable, non-slip shoes due to uneven cobblestones and narrow stairs. Avoid heels. Dress in layers as indoor temperatures can vary.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do you need to book your tickets for the Tower of London in advance?

Yes, online booking is highly recommended to avoid queues of 30 to 60 minutes at the West Gate. This also guarantees your access to Beefeater-guided tours, which are often limited in capacity.

How far in advance can I cancel?

The cancellation policy depends on the ticket purchased, but generally, free cancellation is possible up to 24 hours before the visit. Check the specific terms at the time of purchase to be sure and guarantee a full refu

Is there a current promotion?

Reduced rates are available for children, seniors, and groups. Check our page regularly for seasonal offers or combined tickets with Tower Bridge to optimize your budget and discover two iconic London landmarks in a sing

Which entrance should I choose when booking?

The West Gate is the main entrance for individual visitors and the starting point for Beefeater tours. The middle drawbridge is reserved for organized groups. Prefer the West Gate for complete autonomy.

How long does it take to tour the Tower of London?

Allow a minimum of 2h30 to 3 hours for a complete visit including the White Tower, the Crown Jewels, and an exploration of the battlements. Add 30 minutes if you join a guided Beefeater tour by the historic Yeomen Warder

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

The Myth of Executions

Contrary to popular belief, very few executions occurred inside the Tower walls. Only **seven people** were executed within the fortress before the 20th century. Most public executions took place at Tower Hill, just outside the gates, serving as a deterrent to the public.

Elizabeth I's Imprisonment

Before becoming Queen, Elizabeth I was imprisoned in the Tower by her sister Mary I. She stayed in the **White Tower** for several months. This experience likely influenced her cautious approach to ruling and her understanding of political danger.

Victorian Restoration

In the 19th century, architects Anthony Salvin and John Taylor restored the Tower to its medieval appearance. They removed later structures that had cluttered the site, ensuring that the **medieval essence** was preserved for future generations.

The Royal Menagerie

Long before it was a museum, the Tower housed a zoo founded by Richard I. Exotic animals like lions and elephants were kept here. The **last lion** died in 1836, marking the end of this unusual chapter in the Tower's history.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

The area surrounding the Tower is rich with attractions that complement your visit. Just across the river, the iconic **Tower Bridge** offers panoramic views from its glass galleries, providing a stunning contrast between Victorian engineering and medieval fortification. For a culinary break, head to **Borough Market**, London's oldest food market, located a short walk away. Here, you can sample fresh produce and local specialties amidst a vibrant atmosphere. If maritime history interests you, the **HMS Belfast** is moored nearby, offering a unique immersion into British naval history. Alternatively, relax in the green spaces of Tower Park, perfect for unwinding after exploring the castle's intense historical narrative.



Visiting the Tower of London is more than a tour; it is a journey through the soul of Britain. From the oppressive silence of the prison cells to the dazzling brilliance of the jewels, every moment offers a glimpse into the complexities of power and humanity. Leave with a sense of awe, knowing you have touched the stones that witnessed the rise and fall of empires. This is history alive, waiting to be discovered by those willing to look beyond the surface.