



LONDON BRIDGE FACT SHEET

Last updated: July 30, 2020

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Early History

- For nearly 2,000 years, a series of bridges has spanned the River Thames in London. The Roman founders of London built the first bridges from AD 50–1176.
- Historical evidence and archaeological finds indicate that these early bridges were constructed from wood.
- Olaf II of Norway, King of Norway from 1015 to 1028, led military campaigns to unite Norway into one kingdom. One of these campaigns was a sea-based attack in 1014 that pulled down one of the wooden bridges.
- Two other wooden bridges were built and subsequently destroyed during this turbulent time in England's early history.

The "Old" London Bridge

- The "Old" London Bridge of nursery rhyme fame was a stone bridge built by Peter of Colechurch, an architect and priest, between 1176 and 1209.
- Due to uneven construction, the bridge required frequent repairs yet survived more than 600 years.
- Between 1305 and 1660 at the bridge's southern gateway, the severed heads of traitors were impaled on pikes and dipped in tar to preserve them against the elements. This practice was stopped in 1660, following the Restoration of King Charles II.
- A section of the wooden piling on which Sir Thomas More's head was impaled is preserved and displayed at Lake Havasu City's Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church.
- When the British defeated the French army under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte, British forces seized the army's cannons, melted them down and cast them into the vintage lampposts lining the London Bridge today.

The "New" London Bridge

- By the end of the 18th century, the London Bridge needed to be replaced. It had fallen into severe disrepair and was blocking river traffic.
- Designed in 1799 by Scottish engineer John Rennie, the "New" London Bridge was completed in 1831.
- Due to the weight of automobile traffic crossing the bridge in the early 20th Century, it began sinking into the River Thames. By 1924, the east side of the bridge was some three to four inches (9-12 cm) lower than the west side.
- The bridge came under German enemy fire during World War II and sheltered two American 1st Infantry Division servicemen participating in field maneuvers with British commandos. They visited the London Bridge while on weekend leave and left their mark in the form of graffiti still visible today.

The Sale and Purchase of the London Bridge

- By 1962, the bridge was unable to support the increased load of traffic. The City of London put the bridge up for sale at auction.
- Robert P. McCulloch, chairman of McCulloch Oil Corporation and founder of Lake Havasu City, was the buyer. He placed the winning bid of \$2.4 million on April 18, 1968 (over \$17 million in today's dollars).
- McCulloch purchased the bridge as an attraction to bring tourists and retirement home buyers to the Lake Havasu City area.
- Contrary to rumors and popular belief, McCulloch was not under the impression that he was purchasing the Tower Bridge of London.

The Shipping, Assembly and Rededication of the London Bridge

- After it was dismantled, each of the bridge's 10,276 exterior granite blocks from the original bridge was shipped to Lake Havasu City. Each block was numbered before the bridge was disassembled.
- The blocks were shipped overseas through the Panama Canal to California and trucked from Long Beach to Arizona.
- The shipping and assembly of the bridge, and dredging of a man-made channel underneath, cost \$7 million.
- Spanning 930 feet (280 meters), the bridge was designed to connect pedestrians, motorists and cyclists on "mainland" Lake Havasu City to an island on the Colorado River.
- After three years of reconstruction, Lake Havasu City rededicated the bridge in an extravagant ceremony held on October 10, 1971.

The London Bridge Today

- The London Bridge is the second-largest tourist draw in Arizona, topped only by the Grand Canyon.
- On October 20, 2018, Lake Havasu City celebrated the 50th anniversary of the purchase of the London Bridge. The celebration included the 690th Right Honourable Lord Mayor of the City of London, Alderman Charles Bowman, a proclamation by Arizona Governor Douglas A. Ducey, and a traditional sheep crossing over the London Bridge.
- A celebration marking the 50th anniversary of the London Bridge's rededication will be held in October of 2021.

London Bridge Data

- **Design** Arch bridge
- **Material** Clynelish (Brora) sandstone and various granite mixes
- **Total length** 930 ft (283.4 m)
- **Total width** 56 ft (17 m)
- **Footpath width** 9 ft (2.7 m)
- **Roadway width** 35 ft (10.6 m)
- **Longest span (at center)** 150 ft (45.6 m)
- **Total weight** 30,000 tons
- **No. of spans** 5
- **Designer** John Rennie (June 7, 1761 – October 4, 1821)
- **Reconstruction start** September 23, 1968
- **Rededication** October 10, 1971

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