Take note

All you need to know about the London Eye

Conceived and designed by Marks Barfield Architects
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.

A decade after it opened, the London Eye is as iconic a London landmark as 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 to the world’s greatest city this century, loved by Britons and tourists alike.

In fact, in its short life, it has become the UK’s most popular paid for visitor attraction. A breathtaking feat of design and engineering, guests in the London Eye’s fully enclosed glass 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 engineering. It plays an integral role in the community, has become an internationally recognised symbol for London, a hugely popular filming location and is also a unique venue for corporate events, launches 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 was new was 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”. More recently, they’ve created an aquarium in the sea in Toulon; an award winning watersports centre in Liverpool; and produced the award winning Xtrata Kew Gardens Treetop Walkway.

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, introduces a new shape and sense of order into the chaotic city that is London, and the London Eye’s height means that it fulfils the human desire to see the world from above.

The London Eye is operated by MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS plc, the leading name in location-based, family entertainment. Europe’s number one and the world’s second largest visitor attraction operator, as of June 2014 Merlin operates 104 attractions, 10 hotels/three holiday villages in 22 countries and across four continents. The company aims to deliver memorable and rewarding experiences to its almost 60 million visitors worldwide, through its iconic global and local brands, and the commitment and passion of its managers and more than 20,000 employees.

Among Merlin’s attractions are – SEA LIFE, Madame Tussauds, LEGOLAND, the London Eye, Dungeons, Gardaland, LEGOLAND Discovery Centres, Alton Towers Resort, Warwick Castle, THORPE PARK Resort, Blackpool Tower, Heide Park Resort, WILD LIFE Sydney Zoo, Sydney Tower Eye and SKYWALK, Siam Ocean World and Busan Aquarium. All brands which are distinctive, challenging and innovative – and which have great potential for growth in the future. Visit www.merlinentertainments.biz

A decade after it was first conceived, the London Eye has not only become a global icon, but it also has permanent planning permission to make sure future generations can continue enjoying the London Eye and all it has to offer.
Impressive facts and figures

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

The 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 can carry 800 guests per rotation – equivalent to 11 London red double-decker buses.
3. There are 32 capsules in total, one for each of the London boroughs. For superstitious reasons they are numbered up to 33, with capsule 13 left out for good luck.
4. Each of the 32 capsules weighs 10 tonnes. To put that figure into perspective, it’s the same weight as 1,052,631 pound coins!
5. Each rotation takes approximately 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 guests to step on and off without the wheel having to stop.
6. In one year the London Eye will rotate 7668 times, or 2300 miles, as far as from London to Cairo in Egypt, home to other wonders of the world.
7. The circumference of the London Eye is 424m (1,392ft) – making it the largest wheel to exist in Europe.
8. The height of the London Eye is 135m (443ft – equivalent to 64 red telephone boxes piled on top of each other), making it one of the tallest structures in London.
9. Supermodel Kate Moss holds the record for the UK celebrity that’s enjoyed the most rotations, standing at 25, and Hollywood star Jessica Alba holds the record for an overseas celebrity that’s enjoyed the most rotations, standing at 31.
10. The London Eye receives more visitors annually than ancient wonders of the world like the Taj Mahal (2.4 million per year), Stonehenge (850,000 per year) and even the Great Pyramids of Giza (3 million per year).
11. A new LED lighting system has been introduced on the London Eye, which saves 69% more energy than the previous system.
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 6km – 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 top London 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.

7. The total weight of the wheel and capsules is 2,100 tonnes – or as much as 1,272 London black cabs!

The London Eye is often mistakenly called a Ferris wheel. This is not the case; first, the capsules are completely enclosed and 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; making it the world’s tallest cantilevered observation wheel.
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.

Since launching ourselves as a corporate entertainment venue in September 2000 with a Champagne gala event attended by then Prime Minister Tony Blair, the London Eye’s Corporate and Special Events department has garnered a reputation as a dab hand at hosting high-profile, high impact parties, launches and ceremonies - anything is possible! Many customers and clients choose to hire the entire London Eye, but if you want to hire just one capsule we can help. With a range of products from wine and Champagne tasting capsules with Vinopolis to seasonal treats like Pimm’s and mulled wine, there’s something special all year round.

In 2011 and 2013 the London Eye played host to the famous Red Bull Music Academy events. Beamed across the globe on the internet, the event had famous musicians and DJs performing in each capsule to an intimate audience and in front of the London Eye saw thousands of people enjoying a silent disco hosted by some of the world’s most famous DJs. Guests described it as the best party ever.

In May 2001 we hosted our first-ever wedding with our first happy couple saying ‘Eye do’ live in front of an audience of five million on GMTV, Europe’s most-watched breakfast show. We’ve been hosting happy couples ever since - an average of 60 per year! The London Eye hosted its first ever Civil Partnership ceremony on 21st December 2005 when Dave Cook and James Wright from Clapham exchanged vows.

During the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the London Eye played an integral part in the run up and duration of the games. We hosted hundreds of media and sponsors from across the globe, had the Olympic Torch on top of one of our capsules and even played our part in both the opening and closing ceremony, highlighting the London Eye’s iconic place amongst the capital’s historic treasures.

Not only was the London Eye the venue where London’s transition from applicant city to candidate city was celebrated back in 2003, but in early 2009 it also played host to all of the London 2012 Olympic sponsors in a party that showcased the best London has to offer.

Want to know more?
Corporate events call 0871 222 4002; email corporate.event@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 great taster for the experience that awaits you! It has an online booking facility with exclusive discounts on tickets bought online, and is a superb resource for the media and public alike, with text and commentary in several languages including English, Spanish, French, and German.

Among the things you’ll find on our site:

• The News and Events section is where you’ll find the press releases, filming/photography application forms, details on how to obtain London Eye images, a downloadable press pack and contact details.

• Details of our seasonal treats such as Pimm’s or Winter Cocktail Experiences, Easter and Halloween fun for kids, and be first to know about our new products.

• The Corporate Social Responsibility section details the London Eye’s charitable and community work and has contact details for charitable requests.

• More facts and figures, an exclusive look behind the scenes, our vision, awards, testimonials plus a unique chance to “build” the London Eye for yourself, and a chance to watch some of our videos to whet your appetite for the experience that awaits you!

• A chance to find out more about the London Eye’s educational programme, details of how to plan your educational visit as well as downloadable teacher resources, or details of how to apply for a job if you would like to work at the London Eye.

• Full details of our corporate events packages to entertain clients, treat staff or celebrate in style. Hire a capsule for 20 guests, book the entire wheel, enjoy a tasting experience – the possibilities are endless!

• A hassle-free way to obtain tickets for individuals, schools or groups, plus buy combined tickets with exclusive savings for other Merlin attractions such as Madame Tussaud’s London, the London Dungeon, the London Eye and the SEA LIFE London Aquarium, as well as a host of other London attractions, hotels, West End theatres, gift ideas and more.

• All the information needed to ensure your visit goes without a hitch. You’ll find details of prices, opening times, booking, information for disabled guests and more. Includes FAQs, so if you have a question, it’s certain to be answered.

• If you want to be kept up-to-date with the latest news you can follow us on Twitter, become a fan of the London Eye on Facebook or upload your photos to our Flickr site - the bookmarks are available on the website.
The London Eye River Cruise

The London Eye also operates a unique award winning 40 minute sightseeing cruise on the River Thames with live commentary that brings the city to life, presented by specialist guides.

The London Eye River Cruise was awarded the prestigious *London Tonight People’s Choice Award* at the Visit London awards in 2005, as voted for by the public.

The circular cruise departs from the London Eye pier directly underneath the London Eye, goes as far as Tower Bridge and returns 40 minutes later. The cruise takes in the landmarks on the river: Houses of Parliament, St Paul’s Cathedral, The Tower of London, Shakespeare’s Globe as well as Westminster, Millennium and Tower Bridges.

The Silver Bonito can carry up to 170 passengers at any one time, and has an upper deck and a lower deck meaning it is comfortable in all weather conditions.

The Silver Bonito is one of the few fully accessible boats on the river, with full disabled access to both decks. Audio commentary is also available in French, German, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Russian, Japanese and Mandarin.

“The live commentary is superb and everyone who takes this river cruise will learn something new about one of the attractions they pass.”

Laura Porter, About.com
Filming and photography

Since opening, the press team has worked with literally thousands of film crews and photographers on projects ranging from fashion shoots and news items to TV adverts and international feature films. We value the exposure filming and photography gives the London Eye and London as a whole and encourage applications that reflect the London Eye’s status as a must do experience in the capital and a global icon.

The London Eye has featured in international feature films such as Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer, Wimbledon, Thunderbirds, Woody Allen’s Cassandra’s Dream and well known TV programmes such as The Simpsons, Doctor Who, Project Catwalk and The Apprentice to mention only a few.

In addition, the press office co-ordinates and facilitates filming and photography on the London Eye River Cruise. The cruise offers another perspective on London and its history from the banks of the Thames.

The team has extensive experience with on-site filming taking place almost every day. It is important that we receive as much notice as possible in order to accommodate requests and maximize the full potential of a project for both parties.

Pick up the phone to have a chat with a member of the team on

0870 220 2777 or visit www.londoneye.com/filming for application forms and full guidelines.
The London Eye - a positive impact on London’s South Bank

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 and has played a key role in the regeneration of the South Bank. We are committed to making a continued contribution to the long term development of the area. For over a decade the London Eye has been the focal point of the Mayor of London’s famous New Year’s Eve firework celebrations which sees hundreds of thousands of people congregate in the heart of London each year.

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.

“Our city has an unrivalled range of unique attractions that draw people from across the world and the much loved London Eye is one of the most recognisable.”

Boris Johnson, Mayor of London

“The London Eye has fast become a beloved part of London’s skyline, a great and unique way to see the sights of the capital and one of Britain’s most popular attractions.”

Sandie Dawe, Chief Executive, Visit Britain

As part of the London Eye’s ongoing commitment to the local area, 1% of revenue is donated back into the community, part of the London Eye’s original planning permission, known as ‘Section 106.’ A proportion of the amount donated each year is made available for local charity projects. Local community projects we’ve funded include everything from a youth creative multimedia project and a youth sports coaching programme to first aid training for local school children. We’ve worked with local organisations including the Waterloo Carnival, SE1 United Youth Group, Columbo Centre, St Thomas’ Hospital and the Florence Nightingale Museum.

The London Eye has been central to many charity campaigns. The London Eye was the venue for the launch of Comic Relief Red Nose Day: The Big One. We have also worked with organisations as diverse as Great Ormond Street Hospital, Maggie’s Cancer Caring Centres, NSPCC, Breakthrough Breast Cancer and Diabetes UK to hold high profile events.

Each year we donate thousands of tickets to help not for profit organisations raise funds, thank supporters or give their clients and service partners a day out.

For charity requests please email charity@londoneye.com

All of the London Eye’s fundraising activity is directed towards the Merlin Entertainments Group charity Merlin’s Magic Wand, which provides magical experiences to children who are seriously ill, disabled or disadvantaged and who might not otherwise be able to visit one of our many attractions around the world. For more info visit www.merlinsmagicwand.org
A new perspective on London

In August 2009 the London Eye introduced a revolutionary 4D film that brings a new dimension to the visitor experience, providing a completely new vision of the city that is both emotional and entertaining - the perfect prelude to an experience on the iconic London Eye. The film focuses on the journey of a little girl and her father in London in which they visit the London Eye and find a spectacular new perspective of the capital. Their experience is brought to life with colourful parties inside the London Eye capsules, breathtaking firework displays, which gain an extra dimension with advanced sensory effects, making the watcher feel immersed in the action.

“Go. As soon as you can.”

Techradar.com

“This is the future.”

Total Film

The London Eye 4D Experience is the first live action, 4D attraction film ever produced in the UK and contains the first ever 3D aerial photography over London. The film brings together a number of 3D filming styles: aerials, time lapse, live action as well as sophisticated visual effects. Capitalising on the latest cutting edge technology, 4D adds a new dimension to traditional 3D technology; using sensory effects such as wind, snow and even smell to bring to life the images on screen.

The bespoke 4D film which is almost four minutes in length was developed especially for the London Eye at the award winning Pinewood Shepperton studios, and was produced by Centre Screen Productions Ltd in association with PLF/Pablo Post.

The team of industry acclaimed award-winning talent who have worked on the 4D film have also worked on projects such as the IMAX film ‘Bugs!’; other 3D cinema projects and various attractions with clients ranging from English Heritage to the Hong Kong government.
Useful information

If you’re looking to pass useful numbers on to your readers, listeners or viewers, you should find this list indispensable:

General Information
For general information on the London Eye and discount on bookings, visit www.londoneye.com
For general information and telephone bookings call 0871 781 3000

Events and Special Occasions
For events and special occasions, call 0871 222 4002 or email corporate.events@londoneye.com

Customer Services
For customer services call 0871 781 3000 or email customer.services@londoneye.com

Press Enquires
For press enquiries including images, filming, and media information call 0870 220 2777 or email pressoffice@londoneye.com
To view the latest news and press releases on London Eye activity and events, visit www.londoneye.com/news

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 for two weeks in January, when annual maintenance takes place
• The County Hall ticket office is open from 9:30am