

Spend the afternoon at Hampton Court Palace



How long do I need? Half a day

Where is it? Hampton Court Palace

Highlights

Set in over 750 acres of gardens and parkland beside the River Thames, the magnificent buildings of Hampton Court Palace cover six acres and span 500 years of history. In 1528, England's most-married monarch, King Henry VIII, took the lavish residence from his fallen favourite Cardinal Wolsey and held court here in the series of rooms which we can still see today.

What to see and do at Hampton Court Palace

It's easy to picture Henry himself in the imposing Great Hall used for banquets, receptions, balls and other functions; in The Great Watching Chamber, where bodyguards were stationed to manage the ebb and flow of courtiers; in the Chapel Royal where he worshipped every day and in the sometimes chilling Haunted Gallery. The extra "presence" here could be poor Catherine Howard, Henry's fifth wife, who was dragged screaming from the gallery after pleading with the king for her life. There's a cosier feel to the vast Tudor kitchens, built in 1530 to feed the 600 or so members of the court who were entitled to eat at the palace twice a day.

In the 17th century, King William III and Queen Mary commissioned the architect Sir Christopher Wren to rebuild the palace. Wren wanted to demolish all but the Great Hall, but had to be content instead with creating the wonderful series of State Apartments which we can visit, but the King and Queen did not live to enjoy. The formal circuit of sumptuous royal apartments envisaged by Wren was finally completed in the early 18th century.

The formal gardens of Hampton Court, which cover 60 acres, are as impressive as the palace. The main feature is a re-creation of William III's Privy Garden, based on a design of 1702, with a stunning symmetrical pattern incorporating the original varieties of plants and

marble sculptures. Other highlights include the Rose Garden, Great Fountain Garden, Pond Gardens and the famous maze. Begun in 1690 as a form of courtly entertainment for William III, today the maze covers one third of an acre and consists of half a mile of winding paths surrounded by towering seven-foot high yew tree walls. On average it takes 20 minutes to reach the centre.

Hampton Court Palace is 16 miles (23km) from Windsor / Dorney, via the A308. It is well signposted from all major local roads. [AA Route Planner](#) can provide a choice of routes, with full details.

Hampton Court Palace

East Molesey, Surrey, KT8 9AU

Opening hours: daily, except December 24-26 inclusive; mid-March - mid-October, 9.30 – 18.00 (10.15 on Mondays); mid-October - mid-March, 9.30 - 16.30 (10.15 on Mondays)

Costs: Admission costs vary – see website for details

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