



Nelson's tomb in the crypt of St Paul's

# Monumental attraction

It's one of London's most iconic sights, but there is more to St Paul's Cathedral than first meets the eye

Most Londoners are familiar with St Paul's Cathedral's magnificent dome and floor, but less well known is what lies beneath: Europe's largest crypt.

Forming a place of rest for many who have made an outstanding contribution to the life of the British nation, the crypt is shaped as a cross and is a foundation for the main hall above. Buried here are Lord Nelson, killed in the Battle of Trafalgar; his successor in command and forebear for the new Lord Mayor, Admiral Collingwood; and English landscape painter, J M W Turner.

The grave of St Paul's architect, Sir Christopher Wren (1623-1723), is marked by a simple stone and is surrounded by memorials to his family, to his associate Robert Hooke and to the masons and other colleagues who

worked on building St Paul's. The epitaph in Latin above his tomb was written by his son and says: 'Reader, if you seek [his] monument, look around you'.

But it's not only the great and the good that can be celebrated while visiting the cathedral's underground. There are also 'ordinary' parochial burials of servants of the cathedral and clergy in the crypt.

Worth noting also is the beautiful mosaic floor – particularly gorgeous around Nelson's Tomb – which was designed by Francis Cranmer Penrose, Wren's successor as Surveyor to the Fabric in the second half of the 19th century, and created by female inmates from Woking Prison. Proof that even in the best-known sightseeing spots, there's always something new to discover.

## ST PAUL'S QUICK FACTS

- Following the Great Fire of London, Christopher Wren was commissioned to rebuild 51 churches in the City of London. St Paul's, his masterpiece, was completed in 1711.
- It's the fifth cathedral to have stood on the site since 604.
- A 15-year, £40m interior and exterior restoration programme was completed in summer 2011, having seen more than 150,000 blocks of the cathedral's white Portland stone cleaned on the outside alone.
- At 111.3m high, St Paul's dome is one of the largest cathedral domes in the world and weighs approximately 65,000 tons.
- A choir of boys and gentlemen has served the cathedral for more than 900 years.