Tower Bridge Audio-Guide (Script)

N.B. Les titres de chaque section sont indicatifs, et ne figurent pas sur l'enregistrement.

Part 1 : Welcome & Introduction

Good day to you all, and welcome to Tower Bridge !
Tower Bridge is a combined bascule and suspension bridge over the River Thames in London. It is situated near the Tower of London, and that is why Tower Bridge is called … Tower Bridge !
As you can see, Tower Bridge actually consists of two towers joined at the upper level by two horizontal walkways for pedestrians, and at the lower level by the road bridge for motor traffic. This lower level is split into two equal bascules which can be raised, like a drawbridge, to an angle of 83° to allow river traffic to pass underneath. The bascule pivots and operating machinery are housed in the base of each tower.
Its present colour dates from 1977 when it was painted red, white and blue for the Queen's Silver Jubilee. Originally it was painted a chocolate brown colour.

Part 2 : History

So, let me tell you a little bit about Tower Bridge's history. The bridge was designed by Horace Jones, and it was Sir John Wolfe Barry who devised the idea of a bascule bridge. Building started in 1886, using 432 construction workers, and it took 8 years to complete. In 1887 Jones unfortunately died and George Stevenson (whose father had built the Houses of Parliament some years earlier) took over the project. He decided not to cover the towers in the red brick which had been originally planned, but use ornate Gothic style Portland stone and granite instead. This was intended to harmonise the bridge with the nearby Tower of London, and it makes the bridge a distinctive landmark.
The bridge was officially opened on 30th June 1894 by the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII

Part 3 : Some facts and figures

And now some facts and figures. Tower Bridge is 244 m in length, and the two towers are 65 m high. The central part between the towers measures 61 m. The two side-spans are suspension bridges and are 82 m long. The bascules housed in each tower each weigh over 1 000 tons and take five minutes to bascule over and raise the bridge. At the bottom of the towers there are two massive piers containing 70 000 tons of concrete which support the construction. 11 000 tons of steel provide the framework for the tower and the pedestrian walkways, which are situated 44 m above the river at high tide.
The original raising mechanism was powered by steam hydraulics. In 1974 this was replaced by a new electro-hydraulic system. You can see some of the original hydraulic machinery in the bridge's museum.

Part 4 : Traffic on and over

Tower Bridge is still a busy crossing of the Thames. It is crossed by over 40 000 people (motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians) everyday. Road traffic has a speed restriction of 20 miles per hour (32 km / hour) and there is an 18 ton weight limit. River traffic is much less frequent than when the bridge was first opened, but the bascules are raised about 1 000 times a year.
In 2008, a local web developer created a Twitter feed to post live updates of the bridge's opening and closing. So don't hesitate to go on line to see it !

Part 5 : Tower Bridge Exhibition

Finally, let's conclude our virtual tour of Tower Bridge with a quick look at the Tower Bridge Exhibition. You can walk along the high level walkways which were reopened in 1982. (They had been shut in 1910 as they had gained a bad reputation as a haunt for prostitutes and pickpockets !) These walkways give stunning views of the Thames and many famous London sites and serve as viewing galleries for over 380 thousand tourists who visit each year.
The exhibition also uses films, photos and interactives to explain why and how Tower Bridge was built. You can also go and see the original steam engines that used to power the bascules. These are on show in a building near the south end of the bridge.

Enjoy your visit !