



AllWays

Hampton Court Palace and the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew

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



# Majestic glory and botanical beauty

Hampton Court Palace and the Royal Horticultural Gardens at Kew are within an easy drive of each other along the Thames in West London.

Construction of Hampton Court Palace was begun in 1514 by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey before being gifted to King Henry VIII and his then queen Anne Boleyn in 1529.

With St James's Palace, it is one of only two of over 60 grand houses and palaces owned by the King that remain standing.

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is London's largest UNESCO World Heritage site.

It has the world's largest and most diverse collection of plants, trees, and shrubs.

Together, Kew and Hampton Court provide the basis for a memorable short break in this attractive part of outer London.

If you have more time to spare the is Richmond Park is with its famous deer herd.

[www.hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace](http://www.hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace)

[www.kew.org](http://www.kew.org)

**Ashley Gibbins**  
Commissioning Editor  
AllWays traveller





## Hampton Court Palace



# This palace puts history into perspective

By Ashley Gibbins

**On arriving at Hampton Court, we are ushered to the Great Hall where one of the Palace team was about to giving a short talk on Ann Bolyne.**

Ann and I will take advantage of the talks or guided tours at historical and stately homes.

We will also quiz the hugely knowledgeable volunteers on call in those rooms open to the public.

Knowing more about the people and the politics of times long gone by adds a genuine layer of understanding and appreciation to the place we are visiting and greatly enhances its enjoyment.

### A time to reflect

Waiting for those few minutes in the Great Hall, it was impossible not to feel one's own fleeting mortality when compared to the buildings we will occupy during our lifetimes.

My own home, built in 1935 (two decades before I was born), is sure to be standing many years after I have long ceased to do so.

And this is staggeringly true of the Tudor part of Hampton Court Palace.

Gazing up at the magnificent carved hammerbeam roof covering the Great Hall, I am looking at what Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn would have seen when it was completed in 1535.

The Palace had been handed over to Henry, in 1529, by Cardinal Woolsey.

It was a, hoped for, peace offering by Woolsey after relations between the two had soured.

Though little good it did him.

Woolsey was stripped of his great status and wealth by the King and he headed to York to be out of harm's way.

Not so. Woolsey was charged with treason but died travelling back to London where he would have faced certain death.

### A tour de force

And while Hampton Court Palace is more usually associated with Henry VIII, it was hearing a recounting of Anne Boleyn's life and times that proved most interesting.

Anne was a real tour de force of a woman in the male dominated Tudor court.

Having enjoyed a European education and time as maid of honour to Queen Claude of France she had a savvy and an appeal that outshone the other Tudor ladies of the time.

King Henry became an ardent admirer, but she refused to lose her standing at court by becoming his mistress. If the King wanted her, it was marriage or nothing, though Henry was married to Catherine of Aragon.



The Great Hall

Henry looked to his Cardinal, Wolsey, to get the wedding annulled so he could marry Anne.

Wolsey failed to secure the annulment and Anne was closely involved in plotting his downfall.

With Woolsey out of the way, the King's newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer declared Henry and Catherine's marriage null and void.

### A sad end

The King married Anne but, as our school day history taught us, this did not end well for her.

The second of Henry's six wives failed to give Henry the son and heir he craved, and she had to go.

Anne was accused of high treason, on largely trumped-up grounds, tried and found guilty and beheaded in the Tower of London in May 1533.

She was aged between 28 and 35 years old and disgraced.



Anne Boleyn

The life and times of Henry VII, with Ann and his other wives is brought into fascinating perspective during the tour of the Tudor portion of Hampton Court Palace.

Elizabeth, Anne's daughter with Henry would become England's Queen and, in addition to outshining her father's reign, she also restored Anne's reputation at court.





While part of the original Tudor Hampton Court survives, there is much more to Hampton Court Palace.

Visitors can also admire late 17th Century Baroque style rebuilding and expansion of the Palace that was undertaken by King William III and Queen Mary.

William hoped to create a Palace to rival Versailles but did not live long enough to complete this task.

That said, it was still a magnificent royal residence King George II was the last monarch to reside in the palace.

### The gardens

The Palace itself is surrounded on three sides by 60 acres of formal gardens and some 750 acres of parkland within a loop of the Thames.

The Hampton Court Palace maze is the UK's oldest surviving hedge maze.

It was commissioned around 1700 by William III, covers a third of an acre and is frustratingly effective at confusing those who enter it.

The gardens and grounds at Hampton Court provide for a relaxing stroll and picnic.

Attractive through the four seasons, they burst into life in spring when over one million flowering bulbs come into bloom.

### What's on

Hampton Court Palace also stages a year-round programme of festivals and special events.

Highlights among these are its annual music and food festivals and the Festive Fayre in December.

[www.hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace/whats-on](http://www.hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace/whats-on)

### The Historic Royal Palaces

Hampton Court Palace is managed by Historic Royal Palaces, an independent charity that also looks after the Tower of London, Kensington Palace, Kew Palace and the Banqueting House in Whitehall with Hillsborough Castle and Gardens in Northern Ireland.

[www.hrp.org.uk](http://www.hrp.org.uk)



The maze



RHS Hampton Court Flower Show





## Gardens to savour in all seasons

The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, a UNESCO World Heritage site, has the world's most diverse collection of plants, trees, and shrubs.

Comprising 326 acres of landscaped woodland, gardens and parkland, Kew was first founded in 1840, from an exotic garden that dated from 1759.

It now includes four Grade I listed buildings and 36 with a Grade II listing.

The Kew collection now includes over 30,000 different kinds of plants, with its herbarium having over seven million preserved plant specimens.

The horticultural library here has some 750,000 volumes with the illustrations collection containing more than 175,000 prints and drawings of plants.

But while those with a deep-rooted interest in arboriculture, floriculture or botany will find all they could wish for at Kew, for the rest of us the Royal Botanical Gardens provide a wonderfully relaxing day out.

It is no surprise to hear how many people take annual membership for the gardens at Kew.

### The Arboretum

Whether there's frost or even snow on the ground or spring in the air, a lazy hazy summers day or during the golden browns of autumn, the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew is a delight.

### The Arboretum

Covering over half of the Kew site, the Arboretum has over 14,000 trees of many thousands of varieties from across the world.

The treetop walkway, at 18 metres high, offers the chance to walk 200 metres through a canopy of lime, sweet chestnut, and oak trees.

The plant houses and galleries

The more exotic collections at the Royal Botanical Gardens are to be found in its plant houses.







### The Palm House

The grand facade of Palm house, built between 1844–1848, is one of the main features at Kew.

Step inside and the steamy environment offers the chance to experience the humidity of a tropical rainforest and discover the plants that thrive in these conditions.

### The Alpine House

Rare and unusual plants are housed in the arch shaped Davies Alpine House and Rock Garden, which designed to recreate the cool, dry, windy conditions that these plants favour.

### The Conservatory

The Princess of Wales Conservatory glasshouses contain ten different environments covering a range of tropical conditions and climatic zones.

Commemorating Princess Augusta, who founded the Gardens.

### Marianne North Gallery

Marianne North was a remarkable and talented Victorian artist with a great eye for botanical detail.

In this gallery, you can see 833 of her paintings displayed in geographical order, which she hung herself after travelling around the world.

### Shirley Sherwood Gallery

Kew holds one of the world's greatest collections of botanical art, with more than 200,000 items, dating back to the days before photography could be used for the study of plants.

This gallery is the first to be dedicated to botanical art.

### The Rose Garden



And finally, there the Rose Garden, which is laid out according to plans dating from 1848, has hundreds of rosebushes offering a subtle yet glorious scent and striking colour.

### What's on at Kew

The Royal Botanical Gardens runs an annual programme of special events, evening time picnic concerts, open air movies and the always popular Christmas at Kew.

[www.kew.org/kew-gardens/whats-on](http://www.kew.org/kew-gardens/whats-on)



A Midsummer's Night Dream

### Theatre On Kew

Another annual favourite is *Theatre On Kew* run by the *Australian Shakespeare Company*.

The company, which presents contemporary productions of Shakespeare and children's classics in botanical gardens around the world, has been at Kew for the past five summers.

Shakespeare is so well suited to outdoor performance and *Australian Shakespeare's* productions of the Bard's works suit the environment perfectly

We were lucky enough to get to their 2021 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which was as big and as bold as its surroundings demanded.

It delighted the packed picnicking audience who were obviously a mix of seasoned *Theatre on Kew* goers and those enjoying their first production.

The company's afternoon production of *The Wind in the Willows* delighted families with young children.

[www.theatreonkew.co.uk](http://www.theatreonkew.co.uk)





## London's largest Royal Park of special interest

A morning or afternoon in Richmond Park will also reward those able to spend a little longer in this part of West London

Covering some 2,500 acres, it is the largest of the capital's eight Royal Parks and resplendent in ancient trees and a range of rare species including fungi, birds, stag beetles, bats, grasses, and wildflowers.

The Park is also London's largest *Site of Special Scientific Interest*.

It was first established in 1625, when Charles came, with his entourage to Richmond to escape an outbreak of the plague in London.

While holding court there, he commandeered the area on the hill above Richmond into an area for hunting of Red and Fallow deer and today some 650 of these fine animals live in the park.

The landscape of Richmond Park today is largely determined by the deer herds that have roamed freely here for almost four centuries.

The parks grassland habitat requires grazing with the trees all having a *browse line* as the deer eat all the leaves and twigs growing below about 1.5 metres.

Deer grazing also prevents tree seedlings from growing, keeping the grassland open.

During the autumn the deer 'rut' (breeding season) sees the Red stags and Fallow bucks competing for females (hinds and does respectively).

The large males roar, bark, and clash antlers, to fight off rivals and attract as many females as possible.

The young, born between May and July are hidden among the bracken and long grass by their mothers.

[www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/richmond-park](http://www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/richmond-park)

<https://www.frp.org.uk/its-the-rutting-season-what-you-need-to-know/>

The Royal Parks also look after Hyde Park, The Green Park, Greenwich Park, St James's Park, Bushy Park, The Regent's Park, Kensington Gardens.

[www.royalparks.org](http://www.royalparks.org)





## A place to stay



# The Queen's Head, Kingston-upon-Thames

**Fullers was founded in Chiswick, West London in 1845 and so is local to Hampton Court and Kew.**

That said, the company runs hundreds of pubs and bars, throughout the country, from traditional pubs in historic buildings to modern cocktail bars and prides itself on maintaining the character of each establishment in the portfolio.

It also has 34 *pubs with rooms* and hotels ranging from six-bedroom coaching inns to 80 bed central London hotels.

Popular locations include the Jurassic Coast and New Forest along with Stratford-upon-Avon and Winchester.

## The Queen's Head

The Queen's Head at Kingston-upon-Thames is well placed for those looking to take in Hampton Court, Kew, and Richmond Park.

It is also a very short walk to the Thames, which made for a pleasant stroll along the riverbank to the country town feel of central Kingston-upon-Thames on our first evening.

Our room at the Queen's Head was all one would want in a pub, with comfortable with full en-suite, tea, and coffee facilities and wi-fi.

## The welcome

It is the welcome that sets it apart.

The best pubs have character with staff that make you feel like a local as soon as you arrive, and the hospitality at the Queen's Head was as friendly as it was efficient.

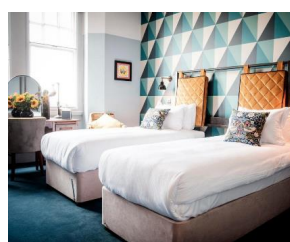
Then there is the 'pub grub', which can sometimes be a little limited.

Not with Fuller's who place great emphasis on the quality of a menu that concentrates on seasonal ingredients that are sourced locally wherever possible.

While I opted for a tremendous, battered haddock with triple cooked chips and crushed minted peas, Ann had a delicious Miso glazed tofu with an orange, pine nut, brown rice & sesame seed salad.

Had we been able to spend another night we agreed there would have been stiff competition between the Roast salmon and Chalcroft Farm beef burger or Prawn & crayfish Marie Rose and the Plant-based Club from the sandwich menu.

## More information



[www.queensheadkingston.co.uk](http://www.queensheadkingston.co.uk)  
[www.fullers.co.uk/hotels](http://www.fullers.co.uk/hotels)

## Shakespeare in the Garden



The other thing to look out for is Fuller's annual *Shakespeare In The Garden* season through late-spring and summer.

Theatre company *Open Bar* will stage some 64 alfresco performances across 39 Fuller's pubs from Bristol to Greenwich.

The productions invariably have 'comedy, romance and adventure' with original songs to help customers follow the plot.

[www.fullers.co.uk/shakespeare](http://www.fullers.co.uk/shakespeare)



## A snapshot of Hampton Court Palace and the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew



## AllWays traveller and the International Travel Writers Alliance



**AllWays traveller** is the consumer travel magazine from the International Travel Writers, providing independent travellers with views of the world from Alliance travel journalists.

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



**The International Travel Writers Alliance** is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

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



**Ann Meador** is a professional travel writer and photographer and Managing Editor of *AllWays Traveller*.



**Ashley Gibbins** is a professional travel writer and photographer and Managing Director of the International Travel Writers Alliance.