

LONDON'S SECRETS: PARKS & GARDENS

A Guide to Over 250 of
the City's Best Parks,
Gardens & Squares

Robbi Atilgan & David Hampshire



LONDON'S SECRETS: **PARKS & GARDENS**

Robbi Atilgan & David Hampshire



Survival Books • Bath • England



First published 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or recorded by any means, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Copyright © Survival Books 2013
Cover design: Di Bruce-Kidman
Cover photo: © Dmitry Naumov (shutterstock.com)
Maps © Jim Watson

Survival Books Limited
Office 169, 3 Edgar Buildings
George Street, Bath BA1 2FJ, United Kingdom
☎ +44 (0)1935-700060
✉ info@survivalbooks.net
🌐 www.survivalbooks.net

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A CIP record for this book is available
from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-1-907339-95-0

Printed in China by International Press Softcom Limited

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank all those who helped with research and provided information for this book, unfortunately too many to list here. Special thanks are due to Peter Read for research and editing; Alex Browning for proof-reading; David Woodworth for final proof checking; Di Bruce-Kidman for DTP, photo selection and cover design; Jim Watson for the superb maps; and the authors' partners for continuing with the pretence that writing is a proper job (that pays a proper salary).

Last, but not least, a special thank you to the many photographers who provided images (listed on page 316) – the unsung heroes – whose beautiful images add colour and bring London's parks and gardens to life.

NOTE

Before visiting anywhere mentioned in this book, it's advisable to check the opening times, which are liable to change without notice.



Information Boxes

The notes below refer to the general information provided for each park and garden.

- ◆ **Address:** Includes the phone number and website (if applicable). You can enter a park's postcode to display a map of its location on Google and other map sites. If you're driving you can enter the postcode into your satnav.
- ◆ **Opening hours:** These sometimes vary, so confirm by telephone or check the website, particularly when travelling a long distance. Note that parks that officially open at dawn usually open between 7 and 8am and those that close at dusk/sunset may actually close around 30 minutes earlier. Some private gardens and parks are closed in winter or at other times, which should be indicated on their website.
- ◆ **Cost:** Most parks are public and provide free entry, while charges for private parks and gardens are liable to change. If applicable, ask about concessions and family rates. Where a park or garden is combined with a house or museum, it may be possible to pay a reduced fee to visit only the grounds. Many parks and gardens have cafés and shops, which can often be visited independently of the garden or park, i.e. without buying a ticket (where applicable).
- ◆ **Transport:** The nearest tube and rail stations are listed, although in some cases there may be a lengthy walk. You can also travel to most venues by bus. Some parks and gardens are best reached by car, although parking can be difficult or impossible (or very expensive) in some areas.
- ◆ **Attractions & amenities:** Special attractions such as an arboretum, parks with formal gardens, lakes/ponds, house, museum, gallery, sculpture/artworks, café/restaurant, bandstand, playground, concerts, animal attractions/farm/zoo, sports facilities, etc. have been noted. Most public parks provide WCs, although they may not be wheelchair accessible.

ACCESS

All parks and gardens provide wheelchair access unless noted otherwise. Note, however, that this doesn't always apply to buildings within parks or WCs. Contact parks and gardens if you have specific requirements. The Disabled Go website (disabledgo.com) provides more in-depth access information for some destinations.

Contents

CHAPTER 1 - CENTRAL LONDON	15
1. Hyde Park	16
2. Kensington Gardens	20
3. Regent's Park	24
4. St James's Park	28
5. Green Park	32
6. Buckingham Palace Gardens	36
7. Garden of St John's Lodge	38
8. Westminster Abbey Cloisters & College Garden	40
9. Mount Street Gardens	42
10. Queen Mary's Gardens	43
11. Phoenix Garden	44
12. Primrose Hill	45
13. St John's Wood Church Grounds	46
14. Victoria Embankment Gardens	47
15. Victoria Tower Gardens	48
16. Brown Hart Gardens	49
17. Brunei Gardens, SOAS	49
18. Natural History Museum Wildlife Garden	50
19. Paddington Green & St Mary's Churchyard	51
20. Paddington Recreation Ground	51
21. Paddington Street Gardens	52
22. St Anne's Churchyard	53
23. Spencer House Garden	53
24. Garden Squares	54
CHAPTER 2 - CITY & EAST LONDON	59
1. Bunhill Fields	62
2. City of London Cemetery	64
3. Epping Forest	66
4. Inner & Middle Temple Gardens	68
5. Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park	70
6. Victoria Park	72
7. Hackney Marshes	74
8. Hainault Forest Country Park	75
9. Lee Valley Regional Park	76
10. London Fields	77
11. Manor Park Cemetery	78

12. Mudchute Park & Farm	79
13. Postmans Park	80
14. Rainham Marshes RSPB Nature Reserve	81
15. St Mary's Secret Garden	82
16. St Paul's Cathedral Churchyard & Festival Gardens	83
17. Springfield Park	84
18. Valentines Park	85
19. Barbican Gardens	86
20. Barking Park	86
21. Bedfords Park	87
22. Calthorpe Project Community Garden	88
23. Coram's Fields	88
24. Eastbury Manor House Gardens	89
25. Geffrye Museum & Gardens	90
26. Hackney Downs	90
27. Haggerston Park	91
28. Jubilee Park, Canary Wharf	92
29. Mayesbrook Park	92
30. Mile End Park	93
31. Rainham Hall Garden	94
32. St Andrews Garden, Holborn	94
33. St George's Gardens, WC1	95
34. St John-At-Hackney Churchyard Gardens	96
35. Thames Barrier Park	96
36. Valence Park	97
37. Wanstead Park	98
38. West Ham Park	98
39. Garden Squares	99
40. Small City Gardens	102

CHAPTER 3 - NORTH LONDON

107

1. Hampstead Heath	110
2. Alexandra Park & Palace	114
3. Highgate Cemetery	116
4. Hill Garden & Pergola	118
5. Abney Park Cemetery	120
6. Avenue House & Arboretum	121
7. Bruce Castle Park	122
8. Camley Street Natural Park	123
9. Canons Park	124
10. Capel Manor Gardens	125

11. Clissold Park	126
12. Culpeper Community Garden	127
13. East Finchley Cemetery	128
14. Fenton House Garden	129
15. Finsbury Park	130
16. Gladstone Park	131
17. Golders Hill Park	132
18. Hampstead Cemetery	133
19. Highgate & Queens Woods	134
20. Kenwood House	135
21. Myddleton House Gardens	136
22. New River Walk	137
23. Paddington Old Cemetery	138
24. Queen's Park	139
25. Roundwood Park	140
26. St Mary Magdalene Gardens	141
27. Trent Country Park	142
28. Waterlow Park	143
29. Bentley Priory Nature Reserve	144
30. Burgh House & Garden	144
31. East Reservoir Community Garden	145
32. Forty Hall & Estate	146
33. Freud Museum & Garden	146
34. Freightliners Farm & Garden	147
35. Gillespie Park & Ecology Centre	148
36. Golders Green Crematorium Gardens	148
37. Grovelands Park	149
38. Highbury Fields	150
39. Keats House & Garden	150
40. Markfield Park & Beam Engine Museum	151
41. Minchenden Oak Garden	152
42. New Southgate Cemetery	152
43. Priory Park	153
44. Royal College of Physicians Garden	154
45. St John At Hampstead Graveyard	154
46. St Martin's Gardens	155
47. St Pancras Gardens	156
48. St Pancras & Islington Cemetery	157

CHAPTER 4 - WEST LONDON**159**

1. Chiswick House & Gardens	160
2. Holland Park	164
3. Brompton Cemetery	168
4. Chelsea Physic Garden	170
5. Fulham Palace & Gardens	172
6. Kensal Green Cemetery	174
7. Royal Hospital Chelsea & Ranelagh Gardens	176
8. Bishop's Park	178
9. Boston Manor House & Park	179
10. Eastcote House Gardens	180
11. Gunnersbury Park	181
12. Gunnersbury Triangle Nature Reserve	182
13. Little Venice	183
14. Margravine Cemetery	184
15. Ravenscourt Park	185
16. Ruislip Woods	186
17. Walpole Park	187
18. Carlyle's House & Garden	188
19. Emslie Horniman Pleasance	188
20. Hammersmith Park	189
21. Kelmscott House Garden	190
22. Kensington Memorial Park	190
23. Kensington Roof Gardens	191
24. Manor House Grounds	192
25. Meanwhile Gardens	192
26. Pitshanger Park	193
27. Rembrandt Gardens	194
28. St Luke's Garden	194
29. Wormwood Scrubs	195

CHAPTER 5 - SOUTHWEST LONDON**159**

1. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew	198
2. Richmond Park	204
3. Hampton Court Palace, Park & Gardens	209
4. Battersea Park	214
5. Bushy Park	218
6. London Wetland Centre	222
7. Cannizaro Park	225
8. Morden Hall Park	227
9. Syon House & Park	229
10. Barnes Common & Old Barnes Cemetery	231

11. Clapham Common	232
12. Crane Park Island	233
13. East Sheen & Richmond Cemeteries	234
14. Ham House & Gardens	235
15. Marble Hill House & Park	236
16. Osterley Park & Osterley House Gardens	237
17. Strawberry Hill House & Gardens	238
18. Streatham Common & The Rookery	239
19. Tooting Common	240
20. Wandsworth Common	241
21. Wimbledon Common & Putney Heath	242
22. York House Gardens	243
23. Buddhapadipa Temple Gardens	244
24. Ham Common & Woods	244
25. Huguenot Burial Ground	245
26. Orleans House & Garden	246
27. Putney Vale Cemetery	246
28. Richmond Green	247
29. Southside House & Gardens	248
30. The Watergardens	248
31. Wimbledon Park	249

CHAPTER 6 - SOUTHEAST LONDON**251**

1. Greenwich Park	254
2. Crystal Palace Park & Dinosaurs	258
3. Garden Museum	260
4. Nunhead Cemetery	262
5. West Norwood Cemetery	264
6. Beckenham Place Park	266
7. Beddington Park & the Grange	267
8. Belair Park	268
9. Blackheath	269
10. Brockwell Park	270
11. Centre for Wildlife Gardening	271
12. Charlton Park & Charlton House Gardens	272
13. Danson Park & House	273
14. Dulwich Park	274
15. Eltham Palace & Gardens	275
16. Hall Place & Gardens	276
17. Horniman Museum Gardens	277
18. Kennington Park	278
19. Lesnes Abbey Woods	279

20. Maryon Park & Maryon Wilson Park	280
21. Oxleas Wood	281
22. Peckham Rye Park & Common	282
23. Roots & Shoots Garden	283
24. The Red House & Garden	284
25. South London Botanical Institute Garden	285
26. Southwark Park & King's Stairs Gardens	286
27. Sydenham Hill Wood & Dulwich Woods	287
28. Sydenham Wells Park	288
29. Well Hall Pleasaunce	289
30. Archbishop's Park	290
31. Avery Hill Park & Winter Gardens	290
32. Burgess Park & Chumleigh Gardens	291
33. Devonshire Road Nature Reserve	292
34. East Greenwich Pleasaunce	292
35. Greenwich Peninsula Ecology Park	293
36. Myatt's Fields Park	294
37. Queen Elizabeth Hall Roof Garden	294
38. Ruskin Park	295
39. Sunray Gardens	296
40. South Norwood Country Park	296
41. Tibetan Peace Garden	297
42. Vauxhall Park	298
43. Small Parks, Gardens & Squares	298

APPENDICES	302
Appendix A: Useful Websites	302
INDEX OF ATTRACTIONS & AMENITIES	305
INDEX	313

Readers' Guide

The notes below refer to the general information provided for each park and garden.

- ◆ **Catering:** All major parks and gardens have cafes and/or restaurants, many of which are excellent (where applicable we have also made alternative local suggestions). Where there are no catering facilities you can usually take a picnic.
- ◆ **Green Flag Award:** Green Flags (www.greenflag.keepbritaintidy.org) are awarded annually by Keep Britain Tidy to recognise and reward the best green spaces in the country, and are the benchmark national standard for UK parks and green spaces. We have indicated parks and gardens that have been awarded a Green Flag.
- ◆ **Dogs:** Most parks and gardens welcome dogs, provided they're kept under control and/or on a lead, and some have special dog runs where you can let Rover run free. Places where dogs may not be so welcome include formal gardens, nature reserves, playgrounds, city farms/zoos and some cemeteries – always check before visiting. Make sure you clean up after your dog or you may risk a fine.
- ◆ **Cemeteries:** Many of London's cemeteries – including the Magnificent Seven of Abney Park (1840), Brompton (1840), Highgate (1839), Kensal Green (1833), Nunhead (1840), Tower Hamlets (1841) and West Norwood (1836) – were designed as garden cemeteries – now cemetery parks – and are among London's most beautiful parks. These (and a number of other attractive and interesting cemeteries) are included in this book.
- ◆ **Registered Parks and Gardens:** The English Heritage 'Register of Historic Parks and Gardens' (www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/registered-parks-and-gardens) of special historic interest in England' was established in 1983 and identifies over 1,600 sites judged to be of national importance. These include many in London.
- ◆ **Listed Buildings:** Many London parks and gardens contain buildings of special architectural and historic interest (noted where applicable) that are protected from development or major alterations. Listed buildings are placed on the 'Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest', which in England is maintained by English Heritage (www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/listing/listed-buildings). There are the following three grades of listed buildings:
 - Grade I: buildings of exceptional interest;
 - Grade II*: particularly important buildings of more than special interest;
 - Grade II: buildings of national importance and special interest.

OPEN LONDON

Visit gardens which are usually closed to the public on special days, when residents of private gardens, squares and estates open their doors to the public. The main events are Open Garden Squares Weekend that takes place in June (www.opensquares.org), when, for example, the garden of 10 Downing Street is among those unveiled, and Open House London in September (www.londonopenhouse.org).

Introduction

Britain is renowned for being a green and pleasant land, and nowhere in the British Isles has such a rich diversity of beautiful green spaces as London. The capital's green bounty includes magnificent royal parks, historic garden cemeteries, majestic ancient forests, breath-taking formal country parks, expansive commons, tropical greenhouse collections, elegant squares and enchanting 'secret' gardens, many of which are known only to insiders and locals.



London is more verdant than any other world city of its size – green spaces cover almost 40 per cent of Greater London – and provides a wealth of places where you can play, relax, exercise and commune with nature year round. There are around 400 green spaces in the City of London alone and over 1,000 in Greater London, ranging from famous public parks to semi-private gardens, city farms to converted church yards – each with its own unique character. This book gathers together over 250 of London's parks, gardens and squares, including all the major ones, and many that are lesser known but often just as glorious – most of which can be visited free of charge!



For London's largest, best-known (royal) parks we must thank – somewhat surprisingly – Henry VIII. Not that the Tudor monarch ever intended his lands to be opened to the *hoi polloi*; when he appropriated them in the 16th century it was so he and his friends could hunt deer in private. Bushy Park, Green Park, Greenwich Park, Hampton Court Park, Hyde Park, Regent's Park, Richmond Park and St James's Park all owe their existence to the royals' passion for chasing deer.

The vast majority of London's public parks were founded by the Victorians from the 1840s onwards (the first was Victoria Park in Hackney, created in 1845) as part of a range of measures to improve the living conditions of the



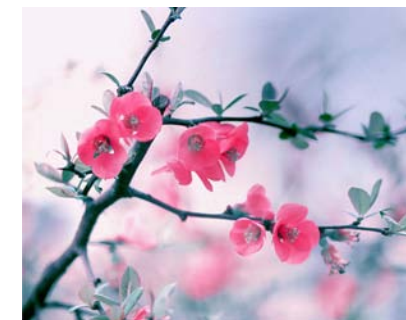
working classes by providing 'green lungs' where they could enjoy exercise and fresh air. It's thanks to the foresight and dedication of those visionary Victorians that modern London is the greenest of green cities; their work is continued today by an army of volunteers ('friends'), who toil selflessly to restore, maintain and improve the city's green spaces.

London's living network of parks and gardens, commons and woodlands, canals, rivers and reservoirs, is vital to the health and well-being of Londoners (and visitors!) and makes an invaluable contribution to the quality, character and economy of the capital. It also provides food and refuge for the city's flora and fauna, which – despite living alongside some 8.25m people – is extraordinary in its abundance, variety and scope.

There's nothing pristine or precious about London's parks and gardens, no multitude of signs saying, 'Keep off the grass' – heaven forbid! The city's green spaces are there to be enjoyed by all, as places to sunbathe, nap, play, picnic, read, listen to music or just chill out. They attract all kinds of sportsmen and women, from walkers to joggers, cyclists to horse-riders, frisbee throwers to rollerbladers, kite flyers to model boat sailors, tai chi practitioners to yoga enthusiasts. They also provide a stage for all manner of organised sports including swimming (in

lidos, lakes and ponds), tennis, soccer, rugby, cricket, hockey, skateboarding, basketball, bowls, golf and much more.

So, whether you're a nature lover or



a history buff, a horticulturist or a fitness freak, or just a deckchair dreamer looking for a bit of peace and quiet, you'll find your perfect spot in London. All you need is a comfortable pair of shoes, a sense of adventure – and this book!

We trust you'll enjoy discovering London's profusion of amazing parks and gardens as much as we did.

Happy hunting!

Robbi Atilgan & David Hampshire
June 2013

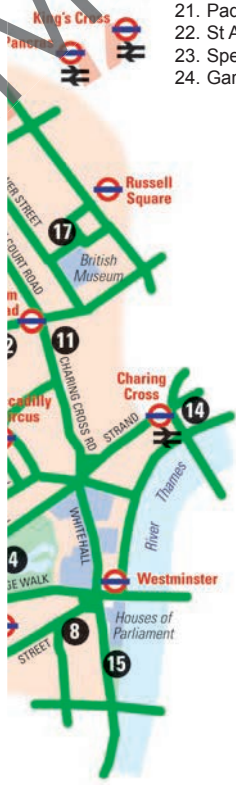
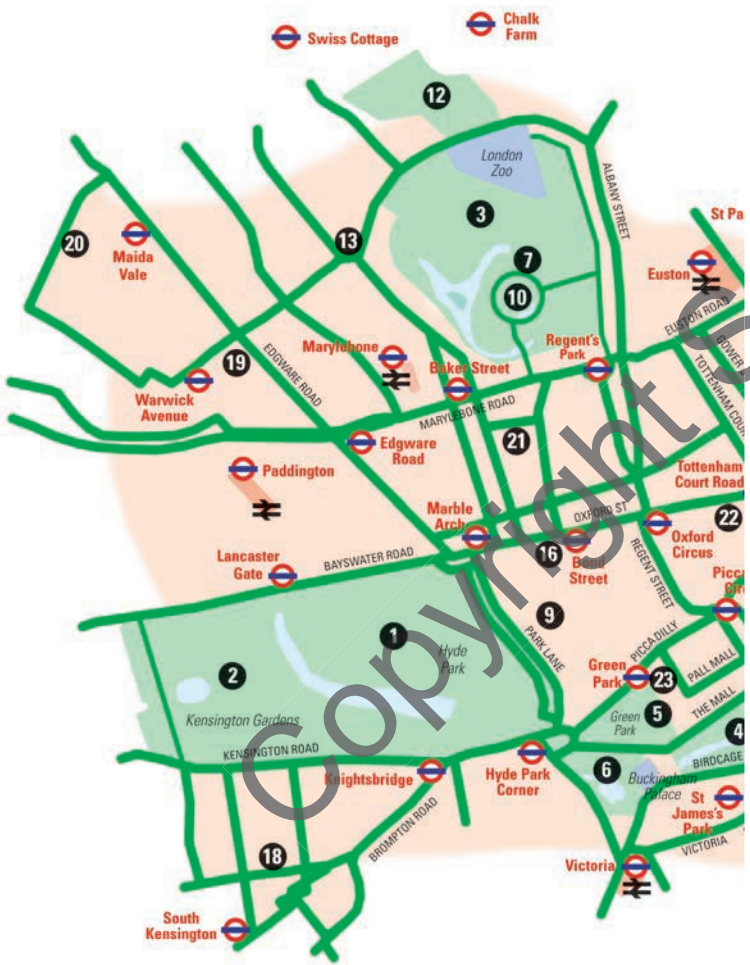


Ref	Place	Page
1.	Hyde Park	16
2.	Kensington Gardens	20
3.	Regent's Park	24
4.	St James's Park	28
5.	Green Park	32
6.	Buckingham Palace Gardens	36
7.	Garden of St John's Lodge	38
8.	Westminster Abbey Cloisters & College Garden	40
9.	Mount Street Gardens	42
10.	Queen Mary's Gardens	43
11.	Phoenix Garden	44

CHAPTER 1

CENTRAL LONDON

Ref	Place	Page
12.	Primrose Hill	45
13.	St John's Wood Church Grounds	46
14.	Victoria Embankment Gardens	47
15.	Victoria Tower Gardens	48
16.	Brown Hart Gardens	49
17.	Brunei Gardens, SOAS	49
18.	Natural History Museum Wildlife Garden	50
19.	Paddington Green & St Mary's Churchyard	51
20.	Paddington Recreation Ground	51
21.	Paddington Street Gardens	52
22.	St Anne's Churchyard	53
23.	Spencer House Garden	53
24.	Garden Squares (see page for map)	54



1 HYDE PARK

Address: Hyde Park, W2 2UH (☎ 0300-061 2000, 📧 royalparks.org.uk/parks/hyde-park).

Opening hours: Daily, 5am to midnight.

Cost: Free.

Transport: Lancaster Gate, Marble Arch, Hyde Park Corner or Knightsbridge tube.

Attractions & amenities: Restaurant, café, refreshment kiosks, boating lake, lido, tennis club, horse riding, playgrounds, mobility buggies, parking (fee).



Serpentine

The largest of the four great royal parks that run like a ribbon of green through central London, Hyde Park is a major London landmark, attracting some 7m visitors a year. In past times it has hosted exhibitions and celebrations, witnessed protests and executions, and provided respite from the noise and discomforts of the city – as, indeed, it still does.

Covering an area of 350 acres (142ha), the park is bordered by Bayswater Road to the north, Kensington Road/Knightsbridge to the south, and Park Lane to the east. To the west is Kensington Gardens (see page 20) which, although it appears to

be a seamless extension of Hyde Park, has been separate since 1728. Hyde Park takes its name from the manor of Hyde which was owned by the monks of Westminster Abbey, until Henry VIII seized it in 1536 for his favourite sport of deer hunting. It remained a playground for royals and gentlefolk until 1637, when it was opened to the general public. It quickly became a refuge and rallying point: Londoners camped in the park in 1665 in the hope of escaping the Great Plague and later gathered to celebrate major victories such as the Battle of Trafalgar and Waterloo.



be seen today, although the massive Wellington Arch which accompanied the gate was later moved to the centre of the Hyde Park roundabout.

Many major events have taken place in Hyde Park. In 1851 it was the venue for the Great Exhibition – Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace (see page 258 was first

built here – and more recently has hosted concerts, from the Rolling Stones to Pavarotti, and also provided a venue for sporting events at the 2012 Olympics.

Successive monarchs have shaped Hyde Park to suit their needs. In 1689, William and Mary had a private drive laid across the southern edge to their new residence at Kensington Palace. The 'King's road' or *Route du Roi* became known as Rotten Row, a fashionable place to ride out in the 18th and 19th centuries; the Household Cavalry still exercise their horses there. In the 1820s, George IV ordered a makeover of the park, and commissioned Decimus Burton to design new railings and gates, including the monumental gateway at Hyde Park Corner, now called the Queen Elizabeth Gate. It included an ornate triumphal screen which can still

built here – and more recently has hosted concerts, from the Rolling Stones to Pavarotti, and also provided a venue for sporting events at the 2012 Olympics.

Hyde Park has a wide variety of flora and fauna. Robins and tits nest among the trees and in herbaceous plantings, such as the Rose Garden, while in the centre of the park a wilderness meadow attracts butterflies to its wildflowers, and waterfowl share the Serpentine with pleasure boats and swimmers.

The park is full of unexpected treats – memorials, statues and works of art; but its best-loved attractions include the following:

FOOD & DRINK

The Serpentine Bar & Kitchen:

Situated at the eastern end of the lake, the Serpentine serves modern English and French cuisine. The all-day menu from 8am to 8pm includes classics such as eggs Benedict and wood-fired pizza. Wonderful views from the terrace.

The Lido Café: Licensed café with outdoor seating, 8am to 7pm (10am to 4pm in winter); child-friendly and a great spot for people-watching.

Kiosks: You can buy ice cream, drinks and snacks at kiosks dotted around the park or take your own food and enjoy a picnic.

◆ **The Serpentine:** This long and lovely stretch of water gets its name from its sinuous shape, although only the eastern stretch is called the Serpentine – the western end beyond the bridge is the Long Water. It was created in 1733 when Charles Bridgeman (1690-1738) undertook a major landscaping project for Queen Caroline (wife of George II). He created the Serpentine by damming the Westbourne stream that flowed down from Hampstead at the then astronomical cost of £20,000. It's a popular spot for

birding, boating and swimming – the Lido is open from May to September although the hardy souls of the Serpentine Swimming Club take the plunge all year round, including on Christmas Day.

HIDDEN CORNER

In the garden of Victoria Gate Lodge, just off Bayswater Road, is one of Hyde Park's curiosities: a pint-sized cemetery full of miniature headstones. It's the last resting place of over 300 much-loved pets – mainly dogs – buried between 1881 and 1967. The first dog interred, a Maltese called Cherry, belonged to friends of the gatekeeper, Mr Winbridge. The epitaphs are heartfelt, even if some names are strange: 'residents' include Fattie, Tally-Ho and Pomme de Terre! Sadly, the cemetery can only be viewed through the railings or by appointment.

- ◆ **Speaker's Corner:** Close to Marble Arch and the former site of the Tyburn gallows, this is London's best known area for free speech. Hyde Park has always been a magnet for marchers and protestors, from the Chartists in



Speaker's Corner

the 1830s to the anti-war rallies of recent years. Since 1872, people have been allowed to protest and preach at Speaker's Corner, provided they don't cause offence, and Karl Marx and George Orwell are among the many who have spoken here. To gain attention, speakers would stand on wooden crates used for shipping soap – hence the term 'to get on your soapbox'.

- ◆ **Diana Memorial Fountain:** Designed by Kathryn Gustafson and opened by HM The Queen in 2004, this sweeping oval fountain south of the Serpentine is dedicated to Diana, Princess of Wales, who died in 1997. It was designed to express Diana's spirit and approachability, and visitors are welcome to cool their feet in the water when the fountain is open (from 10am to between 4pm and 8pm, depending on the time of year).
- ◆ **7th July Memorial:** This permanent memorial honours the victims of the London Bombings on 7th July 2005. It comprises 52 stainless steel pillars, each representing one of those killed, grouped together in four inter-linking clusters reflecting the



four locations where the bombs exploded. A plaque listing the names of the victims is sited nearby.

The first-ever Victoria Cross investiture took place in Hyde Park on 26th June 1857, when 62 heroes of the Crimean War were decorated by Queen Victoria in the presence of Prince Albert and other members of the royal family.

- ◆ **Holocaust Memorial:** Just east of the Serpentine, two boulders surrounded by silver birch trees mark the first public memorial in Britain to victims of the Holocaust. It's inscribed with the words: 'For these I weep. Streams of tears flow from my eyes because of the destruction of my people.'
- ◆ **Achilles Statue:** This 18ft (5.5m) statue of the Greek hero stands near Hyde Park Corner and is dedicated to the Duke of Wellington. Sculpted by Richard Westmacott in 1822 on the orders of George III, it's made of bronze



Achilles statue

from cannons captured in military campaigns by the Duke, including Waterloo. It was London's first public nude statue and caused considerable controversy, despite the fig leaf preserving its subject's modesty.

- ◆ **Boy and Dolphin Fountain:** This charming Pre-Raphaelite marble sculpture of a cherub and dolphin by Alexander Munro dates from 1862, and sits in the centre of the Rose Garden. Look carefully and you'll see that the water flows from the nostrils of the dolphin, not its mouth.
- ◆ **Weeping Beech:** Tucked away in the Dell, this is one of the park's living curiosities; also known as the Upside Down Tree because its branches descend from the crown and look like roots making it look like a shady green tent.

Sports fans are well catered to in Hyde Park. Joggers, skateboarders and people practising tai chi are part of the scenery; there are also cycle tracks and ample space for ball games. As well as swimming at the Lido, there are a tennis centre, putting and bowling greens (☎ 0207-262 3474), while several stables offer horse-riding in the park. Children have a choice of playgrounds, plus the Lookout, a former police observation point which is now an education centre. The park also has excellent facilities for the disabled, including Liberty Drives mobility buggies, which provide half-hour tours of the park and neighbouring Kensington Gardens from seven different pick up points (☑ hydeparkappeal.org).

2 KENSINGTON GARDENS

Address: Kensington Gardens, W2 2UH (☎ 0300-061 2000, 📧 royalparks.org.uk/parks/kensington-gardens).

Opening hours: Daily, 6am to sunset (check website for exact times).

Cost: Free. There's a fee to see Kensington Palace.

Transport: Lancaster Gate, Queensway, Bayswater or High Street Kensington tube.

Attractions & amenities: Restaurant, café, palace, art gallery, lakes, adventure playground, bandstand, mobility buggies.



Kensington Palace

The quieter, more refined neighbour of Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens strikes just the right balance between culture and nature. It was once the 'back garden' of Kensington Palace (see below), one of the great royal residences, although its 270 acres (111ha) are now open to all. Divided from Hyde Park in the 18th century, Kensington Gardens has a more formal atmosphere – it's hard to imagine a rock concert taking place here – and the gardens, fenced off and closed at sunset, feel more private.

Kensington Gardens has had close links with royalty since 1689 when William III and his wife Mary moved to Nottingham House – later Kensington Palace – to escape the grime of Whitehall. While William commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to upgrade the house, Mary landscaped the palace gardens in Dutch style to please her Dutch husband. When her sister Queen Anne took over the throne in 1702, she created an

English-style garden and added an Orangery next to the palace.

However, it was Queen Caroline, wife of George II, who fashioned today's Kensington Gardens. She appropriated a large slice of Hyde Park and separated it from Kensington Gardens with a ditch, called a ha-ha – an idea which was copied all over England. She appointed Charles Bridgeman to design a new landscape, which included two lakes: the Round Pond, which has centre stage in front of the palace, and the Long Water/Serpentine. The bridge where the waters meet marks the border with Hyde Park.

DON'T MISS!

Art lovers should stop at the Serpentine Gallery (☎ 020-7402 6075, 📧 serpentinegallery.org) just north of Mount Gate. One of London's most important contemporary art galleries, it has exhibited work by Henry Moore, Andy Warhol and Bridget Riley, among many others. Open daily, 10am to 6pm, free entrance.

The royal connection carried on through Queen Victoria, who was born in Kensington Palace, up to current royals. Princess Diana lived in an apartment in the palace and would jog incognito in Kensington Gardens; thousands of tributes were laid on the lawns after her death in 1997.



Elephant sculpture

In the 18th century, Kensington Gardens was the place to see and be seen on Saturdays, when the gates were opened to respectably-dressed citizens. Its proximity to the palace gave it an edge over Hyde Park – at least until the late 19th century – and it still has a more rarefied air. With its formal avenues and carefully planned water features, mature trees – plane, chestnut, lime, sycamore, beech – and neat lawns, the gardens are a place for relaxation and contemplation rather than sports and games. There are paths set aside for cyclists and skaters, but it seems to suggest more low-key activities, such as feeding the ducks, model boating and flying kites. Organised activities include bandstand recitals in the summer, while guided walks take place throughout the year exploring the park's horticulture, wildlife and history.

The main attraction in Kensington Gardens is **Kensington Palace** (☎ 0844-482 7777, 📧 hrp.org.uk/kensingtonpalace, daily 10am to 6pm – 5pm in winter). Re-launched in 2012 following a £12m facelift, it's a charming and well-presented stately home, particularly if you're interested in grand décor and the intrigues of the Georgian court. It features a magnificent sunken garden planted in 1908 to recreate the splendour of the original 17th-century gardens. Vibrant colours and exotic planting surround

an ornamental pond with fountains formed from old water cisterns retrieved from the palace. An arched arbour of red-twigged lime, known as the Cradle Walk, surrounds this intimate oasis. You can access the palace gardens from Kensington Gardens without paying to visit the palace itself.

Other must-see attractions include:

- ◆ **Round Pond:** Octagonal rather than round, this lake's lack of corners has made it popular since Victorian times for sailing model boats, and it's the home of two model yacht clubs. It's also a draw for waterfowl and you can see ducks and swans dodging the pint-sized dinghies.
- ◆ **Italian Gardens:** The ornamental water garden at the head of the Long Water was built in the 1860s to a design by James Pennethorne, and is said to have been a love token from Prince Albert to Victoria. Featuring four fountains and an array of classical sculptures, carved in Carrera marble and Portland stone, it's Grade II listed and provides an elegant resting place among the water lilies, yellow flag iris and flowering rush. Look for



The Orangery

Albert and Victoria's initials carved on the wall of the pump house, which once contained the steam engine that powered the fountains.

◆ **Peter Pan Statue:** South of the Italian Gardens is the famous bronze statue of Peter Pan, one of the city's most popular statues. The park is the setting of J M Barrie's book *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, a prelude to Peter's adventures in Neverland, and the statue, sculpted by Sir George Frampton, was commissioned by Barrie in 1912 for the enjoyment of children visiting the park.

◆ **Albert Memorial:** On the southern edge of Kensington Gardens, facing the Albert Hall, this grand high-Victorian Gothic extravaganza commemorates Queen Victoria's adored husband, who died of typhoid fever in 1861, aged just 42. It was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott and opened in 1872 by Victoria. As well as a gilt-bronze

statue of Albert, the memorial celebrates the achievements of the Victorian age and empire, with massive marble sculptures of the continents and a delicately carved frieze of painters, poets, sculptors, musicians and architects. Tours provide a close-up view and take place at 2 and 3pm on the first Sunday of the month from March to December (adults £6, concessions £5).

HIDDEN CORNER

South of the Diana Memorial Playground, there's a rather odd tree stump entombed in a cage, but look closely and you'll see it's carved with fairies, elves and small woodland animals which appear to be living in the bark. This is the Elfin Oak, a 900-year-old tree stump, which was installed in the gardens in 1928 and restored in the '60s. It's now Grade II listed and encapsulates the charm of the gardens.

Other memorials within the park include **Speke's Monument**, which



Henry Moore Arch

commemorates John Hanning Speke (1827-1864), the explorer who discovered Lake Victoria, and a statue of **Edward Jenner** (1749-1823), pioneer of the smallpox vaccine.

FOOD & DRINK

Orangery Restaurant: Queen Anne's former greenhouse, alongside Kensington Palace, serves good food and is a popular spot for afternoon tea. Open daily, 10am to 6pm (5pm in winter).

Broadwalk Café & Playcafé: Next to the Diana Memorial Playground, this informal eatery has flatbread pizza, soups, sweet treats and a menu for children; open all day.

Kiosks: Drinks, pastries and ice cream are available from kiosks near both the Italian Gardens and the Albert Memorial.



Peter Pan statue

places associated with Diana (see royalparks.org.uk for a map).

◆ **Diana Memorial Playground:** Opened in memory of the late Princess of Wales in 2000, this is an innovative adventure playground, with a huge wooden pirate ship as its centrepiece. The gardens are also the starting point for the **Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Walk**. This 7-mile (11km) stroll takes in four parks and many

◆ **The Arch:** One of several artworks in the gardens, this 19.6ft (6m) marble sculpture was donated by Henry Moore in 1980 and recently restored. Sited alongside the Long Water, it perfectly frames a view of Kensington Palace.



View from the Italian Gardens

3 REGENT'S PARK

Address: Regent's Park, NW1 4NR (☎ 0300-061 2300, 📧 royalparks.org.uk/parks/the-regents-park).

Opening hours: Daily, 5am to sunset; see website for seasonal closing times.

Cost: Free.

Transport: Baker Street, Regent's Park or Great Portland street tube.

Attractions & amenities: Formal gardens, restaurant, café and refreshments, London Zoo, wildlife garden, bird walk, lake, bandstand, sports centre, playgrounds.

Home to London Zoo, a vast swathe of parkland and some of the most exquisite Georgian terraces in the UK, Regent's Park is the largest of central London's five royal parks. It was created in the early 19th century for the Prince Regent – later George IV – and is officially titled **The** Regent's Park. These days, it's better known for its sporting and entertainment facilities, and its wealth of birdlife, although the glorious architecture which surrounds the park is a constant reminder of its noble heritage.



Regent's Park is well documented in literature and film. It features in Dodie Smith's novel *The One Hundred and One Dalmatians* as the park where the canine protagonists would take their human family (the Dearlys) for a walk. Trevor Howard took Celia Johnson boating on the lake during their illicit romance in David Lean's *Brief Encounter* (1945) and Hugh Grant's character chatted up young mums in Queen Mary's Gardens in *About a Boy* (2002).

Regent's Park covers 410 acres (166ha) and is bordered by Marylebone and Paddington to the south and west, and Camden and St Pancras to the east. To the north, the park is encircled by Regent's Canal, built to link the Grand Union Canal to the London docks, which offers a peaceful towpath stroll to Camden Lock (east) or west

to Little Venice. The canal divides the main park from **Primrose Hill** (see page 45), officially part of Regent's Park but considered by many Londoners (and the authors) to be a separate park.

Regent's Park has an unusual layout consisting of two ring roads: the Outer and Inner Circles. The Inner Circle encloses formal gardens and an open-air theatre, while the Outer Circle surrounds the wilder reaches of the park and its many amenities, which include gardens, a lake, sports pitches, playgrounds and, of course, the zoo.

Like many of London's important parks, the land which now forms Regent's Park was appropriated from



its ecclesiastical owners – in this case the nuns of Barking Abbey – by Henry VIII who used it for hunting deer. When hunting fell out of fashion in the mid-17th century, it was leased out as farmland. It wasn't until 1811 that the architect John Nash (1752-1835), commissioned by the Prince Regent, came up with a grand plan to transform the area into a suburb within a park, creating the stylish neighbourhood we see today.

Nash's original plans were very grand indeed and included a summer palace for the Prince and over 50 villas for his courtiers and friends. By the time building began in 1818, two years before George IV became king, the scheme had lost some impetus; his majesty's attention was diverted to rebuilding Buckingham Palace, so plans for all but eight villas were shelved, and Nash focused on the terraces which line the edges of the park.

Important organisations such as the Zoological Society and Royal Botanic Society moved into the spaces set aside for the villas and laid out formal

gardens, but the park remained an exclusive estate until 1835 when the public were finally allowed access to selected parts. Today, most of the park is open to all, although it retains its cachet as one of the most elite addresses in London – home to the US Ambassador and Sultan of Brunei, among others – and somehow achieves the near-impossible feat of being a country park in the heart of the city.

Regent's Park has some glorious formal gardens, including **Queen**



Gorilla, ZSL London Zoo

Mary's Gardens which occupies the Inner Circle (for more information, see page 43), the Avenue Gardens in the south eastern corner and the **Garden of St John's Lodge** (see page 38).

FOOD & DRINK

Boathouse Café: With a large terrace overlooking the Boating Lake – from where you can watch the antics of the water fowl – the Boathouse serves pizza, pasta and other family favourites (9am to 6pm).

The Hub Café: Soups, toasties and cake with a 360° panorama of the park.

The Honest Sausage: Free-range sausage or bacon butties in organic bread. Find them at the top of the Broad Walk near the zoo.

The park's other main attractions include:

- ◆ **Open-air Theatre:** Founded in 1932 and refurbished in 1999, this is the only permanent professional outdoor theatre in Britain. Located within the Inner Circle, it stages four productions annually between May and September, from Shakespeare to musicals. Its steep auditorium seats 1,240



Chester Terrace

people and it also boasts the West End's longest 'bar'. For tickets and information, see the website (www.openairtheatre.org).

- ◆ **Bandstand:** Alongside the lake is an old-fashioned bandstand where visitors can enjoy a variety of lunchtime and evening concerts. Look for the memorial to the seven bandmen of the 1st Battalion of the Royal Green Jackets who died here on July 20th 1982 when the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) detonated a bomb under the bandstand during a performance of *Oliver!*.
- ◆ **Boating Lake:** The lake is a tricorn shape with bridges crossing each 'corner'. It's a great place to hire a boat or pedalo (charges start from £4 for 30 minutes) but equally good for bird watching. Regent's Park is home to a waterfowl breeding centre, where birds are raised to populate other royal parks, with over 650 waterfowl on the Boating Lake, including 260 pairs of ducks. There's also a heronry with over 20 nesting pairs – one of the largest grey heron colonies in London.

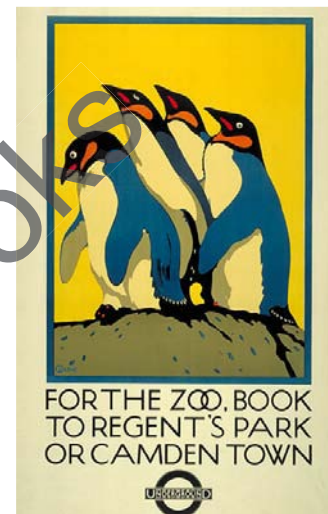
The park's varied terrain – ranging from formal gardens to scrub, woodland and rough grassland with wildflowers – makes it one of London's richest sites for bird watching; over 200 species have been spotted, including owls, kestrels, woodpeckers and peregrine falcons. There's a dedicated bird walk starting from Clarence Gate off Baker Street (see www.regentsparkbirds.co.uk for information).

DON'T MISS!

Everyone should visit London Zoo at least once. Opened by the Zoological Society of London in 1828, it's the world's oldest scientific zoo and houses over 750 species – one of the largest collections in the UK. Favourite residents include penguins, gorillas and the family of meerkats, plus iconic architecture such as the Mappin Terraces (1913) and Lord Snowdon's Aviary (1962). For more information and ticket prices see the ZSL London Zoo website (www.zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo).

South of the Inner Circle, the park's **Wildlife Garden** is a haven for a range of animals, from bats and hedgehogs to butterflies and newts.

- ◆ **Georgian Terraces:** Walking around the Outer Circle of Regent's Park is an architectural treat. Between Gloucester Gate in the north-eastern corner and Hanover Gate to the west of the lake, there are ten fine terraces of elegantly proportioned white stucco houses, many Grade I listed, all designed by John Nash or one of his protégés. The longest and possibly best known is Chester Terrace, a row of 42 houses which stretches for 280m (920ft). After Chester Terrace, take a detour south to peek through the railings at Park Square, one of the



largest private squares in London. An unusual and original feature is the Nursemaids' Tunnel (to enable nannies to take their charges to the park without having to negotiate the busy road), an early example of an underpass, linking the square with Park Crescent beneath busy Marylebone Road.

- ◆ **The Hub Sports Centre:** This is the largest outdoor sports facility in London, complete with underground changing rooms and a café. As well as outdoor exercise classes and children's activities, it maintains pitches for soccer, rugby, lacrosse, softball and cricket. The park is also popular with cyclists who ride around the Outer Circle (the local cycling club is the Regent's Park Rouleurs). The Regent's Park Tennis Centre near York Bridge has both tennis and netball courts, and there are also three playgrounds and a miniature boating pond.

4 ST JAMES'S PARK

Address: St James's Park, SW1A 2BJ ☎ 0300-061 2350, 🌐 royalparks.org.uk/parks/st-jamess-park).

Opening hours: Daily, 5am to midnight.

Cost: Free.

Transport: St James's Park, Westminster or Victoria tube.

Attractions & amenities: Restaurant and refreshment kiosks, lake, bandstand, deckchairs.



St James's Park is the oldest of the royal parks. Surrounded by three of London's great palaces – the Palace of Westminster (now the Houses of Parliament), St James's Palace and Buckingham Palace – it's at the heart of royal history. It's also a glorious urban landscape, providing relaxation and recreation for the workers of Victoria and Whitehall – the writer Hunter Davies once described it as 'the haunt of civil servants' – and for tourists drawn to the area's pomp and pageantry.

The park is quite small – just 57 acres (23ha) – but it packs a lot into its space and it's easy to find your own quiet corner – no mean feat considering 5.5m people tramp through it each year. Its centrepiece

is a tranquil lake with a small island at either end, surrounded by lawns and trees, plus the requisite bandstand and deckchairs. It's bounded by the Mall to the north and Birdcage Walk to the south, with Buckingham Palace at its western end and Horse Guards Parade to the east. As well as its proximity to these London landmarks, St James's Park is also famous for its splendid views and self-important pelicans

The park takes its name from St James the Less, one of the 12 Apostles, to whom the first building on this site – a leper hospital – was dedicated. The land was acquired by Henry VIII in 1532 to use as yet another deer park, this one conveniently close to Whitehall Palace, his main London residence. It was Henry who built St

James's Palace, which is still the official residence of the British Sovereign, even though no king or queen has lived there since 1837!

FOOD & DRINK

Inn the Park: Overlooking Duck Island, this innovative Oliver Peyton restaurant serves a wide-ranging British menu and opens from 8am to 11pm (last dinner orders 8.30pm). It also offers a 'grab and go' menu, so you can take away treats for a picnic.

Kiosks: These can be found at Marlborough Gate, Horse Shoe Bend, Artillery Memorial, and the playground – serving sandwiches, snacks, ice cream, coffee and cold drinks.

When James I came to the throne in 1603 he set about transforming Henry's boggy deer chase into a suitably regal garden. It was drained and landscaped, and became home to the king's menagerie which included crocodiles and an elephant, while aviaries of exotic birds lined the southern perimeter, now named Birdcage Walk. Charles II had the park redesigned in the 1660s, probably by André Mollet, to resemble the formal gardens of France with neat lawns, avenues of trees and a half-mile long ornamental canal. Charles used his creation to entertain guests and court mistresses – the diarist John Evelyn spotted him here in 'familiar discourse' with 'Mrs Nellie [Gwyn]' – but allowed the public in.



The park was remodelled again in 1826-7, this time on the orders of the Prince Regent (George IV) and overseen by the architect and landscaper John Nash (1752-1835), who also worked on the enlargement of Buckingham Palace. Charles' canal was converted into a more naturally-shaped lake, and formal avenues became winding pathways. There were more changes at the western end of the park between 1906 and 1924, when the area outside Buckingham Palace was enlarged to make room for the Victoria Memorial, but St James's Park remains much as Nash intended.



Plantings include the Nash shrubberies and the 'tropical' border, both on the north side of the lake. The majority of trees in the park are plane trees, which are known for their flaking bark and resistance to pollution. Other species include the Black Mulberry Tree (*Morus nigra*), which was associated with James I's failed attempt to build a British silk industry, and fig trees, which border the lake.

It's undoubtedly a park for relaxation. You can hire a deckchair by the bandstand – there are free concerts on summer evenings – or take the circular stroll around the lake, part of the Diana Memorial Walk which

begins at Kensington Palace. Children are catered for with a playground near Australia Gate.

Highlights unique to St James's Park include:

◆ **The Blue Bridge:** The views from the bridge which bisects the lake are among the most stunning in London. Look west to see Buckingham Palace and the Victoria Monument framed by trees. Then turn east to see the roofs of the Horse Guards building, the Old War Office building and Whitehall Court, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London Eye and The Shard. The original elegant suspension bridge was built across the lake in 1857, but was replaced a century later by a concrete crossing.

◆ **The Pelicans:** There has been a resident group of pelicans in St James's Park since 1664, when a Russian ambassador presented the birds to Charles II. They are sociable creatures who act as if they own the park, often perching on the benches alongside visitors; feeding time is between 2.30 and 3pm each day. As well as the pelicans, there are some 15



Pelican

varieties of waterfowl, including ducks, geese and grebes on the lake, using the nesting sites on Duck and West islands. Look for **Duck Island Cottage**, built by John Burges Watson in 1840 to accommodate the park bird-keeper, a position which still exists today. The cottage, resembling a Swiss chalet, is now home to the London Parks and Gardens Trust.

DON'T MISS!

A morning visit to St James's Park is an ideal opportunity to catch the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace – or the Guard Mounting, as it's officially called. This ceremony, which dates back to the 17th century, involves a New Guard exchanging duty with the Old Guard, the handover accompanied by a Guards band. It's a timeless London experience and takes place at 11.30am each morning in summer and on alternate days in winter (see royal.gov.uk).

◆ **Horse Guards Parade:** At the eastern end of the park is the wide parade ground used for annual ceremonial events such as Trooping the Colour, which marks the Queen's official birthday,



and Beating Retreat, a musical spectacular by the bands of the Household Division which recalls the ancient ceremony of closing and securing the castle gates. Both take place in June. Polo tournaments are sometimes also held on Horse Guards Parade, which hosted the beach volleyball tournament during the 2012 London Olympics.

◆ **Victoria Memorial:** At the other end of the park, outside Buckingham Palace, stands the Queen Victoria Memorial which celebrates the glory days of the British Empire. At its centre is the marble statue of Victoria, surrounded by the glittering figures of victory, courage, constancy, charity, truth and motherhood, created between 1906 and 1924 by Sir Thomas Brock. The Queen Victoria Memorial Gardens were fashioned by Sir Aston Webb in 1901, the year of Victoria's death, and feature a broad semi-circular sweep of flowerbeds enclosed by a low stone balustrade. In summer they're often planted with scarlet



Victoria Memorial

geraniums to reflect the tunics of The Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace.

The Mall, and nearby Pall Mall, get their name from a game which Charles II introduced from France, which was played on courts in St James's Park. *Pele Mele*, a forerunner of croquet, was played on a long fenced court, using a mallet to hit a ball through a hoop.

5 GREEN PARK

Address: Green Park, SW1A 2BJ (☎ 0300-061 2350, 🌐 royalparcs.org.uk/parks/green-park).

Opening hours: Unrestricted access.

Cost: Free.

Transport: Green Park or Hyde Park Corner tube.

Amenities: Refreshments, deckchairs.



Topiary crown for Queen's Diamond Jubilee

The smallest of the royal parks, Green Park may appear to be an extension of St James's Park, but the two have very different characters. If St James's Park is an urban garden, Green Park is lush pasture: peaceful, relaxing and very green.

Encompassing just 47 acres (19ha), the park is an important link in a chain of parks which stretches from Kensington to Westminster – the green lungs of central London. It's said that Charles II wanted to be able to walk from Hyde Park to St James's without leaving royal soil, so in the 1660s he acquired land between the two established parks, built a wall around it and called it Upper St James's Park. It only became known as Green Park after it was opened to the public in 1826.

The wedge-shaped park is bordered to the northwest by Piccadilly and to the south by Constitution Hill – the name may come from Charles's habit of taking his daily walk or 'constitutional' along this route. The park is bisected by the wide, tree-lined Broad Walk, but the most interesting route is the Queen's Walk, a private walkway built around 1730 for Queen Caroline, the wife of George II, which traces the edge of elegant St James's.

Though there's little doubt that Henry VIII once hunted deer on this land, the first recorded mention of the park was in 1554, when it was the location for Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion in protest against the marriage of Mary I to Philip II of Spain. Back then it was still meadowland and only became a formal park after Charles II obtained it in 1668; it was he who laid out the walkways and built features such as the icehouse (now long gone).

Although Green Park is now 'empty' save for its trees and some fascinating memorials (see below), during George II's reign (1727-1760) it was crammed with amusing features. These included the Queen's Library, a summer pavilion built for Queen Caroline by William Kent (1685-1748), and a reservoir called the Queen's Basin, which supplied water from the River Tyburn to St James's and Buckingham Palaces. The park became a fashionable place to see and be seen – and to settle differences. One notorious duel

took place in 1730 between William Pulteney, 1st Earl of Bath, and John Hervey, 1st Earl of Bristol (both survived).

FOOD & DRINK

The Ritz: If you want to push the boat out, Green Park is next door to this iconic hotel renowned for its afternoon teas. Prices start from £42 and booking is essential (📧 theritzlondon.com), but it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Picnic: There are kiosks at Ritz Corner and Canada Gate serving coffee, ice cream and sandwiches, or you can stock up on goodies at the world-famous Fortnum & Mason (📧 fortnumandmason.com) on Piccadilly.

Green Park was also the setting for lavish firework displays. Handel was commissioned to write *Music for the Royal Fireworks* to accompany a display in 1749 to celebrate the end of the War of Hanoverian Succession. The Temple of Peace, used to store fireworks, was hit by a rocket and went up in a ball of flame.

For all its royal connections, the park remained a remote spot well into the 18th century, and visitors risked robbery from highwaymen – Horace Walpole was one of many victims. In 1767, a slice of Green Park was appropriated to enlarge the garden of Buckingham House (later Palace). The next major change occurred in the 1820s, when John Nash was tasked with redesigning St James's Park and re-landscaped Green Park at the same time. Trees were planted – lime, chestnut and hawthorn, but mainly hardy London planes – and over time, the buildings were demolished and the lake filled in. By 1855, it was once again a vast green space, much as it had been in Charles II's time.



Bomber Command Memorial, Philip Jackson

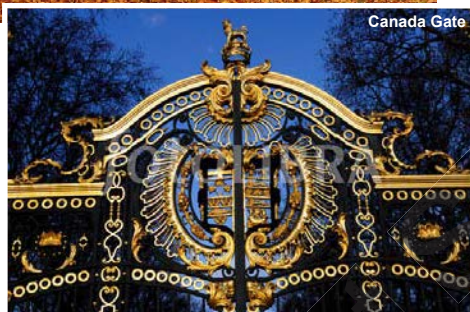




Today, the park is a popular venue for picnics, sunbathing and jogging, and commuters also use it as a short cut. There are no formal sports or playgrounds and no lake for wildlife, although there are common birds such as blackbirds, starlings and tits and, in winter, migrant birds such as redwing and fieldfare. And in spring there's a magnificent display of thousands of daffodils.

More recently, the park has become a place to remember people who served in the two world wars, and there are some important memorials:

◆ **The Canada Memorial:** Designed by Canadian sculptor Pierre Granche, this memorial was unveiled in 1994 as a tribute to the one million Canadians who served with British forces during the First and Second World Wars. It comprises two wedges of red granite, over which water flows, inset with bronze maple leaves. The



Canada Gate

memorial is close to the **Canada Gate**, which marks the entrance to the park from the Mall, an impressive screen of gilded wrought iron gates that were presented to London by Canada in 1908 to form part of the Queen Victoria memorial.

◆ **Commonwealth Memorial Gates:**

At the top of Constitution Hill, four massive stone pillars and a memorial pavilion remember the 5m servicemen from the Indian subcontinent, Africa and the Caribbean who served in the two world wars.

◆ **RAF Bomber Command Memorial:** This is the UK's newest – and long overdue – war memorial, unveiled by the Queen in June 2012 to mark the sacrifice of 55,573 aircrew from Britain, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Poland and other Commonwealth countries, as well as civilians of all nations killed during air raids. It features a striking 9ft (2.7m) bronze sculpture by Philip Jackson of seven air crew returning from a bombing mission.

There are no formal flower beds in Green Park. This is reputedly due to instructions from Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II, who on discovering that the king had picked flowers in the park and given them to another woman, ordered that every single flower be uprooted and no more planted!



The Canada Memorial



Diana of the Treetops, EJ Clack



6 BUCKINGHAM PALACE GARDENS

Address: Buckingham Palace, SW1A 1AA (☎ 020-7766 7300, ✉ royalcollection.org.uk/visit/buckinghampalace).

Opening hours: Aug-Sep, 9.30am to 6.30pm (dates vary, so phone or check website for details). State Rooms & Garden Highlights Tour (3½hrs), 9.30am, 1.15pm and 2pm.

Cost: £27.75 adults, £25.50 over 60s/students, £16.35 5-17s, under 5s free, £74 family. Note that the garden can only be visited as part of a tour.

Transport: Green Park or Hyde Park Corner tube or Victoria tube/rail.

Attractions & amenities: Palace State Rooms, café, shop, unsuitable for wheelchairs but buggy available.

Behind Buckingham Palace is the largest private garden in London and also one of the most tantalising, especially when glimpsed from the top of a double-decker bus. Until recently, the only way to access the palace gardens was to be invited to one of the Queen's garden parties, but they can now be visited on a tour that also takes in the State Rooms.

FOOD & DRINK

Garden Café: No visit to Buckingham Palace is complete without a stop at the Garden Café on the palace's West Terrace, which serves light refreshments, including tea, coffee, sandwiches and delicious pastries specially created for Buckingham Palace.

The gardens occupy a 42-acre (17ha) site with 2½mi (4km) of paths. The



planting is varied and in parts exotic, with trees ranging from London's sturdy plane to a Chinese chestnut and Indian bean, as well as a silver lime planted to mark the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. In the southwest corner there's a single surviving mulberry tree from a plantation created by James I, who tried (unsuccessfully) to breed silkworms.

The current layout dates back to John Nash's transformation of Buckingham Palace for George IV in the 1820s. The gardens were redesigned by William Townsend Aiton (1766-1849), director of Kew Gardens, who swept away the formal lines imposed by previous designers to create a romantic vista. He also added the famous lake which is noted for its variety of waterside plants and numerous water birds, which include a visiting flock of flamingos!



Described as 'a walled oasis in the middle of London', the garden is among the capital's 'greenest' and most environmentally friendly. It contains some 350 species of wildflower attracting moths, dragonflies and other insects, and over 40 bird species, including kingfishers, woodcocks and redwings. Since 2009 it has also supported four bee hives.

Visitors to the State Rooms get a glimpse of the garden as they stroll to the exit gate, but the 45-minute garden tour also takes in the beautiful herbaceous border (dug up to plant vegetables during the Second World War), the wisteria-clad summer house, the world-famous Rose Garden, and the tennis court, where George VI played Wimbledon champion Fred Perry in the '30s (no prizes for guessing who won!).

There's no seating in the garden but visitors are welcome to use walking sticks or folding stools with seat attachments (folding stools can also be borrowed). Visitors should note that the garden path is a mixture of gravel and sand, and quite long

distances need to be covered.

However, mobility scooters can be used in the gardens and a buggy is usually available to transport visitors with particular access requirements.

DON'T MISS!

Among the works of art on display in the palace's garden is the famous **Waterloo Vase**. This huge Carrara marble urn was commissioned by Napoleon and presented (unfinished) to the Prince Regent (George IV) in 1815. At 15ft (5m) high and weighing 20 tons, it was too heavy for any of the floors in Windsor Castle, so ended up in the National Gallery. When the gallery insisted on giving it back in 1906, Edward VII installed it in the garden where it has remained ever since.