**LONDON**

**HISTORY**

|  |
| --- |
| **The Celts** settled the territory of today's London as early as 800 B. C., but even earlier the site had been inhabited in the Stone Age. Although the place had been occupied by **the Romans** about 55 B. C., only later, about 43 A.D. they establish Roman **Londonium** (the name probably comes from the old Celtic word Llyndum which means "a walled place situated high". They built the first, wooden bridge and in A.D. 120 they started the construction of the defensive walls.  When the Romans left the island in the fifth century, it remained the capital of the **Britons**. It kept its importance during the Anglo-Saxon times and later during the reign of the Danish kings in the 10th and 11th centuries. In the 8th century it was a busy trading centre and in the 11th century it became the capital of England. Edward the Confessor built a palace and abbey at Westminster and created two centres which still exist today. The government is based at Westminster, while the City is the commercial and financial centre.  http://skola.amoskadan.cz/s_aj/ajhtm/ae/ae02_soubory/image002.jpgDuring the 12th century reign of **Norman kings** (William the Conqueror was the first to come in 1066) the royal court moved from Winchester, from former capital, to London forever. The Tower, old St. Paul's Cathedral, many churches and monasteries as well as the first stone bridge over the Thames River were built during the Norman period. Medieval London was an important trading centre, its citizens won the right to elect their own leader - Lord Mayor.  The city continued to grow and flourish and gradually extended beyond its walls and absorbed the originally separate Westminster. The 16th century establishment of the trading companies and the Royal Exchange (1565) started the rapid economic rise of London.  The 17th century brought much suffering to London. In **1665** more than 75,000 people died from a **plague epidemic** and a year later, in **1666**, the **Great Fire of London** destroyed four fifths of the city. During the following decades hectic building activity rebuilt the whole town. The old timbered houses were replaced by buildings of bricks in order to reduce any future fire risk. **Sir Christopher Wren** (1632-1723) was appointed the main architect and he constructed about 50 churches and some other public buildings, including his masterpiece St. Paul's Cathedral. In the latter half of the 17th century, Lloyd's Insurance Company was established, in 1694 the Bank of England and later, in 1773, the Stock Exchange.  **The port** had always been important for the existence of Britain, but during the first three decades of the 19th century it became the biggest in Britain. During the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) London acquired its present architectural appearance. Many public buildings sprang up, including the larger part of the Houses of Parliament, the Covent Garden Opera House and the Crystal Palace. The laying of the network of railways (first line 1836) and underground lines (first line 1863) resulted in the construction of a **wide belt of suburbs**, many of which were built in the typical Victorian style of red brick.  German bombing during World War II caused serious damage especially in the City, though this cannot be noticed nowadays. Since 1982 the most risky and criticized project in recent times has been rescue and new development of the Docklands east of the City. |