



Regent's Park, Camden Market, Kings Cross Marylebone, Primrose Hill, Camden Lock Regent's Canal, Granary Square

Distance: 9 km=6 miles or 6 km=4 miles

easy walking

Region: London

Date written: 18-jan-2013

Author: Thwelder, Navigator

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Refreshments: everywhere

Map: London A-Z

Problems, changes? *We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org*

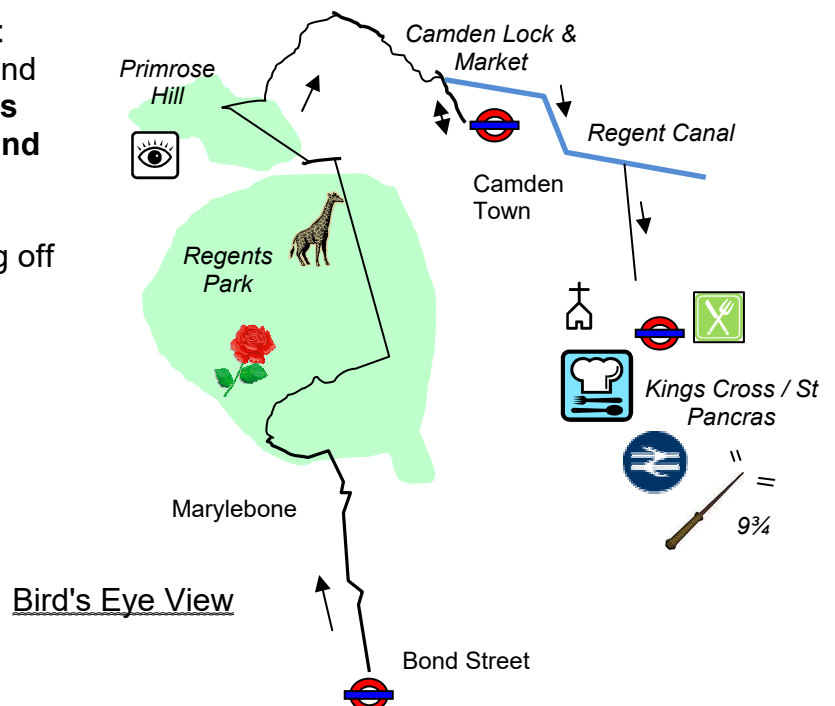
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London "villages", park, view over London, canal, large markets, clothes

In Brief

This is the author's favourite London walk. It takes you quickly out of the West End, through the village of Marylebone, into the fresh air and colour of Regent's Park. At Primrose Hill you have a view over London and a tour of its village leads you onwards to the famous Camden Market, resembling so much a Middle-Eastern souk, then Camden Lock where you can sit quietly and enjoy a meal *al fresco*, and the eccentric Camden High Street with its progressive clothes shops. Finally, the walk takes you along the Regent's Canal to the vast new development of Kings Cross with public spaces offering food and entertainment of every kind imaginable.

The walk begins at **Bond Street Underground** station (Central and Jubilee Lines) and ends at **Kings Cross / St Pancras Underground / Mainline** station, all easily accessed from central London. There are several other stopping off points along the way.



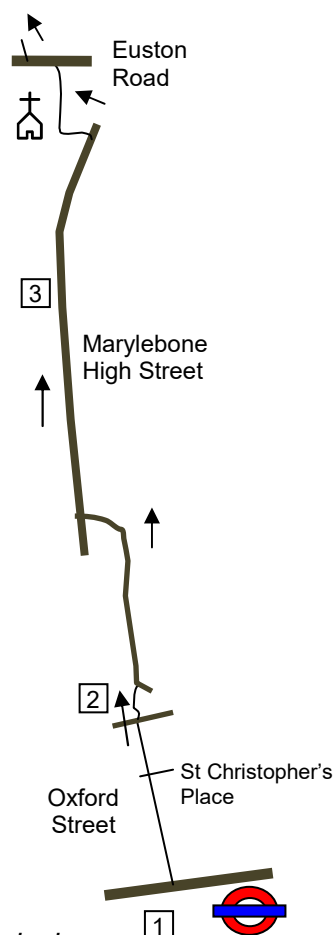
The Walk

Stroll 1: Marylebone 1.1 km=0.7 mile

- 1 Come out of the main exit of Bond Street station, cross **Oxford Street** and turn **left**, but only for **40 metres**. Look out on the **right** for a very narrow passage known as **St Christopher's Place**. This is easily missed and most people walk straight past it without noticing. At the time of writing it is immediately after an H&M shop. Follow this alley past several bijou shops, passing a small plaza with water sculpture, a favourite area for dining. The passage widens a bit and comes out into **Wigmore Street**.
- 2 Go straight over Wigmore Street into **Jason Court**. At the end of this narrow alley, keep straight ahead on Marylebone Lane, with its odd restaurants and *Paul Rothe* delicatessen festooned with jam jars, twisty because it follows the course of the Tyburn River. Cross first Hinde/Bentinck Street, then Bulstrode Street. *Visible two blocks on your left is the Wallace Collection, a free museum of fine art.* At a junction with Bulstrode Place, keep bearing **left** with the lane to reach the next major junction. Turn **right** here on the straight wide shopping street, **Marylebone High Street**, with its mixture of standard outlets and rare one-off shops, boutiques, restaurants and pubs.

Marylebone is a large well-to-do London borough which includes Sherlock Holmes' Baker Street, the famous Lords Cricket Ground (home of the Marylebone Cricket Club), much of the area north of Oxford Street (including Selfridges, the Wallace Collection and Marble Arch) and most of Regent's Park. In medieval times it was called Tiburn or Tybourne from the brook that runs through it (now underground). Later it took on the name of the parish church of St Mary, thus Mary-at-the-Bourn. The parish church on Euston Road was finished in 1817, replacing an older church that dated from around 1400. Samuel Wesley was its first organist.

- 3 In Moxon Street, about half way down on the left, is *La Fromagerie*, a delicatessen where you can take a seat on the long table for a delicious *impromptu* lunch. As the road curves right, you pass St Marylebone School where the great conductor Leopold Stokowski, well-known from *Fantasia*, was a pupil. Just after the school, opposite the Conran shop, go **left** through an iron gate into the gardens of St Mary's church. Turn **right** along the side of the church, which is well worth a visit, and come out to the busy **Euston Road**.



Stroll 2: Regent's Park 2½ km=1½ miles

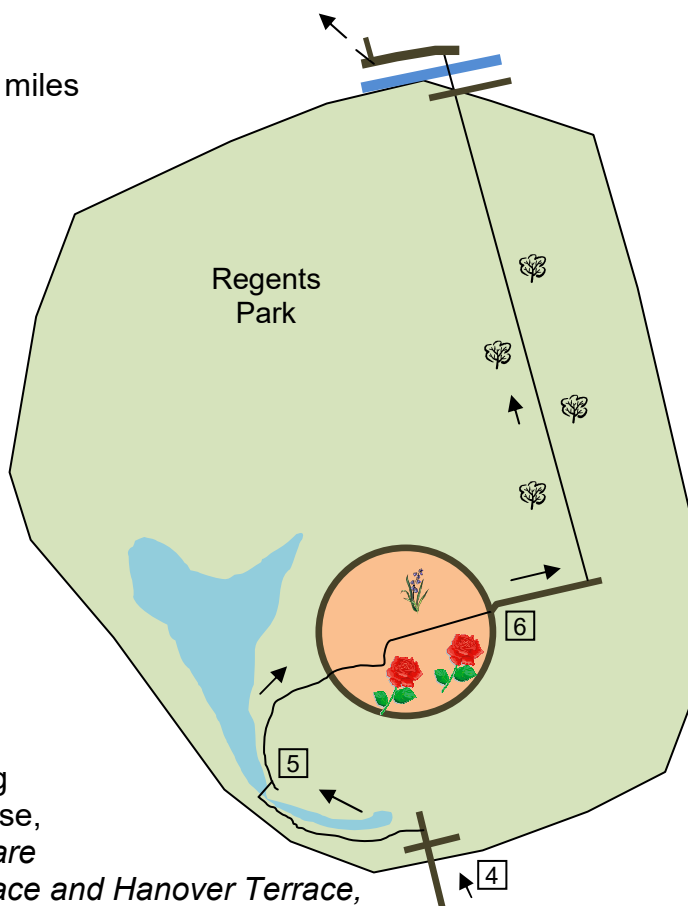
- 4 Cross the Euston Road to York Gate opposite, going between some of the elegant stucco terraces that surround much of Regent's Park. *On the right is the Royal Academy of Music.* At traffic lights go straight over the Outer Circle on a road in the park and, in 30m, turn **left** through some metal gates into the park on a tarmac path.

Regent's 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.

On your right is one arm of the Boating Lake with its abundant moorhens, geese, herons and swans. *Over on your left are more of those fine terraces, York Terrace and Hanover Terrace, both designed by the architect John Nash around 1820.* Soon you reach a steel bridge. Your route is **right** over the bridge but first you may like to make a short detour by walking a little further along the lakeside.

- 5 Having turned right over the bridge, turn **left** on a tarmac path with the Boating Lake and then the Bandstand on your left. The path crosses the Inner Circle road near an ice-cream kiosk and enters the Queen Mary's Garden with the Garden Café on your left. *This is a special place where visitors come to savour the scent of the roses and enjoy the colours.* It is worth spending some time looking round this circular garden. As a guide, you will be walking the whole length of the garden to an ornate wrought iron gate on the opposite side (not the large one visible on your right). As you meander across, on your left you will see the *Open Air Theatre*. In the far left corner is the *Triton Fountain*. On the right are the pond and water garden, with its weeping willows and its little island, together with the main rose garden. Your path is the narrower of two wide tarmac paths that criss-cross in the centre, signposted *London Zoo, Camden Town*, passing a WC.

- 6 After exiting Queen Mary's Garden through those iron gates, cross straight over the Inner Circle road again and continue along Chester Road which in spring is lined with flowering cherries. About half way along, at a zebra crossing, turn left on a wide path known as the *Broad Walk*. On your left is a small café and a WC. Follow this long straight avenue for some distance. *The gothic fountain after 500m dates from 1869 and was the gift of a wealthy gentleman of Bombay.* On your left now is the London Zoo. *The zoo dates from 1828, one of the earliest in the world, and was built by the Zoological Society of London as a centre for scientific study.* Finally the path comes out to the Outer Circle. Cross this road to a path opposite which crosses the Regent's Canal. At the main road, **Prince Albert Road**, turn **left**. At the next traffic lights turn **diagonally right** through the gates in the corner of Primrose Hill.

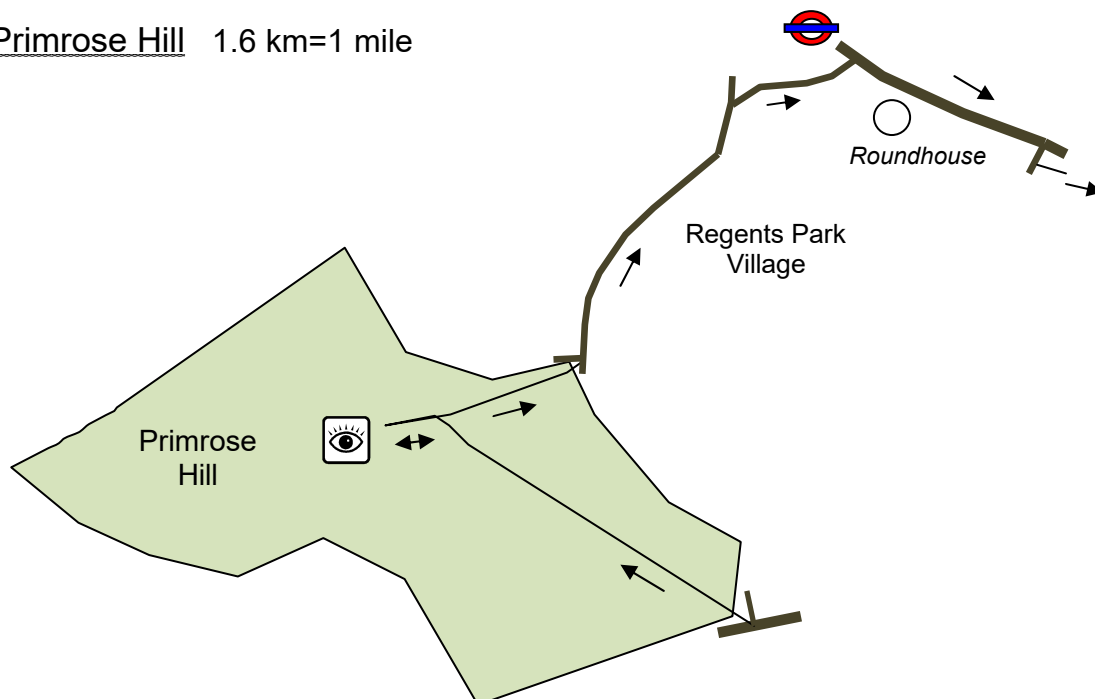


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Stroll 3: Primrose Hill 1.6 km=1 mile



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Take the **right**-hand of two tarmac paths, which leads up to the top of Primrose Hill where you have extensive views over the whole of London. *You can see, from left to right, Canary Wharf, the Heron, the Gherkin, the Cheesegrater, the WalkieTalkie, St Paul's, the Shard, the Telecom Tower and the London Eye.* (See another walk in this series "London Sky-scrapers".) After the viewpoint, go back the way you came but fork **left** after 40m to descend to a gate in the corner at a junction with Primrose Hill Road and Regent's Park Road. With the *Queens* pub on your left, stroll along the local shopping street, **Regent's Park Road**. Welcome to another engaging London village!

Everyone who is anyone seems to live (or have lived) in Primrose Hill village. Included in their number are politicians such as Boris Johnson (ex-mayor and foreign secretary) and the Milibands (Labour Party), showbiz people such as Daniel Craig (James Bond), John Cleese, Tim Burton, Sienna Miller and Jude Law, model Kate Moss, literary figures such as Kingsley Amis, W.B. Yeats, Ted Hughes (and Sylvia Plath of course), musicians such as Robert Plant of Led Zeppelin. You might bump into any of them as you pass.

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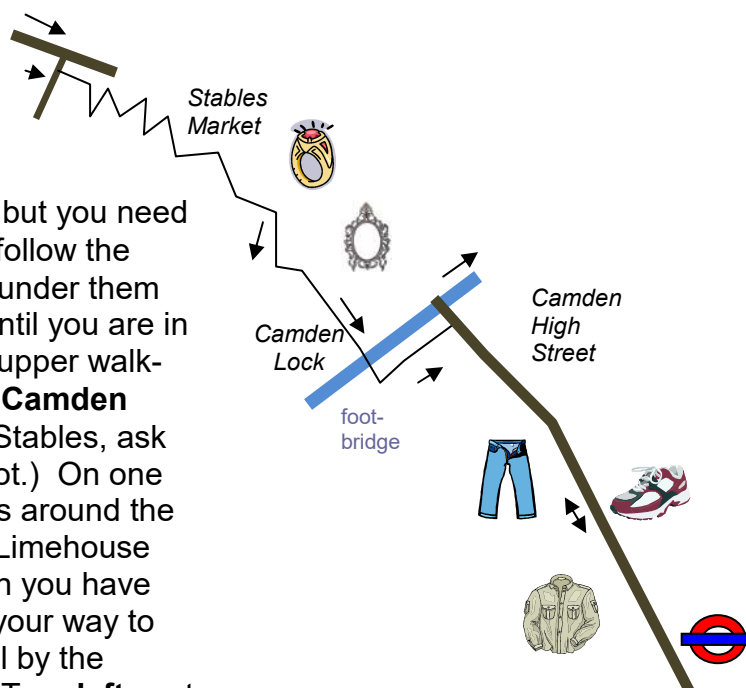


Proceed to the end of Regent's Park Road and go over a colourful pedestrian-only railway bridge. Immediately after the bridge, opposite an eccentric coffee house, turn **right**. The road leads down to the main road **Haverstock Hill**. Chalk Farm tube is on your left. Turn **right** on the main road, soon passing on your right the *Roundhouse*, a large performance arena, in past times an engine shed. Next you pass a large filling station. *Immediately after the filling station*, by a brick wall, turn **right** towards a railway bridge but, in only 20m, go **left** through an arch in the wall marked **The Stables Market**.

Stroll 4: Camden Market 0.8 km= ½ mile

Reminiscent of the souk in Marrakesh, the Stables Market has about 700 shops and stalls, open at weekends and many every day, housed in restored industrial buildings from the age of canals and steam. The first thing you notice is the massive bronze sculptures of the farriers and the horses that were stabled here and pulled the barges along the canal. The Victorian brick arches built in 1854 once supported the railway sidings of the old North Western Railway and the secret Catacombs below contain even more shop units. All kinds of alternative fashions, antiques, collectables, crafts, footwear, furniture, airbrush tattoos, body piercing, street wear and vintage clothing can be had here. A wide choice of hot and cold international food can be bought and eaten al fresco in art deco spaces.

- 9 This is definitely the place to get lost but you need to remember your general direction: follow the arches and, near the end, turn **right** under them and somehow keep going that way until you are in a more open area with warehouses, upper walkways and larger restaurants. This is **Camden Lock Market**. (If you are lost in the Stables, ask any trader the way to this famous spot.) On one side is the Regent's Canal which runs around the north of London from Paddington to Limehouse and has a towpath all the way. When you have finished browsing the market, make your way to the canal side and go cross the canal by the arched metal pedestrian footbridge. Turn **left** past the *Ice Wharf and Sushi Salsa* restaurant and go up to the road.



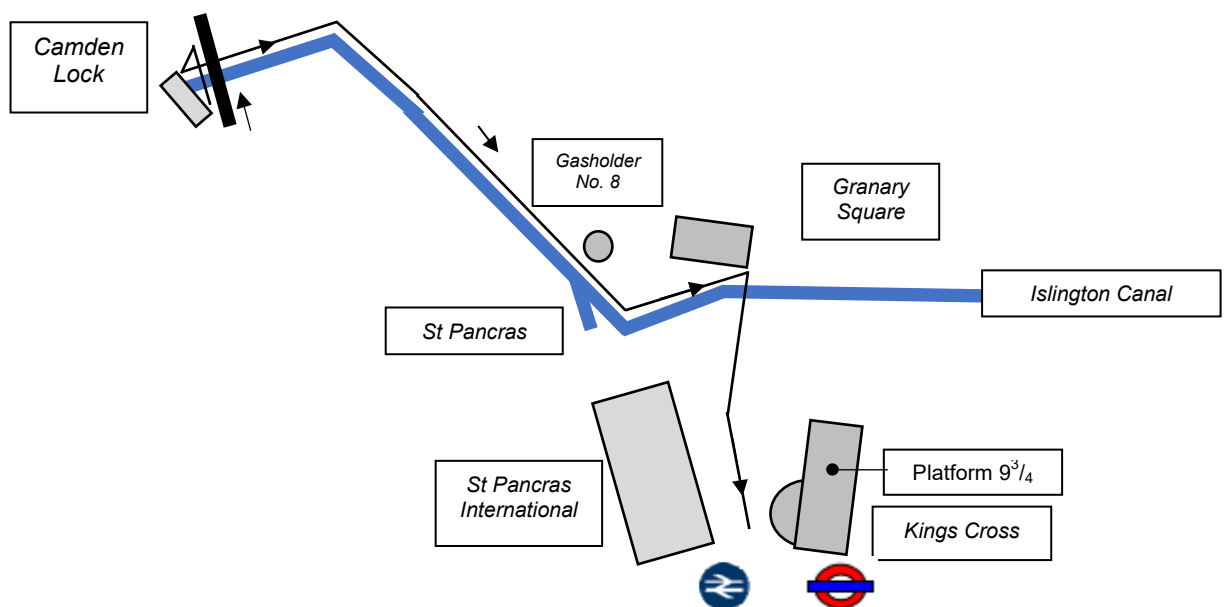
Your route continues along the canal towpath. But first it would be unthinkable to miss what every hipster and tourist comes to see. You need to retrace your steps back to the bridge afterwards to continue your walk along the canal passing some industrial heritage and ending up at the huge Kings Cross adventure village and Platform 9¾.

- 10 Turn **right** on the road, Camden High Street, the coolest street in London! This short stretch from the railway bridge at Camden Lock to the Underground station is on all the tourist maps and swarms with alternative fashion outlets, offering body art, holistic services, latex couture, music, and much more. Each outlet seems to compete to have the most outrageous sculpted sign projecting high up over the street. Don't miss the various smaller markets that lead off the main road. Continue along the road, soon arriving at Camden Town Underground Station (Northern Line). Now, unless you are weighed down with purchases, return on the other side of the street back to the canal bridge.



Stroll 5: Kings Cross 3 km= 2 miles

- 11 Cross the road bridge back over the canal. Keep to the left-hand side of this bridge and, where the black and red metal barrier that runs over the bridge ends, take a **left** down the slip path to the canal towpath. Turn sharp **left**, doubling back on yourself. The canal is on your right as you pass under the bridge that you have just come over. [2017-Aug? 2018: a small section of the canal path is closed due to a huge new building project. A notice directs you back along the road, **left** into Hawley Crescent, **left** again on Kentish Town Road, across the canal and double **left** back on the towpath. However, this does have the advantage of taking you past one of London's best-known fish-and-chip restaurants *Poppies*.] The route now is straightforward: follow the Regent's Canal towpath for the next mile, with the canal always on your right, passing colourful barges, some with live music.



A word of advice: The towpath can be busy, particularly at weekends. It is a shared space used by walkers, joggers and cyclists. Considerate cyclists use their bell to warn you of their approach. Some cyclists and joggers though can catch you by surprise, so do keep an ear or two open. Walking under the numerous road and rail bridges that criss-cross the canal, can at times be a bit of a squeeze (and mind your head!).

The Regent's Canal was so named by town planner John Nash. In 1811 he produced a masterplan for the Prince Regent (George IV) to redevelop a large area of central north London. The first section from Paddington to Camden Town, opened in 1816. The Camden to Limehouse section (a small section of which you are now walking along), including the 886-metre (969 yd) long Islington tunnel opened four years later in 1820. The canal's original purpose was to transfer imported cargo from seafaring vessels from the Regent's Canal Dock (today known as Limehouse Basin) to the Midlands. With the opening of the London and Birmingham Railway in 1838 and the road network in the twentieth century, the canal fell into a period of long decline.

Soon after Camden Lower Lock and Kentish Town Lock, you pass a hi-tech looking steel structure on your right. This is a highly imaginative block of houses built from corrugated metal, designed by Sir Nicholas Grimshaw, who also designed the Eden Project in Cornwall and the grandstand at Lord's Cricket

Ground. The complex, known as **Grand Union Walk**, includes a supermarket and a pre-school. It was built in 1988 and is intended to reflect the canal's industrial language.

- 12 Continue along the towpath, passing numerous converted warehouses or indeed their modern replacements. Later, on your left, you come across a group of gas holders built in the 1850s.

*The use of gas holders has steadily diminished as the upgraded pipe network can now both store as well as supply gas. The Victorian Society led the movement to preserve classic "gasometers" threatened with demolition, and the ones you see here were converted into flats in 2016. **Gas holder No. 8**, the largest of these iconic structures, once stood on the other side of the canal. The intricate wrought-iron structure was dismantled piece by piece, painstakingly restored, and moved to its new home where it today encases a sculpted canopy and lush circular lawn. Opposite the gas holders are St Pancras Docks.*

Shortly after the gas holders, you come across a wide-open terraced seating area, carpeted in green during the summer months. If a little weary, this is the ideal spot to rest and watch the boats slip by. On your left is the site of a vast new development: **Coal Drops Yard**, due for completion in 2018, a rival to Camden Lock. *Coal Drops Yard will be a public space and retail centre, making use of the Victorian arches, featuring traditional craft shops, exhibitions and food outlets.* On your right, just after the St Pancras Lock, is a stainless steel footbridge.



As a very worthwhile there-and-back excursion, turning **right** over the footbridge leads to two wonderful secrets of this area. On your **left** when you reach the road is an inauspicious entrance to the **Camley Street Natural Park**. This is a surprisingly large oasis of woodland trails, a floating jetty, a large pond, marshland, a summer-flowering meadow, all lovingly maintained. It was built on the side of a railway coal yard. *Closed Sunday* (to give the volunteers a day off). It also has a loo. On your **right** when you reach the road, under the railway and immediately **left**, is **St Pancras Old Church**, a wonderful treasure inside and surrounded by a park containing Victorian memorials and tombs of, amongst others, Sir John Soane (architect) and Thomas Hardy (novelist).

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After passing a long Victorian building on your right, veer **left** into **Granary Square** (2017: *there's only one way, everything is subject to change*). Filled with over 1,000 playful water spouts (lit in many colours at night), this square in Victorian times was a canal basin. *Barges unloaded their goods here for transportation onwards to the homes and businesses of London.* Don't be surprised if you come across weekend festivals, food markets and outdoor concerts to keep you entertained. If feeling energetic you might wish to participate in a yoga or fitness class held in the square (weather permitting).

*The Grade II-listed 1850s building in the background is **The Granary Building**, once used to store Lincolnshire wheat for London's bakers. This is now the stunning new home of the world-famous arts college – **Central Saint Martins**, part of the University of the Arts London. Their **Creative Unions Gallery** is full of daring designs. The square is also home to numerous cafés and restaurants.*

- 13 After meandering, continue your journey, veering right over the bridge on the other side of the square, crossing over the Regent's Canal. Carefully cross over the road in front of you and continue down the gently sloping pedestrian way (King's Boulevard), that runs past modern retail buildings on your right, including **Pancras Square** where you find the Google HQ and

many restaurants. The last small square is Battle Bridge Place. *Battle Bridge is the old name for Kings Cross. Until the 1970s this area was a notorious red-light district.* Finally you reach **St Pancras International** on your right and **Kings Cross Station** on your left. Both stations are marvels of modern and Victorian architecture and definitely deserve a visit, just to wander through, even if you are not actually boarding a train.

St Pancras is famous for its huge fairy-tale Victorian Gothic front (enclosing the Midland Hotel) and its spacious airport-like interior, with statues of The Lovers ("Meeting Place") and of the poet and lover of railways, Sir John Betjeman. There is a grand piano on the concourse and you may be lucky enough to hear an impromptu recital from a concert pianist about to board the Eurostar.

Kings Cross is believed to be the location of the legendary battle between Queen Boudicca and Roman invaders in AD 61. The story goes that the final resting place of Boudicca, the warrior queen of the Iceni, is under platform 9 (or 10) at King's Cross Station. A number of famous trains are associated with King's Cross, such as the Flying Scotsman service to Edinburgh. The most famous is the Mallard, which holds the world speed record for steam locomotives at 126 miles per hour (203 km/h), set in 1938. The wonderful semi-circular departures concourse was opened in March 2012. Should your taste in travel be a little more novel, the Hogwarts Express departs from Platform 9^{3/4}.



For those traveling without magic wands, from the front of Kings Cross Station the underground or numerous buses await, to take you homeward bound.

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