**LONDON**

**TEXT**

**I**

**The History of London**

London is the capital of England, Great Britain and the UK. It is almost 2 millennia old. London began life as a Roman **fortification**, called Londinium. Around the town, the Romans built a wall for defense, but later people built outside the walls, and this building continued many years. In 1665 there was a terrible **plague** in London: so, many people left the city and escaped to the villages. About 69,000 people died of this terrible **disease**. In 1666 the Great Fire of London ended the plague, but it also destroyed much of the city, burning about 15,000 houses. But soon London **recovered** from this destruction and now it is one of the largest and one of the world’s most enjoyable cities.

**II**

**A few facts about London**

Today Greater London has an official population of more than 7.5 million people. The London region and the Greater London administrative area are governed by the elected **Mayor**.

London has five international airports and London’s **Heathrow** is the world’s busiest airport by number of international passengers. In 2012 London became the first city to host the Summer Olympics three times.

London is the world’s largest financial centre alongside New York, it has the largest city **GDP** in Europe and is home to the **headquarters** of more than 100 of Europe’s 500 largest companies.

Most famous landmarks include Buckingham Palace, the London Eye, Piccadilly Circus, St. Paul’s Cathedral, Tower Bridge and Trafalgar Square. London is home to numerous museums, galleries, libraries, sporting events and other cultural institutions including the British Museums, National Gallery, British Library, Wimbledon and 40 theatres. London’s Chinatown is the largest in Europe. The London Underground network is the oldest underground railway network in the world and the most extensive after the Shanghai Metro.

London contains four **World Heritage Sites**: 1) the Tower of London; 2) Kew Gardens; 3) the site of the Palace of Westminster, Westminster Abbey and St. Margaret’s Church; 4) and the historic settlement of Greenwich (in which the Royal Observatory marks the Greenwich Meridian and **GMT**).

**III**

**London and its sights**

**London and its sights**

London has many parts. The biggest parts are Westminster, the City, the West End and the East End. The City, the oldest part of London, is the commercial and financial centre of the country. Westminster is the political heart of London. The West End is the richest and the most beautiful part of London, the symbol of wealth and luxury, where the most expensive hotels, restaurants, shops and clubs are situated. The East End is the industrial part. There are many factories and workshops here.

London **offers visitors** a great **variety** of **places of interest**. One of the most famous **sights** is the Houses of Parliament. The structure is a **remarkable** example of Gothic architecture. The Houses of Parliament, called officially the Palace of Westminster, used to be a palace for kings and queens but now it is occupied by the Parliament. Everyone knows Big Ben, the famous clock on the Clock Tower near the Houses of Parliament (the Palace of Westminster).

**Opposite** the Houses of Parliament, **Westminster Abbey** is situated. It’s a national **shrine** where the kings and queens are crowned and famous people are buried. It was founded by Edward the Confessor in 1050. One of the greatest **treasures** of the Abbey is the oaken Coronation chair which was made in 1300. Near the West door of the Abbey **the Unknown Warrior** lies in a **grave** commemorating the men who died in the First World War.

Londoners are **proud of** Saint Paul’s Cathedral, the largest Protestant Church in England. It is an architectural **masterpiece** of the architect Sir Christopher Wren. Wren is buried under the roof of his own great work. “If you want to see his monument, look around”, is written on his tomb.

The Tower of London is also worth visiting and is a real **attraction** for **tourists**. It was built 9 centuries ago. The Tower was used as a **palace**, a **fortress** and a political prison. Now it is a popular museum.

**Questions on text 1 and text 2**

**I**

1. When was London founded?

1. Who founded London?

2. What were the positive consequences of the Great Fire of London?

3. What were the negative consequences of the Great Fire of London?

**II**

1. What is the population of London?

2. Who governs London?

4. How many international airports does London have?

5. What sights of London do you know?

6. What World Heritage Sites are there in London?

7. What other facts about London do you know?