

The Grand – Royal Trail



Start at Kensington Palace

- Kensington Palace became a royal residence during the reign of King William III and Queen Mary II, having been purchased as a rural and relatively modest retreat some distance from the city.

Leave via the Princess Diana Memorial Garden and Queen Victoria Statue.

- One of the palace's best-known residents is Queen Victoria, who was born at Kensington on 24 May 1819. Eighteen years later, it was here that the Princess woke up on 20 June 1837 to the news of her own accession to the throne. Her first Privy Council meeting was held in the Red Saloon that same day,
- Before the young Queen moved permanently to Buckingham Palace with her mother. Their departure marked the start of over five decades of neglect, before a major restoration of Kensington's richly decorated State Apartments saw them opened to the public on Queen Victoria's 80th birthday, 24 May 1899. Parts of Kensington Palace have remained private residences for members of the Royal Family, and in recent years the palace has been home to Princess Margaret - sister of HM Queen Elizabeth II - and Diana, Princess of Wales.

Walk through the parks to **Buckingham Palace**

- While walking through the parks, your route may take you along the wide bridal path in Hyde Park known as **Rotten Row**. The name is a massacred version of the French, Rue du Roi, the King's Road and originally signaled the King's (Wm III) route from Whitehall to Kensington Palace. Nobody else was allowed to use it – then. It was also the first road in the country with street lighting.
- Along the walk, you may also glimpse the Albert Memorial to the south of the park
- To get to the Palace, you can walk through the **Wellington Arch**, in 1885-86 the home of the smallest police station in London and, as of 1999, an internal space for exhibitions and, up top, terraces with fabulous views!
- You will then walk along **Constitution Hill**, where, in 1840, 1842, and 1849, Queen Victoria suffered three assassination attempts and in 1850, Sir Robert Peel (former PM and creator of the Met Police, hence 'peelers' and 'bobbies') was thrown from his horse and subsequently died.

Need less walking? Hop on the tube from Queensway to Green Park (Central line to Bond Street then Jubilee line to Green Park)

Make a royal procession along the Mall to see **Admiralty Arch**

- It was Edward VII who – together with a Parliamentary Committee of 'the great and the good' - hit upon the idea of the Victoria Monument and a grand avenue towards Traf Square to reflect the glories of Britain under Victoria's reign. The project was discussed and agreed within a month of her death.
- The area by today's Admiralty Arch was – once upon a time – known as Milk Fair. See the cow in the bottom left corner of [this painting](#). And note cows in the park itself! The people promenading in the painting are doing so in an area with very low walls, enclosing a long expanse of dirt. That's The Mall, which extends back (out of the picture) towards Buck House. The last dairymaid and cow stand left the area in 1922 when **The Guards Memorial** was created on the Park side of The Parade.

Following in the footsteps of Charles I on his way to his execution on 30 January 1649, and pause in front of **Banqueting Hall (1619-1622)**

- This is the last remaining whole building of the Palace of Whitehall. Turn back and look up. The clock on the lantern above the archway is set to 2 o'clock, the time of the King's death. Next, take in the nature at Whitehall Gardens and have a look for the beautiful tree planted by G-A-Y & Heaven Nightclub, London Landmarks Half Marathon and Westminster in celebration of the LGBTQ+ running community.

Keep heading up to Trafalgar Square

- Before there was Trafalgar Square, they were the Royal Mews, which were rebuilt as stables in 1534 after a fire during the reign of Henry VIII.
- On the way, take note of King Charles I Island, which stands isolated in the whirl of traffic. The bronze statue shows Charles looking down the hill across to where his vast palace of Whitehall once stood. It was commissioned in 1633 by Charles' Lord Treasurer for his garden in Richmond. After the Civil War, it was sold by Parliament to the metalsmith, John Rivet, to be broken down but he buried it intact on his premises. It was purchased by Charles II in 1660 and later erected in its current location. After the Restoration the area was used for the execution of eight regicides.

Finish off at the Royal Portrait Gallery

- Look for George IV on his splendid horse standing in front of the east section of the National Gallery. He is slim and dressed as a Roman, riding bareback without stirrups. The statue was cast in 1828, two years before George IV died. He was massively fat and would have needed a larger and heavier horse to carry him. By the late 19thC nobody knew who the man on the horse was.
- Pop into the National Gallery - it's free! - and dip into its fabulous collections,

Check it out on our interactive map [here](#)

Total walking time: 1 hour 24 minutes

