

Geography of London

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(Source: Daniel Chapman, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:London_from_a_hot_air_balloon.jpg, Creative Commons [Attribution 2.0 Generic](#) license)

Coordinates: 51°30'26"N 0°7'39"W
Sovereign state: United Kingdom
Country: England
Region: Greater London
Settled by: Romans, c.43 AD (as Londinium)
Counties: City & Greater London
Districts: City & 32 boroughs
Government: Type: Devolved authority, Body: Greater London Authority, Elected: London Assembly (14 constituencies)
Area: Greater London: 1,572 km² (607 sq mi), Urban: 1,737.9 km² (671.0 sq mi), Metro: 8,382 km² (3,236 sq mi)
Elevation: 35 m (115 ft)
Population (2014): Greater London: 8,538,689, Density: 5,432/km² (14,070/sq mi), Urban: 9,787,426, Metro: 13,879,757
Demonym: Londoner
Time zone: GMT (UTC), Summer (DST): BST (UTC+1)
Postcode areas: E, EC, N, NW, SE, SW, W, WC, BR, CM, CR, DA, EN, HA, IG, KT, RM, SM, TN, TW, UB, WD
Area codes: 020, 01322, 01689, 01708, 01737, 01895, 01923, 01959, 01992
Police: City of London Police & Metropolitan Police

International airports: Heathrow, City (Both within Greater London) Gatwick, Stansted, Luton, Southend (Outside Greater London)

GeoTLD: .london

Website: London.gov.uk



(Buckingham Palace, Source: DAVID ILIFF, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buckingham_Palace_from_gardens,_London,_UK_-_Diliff.jpg, CC [Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/) license)

London, south-east of Britain, is the capital and largest city of the United Kingdom. Long time the capital of the British Empire, it is henceforth the political center and the seat of the Commonwealth.

Founded almost 2000 years ago by the Romans under the name *Londinium*, London in the nineteenth century was the most populous city in the world. Now widely exceeded by many megacities, it remains a city of the first rank, because of its reach and its considerable economic power, mainly due to its status as the first global financial center.

In the London area, composed of the Inner London and *Outer London*, there were 8,416,535 residents in 2013, and it produced a fifth of gross domestic product in the United

Kingdom. In 2012, the urban area of London had 8,416,535 inhabitants, its agglomeration 11,140,445 and its metropolitan area (larger urban zone or area of direct influence) 12,317,800 inhabitants. In Europe, only the agglomerations Moscow, Istanbul and Paris have a comparable demographic weight. Its inhabitants call themselves *Londoners*.

London, the only city to have hosted the Olympics three times (1908, 1948, 2012), is dynamic and very diverse culturally. It plays an important role in art and fashion. It receives 28 million tourists per year and has four sites in World heritage and numerous iconic landmarks: the Palace of Westminster, *Tower Bridge*, Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, and renowned institutions like the *British Museum* or the *National Gallery*.



(*Palace of Westminster*, Source: Diliff, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Palace_of_Westminster,_London_-_Feb_2007.jpg, CC [Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/) license)

Definition of London

The common name London may appoint several different geographical or administrative units, which can sometimes lead to confusion.

The most common use refers to the *Greater London*, one of the nine regional subdivisions of England, formed of the territory under the authority of the *Greater London Authority* and the Mayor of London. Greater London is regarded as a NUTS-1 region within the European Union. It

is this set of approximately 1600 km² for 7.5 million inhabitants which is commonly referred to when speaking of the British capital.

(*Location of Greater London, England*, Source: Morwen, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:EnglandLondon.png>, CC [Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/) license)



Greater London is divided into two areas; *Inner London* and *Outer London*. Both areas are considered NUTS-2 regions. However, Greater London is not officially a city, whose status, strictly defined in the UK, is awarded to a city by the British monarch on specific criteria. Before its creation in 1965, the territory of Greater London was part of the counties of Kent, Middlesex, Surrey, Essex and Hertfordshire. The *City of London* (abbreviated *City*, or *Square Mile* in reference to an area of 1 square mile), in the heart of Greater London, is the historical definition of London. This is where the modern city was born and today is the oldest district of the capital. It is also a full-fledged district with special status. The City of London and the rest of Greater London form two parts of different "Lieutenancy" (*Lieutenancy areas*).



(*Map of the City of London, central London, of Greater London, and the M25*, Source: Steff, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:London_boundaries-fr.svg, CC [Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/) license)

The vast London agglomeration can be described by the *urban region of London*, which corresponds to the zone occupied by the suburbs, which occupies a territory roughly similar to the Greater London but with a slightly higher population. Beyond the urban area is the *London*

urban area (London commuter belt or London Metropolitan Area) which includes the territories inhabited by people traveling daily (commuters) to work in London. The urban area of London has grown considerably during the Victorian era and again during the interwar period. Its expansion was stopped in 1940 because of World War II and the policy known as the Green Belt and its area has not changed much since. The boundaries of the Metropolitan Police District and the catchment area of London transport have evolved over time but today correspond approximately to that of Greater London.

Other terms such as *Inner London, Outer London, Central London, North London, South London, East London, East End of London, West London or West End of London* are sometimes to designate neighborhoods, statistical units or districts of London.

Unlike many other capitals, the status of "Capital of the UK" of London has never been officially granted to the city by decree or written charter. His current position is established by constitutional convention, London being the seat of British power. Its status as *de facto* capital is in fact an element of the unwritten constitution of the United Kingdom. The capital of England was moved to London from Winchester after the Norman conquest.

Perhaps the Romans marked the center of *Londinium* with the London Stone, still visible in Cannon Street 7. The coordinates of the center of London (traditionally located in the Eleanor Cross at Charing Cross, near the corner of Trafalgar Square and Whitehall) are approximately 51° 30' 29" N 0° 07' 29". Trafalgar Square has also become a central place of celebration and demonstration.

Relief and hydrography

Greater London is located 50 km west of the Thames Estuary and extends over an area of 579 km² (37th worldwide).

The altitude there varies from sea level to 245 m (Biggin Hill, south of the metropolitan area).

The river, which crosses the city from west to east, had a major influence on the development of the city. London was originally founded on the north bank of the Thames and has, for several centuries, only one bridge, *London Bridge*. The main focus of the city is accordingly confined to this side of the Thames, until the construction, in the eighteenth century, of a series of other bridges. The city was then extended in all directions, this expansion being impeded by any natural obstacle, a campaign almost devoid of relief, with the exception of a few hills (*Parliament Hill, Primrose Hill*).



(*London from Primrose Hill*, Source: Duncan from Nottingham, UK, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:London_from_Primrose_Hill_May_2013.jpg, [Attribution 2.0 Generic license](#))

The Thames was once wider and shallower than today. The river banks were heavily decorated, most tributaries were diverted and are now underground, sometimes transformed into sewers (such as the Fleet river, whose name survives in *Fleet Street*, the oldest street newspapers). The Thames is subject to the tide and London is widely flood. Flood threats are increasing elsewhere over time given the steady rise of the water level at high tide and the slow tilting of Britain (bearing north, lowering south) caused by isostatic rebound phenomenon. A dam, the *Thames Barrier* was built across the Thames at Woolwich in the 1970s, to overcome this threat. In 2005 however, it was suggested the construction of a dam of about fifteen kilometers along further downstream in order to counter future flood risk.