

Multicultural London

Immigration is nothing new to London. It has always been a real magnet for people from around the world.

The city of Londinium was originally founded by the Romans, subsequently conquered by the Saxons and Normans and developed as a commercial centre by Italian, Flemish and Baltic traders. In fact for much of its history the percentage of Londoners born outside the capital was actually higher than it is today.

In around 1700, evidence shows there were many foreigners living in London. These included Huguenots from France, Jews from Spain and Eastern Europe, Scandinavians, Germans, Moors and people from various Mediterranean countries. In addition, London was home to many Welsh, Scottish, Irish and English people from both the southern and northern extremes of the country, considered every bit as foreign due to their strong dialects.

In Victorian London around 17% of its total population were not native Londoners, although they represented far fewer ethnic groups. Many came from Ireland, fleeing the potato famine, others were Jewish refugees



from central Europe, Poland and Russia, but there were also more exotic London residents such as sailors from South East Asia and Black African servants and sailors, as well as musicians, boxers and writers.

By the end of the 19th century there were well established communities of Italians, French, Chinese, Germans, Scandinavians, Irish and thousands of Eastern European

Jewish refugees who streamed in after WWII. Polish, Greek and Turkish Cypriots settled in London later and its Black community grew too from the 1950s onwards. The first wave of immigrants from the Caribbean were joined by immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa. The Notting Hill Carnival in Kensington remains a major annual celebration of West Indian life in London. British Commonwealth immigrants, mostly Indians, as well as Bangladeshis and Africans settled in south London.

More recently refugees and asylum seekers have flowed into the poorer areas of London from war torn Vietnam, Kurdistan, Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Brazil and Columbia. Richer Gulf-State Arabs and Japanese immigrants have moved into sophisticated Mayfair and Belgravia. Without all this immigration London would never have become so famous for its banking, silk, watches and of course its food!

Glossary

magnet	=	_____
evidence	=	_____
fleeing	=	_____
famine	=	_____
streamed in	=	_____
flowed	=	_____
war torn	=	_____



1 List the different ethnic groups you would expect to find living in London. Then read the text and check your answers.

2 Read the text again and complete the sentences with the missing information.

- 1 London was originally founded *by the Romans* and developed by _____.
- 2 _____ more non-Londoners than today lived in London.
- 3 British migrants to London were considered foreign because of their _____.
- 4 Victorian London had an immigrant population of 17% but from fewer _____.
- 5 People fled Ireland because of the _____.
- 6 The more exotic London residents were sailors, _____.
- 7 Thousands of Jewish refugees came from _____ after WWII.
- 8 The first wave of _____ arrived in Britain in the 1950s.
- 9 _____ is a major annual celebration of West Indian life in London.
- 10 Without immigration London would not be as famous for its _____.

3 Pairwork What immigrants live in your city? When did they arrive? How do you communicate? Discuss with your partner.

