



London's Rural Thames

London's Rural Thames stretches from Hampton Court Palace – one of the great icons of Tudor England - to fashionable Chelsea Harbour. Within this span of 22.5 miles the river rolls out a dazzling string of world-famous attractions in a rural setting of vast parklands, sun-dappled gardens and secluded green spaces which delights visitors and takes most Londoners by surprise.

The strand that links them all is the Thames Path National Trail, the continuous, way-marked footpath which flanks the river on either side. Strolling along the Thames Path is one of the great joys of London life, following its tranquil scenic route to a favourite waterside pub, taking a circular walk via one of its many bridges or dipping into its impressive catalogue of attractions – safe in the knowledge that you can't get lost.

No other capital city in Europe offers so much to enjoy, both indoors and out. Kings, cardinals and commoners who created the attractions here wanted the biggest or the best, and knew how to get it. Their legacy includes Hampton Court Palace, built by Cardinal Wolsey in such extravagant style that Henry VIII took it for himself; Marble Hill House, the gilded showcase created for George II's mistress, Henrietta Howard; the National Archive, a dry dock for a compelling assortment of national treasures such as Guy Fawkes' Confession or Shakespeare's Will; the New Bridge Steam Museum which used one of the biggest steam engines in the world to pump water from the Thames - or Fullers and Youngs, London's oldest breweries which still draw on the river to make their beer.

These outstanding attractions meet their match in the wonderful, open swathes of greenery and gardens which give London's Rural Thames its title. There are some very prestigious names here, including Richmond Park (London's largest Royal Park and open space), Kew Gardens with its soaring glass houses or the London Wetland Centre, a man-made sanctuary for rare and beautiful wetland wildlife which provides a magical brush with bitterns, butterflies, warblers, waders and other retiring creatures right in the thick of the city. Each is a haven in its own special way, a welcome retreat for walking, picnicking, boating, bird watching, cycling or simply lying in the sun and watching the world drift by.

Underneath all this beats the lively, human pulse of communities linked by the River Thames and its path. These former "London villages", have their own distinctive character and array of shops or theatres, pubs, clubs and restaurants which help to make this part of London such a pleasant place to be.

You can take London's Rural Thames in bite-size chunks on a day off or when you have an afternoon to spare, or you can follow the whole length of The Thames Path from Hampton Court to Chelsea in a long weekend. Access is easy as public transport is never far away.

When feet give up, boats, buses and trains are there to provide the return leg on longer walks – and a generous choice of accommodation ranging from town houses to river barges rewards the visitors who stay!

How to get here

London's Rural Thames is easily reached by public transport. There are regular trains from London Waterloo and Clapham Junction and from the West via the Reading to Richmond service. As you will see from the maps, there are many stations just a short walking distance from the river.

For travel information call: London Travel Information: 020 7222 1234 (24 hours) or Textphone 020 7918 3015 or see www.tfl.gov.uk

For rail information outside London call: National Rail Enquiry on 08457 484950 or www.nationalrail.co.uk

The following river boat services also operate here:

- Westminster Passenger Services run boat trips from Westminster to Kew, Richmond and Hampton Court, from April to October. Tel: 020 7930 2062/4721, or visit www.wpsa.co.uk
- Turk Launches, Tel: 020 8546 2434 (from April to October to Richmond, Kingston and Hampton Court)
- Parr's Circular Cruises, from Richmond Pier to Teddington Lock Tel: 020 8977 8850/07956 902646

- Ferries and Boat hire**
- Hampton Ferry, Tel: 020 8979 7471
 - Hammertons Ferries (& boat hire), Tel: 020 8892 9620
 - Richmond Boat Hire, Tel: 020 8948 8270

Attractions & places to visit

The following is a selection of key attractions and places to visit. To locate the attractions on the map, just look for the numbers which appear beside their entries in this list.

- Garrick's Temple to Shakespeare**
Designed by actor, dramatist and theatre manager David Garrick, and built in his own 18th-century pleasure garden to house a statue of his idol, William Shakespeare. Tel: 020 8831 6000 or visit www.visitrichmond.co.uk
- Bushy Park**
The second largest of London's Royal Parks - a historic deer park which includes woodland gardens, streams and ponds, free-roaming fallow and red deer and the mile-long Chestnut Avenue leading to the Diana Fountain. Tel: 020 8979 1586 www.royalparks.org.uk (& partial)
- Hampton Court Palace**
500 years of royal history unfold in England's most evocative palace, set in 60 acres of world-famous gardens. Experience the palace as it was when royalty was in residence as costumed guided tours, sound guides and family trails bring its story to life. Tel: 0870 752 7777 www.hampton-court-palace.org.uk (& accessible)

For further information, please contact the Visitor Information Centres listed below, where staff will be happy to help:
Hammertons Railway Visitor Information Centre, Tel: 020 8748 3079, for information on Hammersmith, Fulham and Chelsea, or see www.htr.co.uk
Hampton Tourist Information Centre, Tel: 020 863 3292, for information on Hampton, Brentford and Chiswick, or see www.hamtoninfo.co.uk
Richmond Information Centre, for information between Hampton and Barnes) or see www.visitrichmond.co.uk
Kingston Tourist Information Centre, Tel: 020 857 5992 www.kingston.gov.uk/leisure/tourism
Thames Strategy, Kew's Chelsea's strategy for the long term management of the river, land and water, can be viewed on www.thamesstrategy.com/whetealea.org.uk
Thames Landscape Strategy - Hampton to Kew www.thames-landscape-strategy.org.uk

Rural Thames

London's Leisure Guide
Hampton Court to Chelsea

★ free

detailed map



Attractions & places to visit cont'd...

- Kingston:** Historic town and one of London's largest shopping centres with many high street and specialist shops - all just a stone's throw from the river.
- Landmark Arts Centre**
Housed in a magnificent gothic-style former church of cathedral proportions, the Centre offers a lively year-round programme of artistic cultural events. Tel: 020 8977 7558 www.landmarkartscentre.org.uk (& partial)
- Strawberry Hill House**
Horace Walpole bought this house in 1749 and spent 50 years turning it into his "Gothic Fantasy" - which is now considered Britain's most important example of the Gothic Revival style. (Please note that opening hours are limited.) Tel: 020 8240 4224 www.visitrichmond.co.uk
- Twickenham and Eel Pie Island**
Famous for its connection with the Rolling Stones, The Yardbirds and the English Rugby Union. www.twickenhamtown.co.uk
- Twickenham Museum**
Housed in an 18th century cottage, the museum covers the history of Twickenham, Whittaker, The Hamptons and Teddington. Tel: 020 8408 0070 www.twickenham-museum.org.uk (& partial)
- Church Street, Twickenham:** An elegant 17th-century street - a showcase for independent shops selling antiques, quirky gifts, jewellery, designer and lifestyle goods alongside a great mix of restaurants and traditional pubs.
- Orleans House Gallery**
Home of Richmond Borough's excellent public art gallery and the stunning Octagon Room, designed in 1720 by renowned architect James Gibbs. Tel: 020 8831 6000 www.richmond.gov.uk/orleanshouse (& partial)
- Marble Hill House**
This extravagant Palladian villa was built for Henrietta Howard, mistress of King George II, who regularly entertained the greatest poets and wits of the day in its gilded rooms. Tel: 020 8892 5115 www.english-heritage.org.uk (& partial)
- Ham House**
An outstanding Stuart house filled with late 17th-century furniture and textiles, which was once at the heart of fashionable court life and intrigue. Extensive and beautiful formal gardens; kitchen garden currently under restoration; 17th-century Stillhouse used for distilling alcohol and perfumes etc. Tel: 020 8940 1950 www.nationaltrust.org.uk (& partial)
- Petersham Meadows:** At the foot of Richmond Hill, the meadows are still grazed by a herd of cows. It could be hundreds of miles from the City but is, in fact, only 8 miles from Piccadilly Circus!
- King Henry's Mound:** Exactly 10 miles from St Paul's Cathedral, the Mound provides the longest view of the cathedral - the only view which frames Wren's masterpiece to the exclusion of all other buildings. Tel: 020 8948 3209 www.royalparks.org.uk (& partial)
- Richmond Hill:** Take in the world famous view that has inspired painters, gardeners and poets for centuries - the only view in Britain to be protected by an Act of Parliament.
- Royal British Legion Poppy Factory**
This unique factory turns out over 32 million Remembrance poppies and 80,000 wreaths every year. Tel: 020 8940 3305 www.britishteleion.org.uk (& accessible)
- Museum of Richmond**
The history of Richmond, Ham, Petersham and Kew from pre-historic times to the present day are presented here through colourful displays. Tel: 020 8332 1141 www.museumofrichmond.com (& accessible)
- Richmond:** Kings and queens made their home here at Richmond Palace. The town boasts the most magnificent cricket green, a busy riverfront and specialist shops. Henry VII named Richmond after his favourite Earlom, Richmond in Yorkshire. Guided walks leave Richmond Information Centre throughout the year. Call 020 8979 9670 for details.
- Richmond Theatre**
This highly popular theatre stages an excellent programme with many pre and post-West End productions. Tel: 020 8940 0088 www.richmondtheatre.net (& accessible)
- Orange Tree Theatre**
This 172 seat in-the-round theatre enjoys widespread critical acclaim for its production of neglected classics and exciting new plays. Tel: 020 8940 3633 www.orangetree theatre.co.uk (& accessible)

Places to eat & drink

Enjoy all fresh eating and river views..... treat yourself to fish and chips in a 17th-century pub or - for a special occasion - Canyons provides fine food in a stylish setting.

All the establishments listed below serve food. They are all located by the river and most have outdoor seating and river views. We have indicated pubs/restaurants that are wheelchair accessible & although some have only partial access; we recommend that you check details with individual establishments beforehand.

- The Bell Tel: 020 8941 9799
- The Carlton Mitre Tel: 020 8979 9988
- Anglers Tel: 020 8977 7475
- Tide End Cottage Tel: 020 8977 7762
- Pope's Grotto Tel: 020 8892 3050
- Barmy Arms Tel: 020 8892 0863
- White Swan Tel: 020 8892 2166
- The Roebuck Tel: 020 8948 2329
- Canyons Tel: 020 8948 2944
- Tide Tables Tel: 020 8948 8285
- Pitcher & Piano Tel: 020 8332 2524
- H2O Tel: 020 8948 0220
- Henry's Café/Bar Tel: 020 8332 2494
- Slug & Lettuce Tel: 020 8948 7733
- Waterman's Arms Tel: 020 8940 2893
- White Cross Tel: 020 8940 6844
- The White Swan Tel: 020 8940 0959

Please contact the Richmond Information Centre, Old Town Hall, Whittaker Avenue, Richmond, TW9 1TP on 020 8940 9125 or text phone 020 8949 5970 if you need this in braille, large print, audio tape or another language.

Places to eat
Bars & Pubs
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