

# Hampton Court Palace

## Guide for parents/carers of children and people on the autistic spectrum and related conditions

This guide was compiled with the help of the Hampton Court Palace Access Forum and some families with a child on the autistic spectrum.

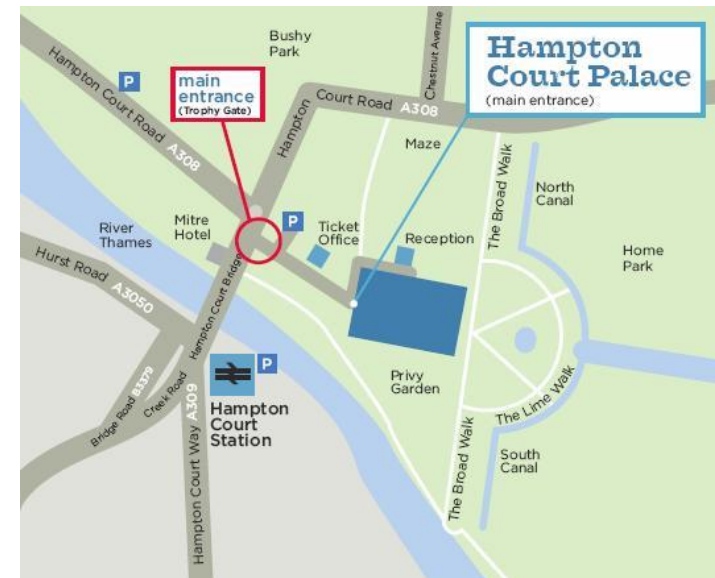


A family visiting the palace

Everyone on the Autistic Spectrum is different but we hope this guide will answer common questions and highlight relevant issues. If you have any additional queries please don't hesitate to contact the palace in advance (details are at the end of this guide). Members of staff on site, particularly the State Apartment Warders, are also very happy to help you get the most from your visit.

## Arrival

- Hampton Court Palace is located next to the River Thames to the south west of London. It is within the M25 and brown attraction signs are on all the approach roads.
- South West Trains run services direct from London Waterloo to Hampton Court station, which is just across the bridge from the palace.
- There are a number of buses that go past the palace gates.
- Limited car parking is available on site and on Hampton Court Green. Parking is also available at Hampton Court station. There is a charge to park in all the car parks and spaces are available on a first come first served basis. The palace car park has nine disabled parking bays.
- For more information about how to get to us, and for car park prices, please visit our website:  
<http://www.hrp.org.uk/HamptonCourtPalace/planyourvisit/gettingthere.aspx> For help in planning your journey, visit [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)



## Visiting times

- If you wish to avoid as many queues as possible, try to arrive early preferably within the first hour of opening to be some of our first visitors. Hampton Court Palace opens at 10 o'clock every day.
- The palace and gardens close at 6pm during the summer and at 4.30pm during the winter. Closing times change when the clocks go forward and back.
- The Maze and Magic Garden close earlier than the palace and formal gardens.
- Our daily live interpretation programme runs from mid-morning to mid-afternoon, with actors in costumes wandering around and interacting with visitors.
- The peak visiting period is Easter to October, but Christmas and the Spring and Autumn school holidays are also busy. Weekends are busier than weekdays.



## Ticketing



The way in from the car park



The entrance to the ticket office (steps and ramp)

- If you are a member of Historic Royal Palaces, you can go straight to the main entrance. Membership is an exceedingly economical option if you hope to visit more than once and/or go to the other palaces in our group.
- If not, and you wish to avoid queuing, tickets can be purchased in advance from our website or by telephone. They will be posted to your home address if you buy them more than seven working days in advance; otherwise you can collect them on arrival.
- Tickets purchased in advance are valid for seven days from the date selected.
- Disabled visitors to Hampton Court Palace need to buy whichever ticket is appropriate but a necessary carer or personal assistant goes in free. If visitors can bring documentation showing that they are disabled – for example a disabled parking badge, something to say they are in receipt of any disability living allowances, specialist's letter – that would be helpful but isn't necessary. Many Health Authorities now issue cards to families with a child who has a hidden disability and these are also acceptable.

- If you buy your tickets through our website, you may need to collect carer tickets from the ticket office in the Welcome Centre as they cannot be issued in advance online. This is so that a different carer may accompany someone each time they visit.
- Check our website or ask an assistant for what will be the best option for you and your family. Carer tickets are issued free of charge but a normal family ticket (and no free carer ticket) might prove be your best, and cheapest, option.
- If you prefer to buy tickets on arrival you may have to queue during school holidays and at weekends during the summer.
- If coming by train, Hampton Court Palace tickets can be purchased from staffed South West Trains stations.



## Entrance

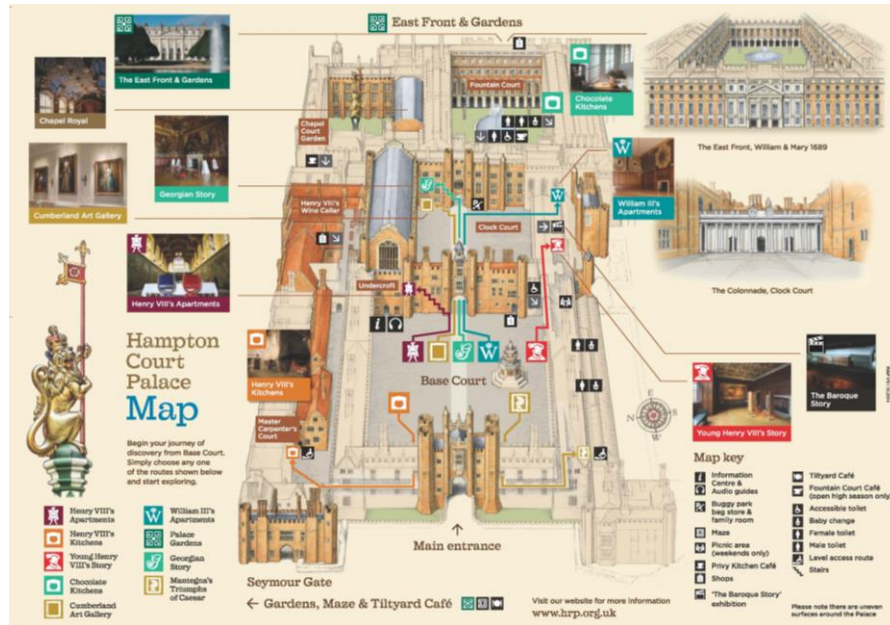
- Visitors enter Hampton Court Palace via the main entrance, down the drive from the ticket office. This leads into the first courtyard, which is cobbled and called Base Court.
  - On occasion, the main entrance is closed to visitors so the way in is through Seymour Gate (the green door on the far left of the picture at the bottom of the previous page).
- To get through the main entrance visitors cross a stone bridge over the palace moat. There are carved stone statues of heraldic beasts on either side of the bridge - and a very large drop down to the moat (which is dry) shielded by a castellated border. The lower portions are only a couple of feet high and have bars to protect them.
- On rare occasions bags may be searched on entry, so it is advisable to let children know this in advance so that they are prepared.



One of the beasts at the entrance



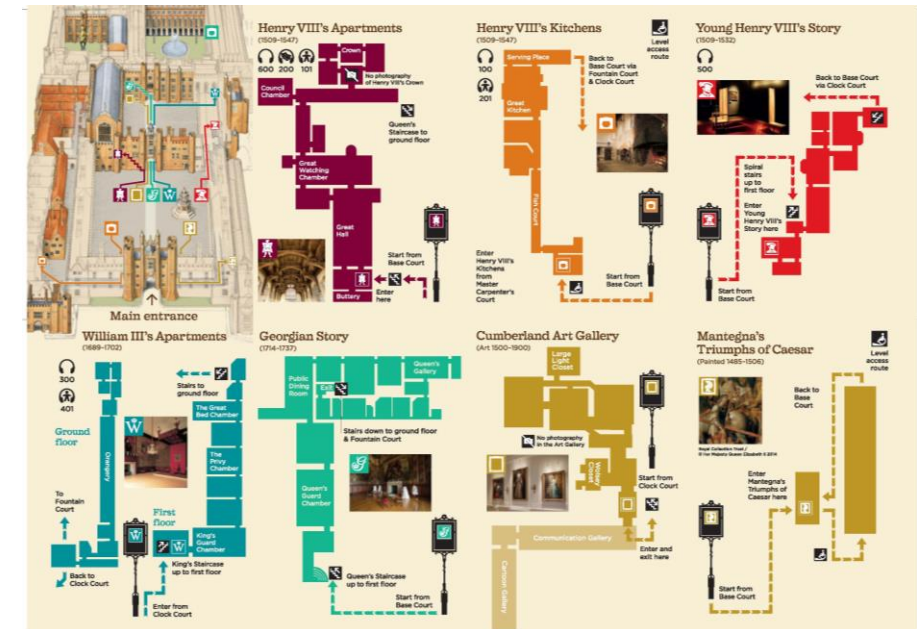
# Visiting Hampton Court Palace



Palace orientation map – ground floor

- There is a lot to see and do at Hampton Court Palace and visitors are encouraged to explore it in their own time – there is no set route.
- Visitors may join the live costumed interpreters on their tours and at presentations. There are also audio tours available from the Information Centre. Both of these are included in palace admission tickets so are free.
- Digital missions, interactive adventures played on a mobile device that help you to explore the palace, are also available. They can be collected from the Information Centre or downloaded to your own device.

- Visitors may also wander round on their own with a palace guidebook (which can be purchased at the ticket office and/or all the palace shops) and chat to the staff.



Palace orientation map – first floor

- The palace is divided into 'routes' which roughly correspond with when they were built. For instance, Henry VIII's Apartments were built during the reign of King Henry VIII (1509-1547) and William III's Apartments were built during King William III's reign (1689-1702).
- Some of the rooms have very little furniture in them, in keeping with what they looked like when they were new, but most have paintings or tapestries on the walls. Some of the paintings are very large and many of them are of naked figures.

- A real fire is lit in the largest of the rooms in Henry VIII's Kitchens on a daily basis except when the chimney is swept (twice a year, in the spring and autumn).



For those with a limited amount of time we have the following recommendations to get the most from your visit:

#### 1 hour – the Tudor experience

- Henry VIII's Apartments and his Crown (20 mins)
- The Tudor Kitchens (20 mins)
- Young Henry VIII's Story (20 mins)

#### 1 hour – the Baroque experience

- William III's Apartments (35 mins)
- Watch the Baroque Story film (15 mins)
- The Georgian Chocolate Kitchen (10 mins)

#### 2 hours

- Henry VIII's Apartment and his Crown (30 mins)
- The Tudor Kitchens (20 mins)
- Chapel Court and/or the Chapel Royal (10 mins)
- Young Henry VIII's Story (20 mins)
- William III's Apartments (15 mins)
- The Georgian Story (25 mins)

#### 3 hours

- Henry VIII's Apartment and his Crown (35 mins)
- The Tudor Kitchens (20 mins)
- Chapel Court and/or the Chapel Royal (10 mins)
- Young Henry VIII's Story (25 mins)
- The Baroque Story film (15 mins)
- William III's Apartments (35 mins)
- The Georgian Chocolate Kitchen (10 mins)
- The Georgian Story (30 mins)

And if you're staying longer don't miss:

- Mantegna's 'Triumphs of Caesar'
- The Formal Gardens and the Great Vine
- The famous Hampton Court Palace Maze
- The Magic Garden
- The King's Kitchen Garden

## General information

- Hampton Court Palace is a large site and there are a number of places, both inside the palace and in the gardens, where children may hide or get lost. Visitors often comment that the palace itself is as much a maze as the world famous one in the gardens!
- We suggest that, upon arrival, you select a suitable location to meet up should you get separated. It needs to be simple to remember and easy to find particularly from several directions. Perhaps somewhere like the replica Wine Fountain which is usually in Base Court (if it isn't, then it'll be in Clock Court), but feel free to choose your own location.
- There are several visual displays and/or interactives in the palace and a number of short films that set the scene. In Base Court there are also a few wooden models.
- There are some 'paper' dresses in the Georgian Story representing people who were at Court in the 18th Century. They are generally white, but three of them have fabric images projected onto them, which makes them appear to move. Others 'speak' when visitors get close – usually making a comment about the Georgian Court. So although they have no heads, they can appear to be alive.
- Henry VIII's Apartments and Henry VIII's Kitchens are the most popular parts of the palace, particularly between 11am and 3pm most days. If you wish to avoid crowds we recommend you visit Young Henry VIII's Story or William III's Apartments first.
- The palace and gardens can feel very crowded although there are areas that are often quiet (especially in the gardens). There are unlikely to be queues except at the ticket office, at the audio tour distribution desk in the Information Centre and in the cafés at lunchtime.



- The exception to this is outside the Royal Pew where our replica of Henry VIII's Crown of State is displayed. As numbers are limited in the Royal Pew people sometimes have to wait for other visitors to come out before they can go in.
- There is a variety of surfaces and room sizes – everything from enormous rooms (like the Great Hall) to narrow or small areas with low door frames. There are also a number of steps, although many are shallow as most were built for the asthmatic William III, and even one spiral staircase.
- Please watch out for the rope barriers that protect the artefacts and/or act as path markers. Artefacts that are not behind barriers – for instance in Henry VIII's Kitchens and in the Great Watching Chamber in Henry VIII's Apartments – may be handled.
- Dogs may be walked in the parts of the gardens that do not require an admission ticket as long as they are kept on a lead. Only recognised guide, assistance and service dogs may enter the palace and formal gardens and all can be identified by their jackets and/or leads. As these are working dogs, please do not attempt to pat or distract them.
- We often have special events which require re-routing of visitors or which might create unusual noises. The BBC Good Food Fayre uses the gardens and/or courtyards and the annual Music Festival in June takes over Base Court. During the Music Festival there may be some rehearsals taking place – which visitors may or may not be able to watch but will definitely hear!

## Staff and volunteers

- All our staff and volunteers are happy to help you – please ask if you have any special requirements.
- The State Apartment Warders are particularly knowledgeable about the history of the palace and its inhabitants. They wear bright red coats or waistcoats – unless they are tending the fire in Henry VIII's Kitchens, in which case they will be in green protective clothing.
- Our helpful volunteers wear a red sash.



- One State Apartment Warder per day is the designated palace first aider. So if you have any first aid needs, please speak to any of the Warders in red and they will call their colleague. Generally, the first aider will come to the patient.
- We have a First Aid Room which, as long as it is not in use, is a good place to take someone who needs to have some quiet time. However, it is not marked on the palace map and is kept locked if not in use. If you feel you may like to use it, please ask to speak to the first aider.

## Family trails

- Packed with fun quizzes, activities, facts and illustrations, our free family trails and Time Explorer Missions for different age groups are the perfect way to explore Hampton Court Palace as a family.
- They can be collected from the Information Centre; when you've completed one, bring it back for a prize!



A family looking at the Family Trails



## Costumed guided tours and presentations



A typical live interpretation presentation in one of the courtyards

- Everyday our costumed performers give dramatic presentations about the stories and events that really happened at Hampton Court. They generally focus on stories from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries so can be found in the cloisters, courtyards, Henry VIII's Apartments and William III's Apartments.
- The 'Today's Programme' leaflet showing the times of the tours and presentations is available on our website in advance, in the ticket office on arrival or from the Information Centre inside the palace off Base Court.
- There is no need to book and you don't need to show your admission ticket to join in the fun as all activities begin inside the palace. Just look in 'Today's Programme' for the meeting place and turn up at the appointed time.

- The presentations are very entertaining, involving a lot of shouting and some moving around. Visitors are often encouraged to react to and participate in the tours and presentations. Children are generally invited to come to the front but it is not compulsory.
- Velvet gowns can be borrowed from the Wardrobe in the Information Centre so that visitors can feel appropriately dressed should they meet any of the interpreters. These need to be returned when you leave the palace, even if you are just going into the gardens or to the café.
- During school holidays, bank holidays, selected weekends, Christmas and Easter the costumed performers are joined by additional interpreters to really bring the palace alive. Additional activities may include cooks in Henry VIII's Kitchens or the Georgian Chocolate Kitchen preparing a meal, etiquette lessons, falconry displays, Fool Shows, the chance to tilt at the quintain (beginner jousting) and dancing – subject to the time of year.
- If you have additional needs within your party, there is an access guide available in the ticket office and the Information Centre. Detailed access information is also on our website: <http://www.hrp.org.uk/HamptonCourtPalace/planyourvisit/disabledaccess.aspx>
- Owing to necessary on-going conservation work, routes around or within the building are subject to closure and change at short notice.

## Family activities

- During school holidays we often have craft activities for children and families in the Clore Learning Centre or in one of the schools activity rooms inside the palace.
- They are free to join and usually involve making and decorating a hat or mask to wear around the palace or contributing to an art installation e.g. a flower for a recreation of the palace gardens.
- The activities are very popular and therefore can get quite crowded and are often noisy. Parents/carers may prefer to take the component parts away with them to do at home; if so, please just ask the staff and volunteers running the activities.



## Audio tours



- There are four audio tours of different areas of the palace available in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Japanese, Russian and Korean:
  - Henry VIII's Kitchens
  - Young Henry VIII's Story
  - Henry VIII's Apartments
    - o A formal tour led by palace experts
    - o A dramatized tour led by Sir Thomas, one of Henry VIII's courtiers
  - The William III Apartments
- We also have three family audio tours in English that are suitable for children aged 6 and over:
  - A beastly palace
  - Tudor rich and poor
  - William III's Apartments

- There is no need to book and you don't need to show your admission ticket. However, audio guides are subject to availability.
- They use drama and sound effects to set the scene and to deliver information about the different areas of the palace in an entertaining way.
- Please do not take the audio tour units into the cafés and gardens. They should be returned to the Information Centre or left in the deposit boxes by the east and west gates.
- Illustrated transcripts of all the tours are available from the Information Centre.
- The Digital Missions are suitable for all ages but are aimed at those aged 7-11 years.

## Tours and talks by palace staff

- These are generally seasonal and don't take place every day. They cover a range of specialist subjects – from the gardens (both their history and the work that goes on in them now) to the Great Vine in the summer months, from tours of the Verrio paintings to recently conserved State Bed's in the autumn. And conservation tours or object talks on a more general theme at any time of year.
- Numbers at these tours and talks are often limited so please reserve a place on arrival. Details of where to go to reserve a space are in 'Today's Programme'.
- We also offer private guided tours with one of our Institute of Tourist Guiding Level 2 Accredited Hampton Court Palace Guide Lecturers but these are at an addition cost. Prices start at £132 (£110 + VAT) for a tour lasting 1½ hours. The guide will tailor the tour content to the needs and interests of the party. If you are interested in this option please telephone ++44 (0)20 3166 6000 or email [customerservices@hrp.org.uk](mailto:customerservices@hrp.org.uk)



The Privy Garden



## Chapel Royal and Royal Pew



- The Chapel Royal is still a place of Christian worship so is closed on Sundays, except in August when the choir and clergy are on holiday.
- This means that Henry VIII's Crown of State in the Royal Pew is not on public display until after the morning service has finished (so from 12.30pm) until just before the afternoon service begins (the Royal Pew closes at 3.00pm).
- Visitors are asked to respect the Chapel and Royal Pew as places of worship as there may be staff or visitors offering up private prayers. Everyone is asked to be quiet and talk in whispers.
- In keeping with places of Christian worship, gentlemen (men and boys) should remove their hat if they are wearing one on entry.
- There is a separate information leaflet specifically about the Chapel Royal but the staff on duty there are also happy to answer quiet questions.
- Visitors are welcome to attend Sunday services. There is one in the morning and one in the afternoon; details are on our website <http://www.hrp.org.uk/HamptonCourtPalace/planyourvisit/religiouservices.aspx> Services generally last an hour and follow the Book of Common Prayer.
- There is also a Lunchtime Eucharist on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:30-12:50. All are welcome to attend. The Chapel and Royal Pew will remain open to visitors throughout.
- In the lunch break between Sunday services, music recitals take place in the Chapel Royal. All visitors are welcome to stop and listen. From 2 o'clock visitors to the Royal Pew can also hear the Chapel Choir practicing for the afternoon service. The main body of the Chapel is closed at this time.
- The Chapel Royal and Royal Pew also close at short notice for special services (i.e. on Good Friday), weddings and funerals. These closures are usually for a few hours rather than most of the day like on Sundays and are usually in the afternoon.

## Photography

- We allow visitors to take photographs and films for their own personal use as long as they take general pictures and do not focus on specific objects (for which they will need permission from the person who owns the object).
- There are two exceptions where photography is **not** allowed:
  - anywhere in the Chapel Royal and Royal Pew,
  - anywhere in the Cumberland Art Gallery.
- Photography in any special, temporary exhibitions is also prohibited.
- In crowded areas there may be a number of people with cameras. Although flash photography is discouraged for conservation reasons, it is not prohibited so there may be some flash photography.
- Tripods may only be used in the courtyards and gardens, not inside the palace.



The Cumberland Art Gallery – where photography is not allowed

## Catering

- There are two permanent catering outlets at Hampton Court Palace – the Tiltyard Café, in the gardens, and the Privy Kitchen Coffee Shop, which is inside the palace and is smaller and often busier with less choice.
- Like most catering outlets, the busiest period is at lunchtime. We therefore recommend that you plan to have an early or late lunch to avoid too many crowds/queues.
- Menus are on signs at the entrances and sample menus are available on the Hampton Court website. Please note that they are subject to change at short notice.
- If you have any specific dietary requirements please feel free to contact the Catering Manager in advance to discuss options.
- During the summer months, we have a third catering outlet – the Fountain Court Café inside the palace off Fountain Court. It has a limited menu and is waiter-service only.

### The Privy Kitchen Coffee Shop



The seating area

- Located in the heart of the Tudor palace, the Privy Kitchen Coffee Shop was originally Elizabeth I's private kitchen.
- It provides hot and cold drinks, cakes and pastries, sandwiches and light lunches. A children's menu is also available.
- There is level access to the serving area but the seating area is down a small flight of steps. Wheelchair users or those who can't manage stairs should enter the seating area via the exit.
- There are no toilets inside the Privy Kitchen Coffee Shop. The nearest facilities are off Fountain Court.
- They are open 10.00-17.00 (summer) and 10.00-16.00 (winter).

### The Tiltyard Café



Self-service counters



Hot food points



Seating area

- This café, on the site of Henry VIII's jousting ground, is a large, warm and open space with a great choice of food and drink. The food and till points are at the far side of the large seating area.
- The food is homemade and changes seasonally. It includes sandwiches, salads, hot lunches and delicious cakes and pastries.
- Gluten-free food is available while stocks last.
- Children's lunch boxes, child portions and meal deals are also available.
- Meals usually have set options which means that different elements from different meals cannot be mixed without incurring extra cost.
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar Den, in the corner of the Tiltyard Café, is furnished with books and games to keep children under 3 happy.
- Most of the tables have 4 chairs around them but they can be put together to accommodate larger parties.
- The tables are quite close together and there is no clear route through them.
- Seating is available on the terrace outside, with many tables covered by large sun shades.
- During the summer, although often only at weekends, this area also hosts a barbecue.
- The Tiltyard Café is wheelchair accessible and toilets, including an accessible one, are available.
- They are open 10.00-18.00 (summer) and 10.00-16.30 (winter).
- Admission to the palace is not required to visit the Tiltyard Café.

### Why not bring a picnic?

- Visitors may picnic on any of the benches in the gardens and there are picnic tables in the 20th Century Garden. See garden map below.
- Visitors may also picnic on the grass in the Tiltyard and Wilderness Gardens, which are free to visit.
- There are no under-cover areas in the gardens.
- Inside the palace, visitors may picnic on the seats in the courtyards. The schools lunchroom off Base Court is available at weekends as an indoor picnic area.
- No food or drink may be consumed inside the building.

## Shops

- We have four gift shops at Hampton Court Palace each selling slightly different products.
- The Palace Shop opposite the ticket office and the Henry Shop inside the palace have the widest range of children's and pocket-money-priced goods including some children's guidebooks.
- The Tudor Kitchens Shop and the Garden Shop are the most themed.
- All the shops can get crowded at various times as most have narrow entrances and exits and often limited space in which to circulate once inside.



The Palace Shop

## Lost Property

- If you lose something during your visit, speak to the nearest member of staff to see if it has been handed in.
- Anything that is found is kept in the Reception Office so contact them by telephoning 0844 482 7777.

## Left luggage lockers

- There are left luggage lockers off Clock Court. They take hand baggage and small rucksacks.
- A £1 coin is needed to get the key out but the £1 will be returned when you collect your belongings.
- Anything larger may be left with the State Apartment Warders at the West Gate. This is at the owner's risk and the facility may be withdrawn without notice at any time.



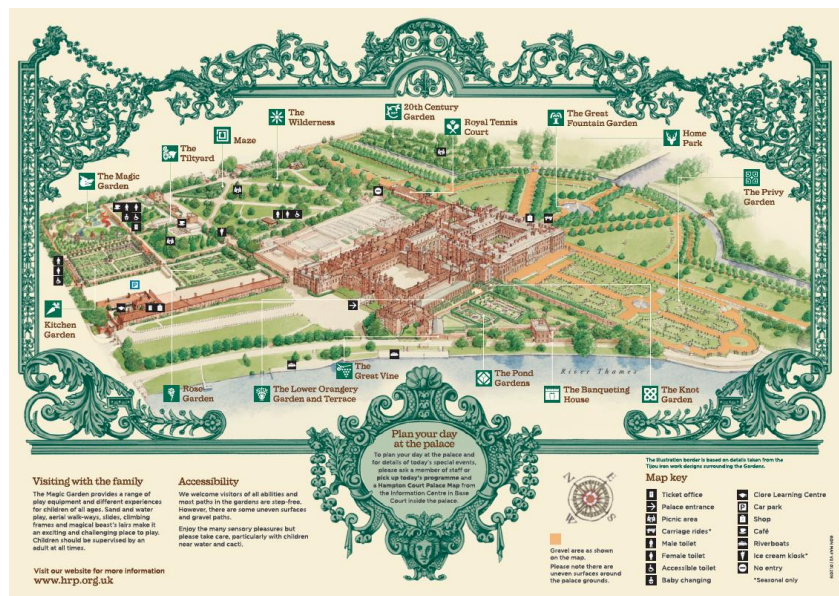
Left luggage lockers

## Quiet spaces

- The gardens are generally the quietest spaces at Hampton Court Palace but the Family Room, just beyond the left luggage lockers, is also a possibility.
- Created so that toddlers can let off a bit of steam, it has soft toys and bean bags so could be an option if a child needs a calm area and it is empty.
- However please bear in mind that if there is a family already in there, it won't be very quiet or calm!



## The Palace Gardens



- Our gardens are very large. We also have Home Park behind the palace, which is even larger.
- They are generally flat but we do have steep slopes and drops from height in some areas. The formal gardens – which can only be accessed via the palace – have gravel paths. These are marked on the map.
- Please be careful near water.
- Please do not climb the trees in the gardens.
- You are welcome to smell the roses and touch the plants in the gardens – but be careful as some have thorns or spikes!
- The animals that you will see in the gardens (mostly swans, geese and ducks) are wild. Please do not try to touch them, get too close or feed them in case they bite you.
- We have a Horse Tram during the summer months that takes visitors around part of the formal gardens. There is an additional charge of £3-£4 to ride it – it is not included in palace tickets. The horses are working Shire Horses and do not like to be touched.

## The Magic Garden

- Entry to the Magic Garden is included in palace admission tickets so just show your palace ticket or membership card at the entrance to get in.
- You can buy a ticket just to go in the Magic Garden and the Maze if you want from the ticket kiosk at the entrance.
- Populated by mysterious mythical beasts, with battlements to storm, towers to besiege, and even a secret grotto to discover, the Magic Garden is a unique way for families to explore the palace's past. It takes its inspiration from the fairy-tale-like quality of the Tudor Palace.
- All the play equipment is adult-proof so parents can play with their children. Indeed, adults are encouraged to!
- Although fairly big there will be areas of congestion on busy days, especially in the summer holidays.
- However, there are also places designed to provide some tranquillity and shade for those who need it.
- There are towers with spiral staircases, enclosed slides, a fireman's pole, a secret grotto and an amphitheatre. The amphitheatre is particularly popular for gymnastic and acrobatic practice! As it is made from artificial grass, please note that there is a potential issue with cochlear implants and static so users should consult the manufacturer of their device for specific advice if they are concerned.
- There is a stretch of water – the moat – with a 'wobbly bridge' and rope boat to take people across. Please take care in this area.
- The dragon breathes out water mist throughout the day.
- There is plenty of seating in the Magic Garden, and a small café and toilets.
- The Magic Garden is open during the summer months only from 10:00. Last entry is at 17:15.



## The Maze

- Entry to the Maze is included in palace admission tickets so just show your palace ticket or membership card at the entrance to get in.
- You can buy a ticket just to go in the Maze and the Magic Garden if you want from the ticket kiosk at the entrance.
- The Maze has narrow paths and 2-metre high hedges. In total there are about half a mile of paths.
- It can therefore get very crowded, especially in the summer.
- The Maze opens at 10:00 every day and closes at 17:15 in the summer and 15:45 in the winter.
- On snowy or icy days it may be closed to visitors due to the inclement weather.



## Contact details

Telephone information: 0844 482 7777  
Textphone: 18001 0844 482 7777

Ticket booking line: 0844 482 7799  
Textphone: 18001 0844 482 7799

Membership: 0844 482 7788  
Textphone: 18001 0844 482 7788

Email: [hamptoncourt@hrp.org.uk](mailto:hamptoncourt@hrp.org.uk)

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

Catering enquiries: call the Catering Manager on 020 3166 6971 or  
[HCP@ampersandvenues.co.uk](mailto:HCP@ampersandvenues.co.uk)