

**Historic Royal
PALACES**

The new citizen's guide to Historic Royal Palaces



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Welcome

Congratulations on becoming a new British Citizen!

The Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, the Banqueting House, Kensington Palace and Kew Palace are some of the most important, interesting and exciting buildings in British history. Today the independent charity Historic Royal Palaces cares for them, with the aim of helping everyone to explore the stories of how monarchs and people have shaped society in some of the greatest palaces ever built.

Whether you have lived in Britain for many years, or have only come here relatively recently, this booklet aims to give you an introduction to each of these five fascinating palaces, and the stories associated with them.

We have also included information about community projects which take place in the palaces, as well as information about opportunities for visiting, volunteering and even how to work in some of these magnificent buildings.

If you would like to find out more about the palaces, you can visit www.hrp.org.uk



Above: New citizens after their ceremony at Kensington Palace
Opposite: Citizenship ceremonies at the Tower of London and the Banqueting House

Tower of London

The Tower of London is over 900 years old. This castle in the centre of London was started by King William I ('the Conqueror') in the years after his invasion of England in 1066. It was built to intimidate the local population so that they would not rebel against the new king's regime. Over the following centuries, this fortress grew and grew, and now over twenty towers and other buildings make up what is known as the Tower of London. The original Tower was built on the orders of William the Conqueror and still stands in the centre of the Tower of London, and is known as the White Tower.

Over the years this fortress has been used as a palace, a prison, a jewel house, a coin mint and even a zoo!

Because the Tower was such a secure building, it started to be used to keep important prisoners. 8,000 prisoners have been held within the Tower's walls, including several kings and queens. John II of France, John Balliol the King of Scots, and two of Henry VIII's wives were held here; the future Elizabeth I was also imprisoned by her half sister Mary I in the mid 16th century. In 1780 the American revolutionary politician Henry Laurens, one time President of the Continental Congress, was sent to the Tower; and Rudolf Hess, Adolf Hitler's Deputy in World War Two, was briefly imprisoned here too.

The Crown Jewels have been kept at the Tower of London for hundreds of years. There are over 23,000 jewels in the crowns, orbs, sceptres and swords on display. In the Imperial State Crown alone (worn by The Queen each year when she opens parliament) there are 2,868 diamonds, 273 pearls, 17 sapphires, 11 emeralds and 5 rubies, whilst the sovereign's sceptre contains the world's largest top quality cut diamond - the 530-carat Cullinan I.



Armour © Courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the Armouries.

Tower of London

The Yeoman Warders who guard the Tower of London (or Beefeaters as they are popularly known) are iconic symbols of Britain and its capital city. Their distinctive uniforms – the navy and red ‘undress’ uniform worn for day use, and the red and gold uniform worn on state occasions, make them instantly recognisable. No one is quite sure where their nickname ‘Beefeaters’ comes from, but one theory is that because their position in the Royal Household gave them the right to eat as much beef as they wanted from the king’s table, they were nicknamed ‘Beefeaters’.

One of the Yeoman Warders has the responsibility of looking after the ravens who live at the Tower. Ravens are the largest of the crow family, and legend has it that should the ravens ever leave the Tower of London, the kingdom will fall.

It is believed that it was Charles II who decreed that at least six ravens had to be kept at the Tower to avoid this fate. Today there are six ravens, plus three ‘spares’ – just in case! Their names are Gandulf, Hugine, Marley, Erin, Merlin, Baldrick, Munin, Thor and Gwyllum.

For six hundred years the Tower of London had its very own menagerie (or zoo). Foreign rulers would give exotic animals to English kings as gifts and these animals would then be sent to the Tower for safekeeping. Over the years many animals came to the Tower including a hyena, an ostrich, a baboon, an alligator, monkeys, elephants, bears, many lions and much more!

In 1830 the menagerie was split up, with some animals going to the newly created London Zoo and others going on tour in America with a travelling exhibition.

Today the Tower is a World Heritage Site, visited by millions of people each year.



Hampton Court Palace

Hampton Court Palace is two palaces in one: a grand Tudor palace which was Henry VIII's favourite residence, and a stunning baroque palace built by William III and Mary II at the end of the 17th century.

In 1514 Thomas Wolsey - who was both a senior churchman (he was a Cardinal of the Church and the Archbishop of York amongst his posts) and an influential statesman (he was Lord Chancellor) - bought Hampton Court, after rising to prominence in the Court of Henry VIII.

Wolsey grew wealthy thanks to his senior religious and political offices and he transformed the manor house at Hampton Court into one of the grandest palaces in the land. By the end of the 1520s though, Wolsey had fallen from the King's favour, and so he gave - or surrendered - to Henry VIII his greatest treasure: Hampton Court Palace.

Henry spent more than £62,000 (a huge sum of money at the time) over ten years re-building and extending Hampton Court. He built tennis courts, bowling alleys and pleasure gardens for recreation, a 1,100 acre hunting park, kitchens covering 36,000 square feet, a beautiful chapel,

a grand communal dining room (the Great Hall) and a multiple garderobe (or lavatory) - known as the Great House of Easement - which could seat 28 people at a time! This was one of the most modern palaces in Europe.

Hampton Court would be the scene of arguably the greatest moment in Henry VIII's personal life: the birth of his son, the future Edward VI, on the 12th of October 1537.



Hampton Court Palace

Whilst significant parts of this Tudor palace survive today – including the Great Hall, chapel, kitchens, courtyards and more, a large amount of the buildings at Hampton Court date from the late 17th century and the reign of the joint monarchs William III and Mary II. These new buildings were designed and decorated in an extravagantly elaborate style known as baroque.

William and Mary found that their principal residence – Whitehall Palace in London – was not suited to the King's asthma. They therefore commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to rebuild Hampton Court as a new palace which would ensure that it continued to be one of the greatest palaces in Europe. With stunning ceilings painted by Antonio Verrio and intricately carved fireplaces by Grinling Gibbons, as well as great paintings, porcelain and furniture from the royal collections, the interior more than matched the beauty of the exterior.

Outside the palace walls, the gardens of Hampton Court are works of art in their own right. Covering 24 hectares, they show styles of garden design stretching from the 16th century to the present day, and are known the world over.

From the grand Tudor rooms to the beautiful baroque apartments, great courtyards and kitchens to magnificent gardens, Hampton Court is still one of the most impressive palaces anywhere in Europe.



Banqueting House

The Banqueting House is the last surviving part of the Palace of Whitehall, which was once a huge and magnificent palace in the centre of London. The Banqueting House is arguably the most important building of the 17th century, because of its architecture, its symbolism and the events it has witnessed.

When King James VI of Scotland inherited the crown of England from Elizabeth I in 1603, he moved to London and became King James I of England. In his palace of Whitehall, he rebuilt Elizabeth I's crumbling Banqueting House; yet this would burn down in 1619.

A new building was needed: it would have to be suitably grand so that it could be used to meet foreign ambassadors and also to stage elaborate masques (these were a mixture of a fancy dress ball and interactive theatre).

The man who was given the job of designing this building was a painter turned architect called Inigo Jones, who chose to design it in a style unlike anything that had ever been built before in this country – the new Banqueting House was to be built in the classical style, inspired by the buildings of ancient Rome. It would be 55 feet wide by 55 feet high by 110 feet long, all above a vaulted basement (which was intended as a drinking den for the king). By early 1622, it was complete.

This building must have looked very unusual at the time, as it was made of light coloured stone and built in the new classical style, sitting amongst a variety of red brick and wooden Tudor buildings.

It is believed that it was in 1629-30 that James' son, Charles I, commissioned the famous Flemish artist, Sir Peter Paul Rubens to paint the ceiling of the Banqueting House. The results would prove to be the crowning glory of this magnificent building. The paintings were meant to symbolise the wise and strong rule of the Stuart dynasty (the family name of King James and King Charles), and each of the largest canvases depicts James in glory – the first king of all Scotland, England, Ireland and Wales.



Banqueting House

One of the darkest moments in the history of the Banqueting House was the execution of King Charles I. The Civil War between the rival armies of King and Parliament, reached its conclusion in 1649 with the trial of the defeated Charles I. He was found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. A scaffold was constructed outside the Banqueting House, and on the morning of 30 January the King entered the Palace of Whitehall for the last time. He was led into the Banqueting House, and then out through a window onto the scaffold. With one stroke, the executioner severed the King's head from his body.

With no king, Oliver Cromwell, the leader of the Parliamentary army, became the Head of State, and after a few years of lying empty, the Banqueting House became his hall of audience, used for welcoming ambassadors and important guests. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, this grand building once again became the home for royal ceremonies.

Yet when the Palace of Whitehall burned to the ground in a massive fire in 1698, only the Banqueting House survived. It was turned into a chapel, and used as such for the next two centuries. It then became a museum, before being restored to its former glory in the 1960s, so that it could once again be used for royal and government events, as well as society and corporate functions – and, of course, opened to the public so that everyone can see its beauty.



Kensington Palace

Kensington Palace has been the home of kings and queens, princes and princesses for over 300 years, playing a central role in the lives of the people who lived there and, indeed, the nation.

The palace was originally a mansion called Nottingham House. However, when the joint sovereigns, William III and Mary II took the throne in 1689, they decided that they would not live in Whitehall Palace in the centre of London, but would instead have Nottingham House extended to become a suitable royal residence. Two of their most notable additions were the grand King's Gallery and the Queen's Gallery.

In their new home, the monarchs displayed their collections of fine art – including works by Titian, Raphael, Holbein and van Dyck – whilst furniture and porcelain enhanced the increasingly large residence. Both Mary and William died at Kensington. On 28 December 1694, Mary succumbed to smallpox at the young age of 32. William would return there after breaking a collar bone falling from a horse in early 1702, and died on 8 March that same year.

Their successor as sovereign, Queen Anne, mainly made additions to the gardens around the palace, including the beautiful Orangery, built in 1704-5. In the winter months it was used to house plants, but in the summer it became an ideal venue for court entertainments such as balls.

When George I became king, he ordered substantial rebuilding, turning Kensington into a grand royal palace. He commissioned William Kent to paint the ceilings of three new state rooms (the Privy Chamber, the Cupola Room and the Withdrawing Room) because he cost less money than the official court painter! The magnificent decoration of the King's Grand Staircase was also the work of Kent, who painted an arcaded gallery around the stairs, showing members of George I's court crowding over the balustrades. George I's son, George II, would be the last monarch to use Kensington as his principal residence.



Kensington Palace

Although the palace would no longer be used by kings and queens, it has been used by princes and princesses ever since. One of the most notable residents was the future Queen Victoria, who was born in Kensington Palace on the 24th of May 1819. Victoria's father died when she was only nine months old, and so she was brought up in the palace by her mother.

Access to the young princess was controlled by Victoria's mother and the unofficial Comptroller of her Household Sir John Conroy. Victoria found her youth rather stifling as her mother and Conroy tried to use Victoria to maintain and improve their power, position and wealth.

However, on the 20th of June 1837, Victoria was woken to be told that she was Queen. Her first request was to have one hour alone. Later, she would hold her first Privy Council meeting in the palace's Red Saloon. Just a few weeks later, she left Kensington for Buckingham Palace.

Kensington's private apartments have continued to be lived in by members of the Royal Family. The palace once again became the focus of world attention when Diana, Princess of Wales died in 1997. Kensington, which had been her home for 16 years, was visited by thousands of mourners laying flowers by its famous golden gates.

A major renovation and restoration project is currently underway at Kensington Palace, meaning that by 2012 it will have new visitor routes, a new entrance, a new public garden, better visitor access and new exhibition and learning spaces. Whilst this work is undertaken, the palace will remain open, but is being transformed into the 'Enchanted Palace' where tales from the palace's history will come alive through theatre and fashion installations.



Kew Palace

Kew Palace can rightly be called a 'doll's house' of a palace. Its most famous residents were King George III and his wife Queen Charlotte, who famously preferred to live a simpler life than many monarchs, with smaller homes, pretty and practical gardens and a large family. Kew Palace is a prime example of this more domestic style of royal life.

Between 1718 and 1818, the gardens of Kew and Richmond (today they make up the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew) were the private property of the royal family, and were ideal locations for them to make peaceful homes.

There were once several royal residences in the vast expanse of greenery, including Richmond Lodge, and the White House. Both these buildings were demolished by George III, and a great Castellated Palace was designed, and building work started in 1800. The costs of this great gothic style castle had risen so high by 1811 that it was abandoned, and in 1828, what had been built was demolished, the stone being removed for use on other buildings.

It was fortunate therefore, that one reasonably sized and habitable residence remained at Kew – a little salmon coloured house, originally built as a merchant's home in 1631, which would become the king and queen's new home, and what we know today as Kew Palace.

George suffered from the disease 'porphyria', which causes periods of mental confusion, and led to him being known as the 'mad king'. He had several periods when his disease overcame him, sometimes lasting a few months, sometimes several years. During his illnesses in 1801 and 1804, it was Kew Palace where he stayed.



Kew Palace

In 1818 a double royal wedding took place in the palace. As Queen Charlotte was ill and staying at Kew, the Drawing Room was turned into a temporary chapel, and her sons, the Dukes of Clarence and Kent, were both married in a ceremony conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Between 1996 and 2006, Kew Palace was closed to the public and underwent a massive conservation and representation project. When a patch of red pigment was discovered behind an old hopper at the top of a drainpipe, it showed that the whole of the palace exterior had been colour washed in a vibrant shade of red-pink.

Today the palace is now the same colour that it would have been in its early days. Inside, some rooms have been restored to how they would have appeared when George III and his family lived there. Using traces of paint and wallpaper, as well as historic records, experts were able to recreate wall papers, borders, paint colours and decorative schemes so that rooms accurately reflected the tastes of their former occupants. Other rooms have been left as they were after George III's daughters left the palace, untouched for over 200 years.

Today the palace captures the atmosphere of the private life of the royal family in the 1800s.

Elsewhere in Kew Gardens, the palace has a sister building - a small cottage built for Queen Charlotte around 1771. It was built as a quaint retreat for her and her family to enjoy picnics or tea as they strolled through the gardens. The cottage has a rustic look inside and out, from its thatched roof to its tiled floors and floral wall paintings, the latter believed to have been painted by her daughter, Princess Elizabeth.



Community

Historic Royal Palaces is committed to helping people in the local areas around our palaces find new ways of enjoying the historic sites on their doorsteps.

We have an Outreach & Community Involvement team to run projects, events, workshop programmes and create resources to involve people of all ages in the local communities around our palaces.

From oral history projects with older people to art and drama workshops for young children, travelling exhibitions to access initiatives, large public events to creative youth projects and much more, we seek to find new ways to bring these palaces alive and show their relevance to the local community.

We also now host special citizenship ceremonies at our palaces, giving some new British citizens the chance to have a life changing moment, in an iconic building.

For more information about community projects, visit www.hrp.org.uk/outreachandcommunity

Opposite: A community event



Opportunities

Visit...

All of the palaces featured in this booklet are open to the public. To find out about what to see, special events and ticket prices, visit www.hrp.org.uk

Volunteer...

Whether you could spare an afternoon each week or occasional hours we would value your support. In return, we can offer volunteers behind the scenes insights and a special intimacy with the palaces.

We believe that volunteers provide an important link between the historic buildings in our care, our visitors and the local community. Volunteer support has a valuable role to play across all of the palaces within our care.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact: volunteers@hrp.org.uk

Working in a palace...

It takes a lot of people to run the palaces. In the Historic Royal Palaces group – from warders engaging with our visitors bringing the palaces' stories to life, to conservators caring for our collections, curators researching history and retail sales staff selling a memory to take home – and many, many more roles.

If you think you have the right skills for one of our varied roles and would like to find out about opportunities to work at one of our palaces, why not visit our website: www.hrp.org.uk/recruitment



Above and Left: Staff at work
Right: A conservator at work





Historic Royal Palaces is the independent charity that looks after the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, the Banqueting House, Kensington Palace and Kew Palace. We help everyone explore the story of how monarchs and people have shaped society, in some of the greatest palaces ever built.

We receive no funding from the Government or the Crown, so we depend on the support of our visitors, members, donors, volunteers and sponsors.