Introduction

Come for a stroll along the Thames Path National Trail beside London's rural Thames, where the tranquil river rolls past palaces, and meadows, with the peaceful seclusion of willowy paths with nothing for company but wildflowers, birdsong and sky.

The walking is easy, level and signed throughout as the Thames Path National Trail.
Directions

Walk from Teddington railway station. From Station Road exit, turn left onto Station Road and then right at the end onto the High Street. Follow the High Street east until it becomes Ferry Road where it leads to Teddington Lock. Alternatively take bus routes 281, 285 or R68 to Teddington Lock from the High Street. From the Teddington Lock bus stop walk ahead along Ferry Road, crossing the river by the footbridge and turn left.

At Teddington Lock, walk with the river on the left. The Thames Path is broad and gravelled here above the sloping river bank with tide-washed willows. The towpath can be flooded at high tides and alternative dry routes are signed. This haven is Ham Lands nature reserve, created from gravel pits filled with rubble from London's wartime bombsites.

As other paths disappear inland amongst the trees, the Thames Path marches on beside the river busy with rowers, to cross the entrance of the lagoon that forms the Thames Young Mariners Outdoor Education Centre. Now the Gothic summerhouse of Radnor Gardens comes into view on the far bank, followed round the curve in the river by Eel Pie Island and the jetty of the Richmond Yacht Club.

The path opens out to the entrance of Ham House.

Did you know?

Ham House is an outstanding surviving example of a 17th century Stuart house and contents, which in its heyday was a hotbed of court intrigue. The house and gardens are now managed by the National Trust (including a cafe and a shop). They can be visited separately (admission fee). At the boundary of Ham House is the seasonal ferry going over to the other side of the Thames.

Beyond the Ferry stage is Ham Polo Club, then soon the path reveals the classic view of cattle grazing in Petersham Meadows, rising steeply to Richmond Hill. The Thames Path skirts the meadow wall to enter Petersham Road. Richmond Bridge is ahead, but looking back along the river there's not a single building in sight. Walk on through the park. Keep beside the river as it passes the Richmond Canoe Club, restaurants, cafes and bars, then walk under the arch of Richmond Bridge and into the sociable buzz of the historic Richmond waterfront.
Stay along the river front - the Capital Ring joins the Thames Path for a while along here. After the railway bridge and then Twickenham Bridge, the view opens up into the Crown Estate’s Old Deer Park Recreation Ground, where George III established an Observatory on the old Kew Meridian, the line of which is marked by two obelisks.

Ahead is Richmond footbridge, painted green and cream. Here sluices are lowered to help regulate the Thames tides. Round another curve, at the far end of Isleworth Ait, is a sudden, lovely view of Old Isleworth with its slipway, church and pub.
From this side a long green tunnel of overarching trees and wet woodland gives way to views of Brentford’s Syon Park on the opposite bank, with the proud lion on the parapet of the Duke of Northumberland’s Syon House.

The path is now skirting the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, the largest living plant collection in the world and a World Heritage Site.

On the other bank, beyond the mouth of the River Brent and Grand Union Canal, the tower of the London Museum of Water and Steam comes into view. On the right is Kew Palace, the former home of George III, which has been restored to its 18th century splendour. Walk on past Kew Herbarium Library to the side entrance of the gardens.

Carry on with the Thames on the left and onwards to Kew Bridge. The walk passes the prestigious new apartments of Kew Riverside Park. The landscaping has been designed to accommodate the endangered two-lipped snail and also to screen various waterworks from sight.

After the railway bridge Putney Town Rowing Club comes into view. The path broadens as it passes the well-kept grounds of Mortlake Cemetery before going beneath an arch of Chiswick’s ornate suspension bridge. Pass Thames Bank, with its pastel-painted houses, and The Ship pub. The Thames Path narrows here to squeeze between the river and the brewery wall, shaking off the heady smell of hops to wend its way behind assorted flats, houses and community buildings to the Ye White Hart pub, an ideal spot for watching the final stages of the annual Boat Race.

Did you know?

The University Boat Race, held around Easter, has been staged on the river between Putney and Mortlake since 1845. Crews race over the 4 miles, 374 yards upstream but with the flow of the tide. The Great River Race from Ham to Greenwich has been held in September since 1988. Over 200 entries of different categories of boat from Viking longboats to Canadian canoes cover a gruelling 22 miles.
Barnes Bridge (railway and footbridge) is straight ahead. Follow The Terrace under the bridge. Beyond Barnes High Street and The Bulls Head hostelry (famous for its jazz), the path leaves the road to beat a tranquil route around the old reservoir, now the Leg o’ Mutton Nature Reserve, with distant views across to Chiswick Mall.

Did you know?

Leg o’ Mutton (or Lonsdale Road) Nature Reserve takes its name from its shape. Bats are known to roost in the old poplar trees here, and a number of bird species, including grebes, cormorants and the rare pochard, use the lake - probably because it is not far from the London Wetlands Centre. A walk around the entire perimeter comes to about a mile, although The Thames Path only follows half way round.

On the right, The Swedish School marks the start of numerous playing fields which keep pace with the path all the way to Hammersmith Bridge. After the bridge, the tree-lined path shakes off its brief brush with the traffic, leading on behind mansion blocks and the grandiose Harrods Furniture Depository, now apartments. From here the path makes for peaceful progress along the river frontage with more attractive, modern flats, to reach a stunningly remote and silent stretch with nothing but bushes, birdsong and acres of open sky.
Behind the vast green bank lies the London Wetland Centre, 42 acres of wetland habitats, home to rare and beautiful wildlife, including bitterns, kingfishers and a colony of endangered water voles. There is a visitor centre with restaurant, gift shop and cinema, a 'Bird Airport' viewing observatory and wildlife hides, an adventure area and interactive Discovery Centre for children. It is managed by the Waterfowl and Wetland Trust who put on free guided tours and regular events. Entry is via Queen Elizabeth Walk (signed Red Lion pub) beyond the monument to oarsman Steve Fairbairn, sited at the Mile Post of the Boat Race course.

Beyond that, Barn Elms Boathouse gives a hint of things to come. At Beverley Brook, the Embankment becomes a successions of rowing and sailing clubs, stretching almost to the foot of Putney Bridge - the oldest Thames Bridge still in use. To walk on, cross over to St. Mary's Church, with the blue and gold clock, and turn left behind it to reach cafes and restaurants beside the river.

Bear right through a huddle of mews cottages then first left into Deodar Road, passing under the railway bridge (with its footbridge to Putney Tube station) and through the archway immediately ahead into Blade Mews. Turn left out of the mews directly into Wandsworth Park and head for the river.

Putney Bridge to Battersea Park - section 1d
To leave the park, go past the moored boats and riverside restaurant by the pier and turn right immediately at Wandsworth Riverside Quarter, past cafes and a shop, onto a new estate road. Turn left here and cross the road to turn right down the side of a new block of flats and then left into Osiers Road.

Follow Osiers Road round a right-hand bend and left into Enterprise Way. This is all still industrial warehousing and a contrast to the luxury flats on the riverside. Go straight ahead through the gap beyond a row of trees, which leads to the mouth of the River Wandle, called Bell Lane Creek at this point.

Enjoy a brief browse around the Wetland Terraces beside the Thames, at the mouth of the Wandle, then press on down the Causeway, following Smugglers Way, past the Refuse and Recycling Centre. Turn left down Waterside Path to get back to the river. Pause at the river to watch the barges being loaded, and then follow the nicely landscaped walkway to the back of The Ship pub. Dog-leg round to the front and cross into Jews Row. Take Pier Terrace opposite and take the pedestrian tunnel under Wandsworth Bridge.

There is now a long stretch of riverside walking past new housing until coming to the heliport. Turn right through new buildings and left into Bridges Court, passing the perimeter of the heliport. Follow the road round to the right to come out on Lombard Road. Turn left and after one block turn left again along a new passage between the boundary wall and a new apartment block to get back to the River Thames.

Chelsea Harbour and Lots Road Power Station appear on the far bank.

**Did you know?**

Lots Road Power Station was a coal and later oil-fired power station that supplied electricity to the London Underground system until 2002. It is also sometimes known as the Chelsea Monster.
Next, an old riverside building blocks the way, so a brief inland detour is necessary, turning left on the road and under the railway. Turn immediately left again under the railway to rejoin the river once more. The Thames Path here is close to Vicarage Crescent for a short stretch, separated by a landscaped embankment, but the road soon veers away and the quiet of the river walk is reached. Ahead, the tree-lined walkway weaves on past homely houseboats.

At the slipway by St. Mary’s Church, follow the road around the perimeter of the church and turn left down an alleyway back to the river. Go past modern glass-fronted buildings to reach Battersea Bridge, with steps up and down.

New offices then pave the way to the Victorian Albert Bridge, painted in delicate ice-cream colours, where a sign instructs troops from Chelsea Barracks to break step when crossing. Walk on to the bridge for first views of central London’s skyline.

This section of the Thames Path ends here, at Albert Bridge – the National Trail carries on into Battersea Park (see Section 2) or cross Albert Bridge to the north side of the Thames.

To find Battersea Park station, continue on the Thames Path to the next bridge (Chelsea Bridge) and turn right following the path alongside Queenstown Road. Continue ahead at the roundabout then left into Battersea Park Road.