

The River Thames

The river Thames is a large river in the south of England. It passes through many places, including London, Reading and Oxford.

River Thames Facts

Length	346km (215 miles)
Source	Gloucestershire
Mouth	Thames Estuary
Flows to	North Sea



History

The Thames has been used to transport people and goods for hundreds of years.

In the past, most of London's rubbish and toilet waste was dumped in the river. In 1858, the smell coming from it was so foul that Parliament had to be suspended. As a result, a sewerage system for London was built.

Engineering

The Thames Tunnel opened in 1843 as the world's first underwater tunnel. It is built 23m below the river in London.

In 1982, the Thames Barrier was built to prevent high tides flooding Greater London.

It is thought that the Romans built the first bridge across the Thames in London. London Bridge has been rebuilt several times. The current one was opened in 1973.

Tower Bridge was opened in 1894. It has two parts called bascules that lift up to allow tall boats and ships to pass under it.

Wildlife

A variety of animals can be found in the river, including trout, crayfish, eels, seals and porpoises.



Leisure

Every spring, Oxford and Cambridge universities have a rowing race along part of the river.

Mudlarking is when people search the riverbed during low tide for interesting objects. Items that have been found include coins, pottery and toys. Some are hundreds of years old.

Did You Know...?

Before the 19th century, cold temperatures during harsh winters would sometimes freeze the river's surface. 'Frost Fairs' would be held on the ice, where Londoners could dance and skate.