

Kensington 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 Kensington Palace Access Panel and some families with a child on the autistic spectrum.

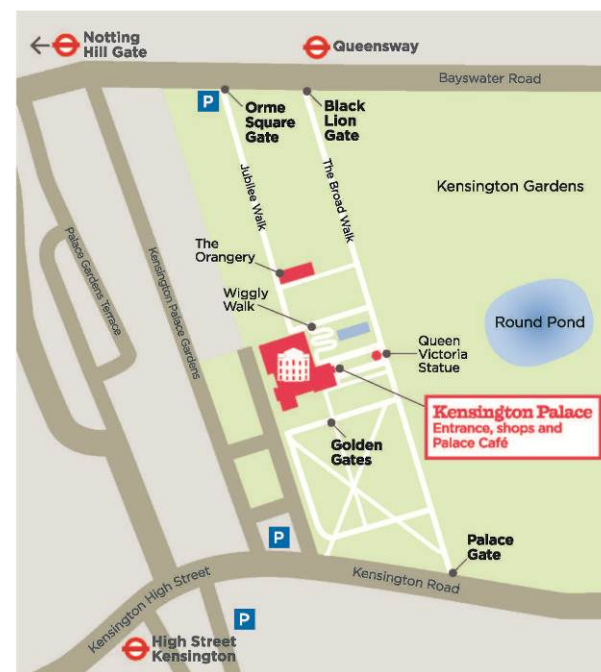


A view of the gardens and entrance to the palace with some general visitors

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 Explainers, and our volunteers are also very happy to help you get the most from your visit.

Arrival and transport

- Kensington Palace is located on the western edge of Kensington Gardens. It can only be reached via Kensington Gardens.
- The nearest underground stations are **High Street Kensington** (District or Circle lines: 10-15 minutes walking time to the palace), **Queensway** (Central Line: 10-15 minutes walking time) or **Notting Hill Gate** (20-25 minutes walking time).
- A number of buses go along Kensington High Street and Kensington Road to the south of the park and Bayswater Road to the north.
- **Liberty Drives** is by The Hyde Park Appeal to provide free rides for anyone who finds it difficult to see all of Kensington Gardens. Electric buggies, to seat up to five people and one wheelchair, drive around the park providing half hour rides. It is also possible to be dropped off at a favourite place and be picked up later. Operating times are 10am - 5pm, Tuesday-Friday, from May to October. To arrange pick up or for enquiries call 07767 498096.
- For more information about how to get to us please visit our website: <http://www.hrp.org.uk/KensingtonPalace/planyourvisit/gettingthere>



Visiting times

- If you wish to avoid as many queues as possible, try to arrive early preferably within the first hour of opening. Kensington Palace opens at 10 o'clock every day.
- 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.



The entrance, viewed from the Broadwalk (Kensington Gardens)

Ticketing



White Court



The ticket sales area

- Kids Go Free! Up to six children aged 15 or under visiting Kensington Palace with at least one adult (aged 18 or over) will enjoy free entry. Please remember that children under 16 need to be accompanied by an adult aged 18+ years at all times.
- If you are a member of Historic Royal Palaces, you can go straight to the main entrance. Membership is an 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 if you order more than seven working days in advance. Tickets purchased in advance are valid for seven days from the date selected.
- Disabled visitors to Kensington Palace need to buy whichever ticket is appropriate but one essential carer or personal assistant goes in free. If visitors can bring documentation showing that they are disabled – disabled parking badge, something to say they are in receipt of any disability living allowances, specialist's letter – that would be helpful. 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 will need to collect carer tickets from the ticket office in White Court as they cannot be issued in advance.
- 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 as children under the age of 15 enter free of charge as long as they are

accompanied by a full-paying adult, a normal ticket (and no free carer ticket) might 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.

Entrance



The Main Entrance

- Visitors enter Kensington Palace via the main entrance (the Loggia).
- It can be reached from Kensington Gardens to the east of the palace, through the landscaped palace gardens that gently slope down to the Loggia – the green ‘porch’ that indicates the way in.

- Visitors can also reach the Loggia via the Wiggly Walk from the north. Despite the slope of the ground, the Wiggly Walk is suitable for wheelchair users. There are also some stairs at the side of the Wiggly Walk. This route into the palace will take you past the café and shop.
- If you wish, you may enter the palace via the café – going through there and the shop to reach the Hub and White Court.
- Those using the Loggia will find the two side doors open during the summer but in winter the central door will be the only way in.
- This leads into a very small lobby (designed to keep the cold out) with automatic doors on either side. Push the doors gently to open them although be aware that they may open automatically. On exit they can be gently pulled towards you. There is also a button to press on the opposite wall.
- The first few rooms – called the Hub – are free to enter and give access to the ticket office, the shop, café and reception. There are also some seats available.
- The reception is staffed and you can leave any luggage or coats here securely whilst you visit the Palace. Bags will be searched here so it is advisable to let your children know this in advance so that they are prepared.
- In the centre of the Hub is an amazing lace light piece made from almost 4 km of electroluminescent wire and containing nearly 12,000 Swarovski crystals.

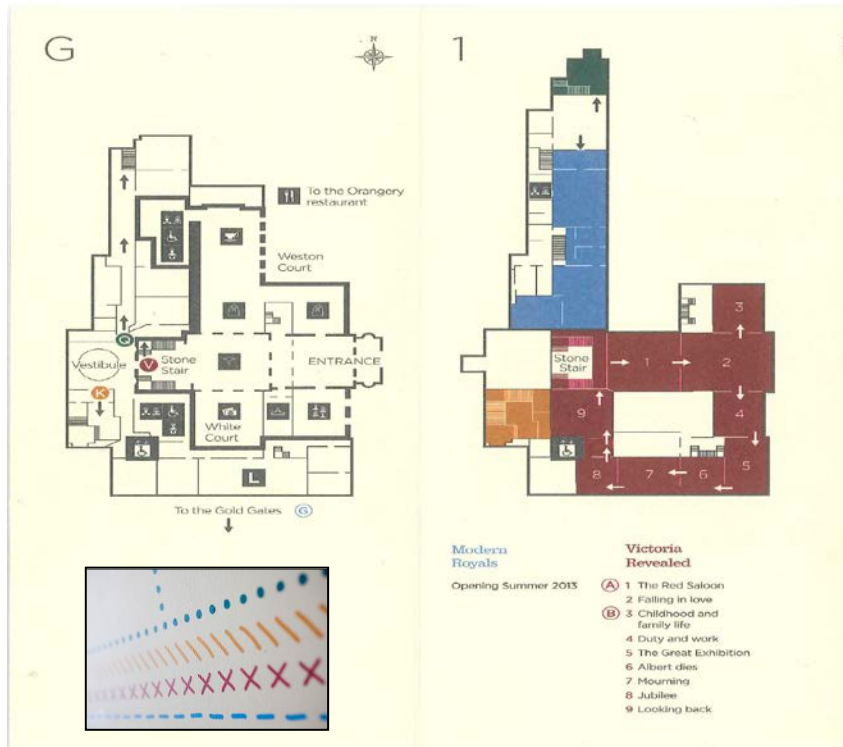


The Luminous Lace light piece

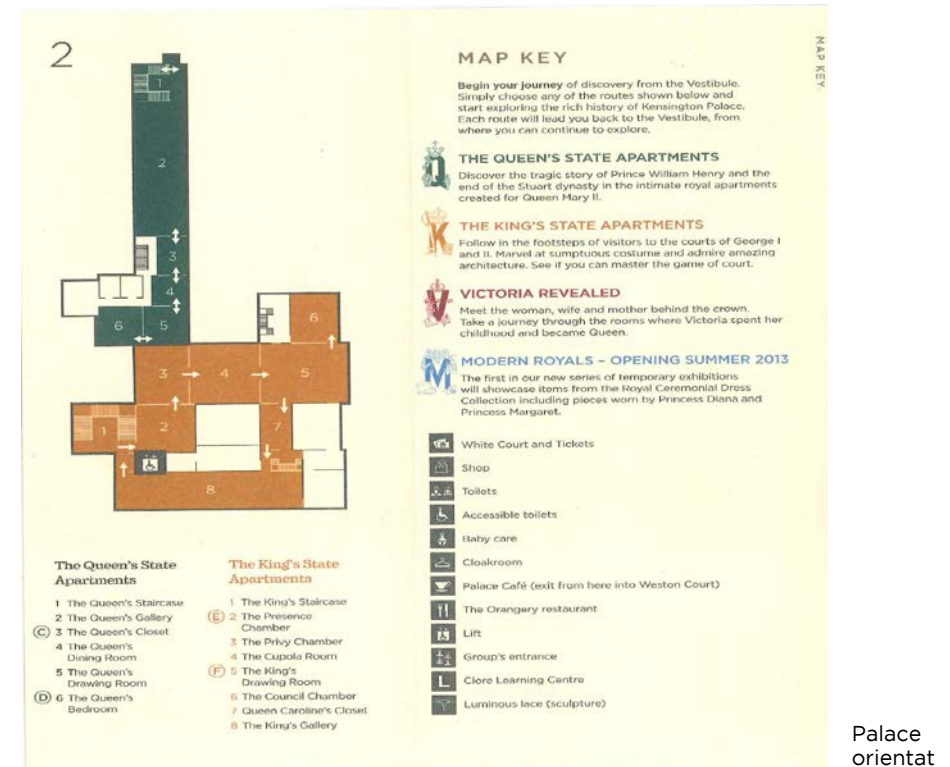
Toilets

- There are public toilets off the Palace Café (so before the pay barrier) and off the corridor leading to the lift from the Vestibule.
- Both are on the ground floor and include accessible toilets.
- There are also some toilets at the back of the Orangery – please speak to the Orangery staff if you wish to use these.

Visiting Kensington Palace



Palace orientation map – ground and first floors



– second floor

Palace orientation map

- There is a lot to see and do at Kensington Palace and visitors are encouraged to explore it in their own time – there is no set route.
- Visitors may also wander round with a palace guidebook, which can be purchased at the ticket office and/or the palace shop.
- There are some costumed characters in the King's State Apartments and Explainers throughout the palace who are very happy to chat to visitors and answer any questions.

- The palace is divided into 'routes' which correspond with the stories of the monarchs who lived in those rooms. Each route is defined by a coloured sewing stitch which acts as a way-finding device. Eg, if you want to visit 'Victoria Revealed' follow the cross stitch (X) on the walls
- Visitors exit all routes the way they came in.
- 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.

Victoria Revealed



The Mourning Albert room in Victoria Revealed

This 'route' tells the story of Queen Victoria, from her birth at Kensington Palace, her accession as queen and her first Privy Council (held at Kensington Palace) to her family life and her long period of mourning after her husband Prince Albert died. This permanent exhibition charts Victoria's life from birth to death and doesn't just refer to what she did at Kensington Palace.

Among the things to look out and prepare for are:

- Several rooms have headless mannequins with costume on. Some are in display cases but not all.
- There are varying light levels – some of the rooms are very dark to both protect the objects displayed in them but also to add to the atmosphere. You'll know when you get to the room describing how Victoria reacted to the death of Prince Albert because it is painted black and is dark.

- There is text on some of the carpets, the walls and the curtains.
- There are information leaflets in all rooms, usually at the entrance.
- There are costumes to try on in the Red Saloon and games to play with in several rooms but particularly in the 'Childhood and family life' one.
- There is a sound track of talking voices in the Red Saloon. They represent members of Queen Victoria's first Privy Council.
- The piano in the second room, 'Falling in love', automatically plays a piece of music on the hour and the half hour. As it was the piano that Victoria and Albert owned and used no-one is allowed to touch it – so it seems to spontaneously start playing by itself. Some of the music is quite loud.
- There are busts of Prince Albert in many of the rooms and especially in those that deal with Queen Victoria's life and reign after his death.
- The next to last room is about Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and contains some black and white film footage of her Jubilee Procession along with one that we've put together using photographs. Background noises have been added (for example – crowds cheering and the jangle of horses' harness).

The King's State Apartments



The King's Staircase, with painted walls and ceiling

This 'route' is about the courts of George I and George II and the start of the Hanoverian Dynasty at the beginning of the 18th Century.

Among the things to look out and prepare for are:

- The King's Staircase is covered from floor to ceiling with vivid, life-sized portraits of people from the court of George I. They look down on anyone passing up and down the staircase and could seem intimidating. There is an interpretation panel on the landing at the top telling you who some of them are.
- There is fanfare music playing as you walk up the stairs. This does not play continually so can start at any time and can be quite loud.
- There are 'smell maps' available for visitors to pick up at the bottom of the stairs. This includes a map of the route and patches to 'scratch and

sniff' to give a sense of what George II, Queen Caroline and their courtiers smelled at Kensington Palace. Smells include tobacco, wine and perfume and can be strong.

- There is a lift with seating available at the top of the King's Staircase
- Many of the rooms have information on fire screens to tell you more about where you are.
- There is a 'throne' in the Presence Chamber on a raised floor which you are welcome to sit on.
- In The Privy Chamber there are bust of famous scientists against the walls.
- There are varying light levels – some of the rooms are very dark to protect the artefacts displayed but others are fairly light. Visitors will go from one to the other in quick succession.
- To prevent visitors from climbing up the clock case steps in The Cupola Room there are small black barriers. The actual clock is very small and can be found on the side facing the window.
- In the Cupola Room, King's Drawing Room, King's Gallery and Council Chamber there are headless mannequins. The one in The Council Chamber include headdresses which seem to float above the dresses.
- Visitors are welcome to sit at tables to play cards and games in the King's Drawing Room.
- There is a speaker just behind the tables in the King's Drawing Room which plays whispering voices depicting courtiers in the court of George II and Queen Caroline.
- There is a mirror and costumes in the Council Chamber which visitors can try on and then return.
- Costumed characters wander through the King's State Apartments talking to and interacting with visitors.
- In the King's Gallery there are large paintings and also mourning music as the room depicts George II mourning of the death of Queen Caroline. The music is not continuous so can start at any time.
- The King's State Apartments is a circular route so visitors begin and end at the King's Staircase.

The Queen's State Apartments



The Queen's Gallery



The Queen's bedroom

This 'route' tells the story of William III and Mary II, and Queen Anne.

Among the things to look out and prepare for are:

- The Queen's Staircase at the start of the route (and down which you exit) has a moving projection on the wall of tulips and vines.
- Many of the rooms have information on fire screens to tell you more about where you are.
- There are white and blue barriers in rooms to protect objects
- The last room, the 'Queen's Bedroom', is very dark with limited space which can get crowded. This room has no through route so visitors will need to enter and exit through the same door.
- The Queen's Bedroom has a moving projection on the floor of tulips and vines.

- Visitors now need to go back the way they came to The Queen's Staircase to exit.

Temporary exhibitions

We have a series of rooms, called the Pigott Galleries, in which temporary exhibitions are displayed. The rooms are off the corridor leading to The Queen's State Apartments.

The current exhibition 'Fashion Rules' opened in July 2013 and includes dresses worn by HM The Queen, Princess Margaret and Diana, Princess of Wales.

Many of the rooms are therefore dark to protect the dresses and there are also sound and film projections.



General information

- Kensington 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.
- 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 round red seat that you can lie back on in the Vestibule, but please feel free to choose your own location.
- There are several visual and interactive displays as well as a number of short films.
- The palace and gardens can feel very crowded although there are often areas that are quieter (see below). There are unlikely to be queues, though, except at the ticket office or in the cafés.
- 'Victoria Revealed' and the special temporary exhibitions 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 The King's State Apartments or The Queen's State Apartments.
- There are a variety of surfaces and room sizes – everything from enormous rooms (like the King's or Queen's Galleries) to narrow or small areas with low door frames.
- There are also a number of steps and several different staircases which will be different from what you are used to. Many are shallow as most were built for the asthmatic William III.
- Several windows are tinted; this is a film that restricts harmful UV light. It means that there are a variety of light levels in the rooms, especially when they are partially open in the summer.
- Please watch out for the barriers, made from a variety of materials and in a number of different designs that protect the objects and/or act as path markers.
- Please do not touch any furniture that has a sign saying don't touch on it or are behind barriers.
- Please play with any objects that are not behind barriers – for instance in the 'Childhood and family life' room in Victoria Revealed.
- The corridor leading to the lift, and the toilets off the Vestibule, is decorated with brightly coloured wallpaper depicting events in the life of Diana, Princess of Wales. It is in a cartoon style.
- If you have additional needs within your party, there is an access leaflet available in the Vestibule or from the ticket office, and detailed access information on our website:
<http://www.hrp.org.uk/KensingtonPalace/planyourvisit/disabledaccess>

- Owing to necessary conservation work, occasionally routes around/within buildings are subject to change.
- In the gardens squirrels will approach visitors. They may seem tame but they are wild and can be vicious. We recommend you do not attempt to touch them and please don't feed them or the pigeons.
- Dogs may be walked in the palace gardens and the park as long as they are kept on a lead. Only assistance dogs may enter the palace. As these are working dogs, please do not attempt to pat or distract them.
- Please do not climb the trees in the gardens or pick the flowers.

Family trails

- Packed with fun quizzes, activities, facts and illustrations, our free family trails are the perfect way to explore Kensington Palace as a family. These are available from White Court.



Family activities

- During school holidays we often have craft activities for children and families in the Clore Learning Centre off the Group Entrance.
- They are free to join and usually involve making and decorating a hat, a flower or contributing to a group art project.
- 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.

Photography

- We allow visitors to take photographs 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).
- In crowded areas there may be a number of people with cameras. Although flash is not allowed as it disturbs other visitors, there may be some occasional flash photography.
- Tripods may only be used in the gardens and park, not inside the building.

Tours and talks by palace staff or volunteers

- These cover a range of specialist subjects – from garden tours to talks about Queen Victoria and conservation. Times and type change every day and are advertised within the Palace.
- Numbers on our Garden tours are limited so please reserve a place on arrival at Reception.

Shop



Inside the Kensington Palace shop

- In our shop you can find beautiful souvenirs and products that reflect the palace including books for both adults and children. It also has a wide range of unique and inspiring gifts.
- We also have a range of children's souvenirs and pocket-money-priced goods including some children's guidebooks.
- The shop can get crowded at various times as there is often limited space in which to circulate once inside.
- You do not need a palace ticket to visit the shops which can be accessed from the Hub or the Palace Café and are wheelchair accessible.

Staff



One of the Kensington Palace Explainers

- All our staff are happy to help you – please ask if you have any special requirements.
- The Explainers are particularly knowledgeable about the history of the palace and its inhabitants. They wear bright red jackets.
- There is a designated palace first aider every day so if you do have any first aid needs, please speak to any of the staff in red and they will call their colleague. Generally, the first aider will come to the patient.
- We also have volunteers throughout the palace who wear red sashes

Catering

- There are two catering outlets at Kensington Palace – the Orangery in the gardens, and the Palace Café, which is inside the palace off the Main Shop.
- The Palace café is self-service and gets very busy, but the Orangery is a more formal environment where you can book a table in advance. They offer very different menus and appeal to different clientele.
- 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.



The inside of the Palace Café



Outside seating area

The Palace Café

- The Palace Café provides an ideal spot for a quick refreshment stop, from morning coffee and pastries to sandwiches, tea and cake.
- For families, the Very Hungry Caterpillar lunch offer allows children to pick and mix their very own lunchbox of healthy options.
- There is outdoor seating on the terrace, where visitors can enjoy views of the palace, landscaped gardens and Wiggly Walk.
- The food and till points are at the far end of the often congested indoor seating area.
- The food is homemade and changes seasonally.
- Some gluten-free food is available while stocks last.
- Most of the tables have 4 chairs around them but they can be put together to accommodate larger parties although the inside seating area is small.
- The tables are quite close together and there is no clear route through them.

- The Palace Café is wheelchair accessible (via a platform lift for those coming from the shop) and toilets, including an accessible one, are also available.
- The Café is open 10.00-18.00 (summer) and 10.00-17.00 (winter).
- Admission to the palace is not required to visit the Palace Café.



The Orangery



The interior

The Orangery

- The tranquil splendor of Queen Anne's 18th-century Orangery is a stunning location for an elegant lunch or an indulgent afternoon tea.
- The Orangery is a large, echoic space, with a high ceiling but it is more spacious than the Palace Café.
- Most of the tables have 4 chairs around them but they can be put together to accommodate larger parties.
- This is a very formal dining experience. The Orangery offers one of the finest tea selections in London, as well as a range of premium wines and champagnes.
- They do welcome children and can offer their very own version of afternoon tea.
- Service times are: Breakfast 10.00-11.45; Lunch 12.00-14.00; Afternoon tea 14.00 -18.00 (17.00 in winter).
- Seating is available outside on the terrace where visitors can enjoy the views of the palace and its elegant gardens.
- The entrance is up a flight of steps but there is wheelchair access via a ramp at the front. Please be aware that the terrace does not have barriers and does have quite a drop in places.

- There are some toilets round the back of The Orangery. Please speak to the staff if you wish to use them as they have a coded door to ensure that only patrons use them and not general park users.
- The Orangery is sometimes closed for private functions so please check in advance.

Why not bring a picnic?

- Visitors may picnic on any of the benches in the palace gardens
- Visitors may also picnic on the grass in the park.
- No food or drink may be consumed inside the palace and there are no indoor picnic areas.

Contact details

Telephone information: 0844 482 7777
Text Relay: 18001 0844 482 7777

Ticket booking line: 0844 482 7799
Text Relay: 18001 0844 482 7799

Membership: 0844 482 7788
Text Relay: 18001 0844 482 7788

Email: kensingtonpalace@hrp.org.uk

Website: www.hrp.org.uk

Catering enquiries: call the Catering Manager on 020 3166 6112 or
KP@ampersandvenues.co.uk

If you wish to make a reservation for the Orangery, please call the Restaurant Manager on 020 3166 6113.

