



Hampstead to Oxford Circus

Distance 7½ km (5 miles), easy walking

Region: Central London

Author: Thwelder comments please to feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

Map: Explorer 173 (London North), London A-Z

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Village, historic houses, parks, gardens

This is a fascinating walk through a green cityscape, beginning with a short loop around the “country village” of Hampstead and ending in Oxford Circus. It can be combined with the walk [Hendon to Hampstead](#) to make a lovely long green walk from outer to inner London.

The walk begins at **Hampstead Underground Station**.

Leg 1: A Small Circuit of Hampstead

See map overleaf. Turn **right** out of the station and at the crossroads and traffic lights go straight ahead up the narrow Holly Hill. The Holly Bush pub (now Fullers) is on the right. Fork **right** on Hollybush Hill and Hampstead Grove. Soon you pass the wrought iron gates of Fenton House on the left.

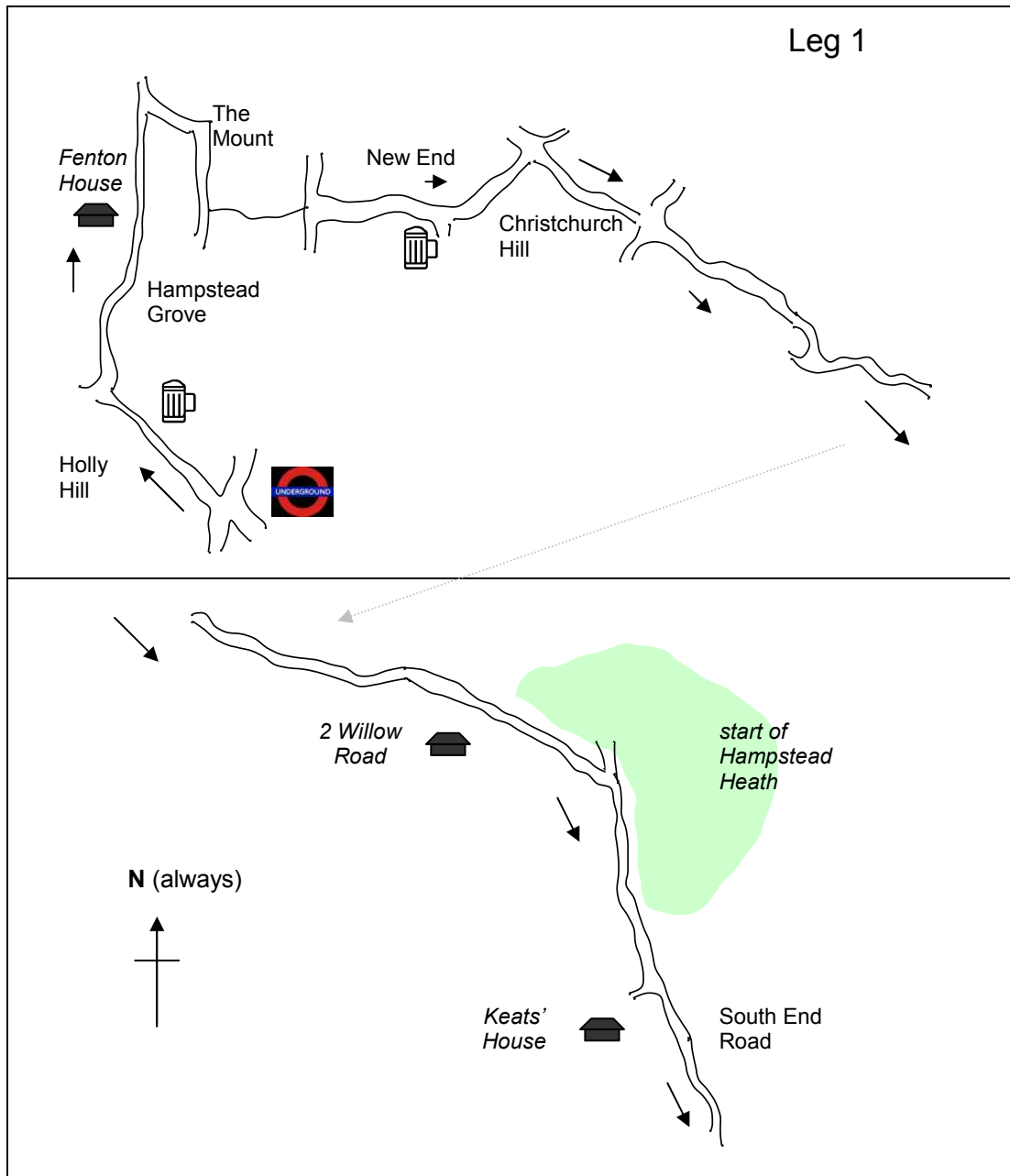
Fenton House is a National Trust 17th-century house full of fine porcelain and furniture and especially an outstanding collection of early keyboard instruments. The house is surrounded by an award-winning pretty walled garden of roses, vegetables and fruit trees. The house is open Wed-Sun non-winter months.

After the side entrance to Fenton House, turn **right** down The Mount Square and right into The Mount. Go down the steps on the **left** after a garage and cross the main road into New End. Go past the Duke of Hamilton pub and the New End Theatre and veer **left** by the Old White Bear (a refurbished pub-restaurant) into Well Road. Go past art studios on the left and turn **right** down Christchurch Hill. Cross Well Walk beside the Well Tavern and join Willow Road. A small section of the Heath is on the left.

Hampstead Heath is a vast rambling hilly area of woodland, heath and ponds covering 320 hectares (790 acres). See other walks in this series.

Soon you pass No. 2 Willow Road.

2 Willow Road is a unique home designed in 1939 by ground-breaking modernist architect Ernö Goldfinger for himself and his family. Goldfinger is known for his concrete high-rises such as the Trellick Tower (see the walk “Portobello Road, Notting Hill, Holland Park” in this series). The house contains a collection of modern art, personal possessions and innovative furniture. Ian Fleming lived nearby and named the eponymous villain of his James Bond novel ‘Goldfinger’ after him. (Their wives knew each other through tennis but there is no evidence that the two men were acquainted.) Interestingly, Goldfinger’s own copy can be seen on one of his bookshelves. The house is run by the National Trust and is open 12-5 Thur-Sun Mar-Oct.



Cross Downshire Hill and join South End Road. Just before the shops, on the right, is Keats Grove and Keats House is a little way on the left.

Keats House is a pleasant airy regency house where the poet John Keats lived from 1818 to 1820. Here he wrote "Ode to a Nightingale" and fell in love with Fanny Brawne, the girl next door. It is open afternoons, except Monday, in the warmer half of the year.

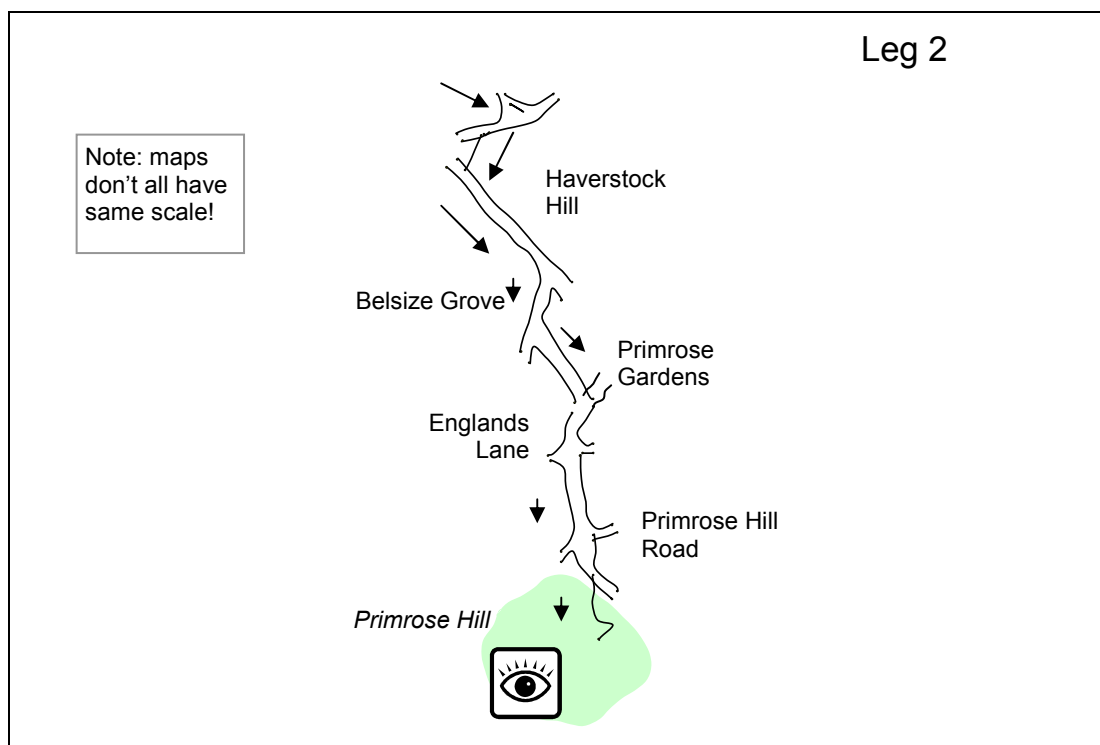
Continue down South End Road soon reaching Hampstead Heath railway station, a small central green, buses and shops.

Leg 2: Heath Village to Primrose Hill

See map overleaf. Turn **right** on Pond Street in front of the Royal Free Hospital, a concrete monstrosity. Just past the building and its access road, turn **left** on a paved pathway and at the end turn **left** on the main road Haverstock Hill, passing many eateries. Pass the Community Centre and Belsize Park tube station and, shortly after this, turn **right** on Belsize Grove. Turn **left** on Primrose Gardens which has a pleasant accessible central garden strip and at the end, turn **right** into Englands Lane. At a junction, veer **left** into Primrose Hill Road, cross Adelaide Road at the lights and go through the first gate on the **right** into the open space of Primrose Hill.

Primrose Hill, just to the north of Regent's Park, was always an open space or "park for the people" and its name bears testimony to its rural situation, when its sides were covered with early spring flowers. Nearby Chalk Farm was also just as its name suggests. Primrose Hill affords views over the whole of London and the lighting along its main routes make it an appealing sight at night time. The nearby village is extremely fashionable with many notable residents from media and politics.

Ascend to the highest point where there is a direction finder and seats with views across London. Regents Park zoo is just below.



Leg 3: Primrose Hill via Regents Park to Marylebone Road

See map overleaf. Facing the view, turn **right**, fork **left** and turn **left** at the bottom onto a main path that runs down the right-hand side of the park. At a junction of six tarmac paths, keep straight ahead, near the buildings on the right. (*The path to the left of this one leads to some toilets.*) At the bottom exit the park and cross Prince Albert Road. Turn **right** for a few paces and **left** on a path that crosses the Regent Canal and a perimeter road and enters Regents Park.

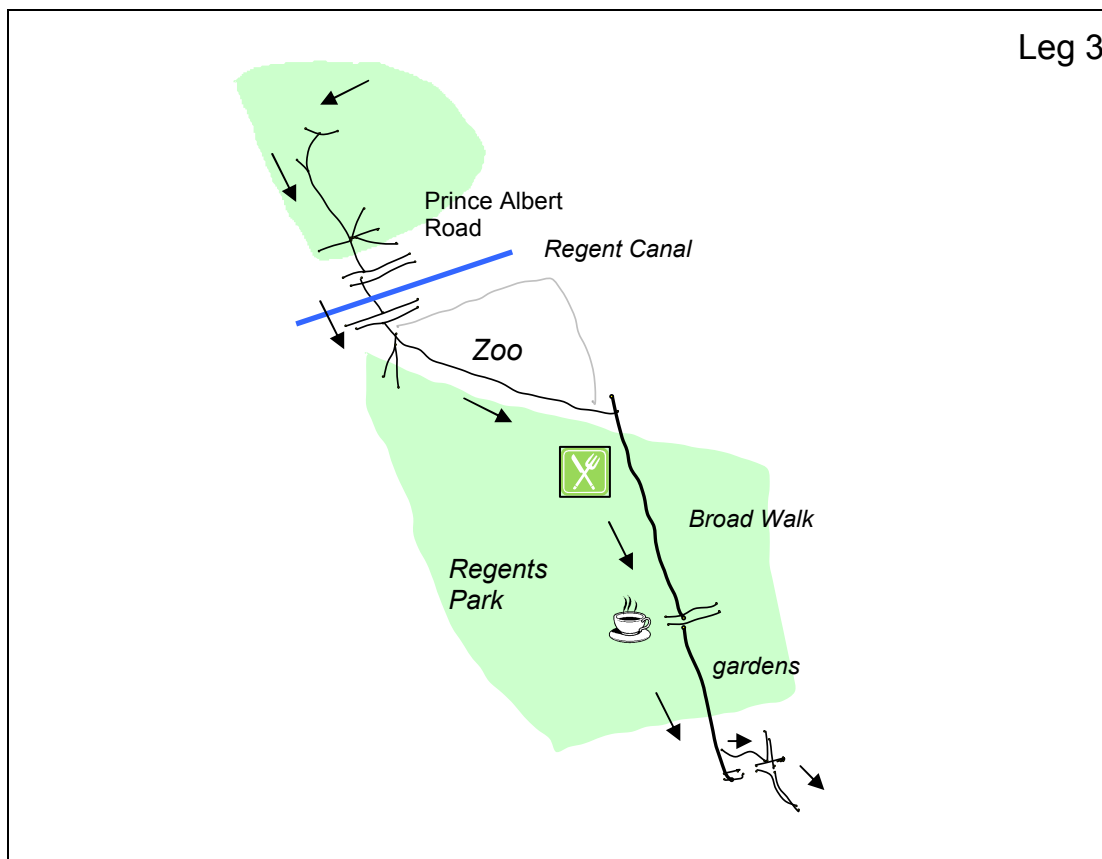
Regents Park, covering 166 hectare (410 acres), is one of the royal parks, famous for the Nash terraces (elegant stucco houses), zoo, villas, mosque, open air theatre and some of London's best gardens.

Ignore two wide paths leading off right and veer left on a straight path with the park's open space on the right and the zoo close by on the left.

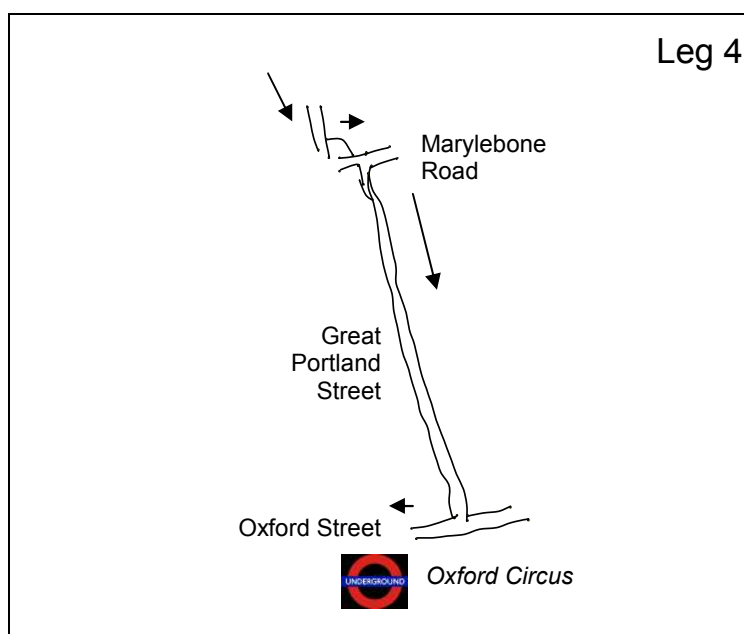
London Zoo began in 1828 not for recreation but as a centre for scientific study. A product of The Zoological Society of London it was the first in the world in nearly every category. Some of the specimens, especially some marsupials, are very rare. The Snowdon Aviary, north of the canal, pioneered the trend towards 'natural' environments, but the zoo has suffered from its restricted space and the change in public attitudes. It is undergoing extensive restoration despite severe financial constraints.

Eventually, the path wheels left and meets the Broad Walk, a wide avenue, where you turn **right**. *Several restaurants plus toilets will be found along the way.* Follow the Broad Walk over Chester Road and into the Avenue Gardens where it is tempting to wander around the fountains and flower beds. Park Square Gardens over the road are private. So, just before a T-junction ahead with the Outer Circle, where there is a

decorative urn on each side, turn **left** and wheel **right** to the road junction. Keep ahead along Park Square to reach the very busy Marylebone Road.



Leg 4: Marylebone Road to Oxford Circus



Just 2m before the main road, turn **left** through a little walkway between a terraced house and its garden and, on emerging, continue ahead along the Marylebone Road. Turn **right** and cross over by the traffic lights and continue along Great Portland Street with Great Portland Street tube station on the left. This street leads all the way to Oxford Street, where Oxford Circus is a short distance on the right.