First Year Listening text January 2018

Good morning! You’re tuned in to Radio Westminster and it’s time for our twice monthly review of Where To Go and What To Do in London. /

Today we’ve chosen to give you a bit of information about the Houses of Parliament, also known as the Palace of Westminster, which is well-worth a visit. Here’s a brief history of the place. The Palace was home to a number of monarchs until the time of Henry V111. The King’s son, however, didn’t want to live there, so, in 1547, the building was handed over to Parliament. A terrible fire destroyed most of the old building in 1834, but original parts still survive and the beautiful architecture of the Victorian restoration of 1837 is admired by over a million tourists every year. /

There are various kinds of tours available to visitors, and all tours last approximately ninety minutes. Many visitors have said, however, that, without a personal guide, they’ve been confused by the amount of information on display. So, if you choose a guided tour, the guides are known to be helpful, friendly and extremely informed about current and past events. /

Guided tours run from the end of July until the 1st of September. The guided tours in English start every 15 to 20 minutes throughout the day between 9 a.m. and 4.15 p.m. Tours in French, German and Spanish are also offered every day, but only at certain times. /

As for tickets and prices, the Ticket Office is on Victoria Embankment and is open weekdays from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. and on Saturdays from 8.45 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Online bookings are also possible of course. /

The average price of an adult ticket is twenty-eight pounds, but there are concessions for people over 60, students and members of the U.K. Armed Forces. Children under five enter free, as do escorts of the disabled, whereas the disabled themselves and children from five to fifteen pay a standard ticket price. /

Also available are self-guided Audio-Tours. For these tours, visitors are provided with headphones and are guided along designated routes while listening to the history and current politics of the Houses of Parliament. /

Audio-Tours are also popular for the fact that, besides the most common European languages, they offer a far wider choice, such as Welsh, Mandarin, Russian and Portuguese. /

All visitors are subject to tight security-screening, for fairly obvious reasons. Visitors must pass through metal-detectors, and all their bags are thoroughly x-rayed and searched. They also have their photographs taken and are given a temporary pass that must be visible at all times. /

Some visitors are worried about whether they need to dress in a certain way. Well, there’s no strict dress-code as such, but visitors are asked to wear sensible, inoffensive clothes and comfortable and safe shoes in case of accidents on stairs or floors. /

Well, whatever tour you choose, we hope you’ll enjoy it. That’s all from us for today, and please tune in next time, when we’ll be looking at some of the more famous Department Stores.