

History of Kensington Palace

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What to see and do

Victoria: A Royal Childhood

Discover the story of Princess Victoria, the young girl destined to be queen. Set in the rooms where Victoria was born, grew up and experienced her first moments as monarch, this new display offers an opportunity to follow in Victoria's footsteps. Visitors can walk the very corridors where the young Queen Victoria escaped her strict education and family power struggles, to become the first female head of state for more than 120 years.

Please be aware that some of the rooms in this exhibition are quite small, so classes should be split into smaller, supervised groups before entering.

The King's State Apartments

The glittering court of George II and Queen Caroline burst onto the scene in 1727 at Kensington Palace. The era of music, fashion and the arts is brought to life in the splendid King's State Apartments. Explore the sumptuously restored apartments, enjoy Georgian music and see exquisite examples of real Georgian court clothing.

The Queen's State Apartments

Discover the tragic story of the Stuart dynasty in this poignant presentation of the intimate apartments created for Mary II. The Queen's apartments were where Mary, and later royal consorts, lived. This is where they had their bedroom, took their meals, entertained their friends and distinguished guests, and relaxed.

Please be aware that some of the rooms in this exhibition are quite small, so classes should be split into smaller, supervised groups before entering.

The Sunken Garden

The beautiful Sunken Garden was planted in 1908, transforming part of the gardens previously occupied by potting sheds into a tranquil ornamental garden of classical proportions. The garden is terraced with paving and ornamental flower beds, surrounding an ornamental pond with fountains formed from reused 18th century water cisterns retrieved from the palace.

Today, the garden continues the tradition of rotational flower displays in the spring and summer. Vibrant colours and exotic planting are on display from April to October when the garden is looking its best.

Further information and key-stage specific resources can be found on our website: <https://www.hrp.org.uk/schools/learning-resources>

Essential information for your visit

Primary

Secondary

Kensington Palace timeline

1689	William III and Mary II bought Nottingham House to escape the grime of Whitehall. They instructed Sir Christopher Wren to improve the house and it became Kensington Palace.
1691	A fire destroyed part of the southern range of the Great Court. This led to a complete remodelling of the approach to the Royal Apartments.
1695	William added The King's Gallery.
1704-1705	Queen Anne improved the gardens of Kensington Palace and built the Orangery.
1714-1727	The core of the old Nottingham House was replaced with three new state rooms; the Privy Chamber, the Cupola Room and the Withdrawing Room. William Kent devised decoration and hung pictures in nearly all the royal apartments as well as painting the King's Grand Staircase.
1727-1760	Kensington Palace changed little structurally during this period, however following the death of Queen Caroline in 1737 large parts fell into disuse.
Early 1830s	Queen Victoria's Mother, the Duchess of Kent extended her apartments into the unused State Apartments on the second floor.
1832	The Duchess of Kent partitioned the King's Gallery into 3 rooms for the use of Princess (later Queen) Victoria.
19th Century	The State Apartments were sadly neglected during the 19 th Century. They were used as stores for various paintings and furniture from other palaces.
1897	The love that Queen Victoria's had for the palace she grew up in saved Kensington. Parliament was persuaded to pay for the restoration of the State Apartments on the condition that they should be opened to the public.
1899	The State Apartments were opened to the public on Queen Victoria's 80 th birthday (24 May 1899).
1911	The State Apartments were given over to the newly founded London Museum.
1914	The London Museum moved and the State Apartments were closed. During World War I (1914-1918) Kensington was used as offices by charitable organisations.
1923	The Palace re opened
1932-1933	The three rooms associated with Queen Victoria were restored and rearranged.
1939-1945	Bomb damage during World War II left the State Apartments badly affected, particularly the Queen's Apartments and the Palace was closed.
1949-1950	The Palace reopened and the London Museum returned. It remained at Kensington for a quarter of a century.
Today	Kensington continues its long history as a residence for members of the Royal Family.

For more information on the history of Kensington Palace, please visit our website [here](#).

Essential information for your visit