The London Underground

The London Underground, or Tube, is the oldest underground transport system in the world. It opened in 1863. At first, there was only one line, but today it is the second largest underground in the world. Only Shanghai Metro in China is bigger. It is also one of the busiest transport systems. Passengers make around three million journeys on the Tube every day!

There are 270 Tube stations in London. Each station is identified by the famous underground sign – a red circle with the word ‘Underground’ in the centre. People enter and leave the Tube stations in lifts or on escalators; some stations have stairs. The longest escalator is at Angel Tube station. It’s over 60 m long. People have to stand on the right on the escalators in the Tube. People can pass on the left when they’re in a hurry to catch their train!
Today there are 11 Tube lines and each line has a name and a colour. The District line is green, for example. It’s the busiest line with over 180 million passengers every year. The London Tube map is very famous. Henry Beck designed it in 1931. A lot of urban rail systems around the world now have similar maps.

Some Tube stations have special characteristics. There are multicoloured mosaics at Tottenham Court Road station, and at Baker Street station (near Sherlock Holmes’s house) there are silhouettes of the famous detective on the walls.

The Tube is one of the quickest and cheapest ways to travel in London. There are trains every three or four minutes. It’s a great way to get around London!