

Attractions *of Great Britain*



The Gherkin

30 St. Mary Axe

30 St Mary Axe, better known by its nickname Gherkin, is one of the most eye-catching buildings in London and it stands out prominently in the city's skyline.

Construction

Construction of the Gherkin was commissioned by Swiss Re, a reinsurance company. The 41 story skyscraper was built in 2004 after a modern glass and steel design by the architectural firm of Foster and Partners.

Originally known as the Swiss Re Building, it was later renamed to its street address 30 St. Mary Axe after Swiss Re sold the building in 2007. Even before its construction was complete Londoners dubbed the building the 'Gherkin' for its distinctive shape, and it is still known by that name.





Architecture

The cigar-shaped structure has a steel frame with circular floor plans and a glass facade with diamond-shaped panels. The swirling striped pattern visible on the exterior is the result of the building's energy-saving system which allows the air to flow up through spiraling wells.

On the street level, the Gherkin's base is well integrated with an open public plaza. Huge white X braces create a dramatic entrance. The top of the tower, where visitors find an open hall covered by a glass conical dome is even more spectacular. From here you have great views over the city. Unfortunately the building is not open to the public.

Its unique, bold and energy efficient design has won the Gherkin many awards including the Stirling Prize, the London Region Award, and the Emporis Skyscraper Award.

Harrods

Harrods is London's most famous department store. The luxurious store is on many tourists' itineraries, who come to admire the magnificent interior and enormous selection. They often leave the store with a signature green bag; foreign visitors account for a significant part of the store's sales.

History

The history of this famous luxury store goes back to 1849 when Charles Henry Harrod opened a grocery at Brompton Road in Knightsbridge, at the time a small village just outside London. Just two years later, the Great Exhibition of 1851, which took place at Crystal Palace in nearby Hyde Park, brought many visitors to the area. Knightsbridge and Harrod's new store boomed.



The Department Store



Harrods is one of the world's most famous stores and one of London's tourist attractions thanks to the wide assortment of luxury goods that are on display in a magnificently decorated building.

The enormous array of products is particularly impressive. The company's motto - engraved on the building's pediment - is Omnia, Omnibus, Ubique (Everything, for everyone, everywhere).

Harrods used to be known as the store where anything you could think of was for sale. While this may not be the case any more, the assortment is still enormous. You can purchase anything from historic eighteenth-century dinner plates or exquisite caviar to giant teddy bears.



London Eye

A modern but already very popular tourist attraction is the London Eye, a giant observation wheel located in the Jubilee Gardens on the South Bank. The 135 meter (443ft) tall structure was built as part of London's millennium celebrations.

A Landmark for the new Millennium

The structure was designed by the architectural team of David Marks and Julia Barfield, husband and wife. They submitted their idea for a large observation wheel as part of a competition to design a landmark for the new millennium.

The Observation Wheel

The futuristic looking capsules, accommodating up to twenty-five passengers, were transported all the way from France by train through the channel. Each egg-shaped capsule is eight meters long and weighs five hundred kilograms. The twenty-five meter (82 ft) long spindle was built in the Czech Republic. The rim has a diameter of 122m (400ft), about two hundred times the size of a bicycle wheel. Eighty spokes connect the rim with the spindle.

The observation wheel turns slow enough for people to embark while it is moving. A complete turn takes about thirty minutes. Thanks to the construction of the glass capsules on the outer side of the rim, London Eye Capsule Capsule the passengers have a great 360 degree view over London.

Many famous landmarks are clearly visible, including Buckingham Palace, St. Paul's Cathedral and the Houses of Parliament. On a clear day you can see as far as forty kilometers (25 miles).





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