*When a man Is tired of London he is tired of life, for there is in London all that Life can afford*

*Samuel Johnson*

Today, more than 250 years later, Johnson’s words still ring true. There are few places that offer such a variety of sights, entertainments, world-famous museums and superb shopping.

There is much in London which fascinates visitors and inspires the affection of Londoners: the splendor of Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament, the dignity of St.Paul’s Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

So, ladies and gentleman! Welcome to our London sightseeing tour. London is situated in the south-east of England on the River Thames, where the Romans landed nearly 2000 years ago.It is 46 kilometres from the north to the south, and 58 kilometres from the east to the west. London is one of the most famous capital cities of the world and every year it attracts crowds of visitors from home and abroad. This city has got a population of about 8 million people. That is 13% of all Britain’s population. London really consists of 3 cities: the City of London, The City of Westminster, and the City of Southwark.

Today I invite you to see the city of Westminster, its commercial and business district. The area of the City is about a square mile. The “City” does not refer to the whole of central London but rather to a small area east of the centre, including the site of the original Roman town. The city of London is one of the major banking centres of the world and one can find the banks of many nations. Here can also be found : the Bank of England, the Stock Exchange, and Lloyds, the most famous insurance company of the world. Only 5000 people live in the city but more than a million come here to work.

We are in Trafalgar Square**.** It was named so in commemoration of the victorious naval battle of Trafalgar in 1805, in which Admiral Lord Nelson was fatally wounded. The Nelson Colomn was erected in the 1840s. As you see, on the top of the imposing colomn, a replica of one Corinthian colomns in the Temple of Mars at Rome, is a 17 feet-tall statue of Lord Nelson. The total hight of the monument is 184 feet. On the pedestal you can see bronze reliefs cast from a captured French cannon, representing Nelson’s famous victories. The four bronze lions are the work of the English architect of Landseer.

On the north side of Trafalgar Square is the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery. The National Gallery was built in 1824. It contains one of the finest collections of pictures in the world. There are more than 850 masterpieces of all European school of paintings.

During the rush hours, when people go to and from their work, it is hardly possible to cross the streets. At that time the quickest transport is Underground railway. All other traffic is slowed down by the crowds of people and all kinds of vehicles. Trafalgar Square is site of demonstrations and mass relies for piece, disarmament and for working people’s rights.

Now we are going to Buckingham Palace. The Palace was built by the Duke of Buckingham in 1705, hence, the name of the building. Originally it was not intended to become the Royal residence. For centuries Monarch lived first in Westminster Palace and then in St.Jame’s Palace. In 1762, George III bought the Palace from the Duke and presented it to his wife. And only in the 19th century, when Queen Victoria was on the throne, Buckingham Palace was turned into the residence of the Monarch. As a matter of fact, it serves two functions. It is a family home and the place where presidents, kings and politicians come to meet the Queen. Buckingham Palace is like a small town with its own police station, two post offices, a bar, two sports clubs, a disco, a cinema and a swimming pool. There are 600 rooms and 3 miles of red carpet. Every day at Buckingham Palace there is a famous ceremony the Changing of the Guard, at 11 p.m. Every day a new Guard of 30 guardsmen marches to the Palace and takes the place of the old guard. A large crowd of people gather to see this famous and traditional ceremony.

Today Buckingham Palace is a very busy place. Several hundreds of people help the Monarch to run the country. Lot’s of important meetings, ceremonies and receptions take place here. In front of the palace you see a monument – this is The Victoria Memorial, the statue of Queen Victoria.

But let’s speak about the building. First we see State rooms: they are furnished with the greatest treasure of the Royal collection – paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens, Vermeer; sculpture by Canova and Chantrey; exquisite examples of porcelain; the finest English and French furniture in the world. Although Buckingham Palace is furnished and decorated with priceless works of art in the world today, it is not an art gallery. The state rooms are used regularly by the Monarch and members of the Royal Family for various official ceremonies.

And this is the Throne room. In it the Monarch receives all important visitors such as Heads of the foreign states. Actually this room is not used very often.

Now we are in the Ballroom that is 36m long, 18m wide and 13m high .It is the largest room in Buckingham Palace which was opened in 1856 with a ball to celebrate the end of the Crimean War. From the Ballroom we can go to the west Gallery decorated with amazing frescoes and paintings. The Gallery overlooks the gardens that surround the Palace. **london sightseeing tour**

We also must see the State Dining Room. Many distinguished people have dined in this room, including lots of presidents and prime ministers. A lot of banquets are held here throughout the year.

Our tour is not over yet. Now let’s visitWestminster Abbey. The great glory of Westminster is, of course, the Abbey. Ancient tradition claims that St. Peter founded the first church here, but the Abbey's more than 900 years of existence since the dedication go back to Edward the Confessor. Henry III rebuilt the earlier church and the present building dates from his reign.

Westminster Abbey is the ancient church where a lot of kings and queens have been crowned and buried for nearly 1,000 years. The old­est part of the building dates back to the 18th century. The Chapel of King Henry VII was built in the 16th century.

There are 3,000 graves of statesmen, scientists, artists inside the Abbey. Some of the tombs are decorated with gold and precious stones.

Princess Diana, so much loved by almost of the peoples the world over, was buried in Westminster Abbey in 1997.

As the visitors of the Abbey, you are attracted to Poets' Corner, with its memorials to great men of letters. Many outstanding statesmen, painters, writers and poets are buried there. Among them are Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling and others. Chaucer, who is buried in the Abbey, is remembered here. So are Spenser, Dryden, Ben Jonson, and Milton. There are also memorials to Shakespeare, Burns, Byron, Walter Scott, Thackeray and to the American poet Longfellow. A full length statue of Shakespeare by Scheemakers was erected in 1741, and just opposite is a monument to the actor David Garrick. He is aptly1 shown parting the curtains. Dr Johnson is rep­resented with a magnificent bust by Nollekens, and there is a remark­able rendering of Blake's life-mask by Epstein.

Nearly all English kings and queens have been crowned in Westminster Abbey.

If you have never visited the Abbey before, try to go it through slowly and look about carefully. For the immediate effect, as you fol­low the wonderfully vaulted roof along the length of the nave, is a startling and breathtaking beauty. There is an element of greatness here that is not just concerned with size and height.

Now we are driving down Whitehall. So let’s stop at 10, Downing Street. It is the home of the Prime Minister. This building is 200 years old. But its interior has been brought up-to-date. It has got electric lights, central heating, and several bathrooms. But at the same time it is where the Cabinet meets. As you know nowadays the Prime Minister is Gordon Brown. From here you can see the Houses of Parliament.

The Palace of Westminster is nearly 1000 years old though it was reconstructed, enlarged and redesigned many times and today's palace dates mostly from the 19th century. For long period of time the Palace of Westminster was the home of Monarch. It was in 1512 that a great fire seriously damaged Palace and the king Henry VIII decided to leave it and move another palace. To St. James's Palace and then to Buckingham, but now we are talking about Westminster. Since the 16th centurу -the palace has served as the home of the British Parlia­ment

So, this is where the House of Commons and the I house of Lords work. the British Parliament are here, all laws are passed and all important political and social questions are discussed in this building. This is where the Monarch of the UK reads her special speech to the Government and the nation once a year.

The Palace of Westminster, together with Victoria Tower and the Clock Tower - which houses the most famous clock in the world, Big Ben - form an unmistakable architectural complex. But the Towers and the Houses of Parliament are not only associated architecturally, but also in the democratic spirit that rules the political life developed in the House of Commons, for, if Parliament is sitting - British parliamentary debates constitute an exemplary political spectacle - the flag flies on top of Victoria Tower during the whole day. If the debates go on during the night - which quite often happens in the dynamic parliamentary life of Great Britain, especially if matters highly important for the nation are being discussed - a light burns above Big Ben in the Clock Tower. This light at night and the flag during the day-time signal for the people of London that the members of Parliament, each from his own political point of view, are watching over the nation's interests.

The Houses of Parliament are open to the public and we can enter it and see some very interesting historic rooms and halls. . Now, when we are inside the building, look at the ceiling of the main hall. You see the three colours of Parliament — gold that symbolizes the Monarchy, red — the symbol of the House of Lords and green — the symbol of the House of Commons. The building is divided in three parts accord­ingto these colours.

First, the Robing Hall. In this room the Monarch receive the Imperial State Crown which is placed on his/her head just before he/she walks through the corridor to the House of Lords to read his annual address. This Crown is usually kept in the Tower. It is used only once a year. The Monarch wears it during the opening Parliament. This rooms lead us to the Royal Gallery where there are Royal portraits. These are kings and queens from the ancient times till nowadays. And these two large paintings show the scenes from the battles which were fought against the French in the 19th century — the Battle of Trafalgar and the Battle of Waterloo.

Now we are going to the House of Lords.

This part of the palace does not seem very old.It is not very old because in the Second World War the palace was bombed and this part of it was rebuilt in the 1950s.

The Lords sit on the red benches and the Lord Chancellor who is the head of the House sit at the end of the hall on the big red divan, which is often called “the woolsack”. It is called so because many years ago, he really sat on the wool­sack, it was used as the symbol of the prosperity of England but today it is just a divan.

And here is the House of Com­mons. The prevailing colour here is green. As you see the members of the Parliament sit on the green benches. The head of the House is the Speaker and he sits on the green chair.

I am sure, you have heard much about BIG BEN. The clock bell was called after Sir Benjamin Hall, who was given a job of having the bell hoisted up. Sir Benjamin was a very tall and stout man, whose nickname was “Big Ben”. One day he said in Parliament: “Shall we call the bell St. Stephen’s because of the name of the tower?” But someone joked: “Why not call it Big Ben?”. Now the bell is known all over the world by that name.

The bell is 7 feet 6 inches high, and 9 feet 6 inches across the mouth. It weights 13.5 tons (about the same as two double-decker buses).

The bell is heard at every hour. It is the big bell with a deep voice, and it counts the hours. Its deep voice is heard on the radio. You may hear, "This is the BBC. The time is six o'clock". And you hear the deep BOOM of Big Ben six times.

But let’s go on. We have an interesting place to visit. We are going to St. Paul’s Cathedral. It is a magnificent, unique building, one of the greatest churches in the world. In fact, there has been a Cathedral on this site since 604 AD but it was destroyed and rebuilt at least three times and he Cathedral you can see today dates back to the 17th century, very day about 40,000 people come to St. Paul’s. When in 66 the Cathedral was burnt down as a result of the Great Fire of London, the plans were made to build a new Cathedral at once. The construction finished only in 1710. Many famous artists took part in the decorating of St. Paul’s: the beautiful frescoes and glit­tering mosaics that the visitors adore today are the perfect works of art.

Many contemporary artists continue to enrich the Cathedral. a lot of important events were celebrated at the Cathedral: the Golden Jubilees of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II, famous priests of the past and present preached here. The Cathedral is also the burial place of many important and influential political and marital figures. They are commem­orated with beautiful monuments. Although the Cathedral is full of treasures it is not a museum. St. Paul is a living place of worship. The services take place daily, so we will be allowed to enter the Cathedral only when the sermon is over. And don’t forget to turn off your camera and a mobile phone. Tourists are not allowed to use them when at the Cathedral.

The Cathedral is enormous .And we shall see the most exciting places of it. First the Nave — the central part of the Cathedral where there is the altar and the imposing memorial to Wellington, it is the largest memorial in the Cathedral, it commemorates the fa­mous British officer. Wellington is depicted riding his horse on the top of the monument. It is so big and fantastic. Several architect worked on it for more than 20 years. If we go down the Nave we can view the statues of famous priests of the past, some of these statues are very old, and mosaics that show the symbols of the Christianity.

The staircase takes us up to the Dome — this part of the Cathedral is also often referred to as "The Galleries". Perhaps you have heard about the Whispering Gallery. It is called this because someone whispers close to the wall on one side, a person with an ear close to the wall on the other side can hear what is said. it is 259 steps up. There is not only one gallery in the Dome. 378 steps up is the Stone Gallery and if you climb 530 steps you will get to the Golden Gallery which offers panoramic view across London.

Now we are going to the Crypt.

The Crypt is the basement of the Cathedral. Many important persons and national heroes are commemorated here: you will see the monuments to the army officers Nelson and Wel­lington, Lawrence of Arabia, the prime minister of the UK – Winston Churchil and Florence Nightingale – the woman who founded the first nursing school in England. There is also the memorial to William Turner, one of the greatest painters of the 19th century. I must say that Christopher Wren, the architect who designed the Cathedral, is also buried here. We will stop at his grave. It is very Simple. There is no monument but the plate on the gravestone says: “If you look for a monument, just look around”. The whole Cathedral is a true memorial to this talented architect.

Our excursion has come to the end. Thank you. If you have questios, you may ask them.