# Highlights Audio Tour

# The Tower of London

## Overview

Make the most of your time and catch all the must-sees, including the Crown Jewels, White Tower, execution sculpture and ravens.

## Stop 1 About This Tour

### Narrator:

A very warm welcome to the Tower of London and to this special Highlights Tour. Before we begin, please find a comfortable place to stand, along the pavement to the right of the building where you picked up your guide.

Today you’ll be visiting the absolute must-see parts of the Tower. We’ll be hearing from experts along the way, who’ll make sure this tour really gives you a unique Tower of London experience. Here’s Lucy Worsley, Chief Curator at Historic Royal Palaces.

### Lucy Worsley:

You’re visiting one of the places that in the whole world holds the most history, drama, intrigue, betrayal and blood. The Tower of London is a castle that’s a thousand years old and it still protects the Crown Jewels. It’s been a luxurious royal palace, it’s been a secure fortress in times of danger, it’s been an infamous prison for enemies of the state, and the place from which kings and queens have exercised their power.

This tour will help you to find the highlights, but please, don’t forget about the rest. Use your map as well to get about, and all of our information is themed by the three main things that the Tower is: a fortress, a palace and a prison.

### Narrator:

For this tour, we suggest you follow our route – though you’re welcome to stop off at the cafe or do some exploring of your own along the way. At the end of each stop, just look at your screen to see an image of where your next stop begins.

I hope you’ll enjoy your tour. Your first stop is just a bit further along the pavement.

## Stop 2 A Royal Palace

### Narrator:

After William of Normandy – better known as William the Conqueror – invaded England in 1066, he started building a castle here.

Over the next couple of hundred years, new kings added layers of defence and new palace buildings.

This building is called St Thomas’s Tower. King Edward 1st built it as part of a huge new outer ring of defences in the late 1200s. What you’re standing on is actually land that he reclaimed from the River Thames.

Sally Dixon-Smith is Curator of Collections here at the Tower of London. You can see a photo of her on your screen.

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

The pavement you’re standing on underneath has just got thousands and thousands of beech piles, so essentially beech trees driven into the mud to reclaim that land from the river and expand the castle out, pushing it into the river.

### Narrator:

St Thomas’s Tower would have faced directly onto the river, because the wharf hadn’t yet been built here. The king’s royal barge would be moored underneath the wide archway. The rooms above were his luxurious new palace apartments. The Tower must have looked stunning to passing river travellers: it was originally topped with imposing statues; and the window bars were covered in a thin layer of gold, so they twinkled in the sunlight.

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

This was a real statement, almost sort of this royal fist shoved into the river to say, I’m here and look at my incredibly special, new palace accommodation that I have managed to make come out of the mud of the Thames.

### Narrator:

The palace was just as spectacular inside, too. We won’t be going in on this Highlights Tour; but it’s well worth a visit if you have time later, and you’ll find a separate tour of the Medieval Palace from the audio tours menu on your guide. For now, have a look at the images on your screen…

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

I think what’s really striking for modern visitors is how incredibly colourful it was. So you get really bright oranges and greens and gilding; and the whole idea of the palace set-up for people coming to see the king or queen is that it should be dazzling, that they’re really overcome and that the whole setting is showing off the power of these people and that they are in charge.

### Narrator:

But not all visitors to the Tower came of their own free will. Let’s take a closer look at Traitors’ Gate.

## Stop 3 An Infamous Prison

### Narrator:

This water gate was built to give Edward 1st easy access to the river. But it later became known as Traitors’ Gate. And for some people, entering through this archway would have been a terrifying experience.

The Tower of London was built as a fortress. And it’s also been used by kings and queens as a luxurious palace. But because it was so secure, it was ideally suited for its more fearsome role – as a prison.

And if it was a prison, it needed jailers.

The Yeoman Warders, or Beefeaters, have been guarding the Tower of London since the 1500s, when the Tudors were on the throne.

Today, all Yeoman Warders must have at least 22 years of military service, have earned the rank of Sergeant Major and been awarded the Long Service and Good Conduct medal.

Part of their role here has always been to act as bodyguards to the king or queen. But in the past, they also guarded any prisoners brought to the Tower.

Here’s Chief Yeoman Warder Peter McGowran – and you can see a photo of him on your screen.

### Peter McGowran:

The Yeoman Gaoler would be on board the boat with the prisoners; they’d come up the stairs at Traitor’s Gate and they’d be met by an escort of Yeoman Warders. And the escort of Yeoman Warders with the Gaoler would then escort them to the prison. There’s twenty towers here at the Tower of London and, at one time or another, every one of those towers has been a prison.

### Narrator:

Now, let’s follow in the footsteps of those early prisoners – and go into the heart of the Tower. Opposite Traitor’s Gate is the archway of the Bloody Tower. Go through the archway, and select the next track.

## Stop 4 A Secure Fortress

### Narrator:

Here, we’re in a good position to take in the layout of London’s great medieval fortress. You may like to stand to one side of the path while you listen.

Facing away from the archway, on the right you’ll see the huge, square bulk of the White Tower. This was William the Conqueror’s original fortified tower, or keep.

In the 1200s, medieval kings expanded the fortress. Henry III added a strong wall around the fortress. His son Edward I added another huge wall all the way round and enlarged the moat.

They had transformed the castle into England’s largest and strongest ‘concentric’ castle – that is, with one ring of defences around another. Sally Dixon-Smith:

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

So this castle is also designed to make it as difficult as possible to get in. You may have found it quite tricky to get in today, but it’s nothing to how difficult it was in the past! So, going from the very outside you’ve got the vast moat, which would have been filled with water. You have all the gateways you’ve come through today – some of them still do have great wooden gates on them and portcullises, which could be brought down, so everything could, it can be shut off.

And also making the most of the physical geography of the site: so making the most of slopes, things that are going to tire out attackers. So where you are, you’ve just come through the Bloody Tower and you’re on a relatively steep slope, and in order then to get into the Inmost Ward, which is immediately to your right, if you look at the wall there, very craggy old medieval wall, the holes that you see in it aren’t windows, those are arrow loops. So there will be archers on the other side firing at you as you’re trying to charge up that slope.

### Narrator:

No wonder kings and queens chose the Tower of London not only to protect themselves, but also to store their most prized possessions.

Now, walk on and up the stairs and select the next track – Prisoners and execution.

## Stop 5 Prisoners and Executions

### Narrator:

The glass sculpture shown on your screen symbolically marks the Tower as an execution site. On it, you can see the names of some of the people who died here.

You might be surprised to know that very few people were executed inside the grounds of the Tower: most executions took place in front of vast crowds out on Tower Hill. To be executed inside the Tower walls – in relative privacy – was only for very high-status or controversial prisoners.

Prisoners like Henry VIII’s second wife, Queen Anne Boleyn. We’ll hear later about the crimes she was accused of. But her real crime – in Henry’s eyes – was not giving him a son.

Like the other people who met their fate at the Tower, Anne was kept as a prisoner here before her execution took place. But the Tower of London wasn’t built as a prison: there were no purpose-built cells. Prisoners were squeezed in anywhere. Have a look at the buildings you see around you: most of them have been used as prisons during the Tower’s history.

For many, the experience would have been terrifying. Prisoners had no idea how long they were going to be held, or whether – any day – they might be told they were going to be executed.

Some prisoners left poignant records of their experience. The Beauchamp Tower is the large stone building you can see on your screen now.

The walls of the upper chamber are covered with prisoner graffiti. Sally Dixon-Smith explains.

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

Literally writing your name and the date on the wall is probably the most common form of graffiti that we have here at the Tower. We have a couple of also reflections of particular prison conditions. So there’s one inscription where the man lists exactly how long he’s been kept as a prisoner in solitary confinement; and he’s broken it down into weeks, days and hours and minutes of how long he’s been kept like that. And so that’s the other extraordinary thing is that from our other knowledge you can see the names of people written on the walls that you know were tortured at the Tower and you know went on to be executed, and yet you’re standing on the exact space they stood on when they were a prisoner.

### Narrator:

And you can find out more about the darker side of life at the Tower in our ‘Imprisonment and Execution’ tour – you can select it from the menu on your audio guide. Or, if you don’t have time for another tour, just pop in to the Beauchamp or Bloody Tower any time during your visit. When you’re ready, select the next track – the Crown Jewels.

## Stop 6 The Crown Jewels

### Narrator:

You are about to enter the Crown Jewels exhibition. It is a very popular part of a visit here, so please listen to this introduction before you go inside – or while you’re in the queue.

The objects you are about to see are completely genuine and utterly unique; they are of priceless value and are held here in the security of the Tower of London under armed guard. Curator of Collections Sally Dixon-Smith:

Sally Dixon-Smith:

The Crown Jewels are the most important items defended today by the fortress of the Tower of London. And what they are, it’s not, if you like, the everyday jewellery worn by the royal family; it’s specifically the crowns and sceptres and other equipment that’s used at the coronation. So used in the great ceremony that crowns them, that makes them kings and queens.

### Narrator:

The exhibition is your chance to get up close to some of the most famous jewels in the world.

Sally Dixon-Smith:

I think if you or I were to be crowned today, you would quite literally, from the objects you’re given and what you’re dressed up in, feel the weight of responsibility. The coronation crown is incredibly heavy. So the 1661 crown that was used to crown Elizabeth II is made of solid gold. Also, in the Jewel House, you have incredible jewels, as you would imagine. So the largest diamond in the Jewel House weighs over 500 carats. So this is something that you could actually weigh on your kitchen scales. So it’s vast.

And the reason for having this incredible collection of precious metals and the largest diamond you can get your hands on is, again, this whole symbolism of being the most important person in society. And the symbolism of the coronation, of the crowning, is to show that the king and queen is the person not only chosen by the people as their leader, but also chosen by God, and so the crowns themselves have that symbolism. And actually, if you look at them, they all at the very top of each of the items, whether it’s a crown or a sceptre or the orb, they have a little cross, and it shows that above everything, God is above everything. So if you’re the king or queen and you’re wearing a crown, you may think that you’re top dog, but in fact your crown is saying no, God is above you.

### Narrator:

There’s no audio commentary inside the building, because there’s sound and film as part of the exhibition.

Do ask the Jewel House Wardens if you have any questions while you’re inside – they’re very knowledgeable and always happy to help. Meanwhile, if you are waiting in the queue, select the option on your screen to explore some of the highlights in store.

When you come out of the Crown Jewels exhibition, your next stop will be outside the main entrance of the White Tower.

## Stop 6a The Oldest Object

### Narrator:

The silver gilt anointing spoon plays an important part in the coronation ceremony: it’s used to anoint the new monarch with holy oil, which is taken from a vessel called an ‘ampulla’.

Keith Hanson, Chief Exhibitor at the Tower.

### Keith Hanson:

Now the ampulla is an eagle with a removable head. It’s unscrewed, and that then opens up the hollow body of the eagle. At Coronation, that hollow body is then filled with holy oil, a nice special recipe that the church puts together. In the front of the ampulla is a spoon. Now at the appropriate moment, the oil is poured out of the ampulla into the bowl of the spoon, the Archbishop then places his fingers into the oil and the Sovereign is anointed.

### Narrator:

The spoon itself is over 800 years old and is the oldest object in the Jewel House. It was part of the old Regalia, used by monarchs until the coronation of Charles I. But, after the King was executed in 1649, Parliament ordered the Regalia to be destroyed. They were powerful symbols of what Oliver Cromwell regarded as the ‘detestable rule of kings’; and the new government were determined that such symbols should be completely eradicated. The gold objects were sent to the Royal Mint, here at the Tower, to be melted down, and the gemstones were removed from their settings and sold.

But, extraordinarily, the anointing spoon survived. It was bought by a member of the dead King’s household, and was not heard of again until the monarchy was restored in 1660.

Keith Hanson:

A man called Clement Kynnersley spent 16 shillings on that spoon, very carefully hid it away for the 11 years of the interregnum and then when the new Crown Jewels were being assembled, he popped up with the spoon and offered it for sale. Of course he was talking a little more than 16 shillings. But it went back into use. The only alteration, it was gilded in gold and four small seed pearls were added for the coronation of William and Mary in 1689, but other than that it’s in the same condition it was over 800 years ago.

## Stop 6b The Sovereign’s Orb

### Narrator:

Like other items of the Crown Jewels, the Orb is part of the dramatic history of the British monarchy itself. In 1649, after a bitter civil war, the monarchy was overthrown and King Charles I was executed. The historic Crown Jewels were broken up, sold off and destroyed. For the next 11 years, Britain was governed without a monarch, under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell. Then, once again, the mood of the nation changed, and, in 1660, the monarchy was restored. The new king, Charles II, recognised the important symbolism of the Crown Jewels. He ordered new regalia to be made, modelled on the lost regalia used by his father. This new set of regalia was completed for Charles II’s coronation, 23 April 1661, St George’s Day. It cost almost £13,000 – an enormous sum at the time.

The Orb was part of that sumptuous new regalia. The hollow gold sphere is set with emeralds, pearls, rubies and sapphires, with 365 diamonds and one amethyst.

The Sovereign’s Orb plays an important role in the coronation ceremony. The new monarch, sitting on the Coronation Chair, also known as St Edward’s Chair, receives it from the Archbishop of Canterbury, as a symbol of Christ’s sovereignty over the world. Then the Sceptre with the Dove and the Sceptre with the Cross are placed in the monarch’s left and right hands, respectively. Finally, St Edward’s Crown is placed on his or her head. This signifies the completion of the coronation ceremony and the full acknowledgement of the authority and responsibilities of the new King or Queen.

## Stop 6c The Enormous Diamond

### Narrator:

The Sovereign’s Sceptre with Cross was made for the coronation of Charles II in 1661 and has been used at every coronation since.

Throughout its long history, various alterations have been made to the top of the sceptre. The most significant change came in 1910, when a new gemstone was added – the largest top quality cut diamond in the world. The diamond was cut from the celebrated Cullinan diamond, which was found in the Premier Mine in present day South Africa in 1905, and given to King Edward VII by the Government of the Transvaal. Uncut, the diamond weighed over 3,000 carats.

Cutting the Cullinan diamond took more than eight months; the result was nine major stones and 96 small brilliants. The largest of the cut stones is the Cullinan 1 diamond, also known as the First Star of Africa, weighing just over 530 carats. It is this diamond that is mounted in the head of the Sceptre with Cross.

This sceptre symbolises royal power and justice and, during the coronation ceremony, it is placed in the monarch’s right hand. With the left hand, the monarch receives another sceptre – the Sceptre with Dove – representing fairness and mercy. Together, they signify the rights and responsibilities of the monarch and his or her duty to lead the people.

## Stop 6d A Working Crown

### Narrator:

The Imperial State Crown was made for the coronation of George VI in 1937, but there has always been a State Crown throughout the ages, and this crown is modelled closely on its predecessor. Different monarchs have added to the crown, and each jewel has its own rich history. The St Edward’s Sapphire, for example, set in the cross on the very top of the crown, is said to have belonged to the saint-king Edward the Confessor. The story goes that it was taken from a ring found on his finger when his tomb was opened, and his body was moved to his shrine at Westminster Abbey in 1163. So, the crown provides a link with the past and places the monarch within a deeply rooted royal tradition.

The crown plays a pivotal role in the coronation ceremony and is worn by the sovereign at the conclusion of the service. Wearing this crown and carrying the Sovereign’s Orb and the Sceptre with Cross, the monarch processes the length of Westminster Abbey and exits to the sound of the National Anthem. It is at this point that we see the transformation from royalty to ruler.

The Imperial State Crown is also a crown of office, which means it’s worn at official events or services – most notably at the State Opening of Parliament each year. If you have walked through the Jewel House and seen an ‘in use’ sign, then you know that the Queen is wearing the crown today.

Keith Hanson, Chief Exhibitor at the Tower.

### Keith Hanson:

The beauty of the Crown Jewels is they are real, they are working pieces of equipment and they continue to be so. So they not only represent a nation past, but also a nation for the future, so they are what everybody would expect and they are deemed to be the most premier collection of Crown Jewels in the world.

## Stop 7 The White Tower

### Narrator:

If you haven’t done so already, make your way to a position where you can see the main entrance to the White Tower. Find a place to stand where you can see the wooden steps leading up. Press ‘Pause’ on your audio guide if you need to.

The White Tower is the oldest building of the Tower of London. It was built on the orders of William the Conqueror, who invaded England and seized the crown nearly a thousand years ago. The people of London would never have seen anything like it. Its imposing size sent an unmistakeable message: ‘We’re in charge now. Look how powerful we are’.

For William himself, the White Tower was a luxurious palace. But it had to be easy to defend too. After all, the Norman invaders hadn’t exactly made themselves popular.

Jane Spooner is Head of Historic Buildings at Historic Royal Palaces.

### Jane Spooner:

The wooden steps that you can see today, which allow entry into the White Tower, actually very carefully replicate the kind of steps that would originally have been there. You notice that the doorway is quite high off the ground, and that’s really for defensive reasons. In the event of a siege or a battle, the wooden steps could have been burnt and got rid of and the garrison, and the king perhaps, would have been safe inside the building.

### Narrator:

Because it was such a strong and secure fortress, the Tower was the perfect place to store valuables; and, over time, it became more of a storehouse than a palace. In particular, this is where kings and queens kept weapons and armour. Over centuries, this led to the building’s role today – as a museum, displaying a spectacular collection from the Royal Armouries.

Your tour will take you right up to the top floor and then down to the secure basement. We’ll pause to discover a few extraordinary highlights along the way.

Now climb the wooden stairs into the White Tower.

Halfway up the stairs, look out for a little alcove where the grim story of two missing princes is told. Once you’re inside, your next stop is a suit of armour made for Henry VIII.

## Stop 8 Henry VIII on Horseback

### Narrator:

This armour belonging to Henry VIII is one of the great treasures of the Royal Armouries’ collection. Look how finely decorated it is, with the king’s and horse’s armour designed as a matching set. It’s always very popular, so do find a space – perhaps to one side, nearest the window – where you can listen comfortably.

The king’s armour was made to fit his body shape exactly – so this is as close as we get to meeting Henry VIII as he lived. You can almost imagine that if you lifted the visor on his helmet you would see his face. But what kind of man are we meeting here?

We asked Bridget Clifford, Keeper of the Tower Armouries.

### Bridget Clifford:

So you get the younger Henry here, probably in his early twenties, sort of rugby player-ish, stocky. He’s a wrestler, he’s a musician and the world is at his feet.

### Narrator:

He’s also in love. Notice his intricately decorated skirts, made to look like folds of cloth. Find the entwined gold letters – ‘H’ and ‘K’ – on the hem. H for Henry and K for his first wife, Katherine of Aragon.

Henry and Katherine were happily married for 24 years. But Henry’s desperation for a male heir drove him finally to divorce Katherine, and marry Anne Boleyn.

Bridget Clifford:

So there’s a love story here and there’s a tragedy as well.

### Narrator:

When you’ve finished exploring the displays on this floor, go upstairs, then continue through the archway into the grand chamber for your next stop.

## Stop 9 A Grand Chamber

### Narrator:

When the White Tower was first built, this room was probably used for royal receptions and other grand occasions. The room would have had colourful tapestries hanging on the walls; it might have been divided up with screens, too, to make it less draughty.

It was also equipped with the latest modern conveniences. In one of the large window alcoves, find a narrow archway with steps leading up into a tiny room. It’s on your screen now.

Have a look inside. This was basically an en suite toilet, called a garderobe. It was built here into the outer wall so it could empty out into a ditch underneath. Having a private toilet like this would have been a real sign of status.

Back in the main chamber, there’s another special feature at the other end of the room – a fireplace built into the wall. It’s on your screen. Head of Historic Buildings, Jane Spooner:

### Jane Spooner:

You might ask, well, what’s so special about that? I’m used to seeing fireplaces built into walls. Well, it’s actually very innovative. Traditionally, you would have a hearth in the centre of the room and vents cut into the roof. Now, as you can imagine, this would have made the room extremely smoky. But, William the Conqueror’s White Tower was different; it was special; and the hearth was built into the wall and the smoke was allowed to escape through vents built into the wall. They hadn’t yet invented the chimney flue, so there were no chimneys; the smoke just escaped through vents. But it was still really a great innovation.

### Narrator:

Now , take time to explore the unique and beautiful chapel and then the displays in the next room. When you’re ready, you’ll find your final highlight stop for the White Tower on the next floor up: The execution block.

## Stop 10 The Execution Block

### Narrator:

This is one of the most iconic objects associated with the Tower of London: the execution block.

Most prisoners in the Tower who were sentenced to death were executed just outside the Tower walls, on Tower Hill. For common criminals, this would mean hanging. But for the aristocracy, the punishment was beheading. This particular block is thought to have been used at the execution of Simon, Lord Lovat, in 1747. Lovat had been involved in a rebellion against the king, and was the last person to be publicly beheaded on Tower Hill. He was eighty years old.

Lovat would have knelt by the block and placed his upper chest in one of the cut-out areas and his chin in the other. This left his neck exposed for the axe.

The block is a unique survival – generally they seem to have been destroyed after use. But judging by illustrations of other executions, this one is quite large. And there may have been a reason for that.

Have a look at your screen… It shows an illustration of a beheading on Tower Hill just eight months before Lovat’s own execution. Bridget Clifford:

### Bridget Clifford:

There is the suggestion that the bigger block was used for spectacle: on something like Tower Hill, if you’ve got thousands of people there, the person being executed is going to be a very long way away and you want to be able to see what’s happening. And part of this is also to discourage people from thinking of doing similar things!

### Narrator:

Before you leave this room, do take a look out of the windows. Up here, you’re at the highest point of your visit to the Tower. Even with today’s skyline, you’ll get a sense of how this massive fortress dominated the area.

When you’re ready, follow the route down the stairs to the basement, then make your way back outside. And, for the next stop on our Highlights Tour, we’re going to tell you about the Lost Palace.

## Stop 11 The Lost Palace

### Narrator:

If you haven’t already, make your way back past the entrance where you went into the White Tower. You should be standing under a large tree, looking across the grass. Remember, you can pause your audio guide until you get there.

You may be wondering why you’re looking at an empty patch of grass; but, for this stop, we’re asking you to use your imagination. This open green space was once the heart of palace life. Sally Dixon-Smith:

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

In the past this would have been absolutely bustling, full of buildings, the most important and secure centre of the site and where most of the palace buildings were. One of the things that would have been there under Henry VIII in the 1500s was - he built beautiful new apartments for his new second wife, Anne Boleyn. And so, if you imagine from where you’re standing, if you look to your right and think that between where you’re standing and the White Tower there would have been a whole range of new apartments in the latest fashions built for Anne Boleyn, ready for her coronation in 1533.

But there were also other buildings: for instance the Jewel House that kept all the royal jewellery was up against the south side of the White Tower, the side of the White Tower that you can see. There also in this area would have been kitchens and stables and the other things that were needed to provide the kind of luxurious lifestyle required in the palace.

### Narrator:

In the 1500s, kings and queens stopped using the Tower as a royal residence. They preferred their other, more spacious palaces, where they could go riding and hunting. Eventually the buildings that filled this space were demolished. The Tower’s life as a palace had come to an end, but it would continue as a fortress and a prison for another 500 years.

Now, walk away from the White Tower, keeping the grass on your right. Go down the steps and walk past the ‘Ravens Shop’ until your reach a spot where you can see the White Tower again.

## Stop 12 Anne Boleyn on Trial

### Narrator:

You’re on your way now to your final stop, to meet some very special residents of the Tower of London.

But, before you go on, let’s pause here for a moment. You’ve just heard about the ‘Lost palace’. Where you are now, the grandest building of that palace once stood – the Great Hall. Have a look at your screen: that gives you an idea of what this now vanished building looked like.

The Great Hall was used for royal feasts and entertaining. But it could also be used for more serious business. On the 15th of May 1536, this space was the scene of one of the most dramatic events in the Tower’s history – the trial of Henry VIII’s second wife, Queen Anne Boleyn. Her portrait is on your screen now.

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

She was accused of treason; she was accused of having affairs with other men – including her brother. The other men accused were actually tried in the main law courts at Westminster, but because of her status as Queen, she was tried at the Tower.

### Narrator:

For Anne, her arrival at the Tower had a particularly cruel twist: only three years earlier she had made the same journey here to prepare for her coronation. She was even imprisoned in the same luxury apartments that had been especially decorated by her new husband to please her.

After two weeks of imprisonment, she was put on trial in the Great Hall.

### Sally Dixon-Smith:

Strangely, the judge at the trial at the Tower was her uncle; and also it was very much a foregone conclusion. As I said, she’d been accused alongside these men; by the time she actually has her trial those men have already been found guilty. So if they’re guilty, it follows that she’s guilty.

So it was an incredibly swift process. Anne Boleyn was arrested on 1st May during celebrations for May Day. And then by the 19th of May she’s executed at the Tower.

### Narrator:

Henry did show Anne one small mercy: he granted her request to be beheaded by a sword, rather than an axe. A skilled swordsman was sent from France and he executed her with a single blow.

Now, continue to your final stop – the Ravens.

## Stop 13 The Ravens

### Narrator:

One of the most famous legends of the Tower of London surrounds the ravens that are kept here. The story goes that if the ravens ever leave the Tower, it will crumble into dust and a great harm will befall the kingdom. So looking after the ravens is a very important job.

Meet Christopher Skaife - Yeoman Warder and Ravenmaster. Here he is on your screen. Chris is devoted to caring for the Tower ravens – and he knows them all individually. He claims he doesn’t have favourites. But there’s one raven – Merlina – who seems to crop up a lot on the Raven master’s social media.

Chris Skaife:

She came to the Tower of London about eleven years ago and originally she was a male raven called Merlin. It wasn’t till about four or five months later when we took her to London Zoo and the veterinary department, that we actually realised that she was a female. And now unofficially she’s known as Merlina.

Ravens come in all forms of intelligence. And she’s at the top of her spectrum. So she - she will play dead, and she will sit on Tower Green, she’ll lay on her back, she’ll spread her wings out, stick her feet in the air and just lay there for up to fifteen minutes.

### Narrator:

If, as the legend goes, Merlina and her friends are so vital – how can we be sure there will always be ravens at the Tower?

### Chris Skaife:

We are looking at breeding our own ravens for the Tower of London, which will be very, very exciting. And so we have provided an area in the moat for a couple of years to allow a breeding pair of ravens that we have here at the Tower of London to be in a quiet environment to go through that process, and we’re in the process of doing that now.

### Narrator:

The history of the Tower of London spans almost a thousand years. We hope it will span as many years in the future – with a little help from the ravens.

Of course, once upon a time ravens weren’t the only animals to be seen here. For 600 years there was a royal menagerie – or zoo – here at the Tower. Find out about it in the Royal Beasts display. And there’s lots more to see before you go. Here’s a final message from Chief Curator Lucy Worsley.

Lucy Worsley:

That’s it for the Highlights, but please, don’t go without seeing a couple of extra things. I really recommend that you go to the Beauchamp Tower. It’s quite a quiet, reflective, poignant part of the Tower that tends to get overlooked. And finally, get yourself up on to those battlements, see the Tower from a different angle, and please, enjoy your day.

## [End of Tour]