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**THE BEAUTY OF LONDON**

**The History of Big Ben**

The Palace of Westminster was destroyed by fire in 1834. In 1844, it was decided the new buildings for the Houses of Parliament should include a tower and a clock.

A massive bell was required and the first attempt (made by John Warner & Sons at Stockton-on-Tees) cracked irreparably. The metal was melted down and the bell recast in Whitechapel in 1858. Big Ben first rang across Westminster on 31 May 1859. A short time later, in September 1859,

**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.
None of the entrants won the competition, but the couple pressed on and eventually got the backing of British Airways, who sponsored the project.

**Construction**

Construction of the observation wheel took more than a year and a half to complete. In the process over 1700 tons of steel were used for the structure and more than 3000 tons of concrete were used for the foundations.
The futuristic looking capsules, accommodating up to twenty-five passengers, were transported all the way from France by train through the Chunnel. Each egg-shaped capsule is eight meters long and weighs five hundred kilograms.

**Westminster Abbey**

Westminster Abbey is a Gothic monastery church in [London](http://www.sacred-destinations.com/england/london) that is the traditional place of coronation and burial for English monarchs. Neither a cathedral nor a parish church, Westminster Abbey is a place of worship owned by the royal family.

Located next to the Houses of Parliament in the heart of London, Westminster Abbey is a must-see for any London visitor. With its oldest parts dating to the year 1050, the Abbey contains some of the most glorious medieval architecture in London. Because of its royal connections, it was spared King Henry VIII's general assault on monastic buildings during the Reformation.

Poet's Corner with its memorials to William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, and other giants of literature; and the tombs of Queen Elizabeth I, "Bloody" Queen Mary, explorer David Livingstone and naturalist Charles Darwin.

**Tower of London**

The Tower of London is one of London's most popular and iconic tourist attractions. Built by William the Conqueror in the early 1080s the Towers role has been as a fortress, palace and prison.
One of the main reasons to visit the Tower is to see the working collection of Crown Jewels. There are 23,578 in the collection including one of the world's most famous diamonds. Find out who dared to try and steal the Jewels in 1671 and whether they succeeded.

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