Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Hampton Court, Bushy Park and Thames Path

Distance: 8 km=5 miles or 12 km=7½ miles — easy walking

Region: Greater London — Date written: 3-dec-2018

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Refreshments: Hampton Court, Teddington, *Pheasantry Café*

Map: Explorer 161 (London South) *but the map in this guide should suffice*

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Parkland, ponds, town, river walk, Royal Palace, garden

In Brief

This is a classic walk along one of the most popular stretches of the Thames Path, including a visit to Hampton Court garden with the chance of purchasing a ticket for the Palace courtyards, kitchens, State Apartments and gardens, including the Rose Garden with the Tiltyard Restaurant, the Wilderness with its wonderful show of daffodils in March, the Maze, the Kitchen Garden and the children's Magic Garden. A visit to the Palace and the formal gardens is one of life's great experiences for anyone who lives in or visits London.

There is absolutely no problem with any kind of attire or footwear on this walk. You can bring your dog and, provided he is on a lead, he is welcome in the less formal parts of Hampton Court Garden.

The walk begins at one of several railway stations (see below) or in the large free car park in **Bushy Park**, near **Kingston**, nearest postcode **KT8 9BY**, w3w:online.dating.firmly. This is the car park near the round *Diana Fountain*, not far from the entrance at Hampton Court's Lion Gate. If coming from Hampton Court, you need to go three quarters around the round pond to find the entrance to the car park. There are loos to the right near the kiddies' playground (and possibly a snack bar). For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

Railway stations suitable for a start and/or end to this walk are:

Hampton Court: direct from Waterloo, on the route;

Hampton Wick: direct from Waterloo, on the route;

Kingston: fast trains direct from Waterloo, with an eventful meander through the town and the shops, over the bridge to Hampton Wick, less than 1 km from the walk;

Fulwell: direct from Waterloo (Shepperton line),1 km walk (or bus) to Bushy Park's Hampton Hill New Gate, with an extra section through the Water Gardens and the Woodland Gardens. See **Starting at Fulwell** further down.

The Walk

If you are starting this walk at **Fulwell Station**, skip to the special section near the end of this text.

Bushy Park was one of the royal hunting parks, still famous for its flocks of deer. The various waterways through the park were constructed in Stuart times to bring water to the palace. The Chestnut Avenue (not on this walk) was designed by Christopher Wren. During the last war, Bushy Park was an air base and a space for allotments. The Water and Woodland Gardens are a delight. You can see them by starting at Fulwell, described in a section below.

1 Starting in the Diana Fountain car park, walk to the back of the car park (away from the entrance) and take a sandy path beside a small pond on your left. *This is the Model Boating Pond and if the Model Yacht Club are gathering today you should see their craft in action, sometimes competing with a course marked out with coloured floats.* Keep ahead past the second, much larger, Heron Pond, usually with resident geese as well as herons. At the end, keep **left** round the end of the pond to go over a bridge across a culvert with a long straight strip of water on your right. Turn immediately

right along the grass beside the strip of water and follow it till it widens and becomes the Leg-of-Mutton Pond. At the end of the pond, by a grassy bank, shift **left** to join a tarmac footpath, known as Cobblers Walk for a reason to be revealed. This path veers right and takes you over a bridge over the strip of water. Soon you reach Hampton Wick Gate, leading out to a main road.

On your left here is the memorial to Timothy Bennet. He was a shoemaker who mounted a successful campaign in 1734 to persuade the Earl of Halifax, who owned the park, to allow public use of the path between Hampton Wick and Hampton village. The path is consequently known as Cobblers Walk.

2 Cross the road (Sandy Lane) by the crossing, turn **left** for 50m and sharp right on Vicarage Road. This road elbows right and leads into the main road of Hampton Wick. Turn **right** on this road, Upper Teddington Road. On your left is Hampton Wick railway station. Continue along the main road, passing several opportunities for refreshment, including, shortly, the *Foresters Arms*, *The Swan* (Thai) and the *Pomegranate* Restaurant. Finally, the large *White Hart* hotel / pub / restaurant is next to the round-about by Kingston Bridge.

Kingston, although not on your route, is nearby, **left** over the bridge. It is also a good arrival / departure point. Blessed with the Bentalls shopping centre, the Market, a theatre and numerous restaurants and cafés along the waterfront, it is London's most complete and stimulating outer suburb.

3 Go **left** at the roundabout, cross the road **right** by the pedestrian lights and take a wide tarmac path (Barge Walk) which runs down to the river, signed *Thames Path*. You now have an easy 4¼ km=2½ mile walk on the towpath. There is usually a choice between a wide tarmac path and a dirt path closer to the river. The only other traffic is a steady stream of bicycles. You pass some isolated houses and a yacht club. Kingston is on the other side, then Surbiton. *The tall italianate church on the other side, topped with a cross, is St Raphael's catholic church.* You come through a metal barrier. In 1½ km you pass an island, Ravens Ait, once a centre for sea cadets, now a wedding venue. Just after the island, on your right, is a gate into Home Park. This used to be a short cut to Hampton Court but now that the back entrance is closed, this is just an optional scenic alternative to the tow path, with the benefit of a free photo-opp of the gardens and back of the palace. There is a very helpful map by the gate and it's a good idea to take a mobile photo shot of it. If you decide on this option, take this charming tree-lined path, turn **right** at the end, **left** around the pond and straight ahead along the left-hand bank of the **Long Water**. You need to go **left** just before some buildings and straight ahead over the grass to the exit gate, back to the river.

4 In one more km, there is a brick column which is rather mysterious, though some say it's the end of a ventilation pipe. Immediately after, there is another limited-use gate into Home Park as the towpath takes a wide curve. After a wooden barrier is *The Hermitage*, of Queen-Anne vintage, now a private house, and later another gate up steps into Home Park. The rounded wall of Hampton Court Gardens is on your right as you gain a view of Hampton Court road bridge. Continue to the bridge and turn **right** on the main road -- but, as a worthwhile diversion, by turning **left** across the Thames bridge into East Moseley village you will find a line of pubs and eateries, such as *Zizzi*. You pass the ornate entrance to the forecourt of the Palace. Unless you are a *Historic Royal Palaces* member, you need a ticket to visit the palace and the gardens.

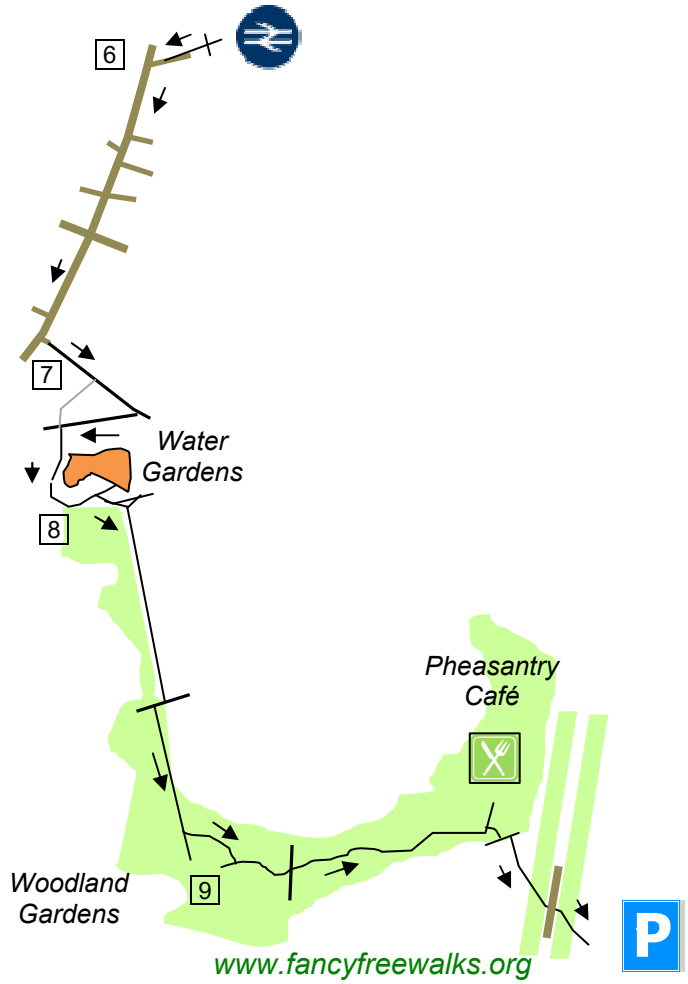
A visit to the Palace with its courtyards, kitchens, Great Hall, State Apartments, Cumberland Art Gallery, Formal Gardens, Maze, Wilderness and Magic Garden is a lifetime's experience. The ticket office is on the left. The State Apartments and courtyards are straight ahead whilst the Rose Garden, Wilderness, Magic Garden, Maze and Restaurant are on your left just before the main moated entrance. As you come through the Rose Garden, there is the kitchen garden and loos on your left. On your right, before the Tiltyard restaurant, a gate in the wall leads into the Wilderness (an informal garden) and loos. By veering left, you pass the famous Maze (with entry charge).

Hampton Court Palace was built in 1515 for Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. When he fell into disgrace he gave the Palace to King Henry VIII. In the reign of William of Orange, an entirely new extension to the palace was built in Baroque style, unfortunately by demolishing part of the Tudor palace. Ann Boleyn had an apartment in the palace and, after her execution, some people fancy they've seen her ghost there. The formal gardens include the Great Fountain garden with its lines of yew trees, the real tennis court, the large privy garden (restored to its original layout), smaller pond gardens and the 250-year-old Great Vine, largest in the world, which incidentally does not produce wine.

5 Continue along the road, turning right with the road, until you reach the large Lion Gate. Go **left** here aross the road into Bushy Park. Immediately fork **right**, through trees and across the grass, past a café on your left, leading to the car park where the walk began.

Starting at Fulwell Station 4½ km=2¾ miles

Fulwell station, close to Teddington, is the nearest access point for the North-west section of Bushy Park, containing the delightful Woodland Gardens. There is a short section along the main road to reach the gate but not without some interest (and some excellent eateries).



6 Turn **left** over the footbridge (assuming you came from the Kingston direction) and **right** on a passageway beside the railway. Continue on a residential road to meet the main road and turn **left**. *Note that you are on part of the **London Loop**: you will be following this route for almost this entire section and, if unsure, you can simply following the badge signs.* You pass a modern catholic church and, after an unexciting 500m, reach the traffic lights where the Hampton Road crosses. Go straight over. *There are a good number of interesting shops and restaurants in this prosperous part of Teddington.* In another 300m, just after a library, turn **left** on Cricket Lane and go ahead through a gate (Hampton Hill Gate) into Bushy Park.

7 Go straight ahead on a wide path, in the direction *Water Gardens*, and continue for 300m to a junction of paths. (You can instead take a short cut by turning **right** at the corner of a cricket pitch and in the next corner, nipping 50m across the grass.) Turn sharp **right** in the direction *Water Gardens*. In 200m or so, there is a little signpost pointing you **left** to the *Water Gardens*. The path veers right a little and takes you to a gate on the **left** leading into the gardens.

The Water Gardens were built in 1710 as a private garden for the large house Upper Lodge, residence of the Earl of Halifax. They served as a wartime hospital, as a swimming pool for sick youngsters, and as a MoD site, before being lovingly restored in 2010. The cascade is fed by the Longford River.

8 Go round to the right past the ponds and, near the end, go **right** through another gate to exit the gardens. Immediately go **right** on a narrow dirt path which is a short cut to a path running along the right-hand side of the Park close to a fence and trees on your right. Keep **right** on this path, staying close to the fence. In 500m, you reach a junction with a driveway and a notice board. Go **right** here through a gate and immediately **left** through a wooden gate into the Woodland Gardens. Ignore a path on your right and keep straight ahead through the woods, parallel to your original route. In 300m, you pass on your left a small house, *River Lodge*. Just after the house and a pond, turn **left** on a path through the Silver Birch Glade.

9 This is one of the loveliest parts of the gardens, but this route is only a suggestion. As the notice board shows, there are a number of small gardens here with enticing names and all are worth exploring. Your path leads you over a bridge and curves right to meet a T-junction. Turn **left** here, still on the *London Loop*. Keep ahead to exit through a gate beside a small kiosk. Cross over a tarmac path (the “Ash Walk”) to reach another small gate, back into the Woodland Gardens. Follow the main winding path. (Some walkers take a path next to the stream on the left.) On your left is Triss's Pond. Finally, the path bends left to go over a bridge. Your route however is **right** through a gate, back into the main Park. (If you keep left over the bridge, you reach the Pheasantry Café which serves stone-baked pizza and other good grub.) Go **left** and immediately **right** on paths across the Park. The large car park is visible ahead and you only need to cross the tree-lined avenue and a small bridge over a stream to reach it.

Now pick up to main walk from section 1 and end it in at Hampton Court Station, or on the bus route.

Getting there

Hampton Court can be reached from Kingston, over the Thames bridge, or from the big roundabout at Esher/Hinchley Wood on the A309 (A3) road. Coming from Kingston, the entrance is 1¼ miles on the right, just as you enter the town. Coming from Esher, after Hampton Court Bridge, you need to keep straight ahead and right around the bend in the road, to find the entrance to the park on your left. The entrance is opposite *The Six Restaurant* and *The Kings Arms Hotel*.

By train: **Hampton Court** station is just over the bridge. **Hampton Wick** station, is on the route (see page 1). Also various buses. **Fulwell** station is two stops further from Hampton Wick. Both are on the Waterloo-Shepperton branch. If starting in **Kingston**, you can walk over the bridge or take bus 281 or 285 towards Hampton Wick.

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