

Tower Bridge



Tower Bridge (built 1886-1894) is a combined bascule and suspension bridge in London, England, over the River Thames. It is close to the Tower of London, from which it takes its name. It has become an iconic symbol of London.

Pictures



Tower bridge at night



Tower bridge - bird view



Tower bridge - open

Construction

Construction started in 1886 and took eight years with five major contractors – Sir Joh Jackson (foundations), Baron Armstrong (hydraulics), William Webster, Sir H.H. Bartlett, and Sir William Arrol & Co. – and employed 432 construction workers. E W Crutwell was the resident engineer for the construction.

Design

- The bridge is 800 feet (244 m) in length with two towers each 213 feet (65 m) high, built on piers. The central span of 200 feet (61 m) between the towers is split into two equal bascules or leaves, which can be raised to an angle of 83 degrees to allow river traffic to pass. The bascules, weighing over 1,000 tons each, are counterbalanced to minimise the force required and allow raising in five minutes.

Opening

- The bridge was officially opened on 30 June 1894 by The Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VII), and his wife, The Princess of Wales (Alexandra of Denmark).
- The bridge connected Iron Gate, on the north bank of the river, with Horselydown Lane, on the south – now known as Tower Bridge Approach and Tower Bridge Road, respectively. Until the bridge was opened, the Tower Subway – 400 m to the west – was the shortest way to cross the river from Tower Hill to Tooley Street in Southwark. Opened in 1870, Tower Subway was the world's first underground ('tube') railway, but closed after just three months and was re-opened as a pedestrian foot tunnel. Once Tower Bridge was open, the majority of foot traffic transferred to using the bridge, there being no toll to pay to use it. Having lost most of its income, the tunnel was closed in 1898.

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