**London Eye**

**London Eye**, formerly **Millennium Wheel**, revolving observation wheel, or Ferris wheel, in [London](https://www.britannica.com/place/London), on the [South Bank](https://www.britannica.com/topic/South-Bank) of the [River Thames](https://www.britannica.com/place/River-Thames) in the borough of [Lambeth](https://www.britannica.com/place/Lambeth). At an overall height of 443 feet (135 metres), the London Eye was the world’s tallest Ferris wheel from 1999, when it was built, until 2006, when it was surpassed by the Star of Nanchang, in [Nanchang](https://www.britannica.com/place/Nanchang), China. It is one of London’s most popular tourist attractions for which an admission fee is charged and is sometimes credited with sparking a worldwide revival of Ferris wheel construction.

What is now called the London Eye originated as an entry submitted by David Marks and Julia Barfield of Marks Barfield Architects in 1993 to a competition, sponsored by [The Sunday Times](https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Sunday-Times) and Great Britain’s Architecture Foundation, for a new landmark to [commemorate](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/commemorate) the [millennium](https://www.britannica.com/science/millennium-time-period) in London. Although no winner was declared, Marks and Barfield undertook the development of the project themselves and found the site where the wheel now stands. Much of the funding was provided by [British Airways](https://www.britannica.com/topic/British-Airways-PLC). Construction began in 1998, and the wheel was put together over the river, in a horizontal position, before being pulled upright. The London Eye, as it was called by this time, was ceremonially “opened” by Prime Minister [Tony Blair](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tony-Blair) on December 31, 1999, but did not admit its first paying passenger until March 9, 2000. Originally scheduled to be dismantled after five years, it was kept in place because of continued popularity. In 2006 a decorative [LED](https://www.britannica.com/technology/LED) lighting system was installed in order to make the wheel more prominent after dark.

With both its supports on the same side of the hub, the wheel is said to be [cantilevered](https://www.britannica.com/technology/cantilever) over the river. The entirety of the structure is held in place by six backstay cables anchored to a second foundation.

The wheel itself has a diameter of 394 feet (120 metres) and is connected to its hub by 64 cables that function much like the spokes of a bicycle wheel. The power to turn the wheel is transmitted to the rim through [rubber](https://www.britannica.com/science/rubber-chemical-compound) tires that are mounted on the base of the structure. Mounted on the wheel are 32 ovoid “capsules,” as the cabins that carry the passengers are called. Their number corresponds to the 32 [boroughs](https://www.britannica.com/topic/borough) that (together with the City of London) [constitute](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/constitute) [Greater London](https://www.britannica.com/place/Greater-London). Each capsule has a capacity of 25 passengers and rests on motorized mounts that function in such a way that the capsule remains upright as the wheel turns. The wheel moves so slowly—two revolutions per hour—that it need not stop for boarding or disembarkation of passengers, except for those with disabilities.

**11 Fun Facts About The London Eye**

* It wasn't London's first big wheel. ...
* It's Europe's tallest 'ferris' wheel. ...
* It's very popular. ...
* It was supposed to be temporary. ...
* It opened late. ...
* It's part Skoda. ...
* Unlucky number 13. ...
* It's got one royal capsule.

The London Eye was preceded by The Great Wheel, a 40-car ferris wheel built for the Empire of India Exhibition at Earls Court.

The Great Wheel — modelled on the original Ferris Wheel from Chicago — opened to the public on 17 July 1895. It was 94 metres (308ft) tall and 82.3m (270ft) in diameter.

It ran until the Imperial Austrian Exhibition in 1906, by which time its 40 cars (each with a capacity of 40 people) had carried over 2.5 million passengers.

When it was built in 1999, the 443ft (135m) tall wheel was the world's tallest.

But it's been pushed into fourth place, surpassed by the 520ft (158m) Star of Nanchang in 2006, the 541ft (165m) tall Singapore Flyer in 2008, and Las Vegas's 550ft (168m) High Roller, built in 2014.

The Eye is rather used be being toppled from first place: it used to be London's highest public viewing point too. The 804ft (245m) high observation deck on the 72nd floor of The Shard took away that accolade on 1 February 2013.

Marketing types like to refer to the Eye as the world's 'tallest cantilevered observation wheel' — a reference to the fact that, unlike a ferris wheel, it's supported by an A-frame on just one side, and the carriages don't hang below, they're outside the wheel rim and righted by motors.

Just like the Eiffel Tower, the London Eye was originally planned as a temporary structure; built to stand on Lambeth Council's ground on the banks of the Thames for around five years.

In July 2002, Lambeth Council granted the Eye a permanent licence.

Following a dispute between the Southbank Centre (which owns the land beneath one of the struts) and the London Eye, a 25-year lease was agreed on 8 February 2006. As part of the lease agreement, the London Eye provides the South Bank Centre (a publicly funded charity) with at least £500,000 a year.

Built to celebrate the millennium, the London Eye only started carrying public passengers in March of that year.

The London Eye was formally opened by then prime minister Tony Blair on 31 December 1999.

It was due to open with various VIPs enjoying the views, but a clutch problem on one of the capsules meant it rotated without passengers, and the opening was postponed for a month.

The London Eye finally opened to the paying public in 9 March 2000.

The London Eye was dreamt up by a UK design team, but its parts come from all over Europe.

The wheel was developed and constructed in The Netherlands from UK steel, with cables from Italy, bearings from Germany, and the iron spindle and hub were cast in the Skoda factory in the Czech Republic. The capsules were made by cable-car specialists Poma in the French Alps. And the double-curved laminated glass for the pods was made in Venice.

The London Eye has 32 capsules, numbered 1 to 12 and 14 to 33. You can read more examples of London's triskaidekaphobic tendencies [here](http://londonist.com/2015/05/londons-fear-of-the-number-13).

The 32 capsules are said to represent London's 32 boroughs

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| [Wikimedia](https://foundation.wikimedia.org/wiki/Maps_Terms_of_Use) | © [OpenStreetMap](https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright) | |
| **Alternative names** | Millennium Wheel |
| **General information** | |
| **Status** | Operating |
| **Type** | [Observation wheel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Observation_wheel) |
| **Location** | [Lambeth, London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Borough_of_Lambeth) |
| **Address** | Riverside Building, County Hall, Westminster Bridge Road |
| [**Coordinates**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system) | [51.5033°N 0.1194°W](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=London_Eye&params=51.5033_N_0.1194_W_region:GB_type:landmark)[Coordinates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): [51.5033°N 0.1194°W](https://geohack.toolforge.org/geohack.php?pagename=London_Eye&params=51.5033_N_0.1194_W_region:GB_type:landmark) |
| **Completed** | March 2000[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-marksstudy-1) |
| **Opened** | * 31 December 1999 (ceremonial, without passengers) [[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-cnnbirthday-2) * 1 February 2000 (first passengers carried) [[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-3) * 9 March 2000 (opened to general public)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-cnnbirthday-2) |
| **Cost** | £70 million [[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-7) |
| **Owner** | [Merlin Entertainments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merlin_Entertainments) [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-6) |
| **Height** | 135 metres (443 ft) [[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-structurae-8) |
| **Dimensions** | |
| **Diameter** | 120 metres (394 ft)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-structurae-8) |
| **Design and construction** | |
| **Architect** | * Frank Anatole * Joanna Bailey * Nic Bailey * [Julia Barfield](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julia_Barfield) * Steven Chilton * Malcolm Cook * [David Marks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Marks_(architect)) * Mark Sparrowhawk [[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-ukattractions-4) [[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-5) |
| **Architecture firm** | [Marks Barfield](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marks_Barfield) [[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-marksbarfield-9) [[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-marksstudy-1) |
| **Structural engineer** | [Arup](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arup_Group) [[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-10) |
| **Other designers** | * [Babtie Allott & Lomax](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babtie,_Shaw_and_Morton) (checking engineer) [[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-11) * Tony Gee (foundations) [[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Eye#cite_note-12) |