



**Hampton Court is a palace fit for a king but actually built for a cardinal.**

cityscape to this day - views of it from different parts of London are protected. He was also the brains behind the Monument, a giant column that commemorates the fire.

**The 18th and 19th centuries:  
Georgian digs, Victorians dig**

As London entered the Georgian Era (1714-1830), it continued to expand, and all those outlying villages were gradually subsumed into the vast metropolis we see today. Elegant new neighborhoods like Mayfair began popping up for the aristocracy, and numerous beautiful garden squares appeared, such as Bedford Square, which boasts some of the finest Georgian architecture in the country. Towards the end of this period, the current version of Buckingham Palace was built.

The Georgians were followed by the exuberantly ambitious Victorians, and throughout the second half of the 19th century, London became the most powerful city in the most powerful empire in the world. Rapid development, fuelled by the Industrial Revolution and imperial expansion, created intense pressure on the city's population. Poverty was rampant, and getting around was becoming intolerably difficult. The solution to the latter was the London Underground, today an icon and at the time a global first and engineering marvel (though when it opened *The Times* rather uncharitably called it 'an insult to common sense'). Some of London's most famous architectural set pieces and buildings, including Trafalgar Square, the Houses of Parliament and Tower Bridge, were all constructed during Queen Victoria's long reign.

**The 20th century and beyond: bombs, booms and Brutalism**

The capital continued to grow well into the 20th century, but the heady heydays of imperial London came crashing down as a result of the century's two world wars. During World War II, the city was mercilessly targeted by the German Luftwaffe, which dropped some 30,000 tons of bombs on the capital. Much was destroyed - one in six buildings to be precise - but, just like during previous disasters, much survived, too. The London Underground provided an incredibly effective sanctuary for the population to shelter from the bombardment, and still occupies a firm place in the hearts of Londoners.

The post-war years were about slowly rebuilding, and the results were mixed. Innovative but ugly concrete housing blocks were criticized almost as soon as they were completed. But others, such as the National Theatre and the British Telecom Tower, have become modern icons reflecting the city's insatiable architectural adventurousness.

Today, London is fully established as one of the world's great cities: a beacon of commerce, culture and enlightened ideal with buildings that show off its globally important status. Construction these days is more often vertical than lateral, with a prime example being the Shard, opened in 2013 and currently the tallest building in Western Europe, along with the other skyscrapers jostling for position in the City. London faces an uncertain few years as it grapples with the outcome of Brexit, but if one thing's for certain, this city has grappled with, and overcome, far worse in the past and still has the buildings to prove it. — (www.lonelyplanet.com)



**The White Tower has stood guard over the Thames for almost a thousand years**