

Take note

All you need to know about The London Eye



Conceived and designed by Marks Barfield Architects
Operated by the London Eye Company Limited, a Merlin Entertainments Group Company



Discover the world of London's 21st century landmark

Who would have thought that such a simple idea could be so stunningly successful? The world's tallest cantilevered observation wheel, 135m high, on the banks of the Thames, offering unrivalled views over London. It's so uncomplicated, but so visionary, it's surprising that nobody thought of it years before it happened.

We're talking about The London Eye

Since opening at the turn of the century, the London Eye has become an iconic landmark, with a status that can be compared to Tower Bridge, Big Ben, Eros and the Tower of London. It has been used as a backdrop in countless films and for innumerable TV programmes. A source of pride for the whole country as well as the capital, the London Eye is the most distinctive addition this century to the world's greatest city, loved by Britons and tourists alike.

In fact, in its short life, it has become the most popular paid for UK visitor attraction, visited by over 3.5 million people a year (an average of 10,000 a day). A breathtaking feat of design and engineering, passengers in the London Eye's capsules can see up to 40 kilometres in all directions, in complete comfort and safety.

But there's much, much more to the London Eye than its views and its engineering. It plays an integral role in the community, has become something of a gateway or a symbol for London and offers a unique venue for corporate events and entertainment.

Want to know more? This pack will guide you through the world of the London Eye, telling you everything you need to know about great days out, and memorable nights too. Read on, we're sure we'll open your eyes to our world of wonder.



The vision

In the closing years of the last century there was a huge demand for monuments and events to commemorate the Millennium.

Two visionary architects, David Marks and Julia Barfield, came up with an astonishingly simple, yet audacious idea: they wanted to give London a structure which was physically beautiful, technologically innovative and which would also allow visitors the chance to see one of the world's greatest cities from a new and exciting perspective.

The idea isn't entirely without precedent – Paris' most famous landmark, the Eiffel Tower, is a celebratory structure (erected to commemorate the 1889 Paris Exhibition) – but what is new is the technology and the interactive nature of the experience.

Then and now

David Marks and Julia Barfield, The London Eye's creators and architects, are not only business partners, but also husband and wife! The pair first attracted attention back in 1989 when they won a competition to design a "Bridge of the Future". Typically daring, they proposed a single-span bridge across the Grand Canyon based on the structural principles of a dinosaur spine. More recently, they've created an aquarium in the sea in Toulon; an award-winning watersports centre in Liverpool; an aviation museum in Riyadh; and they've also transformed Stoke Newington reservoir in London. They decided a wheel was an ideal symbol for London in the new Millennium. The wheel is a universally recognised symbol of time and regeneration. It's a powerful metaphor of the turning of a century and a millennium, and it also introduces a new shape and sense of calm into the chaotic city that is London.

Merlin Entertainments Group is the leading name in location based, quality family entertainment. Now the world's number two visitor attraction operator, it aims to deliver unique, memorable and rewarding experiences to its 30 million visitors worldwide. Merlin has 51 attractions, in 12 countries, across three continents. The Merlin Entertainments Group is the sole owner of the London Eye.

A decade after it was first conceived, the London Eye is as famous a London landmark as Big Ben or the Tower of London and has become a global icon recognised the world over.



Impressive facts and figures

The London Eye is the world's tallest cantilevered observation wheel – and so, unsurprisingly, its vital statistics are rather impressive.

Ten things you didn't know about the London Eye

- 1 You can see around 40km from the top – as far as Windsor Castle – on a clear day.
- 2 The London Eye carries 3.5 million passengers every year – you'd need 6,680 fully-booked Boeing 747-400 jumbo jets to move that number of fliers!
- 3 The London Eye can carry 800 passengers per revolution – equivalent to 11 London red double-decker buses.
- 4 Each of the 32 capsules weighs ten tonnes. To put that figure into perspective, it's the same weight as 1,052,631 pound coins!
- 5 Each rotation takes 30 minutes, meaning that a capsule travels at a stately 26cm per second, or 0.9km (0.6 miles) per hour – twice as fast as a tortoise sprinting; this slow rate of rotation allows passengers to step on and off without the wheel having to stop.
- 6 The circumference of the wheel is 424m (1,392ft) – meaning that if it were unravelled, it would be 1.75 times longer than the UK's tallest building (One Canada Square at Canary Wharf which is 244m tall!
- 7 The total weight of the wheel and capsules is 2,100 tonnes – or as much as 1,272 London black cabs!
- 8 The height of the London Eye is 135m (443ft – equivalent to 64 red telephone boxes piled on top of each other), making it the fourth tallest structure in London after the BT Tower, Tower 42, and One Canada Square in Canary Wharf.
- 9 The spindle holds the wheel structure and the hub rotates it around the spindle. At 23 metres tall, the spindle is around the size of a church spire and, together with the hub, weighs in at 330 tonnes: over 20 times heavier than Big Ben.
- 10 There are two sets of foundations for the London Eye: the "compression" foundation, which supports the A-frame legs, has 44 concrete piles, each 33m deep; a total of 2,200 tonnes of concrete was required. The "tension" foundation, which holds the backstay cables, consists of 1,200 tonnes of concrete. In total, 3,400 tonnes of concrete were used, equivalent to the weight of more than 500 double decker buses!



A feat of engineering

- 1 It took seven years and the skills of hundreds of people from five countries to make The London Eye a reality.
- 2 The design is similar to an enormous bicycle wheel, with a central hub and spindle connected to outer and inner rims by cable spokes. It is over 200 times larger than the average bike wheel (and four times wider than the dome of St Paul's Cathedral).
- 3 The 80 spokes laid together would stretch for six kilometres – the distance from Trafalgar Square to Canary Wharf.
- 4 The spindle which holds the wheel structure is 23m long – the height of nine classic London red telephone boxes. The hub and spindle weigh in at 330 tonnes – equivalent to 49 double-decker buses, and 20 times heavier than Big Ben – the bell inside St Stephen's Tower at the Houses of Parliament.
- 5 Some 1,700 tonnes of British steel were used in the construction of the London Eye, which makes it 298 times heavier than all the London Premier League football teams (West Ham, Arsenal, Tottenham, Chelsea, Fulham and Charlton) combined!
- 6 The London Eye was shipped up the River Thames by barge in sections and assembled at the South Bank. It took a week to lift it from a horizontal position to the fully vertical one we all know. The technology employed had previously been used to erect North Sea oil rigs.



The London Eye is often mistakenly called a Ferris wheel. This is not the case: first, the passenger capsules are completely enclosed and are climate controlled; secondly, the capsules are positioned on the outside of the wheel structure and are fully motorised; and third, the entire structure is supported by an A-frame on one side only.



What you can see

Looking South

Westminster Abbey

Big Ben You can't actually see Big Ben from The London Eye.

What you're looking at is the clock tower, which is called St Stephen's. Big Ben is the bell inside that tower.

Battersea Power Station

The Houses of Parliament

Looking East

St Paul's Cathedral Christopher Wren's masterpiece is the fourth cathedral to occupy this site since 604AD.

Tower Bridge

Tower 42

Canary Wharf

Looking West

Buckingham Palace The British Monarch's official residence has been subject to a number of security lapses in recent years. The most bizarre breach occurred back in 1837 when a 12 year old boy lived undetected in the palace for a year! He was only caught because he used to hide in chimneys and guards followed his soot trails.

Trafalgar Square

10 Downing Street

Looking North

The BT Tower

Alexander Palace

Covent Garden Built by famous architect Inigo Jones and formerly London's premier fruit and veg market. Now it's a visitor favourite with its shops, restaurants and street entertainers.



Big impressions count

If you want to make a really big splash, you'll need to hire the best venue and one of the best events teams in the business.

The London Eye's Corporate and Special Events department is a dab hand at hosting high-profile, high impact parties, launches and ceremonies. Many customers and clients choose to hire the entire London Eye, but if you want to hire just one capsule we can help. Whether you want a cocktail party, an exclusive evening flight, a product launch or you just want to entertain some clients, everything is possible! We have hosted one of London's most unusual Yuletide events – Schrodgers, the big bank, hired the London Eye for a children's Christmas party for over 150 children and their families.

We teamed up with Café Direct to promote fair trade with Africa. The project, partly organised by Damon Albarn, the lead singer of the Gorillaz, saw the 32 capsules transformed into stages for different performances.

The London Eye hosted the celebrity and showbiz UK launch of the new Fiat 500. The event which featured live bands, top presenters and a fantastic light show, was broadcast live on MSN and Virgin Radio and covered by the world's media.

In May 2001 we hosted our first-ever wedding – the result of a competition we ran with national broadcaster GMTV – Europe's most-watched breakfast show. The event was broadcast live to more than five million people in the UK. We've been hosting happy couples ever since! On 21 December 2005 Civil Partnerships became legally recognised in the UK. On this day, the London Eye hosted its first ceremony.

Want to know more?

Private capsule hire call + 44 (0) 870 220 2223 fax + 44 (0) 870 990 8882
email capsules@londoneye.com

Weddings call + 44 (0) 870 220 2223 fax + 44 (0) 870 990 8882
email weddings@londoneye.com

Corporate events call + 44 (0) 870 220 2223 fax + 44 (0) 870 990 8882
email corporate.events@londoneye.com



Experience The London Eye online



Our website, www.londoneye.com, has gained a reputation for being visually stunning, informative, fun and easy to use. If you haven't yet visited or experienced the London Eye this is as close to the real thing as you'll get and is a wonderful taster for the experience that awaits you!

Customers can save 10% by booking online.

Among the things you'll find on our site:

- More facts and figures, an exclusive look behind the scenes, our vision, awards and testimonials.
- A chance to find out more about the landmarks visible from the capsules, e-cards, a photo gallery and much more. Also, why not take a virtual cruise up the river?
- The hassle-free way to obtain tickets for both private individuals and schools and groups. Plus details of hotels, West End theatres, gift ideas and more.
- All the information needed to ensure your visit goes without a hitch. In this section you'll find details of prices, opening times, booking and more. Includes FAQs, so if you have a question, it's certain to be answered.
- Details about corporate events, entertaining clients, treating staff or how to celebrate in style. Hire a capsule, throw a party, dine on board – the possibilities are endless!
- How the London Eye works with businesses, including teaching resources, jobs news, educational projects, partners and sponsors. The Corporate Social Responsibility section details the London Eye's charitable and community work.
- The News and Events section, where you will find the press section, including filming/photography application forms, details on how to obtain London Eye images, downloadable press packs and contact details.



Awards recognition

Since 2000 The London Eye has won over 78 awards for national and international tourism, accessibility for disabled people, marketing campaigns, business innovation and outstanding architectural quality and engineering achievement.

There are just too many to list here, but to name a few highlights:

Top Attraction in Europe 2007

As voted by Tripadvisor.com.

Platinum Access Award 2006

Acknowledging the London Eye's excellent access for guests with special needs.

Best tourism experience, Enjoy England awards, 2006

Kid's superbrand, 2006

2005, Visit London 'Tour London' award

2005, Visit London - 'Best Day out for Londoner's' People's Choice award

World's Leading Attraction, The World Travel Awards 2004/2005

Tourism Website of the Year Gold Award 2003/2004

Cool Brand leader 2002/2003/2004/2005

National Business Awards 2003 Customer Focus Award

Highlighting organisations that place the customer at the heart of their business.

National Business Awards 2003 Business of the Year Award

Awarded for excellent financial returns, strong growth and innovation strategies, plus market leadership.

The 2003 Queen's Award for Enterprise: Innovation

Conferred by the Queen to Marks Barfield Architects for the London Eye in recognition of outstanding achievement in innovation.

Prince Philip Designer's Prize 2000, Special Commendation



Doing business in the community

The London Eye isn't just one of the capital's best-loved and most familiar landmarks – it also plays a vital part in local life. It has become a symbol of London's dynamism and modernity. The London Eye is also the focal point of London's New Years Eve celebrations.

Winning plaudits

We've won plaudits from the Mayor and the tourist authorities for the positive effects we've had on our city – the South Bank in particular – and the nation as a whole.

"The London Eye has become a memorable feature of London, projecting a sense of modernity and excitement. It's an achievement of which Londoners can feel truly proud." **Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London**

"The London Eye has become the most visible icon of London. It really helps us convey a fresh, vibrant image of London and indeed, of Britain"
David Quarmby, Chairman, British Tourist Authority

At the London Eye we are committed to Corporate Social Responsibility. We work with numerous and diverse organisations to ensure best practice is delivered in the key areas of community, workplace, marketplace and environment.

Eye society

The London Eye has a comprehensive Corporate Social Responsibility programme, has played a key role in the regeneration of the South Bank and is committed to making a continued contribution to the long term development of the area.

The London Eye supports a variety of charities and projects in the local community, in addition to their Flight for Sight programme and main charity, the Merlin Entertainment Group's Children Foundation.

We extend our support to other registered charities, schools, organisations and the people within our local community and London. We do this through ticket donations and financial grants on both a committed and ad hoc basis.

The London Eye has been the chosen venue for the launch of several high profile charity campaigns including Breakthrough Breast Cancer and Comic Relief - The Big One.



Useful Information

Website For general information on The London Eye and a 10% discount on bookings, visit www.londoneye.com

Bookings For general information and telephone bookings, call + 44 (0) 870 5000 600

Events For events and special occasions, call + 44 (0) 870 220 2223

Customer services For customer services call + 44 (0) 870 990 8883
fax + 44 (0) 870 990 8884 email customer.services@londoneye.com

Press office For press enquiries including images, filming, and media information call + 44 (0) 870 220 2777
email pressooffice@londoneye.com

The postal address of the London Eye is:

The London Eye, Riverside Building, County Hall, Westminster Bridge Road,
London SE1 7PB.

Other information you and your readers/viewers will find useful:

- The London Eye is open all year round, except for Christmas Day (25 December) and the one week in January, when annual maintenance takes place.
- The London Eye is open from 10.00am until 9.00pm from June to September; and from 10.00am to 8.00pm from October through to May.
- The London Eye ticket office inside County Hall opens at 9.30am each day.

