



AS IT IS

Ceremonies Surrounding the Death of Queen Elizabeth II

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Hundreds of thousands of people are expected to visit Westminster Hall in London this week to pay their respects to Queen Elizabeth II.

Queen Elizabeth had been Britain's head of state since 1953. People will be able to see her **coffin** 24 hours a day until early Monday. Her funeral will be held on September 19.

What will people see?

The coffin is closed. It will be covered with the royal flag and other objects, including the crown the queen wore in 1953 during her **coronation**. The coffin will be on a raised structure in the middle of Westminster Hall with guards on watch.

How long must people wait to see the queen?

There are two main lines people must join in order to get into Westminster Hall. The lines are expected to stretch along the Thames River for many kilometers. Visitors have been warned to expect to wait many hours and possibly overnight.

When they get closer to the hall, visitors will need to pass through security stations, like those used at airports.

What is the coffin made from?

The coffin is made from English oak, a heavy wood. It is lined with the metal lead. It was made many years ago. Sarah Hayes is a supervisor for the Coffin Works museum in Birmingham, England. She said former Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Prince Philip and Princess Diana all had similar coffins.

She said the special coffins with the lead inside slow the breakdown of the body. The queen's coffin will not be put in the ground, eventually it will stay in a chapel at Windsor Castle, about 30 kilometers outside of London. Her husband's coffin will be moved there also.

Who gets to lie in state in Britain?

In Britain, the honor of lying in state is only for special people. They are the head of state – that is the king or queen – their partners, such as a husband or wife, and — sometimes — the prime minister.

Queen Mary, King George VI, and King George V are among those royals who have lain in state in Westminster Hall. Winston Churchill is the only prime minister who was given the honor in more than 100 years.

When did the tradition begin?

The ceremony of lying in state among British leaders started about 500 years ago with the Stuart line of kings. However, the modern tradition of lying in state at Westminster Hall began in 1910 with Edward VII.

I'm Dan Friedell.

Dan Friedell adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on a report by the Associated Press.

Words in This Story

coffin -n. a box that holds a body for burial

coronation -n. the ceremony in which a crown is placed on the head of a new king or queen

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