



## **MADAME TUSSAUDS – MORE THAN 200 YEARS OF FAME**

More than half a billion people have experienced Madame Tussauds since they first opened more than 200 years ago and it remains just as popular as ever. There are many reasons for its enduring success, but at the heart of it is good, old-fashioned curiosity. Today's visitors are sent on a unique, emotionally-charged journey through the realms of the powerful and famous. The museum-style ropes and barriers are long gone so our guests can truly get up close and personal with A-list celebrities, sporting legends, political heavyweights and historical icons, reliving the times, events and moments that made the world talk about them.

### **From France to the United Kingdom...**

The attraction's history is a rich and fascinating one, with roots dating back to Paris in 1770. It was here that Madame Tussaud learnt to model wax likenesses under the tutelage of her mentor, Dr Philippe Curtius. At the age of 17, she became art tutor to King Louis XVI's sister at the Palace Of Versailles and then, during the French Revolution, was hastily forced to prove her allegiance to the feudalistic nobles by making the death masks of executed aristocrats. Madame Tussaud came to Britain in the early 19th century alongside a travelling exhibition of revolutionary relics and effigies of public heroes and rogues.

### **Bringing the news to life...**

At a time when news was communicated largely by word of mouth, Madame Tussaud's exhibition was the 'Page 6' of the day, reporting global events, headlines and royal news to the public. Figures of leading statesmen and, in the Chamber of Horrors, notorious villains put faces to the names on everyone's lips and captured the public's imagination. In 1835, Madame Tussaud's exhibition established a permanent base in London as the Baker Street Bazaar. Visitors paid 'sixpence' for

the chance to meet the famous, and the infamous, names of the day. The attraction moved to its present site on Marylebone Road in the year 1884.

### **Blending history and celebrity...**

In the 20th Century, Madame Tussaud's role began to change. Thanks to the rapid growth of both popular tabloid press and public literacy, information about current events was easily acquired. The attraction gradually, therefore, became less a source of direct news, than a commentary on popular celebrity. It also survived some major upheavals including a destructive fire (1925), earthquake (1931) and World War II 'Blitz' bombing (1940). Today, Madame Tussauds is bigger and better than ever, combining its diverse history with the relentless glamour, intrigue and infamy of 21st century celebrity.

Some of Madame Tussaud's original work and earliest relics are still on display in London, including the death masks she was forced to make during the French Revolution and the Guillotine that beheaded Marie Antoinette. Guests can also marvel at probably the earliest example of animatronics – 'Sleeping Beauty', a breathing likeness of Louis XV's sleeping mistress Madame du Barry sculpted in 1763, is the attraction's oldest figure on display.

Nowadays, there are more contemporary, interactive and engaging celebrities in the attraction. From Brad Pitt, with his squeezable bum, and actress Halle Berry posing with you for a fashion magazine...the biggest names in entertainment, sports and politics are all dazzlingly represented; authentic in every way to the very last eye lash....

### **Finger on the pulse...**

Madame Tussauds continues regularly to add figures that reflect contemporary public opinion and celebrity popularity – Hollywood sirens such as Nicole Kidman; pop idols Justin Timberlake and Beyoncé and athletes Kobe Bryant and Tiger Woods. The 2009 opening of Madame Tussauds in Hollywood included more than 50 first-time wax figures, and icons of the big screen, such as Hugh Jackman, Jessica Alba, Bruce Willis, Martin Scorsese, Mel Gibson and Quentin Tarantino to name a few.

The attraction also continues to expand globally with established international branches in London, New York, Hong Kong, Las Vegas, Shanghai, Berlin, Amsterdam, Washington DC, Hollywood and Bangkok to soon become the 10<sup>th</sup> Madame Tussauds. Forever a red carpet of celebrity, fame and glamour, each Madame Tussauds attraction offers the same rich mix of interaction, authenticity and local appeal.

A visit to Madame Tussauds is essential – where else can you savor two centuries of fame and notoriety, and get up close and personal with your favorite stars. Who do you want to meet?

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### **Journalist/EditorNotes:**

Madame Tussauds Studios has been making wax figures for over 150 years. Each masterpiece takes up to four months, and a team of 20 dedicated sculptors, to create. Over 500 precise body measurements are referenced, real head hairs are inserted one by one, and countless layers of paints and tints are applied to build up skin tones - all to achieve the kind of astonishing realism that has kept Madame Tussauds world renowned for over two centuries.

Merlin Entertainments Group is the leading name in location based, family entertainment, and has seen the most successful and dynamic growth of any company in the sector over the last five years. The world's second largest visitor attraction operator, Merlin has 59 attractions and six hotels/2 holiday villages in 13 countries and across 3 continents. The company aims to deliver memorable and rewarding experiences to its 35 million visitors worldwide, through its iconic global and local brands, and the commitment and passion of its managers and 13,500 employees.

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