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## Round the Garden Squares Knightsbridge, Belgravia, Chelsea, Kensington

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Distance: 11½ km=7 miles

very easy walking

Region: London

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Author: Thwelder

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Refreshments: everywhere

Map: London A-Z

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*Garden squares, fine residences, park, shops, museums*

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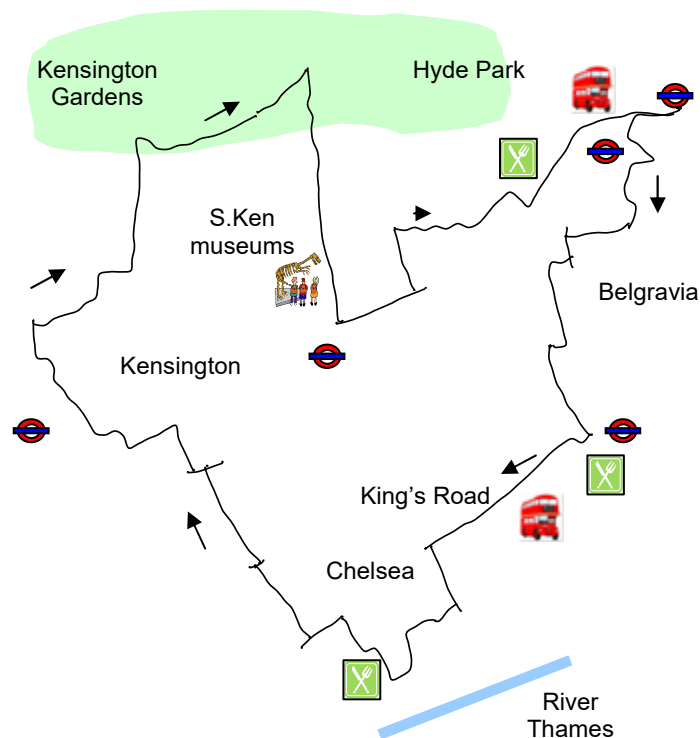
### In Brief

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This resplendent long walk takes you through the fine residential streets and garden squares of West London, visiting on the way Kings Road, Thomas More's Chelsea, Kensington Gardens, the museums and Harrods. It is wonderful at any time, but especially in early spring when the blossom is out, or in the **second weekend of June** when many squares are open to the visitor for a one-time charge.

The walk begins at **Hyde Park Corner** (Piccadilly Line tube). This is the south east side of Hyde Park (**not** the north east at Speakers' Corner).

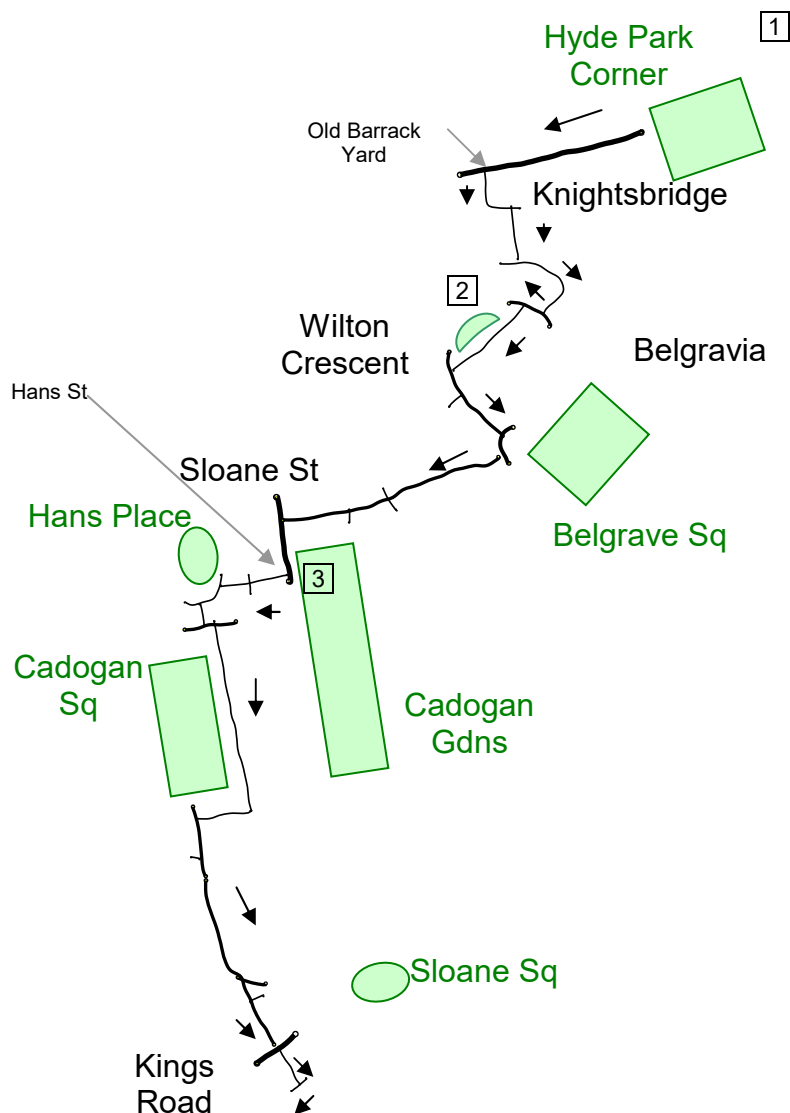
### Overview:



## The Walk

### First Stroll: to the shops! – King’s Road

- 1 Before you begin, look around you at some of the sights of Hyde Park Corner. In the centre is the Wellington Arch, a triumphal arch conceived by George IV after the Napoleonic wars. On the north side near the Hyde Park entrance is the isolated mansion Apsley House, known as “number one London”, residence of the Duke of Wellington and now a public art gallery. Begin the walk on the south side of **Knightsbridge**, going west, passing the Lanesborough Hotel. After passing number 27, turn **left** down a narrow grubby lane, **Old Barrack Yard**. (Yes, this is correct!) Keep **left** round a mews cottage and go **right** through the archway marked *Grosvenor Estate*. Follow the pretty little lane past cottages and exit through a bright red door into the mews, **Wilton Row**, next to the *Grenadier* pub. Turn **left** in the mews. A “mews” was originally a place where the horses were stabled. You will pass many of them en route. At the end, turn right into **Wilton Crescent**.



2 In 20m, turn **left** along the left side of the garden of Wilton Crescent. You will see many garden squares on this walk. They are mostly private and accessed by residents with a key. One weekend each year in June many of them are open to the public. (See [www.opensquares.org](http://www.opensquares.org).) Turn **left** into [Wilton Terrace](#) and continue to the corner of [Belgrave Square](#), a large garden square. Turn **right** on [West Halkin Street](#) and continue straight over into [Lowndes Street](#). Soon, on your left, is Cadogan Square, one of the largest garden squares in London and notable for its sculptured figures. Cross [Sloane Street](#) by the zebra crossing and turn **left**.

3 Take the first turning **right**, just after the Danish embassy, [Hans Street](#). Turn **left** into [Hans Place](#), opposite a pleasant little garden square Hans Place Gardens. Passing a plaque indicating Jane Austen's dwelling place, cross Pont Street into [Cadogan Square](#) and pass the magnificent redbrick terrace as you proceed.

*Much of this part of London was shaped by two families, linked together by alliance and marriage, the Cadogans and the Sloanes. The Cadogan Estate, where you are now, is dominated by these immaculate redbricks. The Cadogans were originally Welsh warrior princes who held out against the Normans but their fortune was made in Ireland. William Cadogan distinguished himself in the Duke of Marlborough's campaigns. His brother married Elizabeth Sloane, daughter of Sir Hans. Since then, the Cadogans have been a main force in English politics and society but it is to Sir Hans and the other side of the family that we turn next as we walk.*

Pass the garden square and turn **right** round it at the end and **left** at the junction. No. 72 opposite has a fine bay extending four stories. Pass the little back garden opposite Clabon Mews and cross straight over at the next junction into [Cadogan Gardens](#). Ahead now is the back of Peter Jones department store, a branch of John Lewis. Keep straight ahead to the right of Peter Jones and cross King's Road into a passage opposite that has some whimsical sculptures.

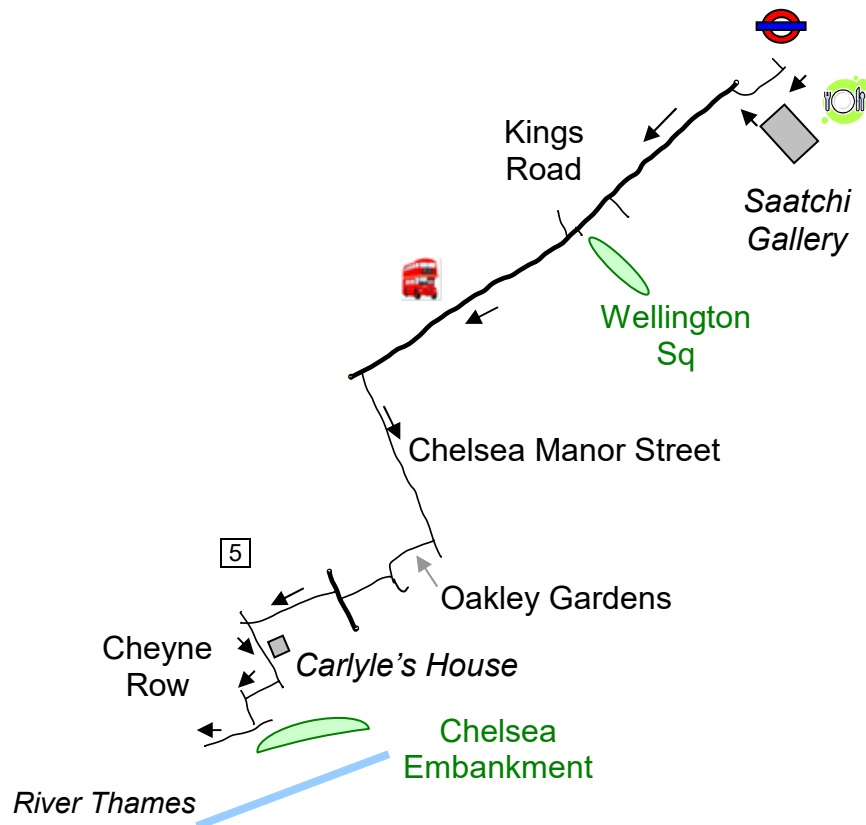
## Second Stroll: down to the river – Chelsea

4 **See map overleaf.** Turn **right** in the pedestrianised area of [Duke of York Square](#). There are several places to eat or take a coffee. Gallery Mess, the last on the left, is particularly good for fodder. Through the archway left is the Saatchi Gallery.

*The Saatchi Gallery, now officially known as the Museum of Contemporary Art for London, is a free gallery of contemporary art, on four floors, built and paid for by Charles Saatchi the advertising magnate and keen collector of "britart". It was famous for exhibitions of works by Damien Hirst, the Chapmans, Tracy Emin. It has no permanent exhibits but makes a total change of theme each year showing art from China, Britain and the USA, to name a few.*

Resuming the walk, you immediately pass a statue of Sir Hans Sloane.

*Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753) was a physician, scientist and collector. He was born in Ireland and spent some time in Jamaica from where he introduced the cocoa drink to England. His vast collection of artefacts and biological samples made up the bulk of the British Museum. His family owned the land where you are now and the area is named in his honour. Today the term "Sloane" or "Sloane Ranger" is often used to refer to young, upper-middle-class frequenters of the local wine bars and restaurants around Sloane Street and Sloane Square.*



Rejoin the King's Road and continue down this shopping street, one of the icons of the "swinging sixties". Shortly, on your left is Royal Avenue, laid out by Sir Christopher Wren in 1682 and originally intended to run all the way to Kensington Palace. Here you have a distant view of the Royal Hospital, home to the Chelsea Pensioners. Soon after, on your left is Wellington Square with its neat central garden and on your right Bywater Street with its colourful facades. Pass the *Chelsea Potter* pub. Three streets later, turn **left** into [Chelsea Manor Street](#) and, in 250m, **right** into [Oakley Gardens](#). Follow the zigzag left-right round this pleasant quiet backwater into [Phene Street](#). At the T-junction with Oakley Street, you have a view left of the Albert Bridge. Turn **right** and immediately **left** into [Upper Cheyne Row](#).

- 5 At the corner of St Thomas More catholic church, turn **left** into [Cheyne Row](#). A short way along, on the left, is Carlyle's House, now a property of the National Trust.

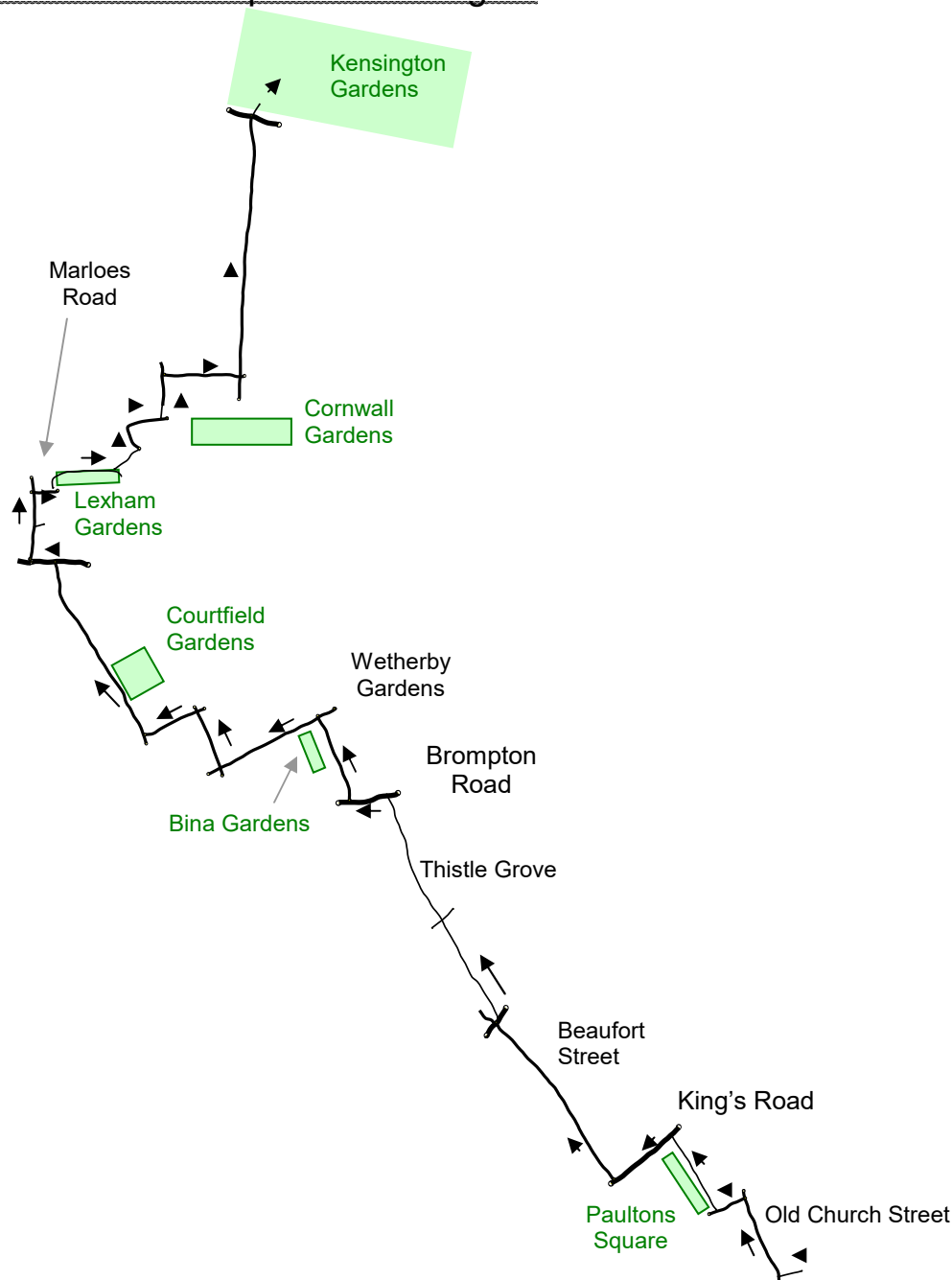
*Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was a Scottish writer and historian, famous for his books about the French Revolution and Frederick the Great, who spent his last years here. His writing is not simple and objective but full of metaphysical ideas and extraordinary turns of phrase. His house (and its garden) is preserved close to as it was in the 1870s and forms a kind of fascinating time capsule. It is open March-October, closed Mon & Tue.*

Turn **right** into [Lordship Place](#) to the Cross Keys an amazing pub-restaurant, founded in 1708 and extravagantly adorned inside and out, recalling the pre-raphaelites who drank here. Turn **left** and **right** on [Cheyne Walk](#) by the riverside. Here you see another monument to Sir Hans Sloane, an urn. As you pass a little garden, you find a statue of Sir Thomas More. This is the site of his house, as portrayed in the film and play *A Man For All Seasons*.

*Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) was a writer and statesman, famous for opposing Henry VIII's separation from the Church of Rome and for writing*

*Utopia, a fictional account of an idealised country. He opposed the Protestant Reformation and was made a catholic martyr, long after losing his head. He is correctly portrayed as a great humanist and man of unwavering principle. But it is worth noting that as Lord Chancellor he condemned several people to death at the stake. The portrayal of King Richard III as a deformed hunchback, famously elaborated by Shakespeare, also derives from his writings.*

### Third Stroll: into the park – Kensington



- 6 Turn **right** into **Old Church Street** and pass Chelsea Old Church, destroyed in the war and rebuilt. At the *Pig's Ear*, a superior gastropub, turn **left** into **Paultons Street** and **right** along either side of **Paultons Square** with its garden and turn **left** on King's Road. Turn **right** at the traffic lights and follow **Beaufort Street** to its end at Fulham Road. Turn **right** for just 30m and then **left** into a passage **Thistle Grove**. This long quiet passage is a change from the busy roads and gives you a chance to view the terraces, smaller cottages and little gardens of this area. It crosses a road and

continues on the other side. Finally you reach **Brompton Road**. Turn **left** and shortly **right** into **Bina Gardens**, opposite the Drayton Arms a beautiful slightly rowdy Victorian pub with “purple brick, buff terracotta and fantastic Jacobean pilasters”.

7 Pass the garden square on your left and, at the end, turn **left** into **Wetherby Gardens**. Turn **right** into **Collingham Gardens** and, at a mini-roundabout, turn **left**, still in Collingham Gardens, with the little garden square on your left and a perfect row of white terraced porticos on your right. At the end, turn **right** into **Laverton Place**. At a junction, keep straight ahead into **Courtfield Gardens** with its garden square on your right and keep straight on. *After all this beauty, just for balance, it's time for a detested ugly construction:* you pass under the air bridge of the Premier Inn. After a bend you reach **Cromwell Road**. Turn **left**, cross this busy road at the traffic lights and turn **right** here into **Marloes Road**.

8 Take the second road **right**, **Lexham Gardens**. As you reach the garden square, keep to the **left** around it. This is one of the most interesting in London, being intricately divided up with winding paths, arbours, lawns, rockery, areas for children and sculpture: you may see the large horse piece as you pass. In the far left-hand corner, go between bollards into **Lexham Walk** and continue up a slope. Turn here immediately **left** into Cornwall Gardens so that you have Braemar Mansions on your right. This absolutely magnificent mansion block was home once to Sir Terence Rattigan, the playwright. Its junior sister mansion Cornwall House stands beside it, separated by a garden with Cornwall Gardens beyond. Turn **right** round the corner of the mansion. Turn **left** just after the first mansion and before a Victorian letterbox down a narrow passage opposite. Continue at the end along **Stanford Road**. Take the first road **right**, **Eldon Road**, passing several interesting houses. Turn **left** at the end into **Victoria Road** and follow it to its end at Kensington Road. Cross this main road directly, using the crossing to the left, and through a gate into Kensington Gardens. If the weather is good, you are met with a cheerful sight.

*Kensington Gardens form the huge western part of Hyde Park but they are more intimate and are locked at night. On the west side is Kensington Palace (of which they once formed the garden) which is a **must** to visit, if not now then another day. J.M. Barrie's "Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens" takes place here. The Round Pond and some sculpture are notable features of the gardens, including a statue of Peter Pan nearer the north side.*

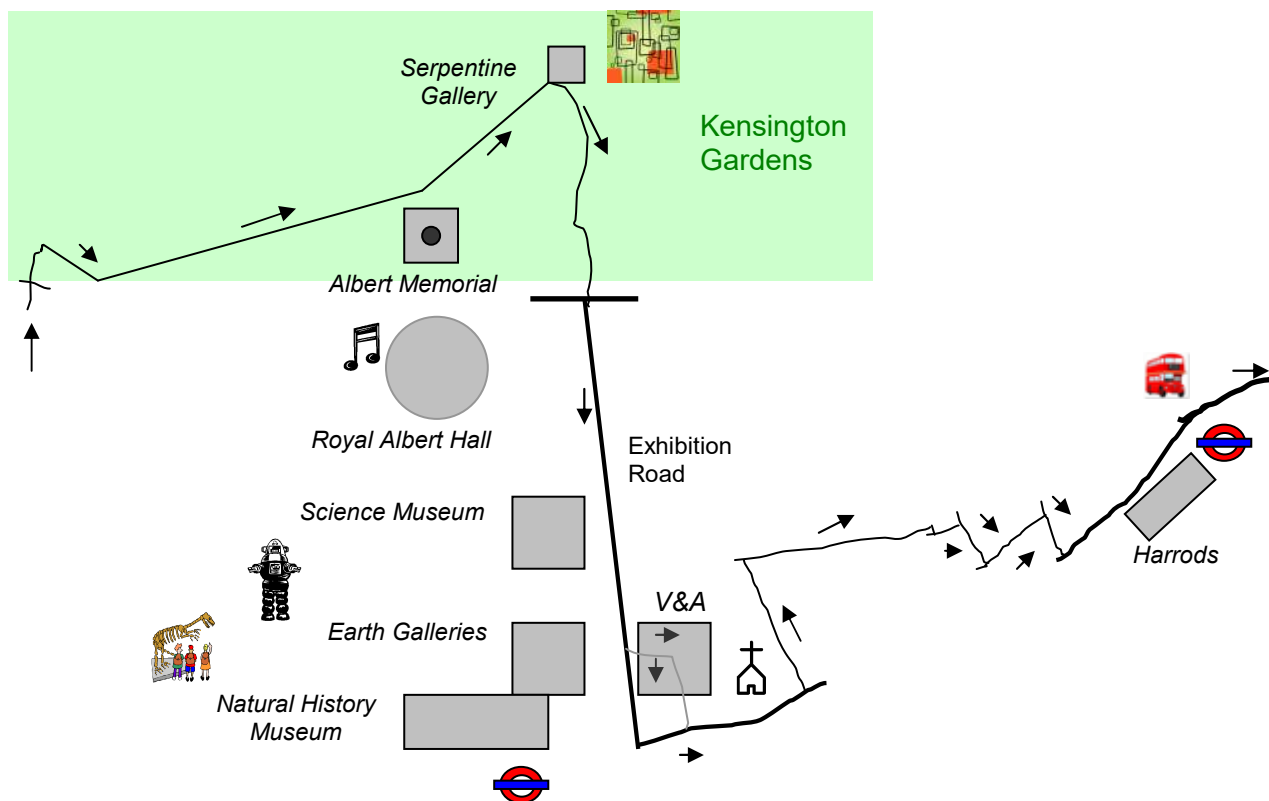
#### Fourth Stroll: a trip to Harrods – Knightsbridge

9 Take the first turning **right**, so that you are walking parallel to the road you just crossed, and go past the start of the Broad Walk, a very wide path running south-to-north. Take a central path between two low metal gates. This path runs amongst flower beds and has occasional benches and recesses for the visitor seeking peace and quiet. It crosses a wide path and continues for some distance until suddenly on your right is the Albert Memorial and, beyond it the Royal Albert Hall.

*The Albert Memorial, a neo-gothic tour-de-force, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, was commissioned by the heartbroken Queen Victoria to commemorate her husband Prince Albert. Below his gilt statue are sculptures depicting human industry, and below them, groups and animals representing the four principal continents.*



Plans for The Royal Albert Hall were drawn up by Prince Albert but he died before the first stone was laid. When completed, it had problems with acoustics and this was solved using huge suspended “mushrooms”. The Royal Albert Hall is the main venue of the Promenade Concerts, known as the “Proms” which take place each year from mid-July to mid-September and where the cheapest tickets are standing tickets in the “promenade” area just in front of the orchestra. So dedicated are the “prommers” that you can hear a pin drop even when the house is full.



Turn **left** and take a path **half right**, heading for a low building. This is the Serpentine Gallery, a free gallery that puts on interesting and surprising, sometimes controversial, contemporary art exhibitions always by a single artist. *This gallery also has good loos.* In the summer months, there is a pavilion next to the Gallery, always different and designed by a different architect. After visiting the Serpentine Gallery, from the entrance, go **half left** heading for the road junction between the road that runs across the park and the main road. At a little fingerpost, don't join the road but take a path ahead parallel to the road that crosses the park. Where the path bends right, take a path ahead across the grass. On meeting the arterial road, turn **left** between the massive wrought iron gates and **right** to the traffic lights. Cross the main road at the lights and take **Exhibition Road** that leads away from the Gardens.

*Exhibition Road is also an experimental project. It has been re-configured so as to give pedestrians priority or, more accurately, to blur the distinction between motor transport and people on foot, by removing all markings and thereby taming the traffic. It is expected to become a cultural centre or “creative quarter” promoting free expression at street level. It is also, as the name implies, home to the great South Kensington museums.*

- 10 Go down Exhibition Road passing, on your right, Imperial College of Science, the (free) Science Museum, and the Earth Galleries of the Natural

History Museum. On your left is the (free) Victoria and Albert Museum (“the V&A”).

*The V&A is the world's largest museum of decorative arts and design, housing a permanent collection of over 4.5 million objects. It has an award-winning new medieval gallery, also the intimate British galleries, fine galleries of glass, iron, silver, paintings, sculpture and “ethnic” cultural collections. It also has an excellent self-service restaurant centred on the William Morris decorated rooms.*

On your right is the corner of the Natural History Museum designed in cream-and-green stone and housing a spectacular scientific collection. Your route is **left** at the corner of the V&A into [Thurloe Place](#) but of course you can go through the V&A, exiting by the main entrance and turning left.

- 11 Just after the V&A is a church, the Brompton Oratory, a large catholic church built in the late baroque Italian Renaissance style. Turn **left** after the Brompton Oratory on a footpath that runs beside a narrow lane. *Note the old disused underground station building.* The path passes another church, Holy Trinity Brompton. At the end of the passage, at a row of pastel coloured mews cottages, turn **right** into [Ennismore Garden Mews](#) and go under a classical-style portico. Continue ahead, passing on your left in succession Ennismore Gardens and Rutland Gate, both fine garden squares. At the end of the street, go **right** down three steps and **left** into [Rutland Street](#). At the end, go **right** into [Montpelier Walk](#), left at the end into [Cheval Place](#), right at the end into [Montpelier Street](#) and left at the end into [Brompton Road](#). Opposite you is Harrods department store.

*Harrods is one of the world's largest and most famous department stores with more than 90,000m<sup>2</sup> of space. It is recognised for its vast range, its food hall and its signature green bags. Harrods sells luxury and everyday items across seven floors and 330 departments, its motto being "Omnia Omnibus Ubique" (all things for all people, everywhere) and the store attracts 15 million customers each year. It was founded in 1849 by Charles Henry Harrod, starting in one room and employing two assistants and a messenger boy, selling tea and groceries. It steadily expanded but in 1883 a fire destroyed the store. Unperturbed, the owners still completed all their Christmas deliveries and soon rebuilt the store with the help of architect Charles William Stephens, to what you see today. In 1898 it installed one of the world's first escalators.*

*In 1985 the store was bought by Egyptian-born Mohamed Al-Fayed and this led to a bitter feud first with Tiny Rowland, director of Lonrho, and then with British high society who looked on him as an upstart. Mr Al Fayed added his own personal touches to the store, such as the Egyptian Room which is adorned with busts of himself. His son Dodi escorted Diana Princess of Wales and died with her in 1997. In 1989 the store introduced a controversial dress code which banned shorts, swimwear, flip flops and thong sandals (be warned!) causing several tourists to be refused entry, much to their chagrin.*

After possibly visiting Harrods, finish at nearby Knightsbridge tube or continue along Brompton Road and bear **right** at the traffic lights into Knightsbridge where the walk began.

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