

NEVER, NEVER  
NEVER GIVE UP  
WINSTON CHURCHILL

Historical context guide

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# Piccadilly

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2020/2021

# Piccadilly Circus

**Piccadilly Circus** is a road junction and public space of London's West End in the City of Westminster, built in 1819 to connect Regent Street with Piccadilly. In this context, a circus, from the Latin word meaning "circle", is a round open space at a street junction.

Piccadilly now links directly to the theatres on Shaftesbury Avenue, as well as the Haymarket, Coventry Street (onwards to Leicester Square), and Glasshouse Street. The Circus is close to major shopping and entertainment areas in the West End. Its status as a major traffic junction has made Piccadilly Circus a busy meeting place and a tourist attraction in its own right. The Circus is particularly known for its video display and neon signs mounted on the corner building on the northern side, as well as the Shaftesbury memorial fountain and statue, which is popularly, though mistakenly, believed to be of Eros. It is surrounded by several notable buildings, including the London Pavilion and Criterion Theatre. Directly underneath the plaza is Piccadilly Circus tube station, part of the London Underground system.



The phrase *it's like Piccadilly Circus* is commonly used in the UK to refer to a place or situation which is extremely busy with people. It has been said that a person who stays long enough at Piccadilly Circus will eventually bump into everyone they know. Probably because of this connection, during World War II, "Piccadilly Circus" was the code name given to the Allies' D-Day invasion fleet's assembly location in the English Channel.



**In popular culture**

# Blitz in London

The Blitz was the name given to the bombing raids that Germany launched against Britain in 1940, during World War II (1939-45). For eight months German airplanes dropped bombs on London and other cities, including Birmingham, Coventry, Sheffield, Liverpool, Plymouth, Southampton, Portsmouth, and Manchester. These were all places where factories and other important industries were based. The attack was Adolf Hitler's attempt at forcing the country to surrender.

## Night Raids

At first, Hitler sent the bombers by day, but within a few weeks, he decided to make the bombing raids at night. He wanted to make the British people even more afraid and to weaken them by stopping them from sleeping properly.

## Air-raid Shelters

In London, many people slept on the platforms of the underground railway stations so they would be protected from the bombs, falling debris, and fire. As the bombing raids continued, all large towns set up public air-raid shelters. Many people also built smaller ones, called Anderson shelters, in their gardens. There was even a type of shelter—a Morrison shelter—that people could set up inside their homes.

## End of the Blitz

Hitler's intention had been to break the morale of the British people so that they would want to give in. Instead it brought them together to face a common enemy. The people became determined to hold out against the German attack. The phrase "Business as usual" could be seen everywhere written in chalk on boarded-up shop windows. Such signs showed the spirit of the Blitz, when people carried on as best they could. On May 11, 1941, Hitler called off the Blitz against Britain. In the eight months that the attack had lasted, 60,000 people were killed, 87,000 were seriously injured, and 2 million homes were destroyed.

# Carnage at the Café de Paris

There was, surprisingly, plenty of glitz in the Blitz. With enemy planes overhead night after night, the old biblical injunction to « eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die » was never more appropriate.

So while much of the population took shelter, a large number of mainly young people were determined to party.

And if food was rationed and the beer watered down, then at least they could dance. At night, thousands packed into local Locarnos and Palais to forget their worries in furious jitterbugging or romantic, waist-hugging waltzing.

The West End, some recall, was never so full of live music. From streets darkened by the strictly imposed black-out, fun-seekers could escape into a brightly lit world of crooners, cocktails and big bands. And the place the smart crowds were drawn to was Soho's sumptuous, subterranean Café de Paris.

A must-visit nightspot for high society before the war, when the likes of the Mountbattens, the Aga Khan and Cole Porter were seated at its best tables, its doors stayed open despite the outbreak of hostilities.

Its clientele was not quite as select – uniforms were a great social leveller – but this was still where debs and celebs chose to go for a good night out.

8th of March 1941

Here, according to one habitué, « the men all seemed extraordinarily handsome and the young women so very beautiful ».

Its enterprising manager promoted it as « the safest and gayest restaurant in town, 20ft below ground'. It was a boast that went tragically awry on the night of **8 March, 1941**. That night, the area between Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square was being strafed with bombs.

But inside the Café de Paris, West Indian-born band leader Ken Johnson – known as 'Snakehips' because of his silky dancing style – revved up his swing band into the opening bars of the Andrews Sisters' hit, Oh, Johnny, Oh, Johnny, Oh!.



# Winston Churchill

## Occupation:

Prime Minister of Great Britain

## Born:

November 30th, 1874 in  
Oxfordshire, England

## Died:

24 January 1965 in London,  
England

## Best known for:

Standing up to the Germans in  
World War II

## Childhood and Growing Up

Winston was born November 30th, 1874 in Oxfordshire, England. He was actually born in a room in a palace named Blenheim Palace. His parents were wealthy aristocrats. His father, Lord Randolph Churchill, was a politician who held many high offices in the British government..

## Biography

Winston Churchill was one of the great world leaders of the 20th century. His leadership helped Britain to stand strong against Hitler and the Germans, even when they were the last country left fighting. He is also famous for his inspiring speeches and quotes. Childhood and Growing Up Winston was born November 30th, 1874 in Oxfordshire, England. He was actually born in a room in a palace named Blenheim Palace. His parents were wealthy aristocrats. His father, Lord Randolph Churchill, was a politician who held many high offices in the British government.



## Rise to power

In 1900 Churchill was elected to Parliament. Over the next 30 years he would hold a number of different offices in the government including a cabinet post in 1908. His career had many ups and downs during this time, but he also became famous for many of his writings.

## Prime Minister

At the outbreak of World War II, Churchill became First Lord of the Admiralty in command of the Royal Navy. At the same time the current Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, wanted to appease Germany and Hitler. Churchill knew this would not work and warned the government that they needed to help fight Hitler or Hitler would soon take over all of Europe. As Germany continued to advance, the country lost confidence in Chamberlain. Finally, Chamberlain resigned and Winston Churchill was chosen to be his successor as Prime Minister on May 10, 1940.

## World War II

Soon after becoming Prime Minister, Germany invaded France and Britain was alone in Europe fighting Hitler. Churchill inspired the country to keep fighting despite the bad circumstances. He also helped to forge an alliance of Allied Powers with the Soviet Union and the United States. Even though he did not like Joseph Stalin and the communists of the Soviet Union, he knew the Allies needed their help to fight Germany.

# We shall never surrender



WE SHALL FIGHT WITH GROWING CONFIDENCE  
AND GROWING STRENGTH IN THE AIR.

WE WILL DEFEND OUR ISLAND, WHATEVER  
THAT COSTS MAY BE.

WE SHALL FIGHT ON THE BEACHES.

WE SHALL FIGHT ON THE LANDING GROUNDS.

WE SHALL FIGHT IN FIELDS  
AND IN THE STREETS.

WE SHALL FIGHT IN THE HILLS.

WE SHALL NEVER SURRENDER. AND IF  
WHICH, I DO NOT FOR A MOMENT BELIEVE,



▶ ▶| 🔊 1:50 / 2:21



**June 4, 1940**

[Listen here the most famous Churchill speech](#)