



## London's largest royal park offers sanctuary for all

**Hyde Park, in central London, is the largest of the eight parks managed by the Royal Parks agency under an Act of Parliament dating back to 1851.**

Along with the adjacent Kensington Gardens and St. James's Park, Green Park and Regent's Park it provides a veritable 'green lung' for residents of and visitors to the UK capital.

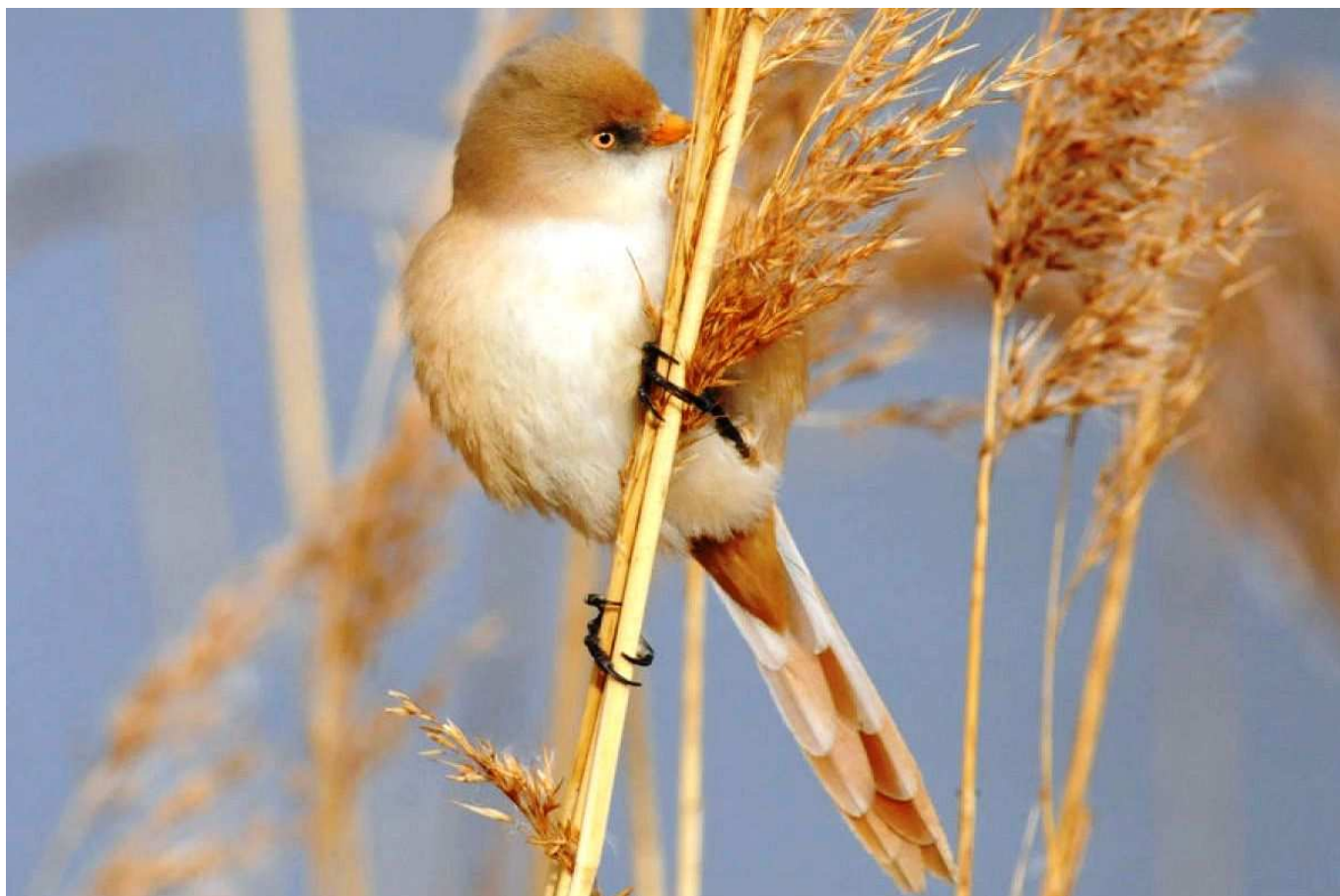
The Bushy, Greenwich and Richmond Parks, the other three Royal Parks, are found in the suburbs.

Hyde Park is, without doubt, one of the world's most iconic green city spaces with over 4,000 trees, a large boating lake, meadow and ornamental flower gardens.

**Ashley Gibbins**  
Commissioning Editor  
**AllWays traveller**







Many breeds of bird can be spotted in Hyde Park

## Still rewarding after all these years

By Ashley Gibbins

**As a Londoner I have taken advantage of Hyde Park on many, many occasions.**

Watching the funeral service of Princess Diana broadcast live on a large screen in the park, before moving to stand silently as the cortège passed by, was one of the emotional experiences of my life.

Equally memorable, on a more enjoyable occasion, I was in the crowd sitting in the Park watching Andy Murray win gold medal at the 2012 London Olympics.

Again broadcast onto a large screen, the many thousands there were as patriotically enthusiastic and excited as if at Wimbledon.

I also surprised Ann with a hack on the horse track around the Hyde Park as a birthday present.

I have also enjoyed many outdoor festivals over the years, for which Hyde Park is so well suited.

And finally, I regularly dart through perimeter parts of the Park when this allows me to get from one meeting or event to another.

### Taking it all in

But it was not until February of 2018, after some 35 years living London, that I took the time out to take in the whole of Hyde Park - and truly appreciated what it offers to so many people.

At some 350 acres, Hyde Park is large enough to embrace so many activities by so many people and still not feel overused.

There are the lunchtime joggers, cyclists, skateboarders; dog walkers and squirrel feeders and commuters exploiting its open spaces before going into work or home.

The Park is also an open air aviary for swans, ducks and geese, all manner of tits and bunting.

There areas for team games with groups of friends playing, football, softball and touch rugby.

The park also offers tennis courts, a large children's playground and the horseriding track and where one could well find soldiers of the Household Cavalry exercising their horses.

Boating on the Serpentine in the Park is a very popular pursuit, particularly for tourists and on warm days and, for the braver there is the chance to swim in the lake.

Hyde Park has two lakeside restaurants which are licensed and serve everything from a meal to a quick drink.

Finally the Park is home to a number of buildings and monuments, such as The Serpentine Bridge, the Joy of Life fountain, the statue of Archilles and the Diana Memorial Fountain.





## Free speech courtesy of the Tyburn gallows

### Speakers Corner

**While Hyde Park may now offer rest and relaxation in the heart of one of the world's vibrant cities has a long and fascinating history as a site of protest – and still hosts rallies and marches today.**

Over 50,000 people were hanged at the infamous Tyburn Gallows, close by, between 1196 and 1783.

Everyone condemned to be hung at Tyburn could make a final speech.

While some confessed their sins or protested their innocence,

Others criticised the authorities or used the occasion as an opportunity for one final pronouncement to the world.

For spectators, the executions at Tyburn were raucous social events.

For the more wealthy, tickets purchased to watch proceedings from a seat on huge wooden platforms

The public hangings became too rowdy and they were transferred to Newgate Prison.

But the tradition for free speech in Hyde Park continued.

Located on the north-east edge of Hyde Park, by Marble Arch and Oxford Street, Speakers' Corner has been a traditional site for public speeches and debates since the 1880s.

Speakers have included Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and George Orwell, with an Act of Parliament in 1872, formally setting aside this part of Hyde Park for public speaking.

On a Sunday morning today you can hear people from all walks of life share their views on a wide and diverse range of topics with anyone willing to listen.

Anyone can turn up unannounced and speak on any subject, as long as the police consider their speeches lawful.

Passionate, peaceful, disagreement with the speakers is encouraged, and this adds greatly to a visit







## A right royal residence through the centuries

**Standing proudly on the edge of Hyde Park is Kensington Palace, a working Royal residence.**

It is the London residences of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry; The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester; The Duke and Duchess of Kent and Prince and Princess Michael of Kent.

### The first royal palace

The property first came into royal hands in 1689, when William III bought the Jacobean mansion and commissioned Christopher Wren to extend and improve the house.

Until the death of George II in 1760, Kensington Palace was the favoured residence of successive sovereigns

Queen Victoria was born and brought up in Kensington Palace, although she chose to reign from Buckingham Palace.

Queen Mary (grandmother of the present Queen) was born at Kensington Palace in 1867.

### Open to the public

The historic parts of the Palace are open to the public today.

Visitors can view the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection, with items of Royal, ceremonial and court dress dating from the 18th century to the present day.

### State apartments

Visitors can stroll through the

King's and Queen's State Apartments with paintings from the Royal Collection.

Victoria Revealed, set within the rooms Queen Victoria lived in as a child, is an exhibition that explores her life and reign.

### Diana's fashion

*Diana: Her Fashion Story* is Kensington Palace's newest exhibition and traces the evolution of Diana's style.



On display are demure, romantic outfits of her first public appearances to the glamour, elegance and confidence of her later life.

Highlights include the pink blouse worn for Diana's engagement portrait in 1981 and the ink blue velvet gown, worn when she danced with John Travolta.

[www.royal.uk/royal-residences-kensington-palace](http://www.royal.uk/royal-residences-kensington-palace)







# The Lancaster is back to its regal best

By Ann Mealor

**We first discovered the Lancaster London during the London Olympics, when attending an international reception.**

Ideally situated next to Lancaster Gate Underground station, on the Central Line, and located next to Hyde Park, this 18 story, high rise, hotel has been welcoming guests since 1967.

During its early days the hotel was a location for Michael Caine being filmed for *The Italian Job* and hosted events attended by celebrities galore including Mohammed Ali and Princess Diana.

Despite its illustrious past it was perhaps not surprising that the hotel was tending to show its age by 2012.

Returning to the hotel in early 2018 it was difficult to believe I was entering the same hotel.

This is because an £80 million renovation, that has been three years in the doing, has completely transformed the hotel - outside and in.

## Deserving the 'Royal'

The result is stunning and so warrants the hotel reverting to its original Royal Lancaster London name.

The entire frontage has been remodelled to feature a dramatic glazed façade leading to an impressive double-height reception and lobby.

The showpiece here is sweeping staircase of white Carrara marble which wraps around to the first floor.

Whether business, pleasure or both, this hotel won't disappoint.

[www.royallancaster.com](http://www.royallancaster.com)







### Rooms with views

**The first thing that hits you when walking into the beautifully refurbished bedrooms at The Royal Lancaster London is the light - and then the views.**

I was immediately drawn to the large windows, where I hypnotically stood and stared out at the vista of London and Hyde Park.

Originally designed as an office block in the 1960s, all bedrooms are spacious and have large windows.

Our Studio on the 18<sup>th</sup> floor gave us the chance to look down on London's buzzing city life.

Chic and stylish, our room had an extremely comfortable six foot bed and a luxurious white marble bathroom. Decorated in delicate beige and golden tones with walnut furniture and a plush, teal chesterfield sofa, it was that perfect mix of traditional and modern.

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All guest rooms at The Royal Lancaster London have Handy phones, hidden international plug sockets, bath robes, slippers (always welcome), *The White Company* toiletries, waterfall showers and under floor heating in the bathrooms.

They also have delightful touches that recall the hotel's colourful past.

Our Studio had a large toy mini cooper on the bookshelf - Michael Caine was filmed there for 'The Italian Job'.

There was also a papier mache' dog made out of 60's comics and other *objets d'arts* that reflect the era.

The hotel also famously hosted the after-party for *The Beatles' Yellow Submarine* film premiere, with all of the *Fab Four* and many pop icons dancing the night away in the *Yellow Submarine Nightclub*.

Before dinner, I took the time to curl up on the comfy armchair, sip a glass of wine and browse through the selection of the books left in the room.



I found a PG Wodehouse 'Jeeves and Wooster' and enjoyed the chance to read one of the short stories. A real treat.

For those who need to spend time on the laptop, there is a comfortable desk, chair and plenty of room to work.

### Breakfast

Breakfast in the Island Grill was a relaxed affair.

I tucked into creamy scrambled egg and smoked salmon and Ashley enjoyed a fluffy mushroom and tomato omelette



There was plenty of choice including the obligatory Full English and a large selection of breads, cheese, cold meats, fruit, pastries, yoghurt and olives – something for everyone



## A place to dress for a delicious dinner

By Ann Mealor

**I was really looking forward to my evening meal at the award winning, fine dining restaurant, Nipa Thai.**

I love Thai food, and was eager to taste the authentic dishes that the all women kitchen team were busy preparing.

The restaurant, refurbished and redesigned in 2015, is very luxurious with wood panelling, large comfortable chairs, rich teal and gold carpeting, and starched white napkins.

### Warm and welcoming

The atmosphere is warm and welcoming. This is the place to 'dress up' for dinner.

Our waiter quickly brought a dish of prawn crackers to the table, which we munched whilst looking through the menu.

The crackers were followed by a tiny, but perfectly formed, fish cake hors d'oeuvre each, courtesy of our chef.

For starters we shared crisp fried prawn dumplings with homemade sauce and crispy soft shell crab served with spicy mango salad, toasted cashews and coriander.

The dumplings were tasty but the star of the show was the crab, which was melt-in-the-mouth delicious and perfectly complemented by the mango.

For mains we chose :

- mixed seafood Thai aubergine and basil poached in a spicy and rich green coconut curry
- fried sea bass with Thai aubergine
- lemongrass, red chilli, lime, sweet basil and peppercorns
- fried rice noodles with bean sprouts, spring onions, eggs and prawns

- a Thai jasmine rice and a steamed rice with coconut milk and pandan leaves.

All dishes had just the right amount of spice – enough to give your taste buds a kick without setting your mouth on fire.

The sea bass and the fried noodles with prawns were our favourites: the fish, soft and flakey, worked so well with the zesty lemongrass and lime and the Phad Thai noodles with their juicy prawns were simply addictive.

Desserts came in the form of a boule of deep fried ice cream topped with a chocolate sauce and a fresh fruit, crisp pastry tart with a salted caramel sorbet.

Both were a sweet success, but the deep fried ice cream, with its doughnut style batter won both our votes, although it's not for the calorie conscious.

All dishes were beautifully presented and decorated with delicate flowers, hand carved carrot roses and carefully curled spring onions.

### Thai wine excellent

The Thai wine from the Monsoon Valley, which we paired with each of our courses, was excellent – a white Colombard, a red Shiraz and a sweet Chenin Blanc.

The service was courteous and discreet with the Maitre'd providing expert advice on the food and wine.

At the end of the meal, we were more than happy to send our enthusiastic compliments to Head Chef, Sanguan Parr.



## A snapshot of Hyde Park



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