1) The North Transept

The north transept became known as Statesmen's Aisle following the burial of Prime Minister William Pitt, Earl of Chatham in 1778. Here also can be found the graves of Charles James Fox, William Gladstone and Lord Palmerston and memorials to Benjamin Disraeli and Sir Robert Peel among others. The stained glass in the north rose window was designed by Sir James Thornhill in 1722, although it was altered in the late 19th century by J.L. Pearson. The three small chapels on the eastern side of this transept contain some fascinating monuments including that by Roubiliac to Lady Elizabeth Nightingale (pictured) which shows a skeletal figure of Death emerging from a cavern to aim his dart at the dying lady.

In the north ambulatory can be found the large memorial to General James Wolfe. The upper Islip chapel was dedicated as the Nurses Memorial chapel in 1950 in memory of UK and Commonwealth nurses who died in the 1939-45 war (this chapel can be viewed on application to the information desk). Many fine Elizabethan monuments can be seen in St John the Baptist's chapel and St Paul's chapel, including the tallest monument in the Abbey (36 feet) to Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon.

2) The High Altar

The Sanctuary is the heart of the Abbey, where the High Altar stands. The altar and reredos above it were designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1867. The Last Supper mosaic is by Antonio Salviati. On the altar are two candlesticks bought with money bequeathed by a serving maid called Sarah Hughes in the 17th century. The inscription along the top reads "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ" (from the book of Revelation). There are four large statues of Moses, St Peter, St Paul and King David flanking the altar and the doors leading into St Edward's chapel, which is immediately behind the screen. Also in this area is the Abbey Lectern, given in memory of the missionary William Carey.

In front of the High Altar is another of the Abbey's treasures - a marble pavement dating from 1268. The method of its decoration is known as Cosmati work, after the Italian family who developed the technique of inlaying intricate designs, made up of small pieces of coloured marble, into a plain marble ground. Materials used include onyx, porphyry, serpentine and coloured glass. It is 24 feet 10 inches square and there were three Latin inscriptions incorporated in it. One calculated that the world would last for 19,683 years. The pavement has recently undergone restoration.

To the south of the Altar is the ancient Sedilia, or seats for the priests, with two paintings of kings, thought to be Henry III and Edward I. A 15th century altarpiece by Bicci di Lorenzo...
was bequeathed to the Abbey in the late 1940s and is placed above the tomb of Anne of Cleves. To the north of the Altar are three medieval tombs.

3) The Quire

The choir was originally the part of the Abbey in which the monks worshipped, but there is now no trace of pre-Reformation fittings, for in the late eighteenth century Henry Keene, the then Surveyor, removed the thirteenth-century stalls and designed a smaller Choir. This was in turn destroyed in the mid-nineteenth century by Edward Blore, who created the present Choir in Victorian Gothic style and removed the partitions which until then had blocked off the transepts.

It is here that the choir, of twenty-two boys and twelve Lay Vicars (the name given to the men of the choir), sings the daily Services.

The Organ with cases designed by J.L. Pearson and placed above the Choir screen, was originally built by Christopher Shrider in 1727. Successive rebuildings in the nineteenth century and in 1909 and 1937 and extensive work in 1983 and 1987 have resulted in the present instrument. Orlando Gibbons and Henry Purcell are two of the great musicians who have been Organists at Westminster Abbey.

The north choir aisle is known as Musicians’ Aisle where Purcell, John Blow, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Herbert Howells and others lie buried. Sir Edward Elgar and Benjamin Britten have memorial stones.

The black and white marble floor in the Quire was the gift of Dr Richard Busby in 1677.

4) Edward the Confessor

The Chapel containing the shrine of St. Edward the Confessor, lies east of the Sanctuary at the heart of the Abbey. It is closed off from the west by a stone screen, probably of 15th century date, carved with scenes from the Confessor's life. Work is in progress to conserve the floor of this chapel and during this time public access is restricted.

An earlier shrine had been erected in 1163, after the Confessor had been canonised. When Henry III rebuilt Edward's Abbey he prepared a new shrine, bringing workmen from Italy. Peter the Roman was the chief artist. On 13 October 1269 the body was brought in solemn procession to its new resting place. The shrine seen today is only a shadow of its former self. It originally had three parts: a stone base decorated with Cosmati work, a gold feretory
containing the saint's coffin, and a canopy above it, which could be raised to reveal the feretory or lowered to cover it. The shrine was decorated with gold images of kings and saints. Many sick people came to the shrine to pray for a cure and the steps in the recesses of the shrine base are worn away by the knees of pilgrims (the illustration shown is by David Gentleman). At the Reformation the shrine was dismantled and stored by the monks, although the gold feretory was taken away. The Confessor's body was buried in another part of the Abbey. In the reign of Mary I the shrine was rebuilt. The Purbeck marble base was re-assembled but little care was taken to match the carvings and designs which decorated it. In absence of a feretory the coffin was placed in a hollow in the top part of the stone base, where it still remains. The wooden canopy has been restored and re-painted.

Around the shrine are the tombs of:
- Henry III
- Edward I
- Eleanor of Castile
- Edward III
- Philippa of Hainault
- Richard II with his queen Anne of Bohemia.

To the east, under his chantry chapel, lies Henry V. There are two small tombs to Margaret, daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VII. A brass on the floor covers the grave of John of Waltham, Bishop of Salisbury.

The chapel has a Cosmati floor, similar to that in front of the High Altar. The present altar dates from 1902. For many centuries the Coronation Chair was housed in this chapel but is now located at the west end of the Nave.

The Chapel of St. Edward the Confessor (King 1042-1066)

5) The Lady Chapel

The Lady Chapel was begun in 1503 and constructed at the expense of Henry VII. It is the last great masterpiece of English medieval architecture. In 1545 John Leland called it "the wonder of the entire world". Unfortunately the names of the master masons who designed it are not known but they were possibly Robert Janyns and William Vertue. The chapel is approached by a flight of stairs and at the entrance are finely wrought bronze gates displaying royal Tudor emblems.

The outstanding feature of the chapel is the spectacular fan-vaulted roof with its carved pendants. Around the walls are 95 statues of saints. Behind the altar is the tomb of Henry VII and his queen Elizabeth of York. The bronze screen around it is by Thomas Ducheman and the gilt bronze effigies and Renaissance tomb were designed by Italian Pietro Torrigiano. James I is also buried in the vault beneath the monument.
In 1725 the chapel was first used for installations of Knights of the Order of the Bath and the heraldic banners of living knights hang above the oak stalls. Beneath the hinged seats of the stalls are beautifully carved misericords.

At the east end is the Royal Air Force chapel. The stained glass window by Hugh Easton depicts the badges of the fighter squadrons that took part in the Battle of Britain in 1940. Above, in the main east window, is stained glass designed by Alan Younger, installed in 2000. In May 2013 two new windows designed by Hughie O’Donoghue were installed either side of the central east window. Predominantly blue in colour they incorporate emblems related to the Blessed Virgin Mary including lilies and stars. All three eastern windows were presented by Lord and Lady Harris of Peckham.

In the north aisle of the chapel is the tomb of Elizabeth I and her half-sister Mary I. In the south aisle are monuments to Mary, Queen of Scots and Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII. Here also is the vault where Charles II, William III and Mary II and Queen Anne lie, although none of them has a monument. George II, the last monarch to be buried at the Abbey, is interred in a vault below the central part of the chapel.

The painting of the Virgin and Child on the altar is by Bartolomeo Vivarini (Venetian School, about 1480). It was presented to the Abbey in 1935.

The heraldic west window, designed by John Lawson, contains the coats of arms, initials and cyphers of donors to the Abbey’s restoration appeal 1973-95, those concerned with fundraising and some of those involved in the actual restoration work. It especially honours Sir John Templeton, a major benefactor. Smaller stained glass windows in the side chapels also honour major donors to the appeal.

6) Poets' Corner

The South Transept is lit by a large rose window, with glass dating from 1902. Beneath it, in the angles above the right and left arches, are two of the finest medieval carvings in the Abbey, depicting censing angels. In addition to the many monuments, there are two fine late thirteenth-century wall paintings, uncovered in 1936, to be seen by the door leading to St. Faith's Chapel. They depict Christ showing his wounds to Doubting Thomas, and St. Christopher. At one time the south wall supported the dorter staircase, used by monks going from their dormitory to the Choir for their night offices. No sign of the staircase exists but if you look inside St. Faith's chapel you will see the passage leading to the staircase.

Poets' Corner

"The communication of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living" - Epitaph on the memorial to T.S.Eliot.

One of the best known parts of Westminster Abbey, Poets' Corner can be found in the South Transept. It was not originally designated as the burial place of writers, playwrights and poets;
the first poet to be buried here, Geoffrey Chaucer, was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey because he had been Clerk of Works to the palace of Westminster, not because he had written the Canterbury Tales.

Over 150 years later, during the flowering of English literature in the sixteenth century, a more magnificent tomb was erected to Chaucer by Nicholas Brigham and in 1599 Edmund Spenser was laid to rest nearby. These two tombs began a tradition which developed over succeeding centuries.

Burial or commemoration in the Abbey did not always occur at or soon after the time of death. Lord Byron, for example, whose lifestyle caused a scandal although his poetry was much admired, died in 1824 but was finally given a memorial only in 1969. Even Shakespeare, buried at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1616, had to wait until 1740 before a monument, designed by William Kent, appeared in Poets' Corner.

Other poets and writers, well known in their day, have now vanished into obscurity, with only their monuments to show that they were once famous.

Conversely, many whose writings are still appreciated today have never been memorialised in Poets' Corner, although the reason may not always be clear.

**Burials**

Some of the most famous to lie here, include the poets John Dryden, Tennyson, Robert Browning and John Masefield. Many writers, including William Camden, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Charles Dickens, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Rudyard Kipling and Thomas Hardy are also buried here.

Charles Dickens's grave attracts particular interest. As a writer who drew attention to the hardships borne by the socially deprived and who advocated the abolition of the slave trade, he won enduring fame and gratitude and today, more than 110 years later, a wreath is still laid on his tomb on the anniversary of his death each year.

**Memorials**

Those who have memorials here, although they are buried elsewhere, include the poets John Milton, William Wordsworth, Thomas Gray, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Robert Burns, William Blake, T.S. Eliot and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Writers such as Samuel Butler, Jane Austen, Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Walter Scott, John Ruskin, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Bronte, Henry James and Sir John Betjeman have also been given memorials here.

Not all those buried in the South Transept are poets or writers. Several of Westminster's former Deans and Canons lie here. Also buried here is Thomas Parr, who was said to have died at the age of 152 in 1635 after having seen ten sovereigns on the throne during his long life.

The grave and monument of the famous composer George Frederic Handel can also be seen here, as well as the graves of David Garrick, Shakespearean actor, and Laurence Olivier, actor of our age.
7) Saint Faith's Chapel

St Faith was a 3rd century virgin martyred for the Christian faith by being roasted on a bedstead or gridiron. Her cult was popular in England and France in the Middle Ages and this chapel was built in the 1250s. The 13th century wall painting shows St Faith wearing a crown and holding the symbol of her martyrdom, a gridiron. St. Faith's Chapel is reserved for private prayer throughout the day.

8) The Cloisters

The Cloister were, in pre-Reformation days, one of the busiest parts of the monastic precincts and, with windows filled with glass, rushes strewn on the floor and braziers burning, would have been cosier than they seem today. They were used by the monks for meditation and exercise, besides providing access to the main monastic buildings.

In the West Cloister, the novices were instructed by the Novice Master. Also located here was the washing place. The north walk was for private study, equipped with bookcases and tables and seats below the windows. The south walk was the way to the Refectory where meals were taken, while the east walk led to the Chapter House.

It was in the East Cloister, in monastic times, that the Abbot held his Maundy on the Thursday of Holy Week each year. Thirteen aged men were seated on a stone bench and the Abbot washed their feet, wiped them with a towel and then kissed them. He then gave each man three pence, seven red herrings, some ale and three loaves of bread. Simultaneously, in the South Walk, the monks washed the feet of children, where their Maundy seat, 'a faire, long bench of stone', still exists.

Each of the four Cloisters is approximately 100 feet in length, dating mainly from the 13th to the 15th centuries. The Cloisters were rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1298.

The Chapter House is in the East Cloister and was the place where the day-to-day business of the monastery was discussed and tasks allocated. The Chapter House was also the place where Parliament met in the 14th century before transferring across the road to the Palace of Westminster.
9) The Chapter House

In the East Cloister is the 'incomparable' octagonal Chapter House, dating from the 1250s. It is one of the largest in England. The monks met here every day for prayers and to read a chapter from the rule of St Benedict and discuss the day's work. The King's Great Council first assembled here in 1257. This was effectively the beginning of the English Parliament. The House of Commons used the room for several years in the late 14th century. After having been a repository for government records from the 1540s it was restored in Victorian times by Sir Gilbert Scott.

The room is lavishly adorned with sculpture, and wall paintings of the Apocalypse, with the Last Judgement painted on the east wall. It contains one of the finest medieval tile pavements in England. The windows incorporate Victorian stained glass and new post-war designs. An inscription underneath them recalls the work of the original masons "In the handiwork of their craft is their prayer".

In the vestibule of the Chapter House is the oldest door in Britain, dated to the 1050s.

10) The Pyx Chamber

This low vaulted room off the East Cloister is part of the Undercroft that was built about 1070 but was walled off from the rest of the room sometime in the 12th century. The chamber was probably made into a treasury in the 13th century and may have been used as a sacristy when Henry III was rebuilding the main Abbey. This would explain the presence of the altar, recently dedicated to St Dunstan. The medieval tiled floor has designs similar to those on the much finer floor in the Chapter House, and show mainly heraldic subjects. In the time of Edward I this Chamber and the crypt of the Chapter House were assigned to the "Royal Wardrobe", a department of State. In 1303, when the King was away in Scotland, the Wardrobe treasury was burgled and money and plate stolen. Although the Abbot of Westminster and the monks were suspected of complicity and sent to the Tower of London, they were later released and one Richard de Podlicote and associates hanged for the crime. The present double oak security doors at the Chamber entrance were provided after this event and the room was then used to house some valuables of the Exchequer. There are two large rectangular chests in the Chamber dating from the 13th and 14th centuries which were evidently made inside the room.

But it was best known as the home of the wooden boxes, called Pyxes, where a sample of the coinage of the realm was kept to await the "Trial of the Pyx". This was a public demonstration to show that the coinage was pure and samples of coins were "tried" by being melted down
and the silver content measured. The Trial itself was never held in the Chamber but in the Palace of Westminster. It still takes place today in Goldsmiths' Hall in the City of London.

11) The Museum

The Museum is housed in the magnificent vaulted undercroft beneath the former monks' dormitory. This is one of the oldest areas of the Abbey, dating back almost to the foundation of the Norman church by King Edward the Confessor in 1065.

The centrepiece of the exhibition is the Abbey's collection of royal and other funeral effigies. This collection includes the effigies of Edward III, Henry VII and his queen, Elizabeth I, Charles II, William III, Mary II and Queen Anne. Later wax effigies include a striking likeness of Horatio, Viscount Nelson (pictured here) wearing some of his own clothes and another of the famous Prime Minister William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, modelled by an American lady called Patience Wright. During recent conservation of Elizabeth I's effigy a unique corset dating from 1603 was found on the figure and is now displayed separately.

Other items on display include the funeral saddle, helm and shield of Henry V, some panels of medieval glass, 12th century sculpture fragments, Mary II's coronation chair and replicas of the Coronation regalia.

A recent addition to the display is the late 13th century Westminster Retable, England's oldest altarpiece. It was most probably designed for the High Altar of the Abbey, although it has been damaged in past centuries. The panel has been expertly cleaned and conserved. One section shows the figure of St Peter, the patron saint of the Abbey (pictured).

The Museum is open daily from 10.30 to 16.00 but may be closed for State and other special events. Some postcards and books are available at the Museum.

12) Little Cloister

The present Little Cloister and the surrounding houses, inhabited by the clergy and staff of the Abbey, stand on the site of the monastic infirmary. The central fountain dates from 1871. On the east side are the ruins of the 12th century chapel of St Catherine where many important meetings were held in the Middle Ages and where the sick monks attended services. This area leads to the College (or Infirmary) Garden and can be viewed Tuesdays-Thursdays.
13) St Catherine's Chapel Garden

From the Dark Cloister visitors reach Little Cloister and in its east walk there remains the fine fourteenth-century doorway, which led into the ancient Chapel of Saint Catherine. The original chapel was built in the twelfth century and consisted of a nave and two aisles.

The north arcade partly survives in the form of the lower parts of the columns alternately round and octagonal. On the south side all the columns stand to the height of the capitals; the three eastern arches have been filled in, but each round arch still contains some of its original twelfth-century voussoirs. To the south of this blocked arcade the outer wall of the aisles has been demolished and the ground is taken up by the courtyard of numbers 4 and 5 Little Cloister. At the west end, however, the outer wall of the south aisle stands an original twelfth-century window opening. The roof of the chapel was removed in 1578 and a house built over part of it. Bombs destroyed the successor to this house in 1941, and in subsequent rebuilding much of the original chapel was left exposed.

The chapel was used for many important assemblies, both secular and clerical, including the consecration of various prelates. It was here that in 1176 the precedence between the Archbishops of Canterbury and York was decided in Canterbury's favour. It is also where Henry III solemnly swore on the Holy Gospels to maintain the Magna Carta.

14) Abbey Gardens

There are three original gardens within Westminster Abbey: the Garth, the Little Cloister and College Garden. St Catherine's Garden lies in the area of the ruined monastery and was more recently created. Each Garden had a separate function: the Garth with its square of turf, bounded by Cloisters, gave the monks somewhere to rest their eyes and minds as they walked around it. Metaphysically speaking, green was symbolic of rebirth, and therefore appropriate for spiritual refreshment. The Little Cloister Garden with its fountain and borders of scented plants was an area set aside for recuperation after illness. There would have probably been seats in this garden, and may have well been turf-topped ones, which were common in medieval times. The College Garden was the Infirmarer's Garden, used for the purposes of growing medicinal herbs and foods for the general well-being of the occupants of the Abbey. It is very unusual (possibly unique in England) for an Abbey or Monastery to still have its infirmarer's garden attached and kept as a garden.

The Infirmary Garden originally contained an orchard (hence the name of the nearby Abbey Orchard Street). Though the orchard would have grown apples, pears, plums, figs, mulberries, nuts, medlars and vines, it did not exist merely to provide food. It was also an area of beauty, neatly laid out with plentiful paths and containing roses and lilies. This area was also known as the Cemetery Orchard for the monks were buried there. Symbolically, life and death were dovetailed in this garden. Vegetables such as broad beans, leeks, onions, garlic, coleworts
(kale) and root vegetables were grown in a separate plot. There were also fishponds, beehives, and an area for growing medicinal herbs. The value of herbs to medieval people cannot be overestimated. Their bland vegetable and starch diet needed herbal flavouring to make it palatable. Herbs had enormous symbolic meaning, many being named after the Virgin Mary such as 'Lady's Bedstraw'. Galium verum. Illnesses were treated by diet, blood-letting, and the application of herbs - surgery was only attempted in cases of direst need.

The Gardens were tended by a Head Gardener and two undergardeners. They were monks and expected to attend matins and compline, though they were asked to leave their muddy boots and capes outside. In addition to providing the Abbey with food, the Gardener also gave away fruit from the orchard to local people on 25th July every year, St James' Day. Up to 1300, England had a Mediterranean climate, ideal for fruit growing, and especially vines and wine making. After this the weather became cool and damp. The Gardener had one day off a year, called his 'O' Day. He could choose when he wanted to take it, and the other monks gave money for him to spend on his special day.

15) The Nave

When Henry III died in 1272 the building of the Gothic Abbey was not complete and part of the Norman nave remained attached to the new work. The present nave was nearly 150 years in building. It was begun in 1376 by Abbot Nicholas Litlyngton, who financed the work with money left by his predecessor Cardinal Simon Langham. The master mason was the great Henry Yevele, who followed closely the earlier Gothic style of architecture. Flying buttresses on the exterior took the thrust of the walls and enabled the roof to be raised to a height of 101 feet (31 metres). Richard II and Henry V later provided finance to continue the building but it was not finished until 1517, when the west window was glazed.

The choir screen has a monument to Sir Isaac Newton, in an area often referred to as Scientists Corner. Among the famous people buried in the nave are Charles Darwin, David Livingstone, Sir Charles Barry, Thomas Telford and Clement Attlee.

The West Window

The present stained glass in the west window dates from 1735. The design is probably by Sir James Thornhill and the work was carried out by the glass-painter William Price. The design shows Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and fourteen prophets. At the base are the coats of arms of King Sebert, Elizabeth I, George II, Dean Wilcocks (the Dean at the time) and the City of Westminster.

Just below this window you find the grave of the Unknown Warrior which commemorates the many thousands killed in the 1914-18 war who have no grave.

The Waterford crystal chandeliers were the gift of the Guinness family for the Abbey's 900th anniversary in 1965.
In front of the votive candle stands are two icons, one depicting Christ and the other showing the Blessed Virgin Mary with the Christ Child. These were painted by Sergei Federov and installed in 1994. Near the entrance to St George’s chapel (which is set aside for private prayer) is the earliest known contemporary portrait of an English king, Richard II, painted in about 1395. In a case nearby are seven volumes which form the Roll of Honour of the Civilian War Dead 1939-45.

The ancient Coronation Chair has recently been conserved and can now be viewed in St George's chapel.

Just outside the west door is the circular memorial to Innocent Victims of Oppression, Violence and War, dedicated in 1996. Above the west porch are statues of ten modern martyrs, unveiled in 1998

16) Shop

Westminster Abbey’s shop offers a wide range of gifts and souvenirs to provide you with a lasting reminder of your visit. From books and CDs, to tapestries and prints, there is something to suit everyone and every pocket. All profits from the Abbey shop are used for the running and upkeep of the Abbey.

Opening times

**Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday**
October - March, 9.15am – 5.00pm
April - September, 9.15am – 5.30pm

**Wednesday**
October - March, 9.15am -6.30pm
April – September, 9.15am – 7.15pm

**Saturday**
October - March, 9.15am – 6.30pm
April – September, 9.15am – 6.30pm

**Sunday (except Easter Sunday)**
11.30am – 5.30pm