



Richmond and Petersham

Distance: 6½ km=4 miles

easy walking

Region: Greater London

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Author: Thwelder

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Refreshments: Pembroke Lodge, Richmond

Map: Explorer 161 (London South) or the wider A-Z

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

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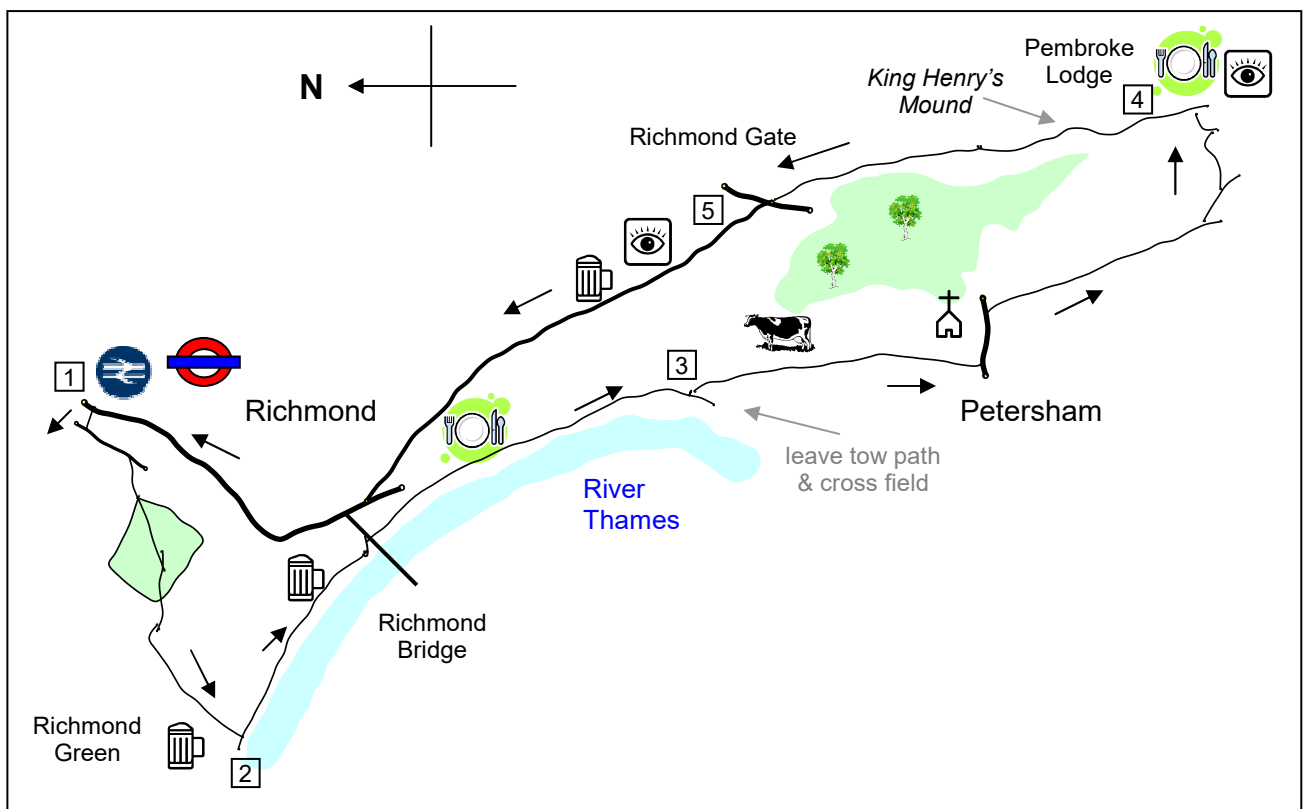
River, parkland, historic town

In Brief

This walk is an adventurous circular tour of this delightful riverside town, taking in a nearby village and farm, plus some of the delights of Richmond Park and the famous view of the Thames. Amazingly, with all this, the walk is reached via the London Underground (or half an hour from Waterloo).

This is an easy walk and any reasonable clothing and sensible shoes are fine. It is also good with a dog.

The walk begins at **Richmond Station** (District Line or SW Trains). Other access is by bus or by car (park in Old Deer Park car park).



The Walk

- 1 Turn **left** out of the station and immediately cross the main road by the zebra crossing. Turn **right** for just a few paces and go **left** on Old Station Passage which goes under a building. Turn left on the road (Parkshot, Little Green). On reaching Richmond Green, take a path that goes diagonally across it. Just over on your left is Richmond Theatre.

A theatre has stood on or near Richmond Green since Elizabethan times. The current building was constructed in 1899. Another theatre The Orange Tree is just off the road you came on. Richmond Green used to be a corner of Old Deer Park with houses built around it. Now calved off by a road and railway it has many fine houses built all around in a square. It has been a principal location for cricket matches ever since the early 1700s. Just off the Green on the left are a number of passages with pubs and unique curiosity shops, worth exploring now or on the return.

At the centre of the Green, veer **right** on a crossing path. The gateway over on the left is the Gate House – one of the few remaining remnants of the old Richmond Palace.

Richmond Palace was a vast Tudor edifice looking from the pictures much like a “lost Hampton Court”. It was built in 1501 by order of King Henry VII to replace an older fire-ravaged palace. He named it after his own title, Earl of Richmond (that great town in Yorkshire). The surrounding town eventually took on the name of the palace. Henry VIII’s first son (by Catherine of Aragon) was born there but only survived one month. Queen Elizabeth I lived and died there. The palace was sold during Oliver Cromwell’s stewardship and was gradually dismantled.

At the far corner of the Green, cross the road that runs round the side of the Green and continue ahead Old Palace Lane which promptly bends left. Pass the *White Swan* pub and reach the River Thames. On your right are the railway bridge and Twickenham Bridge. Turn **left** along the tow path.

- 2 *Immediately on the left is Asgill House, built 1760 on the site of the old Palace to designs by Sir Robert Taylor. In the garden is a magnificent copper beech, listed in Time Out’s “Great Trees of London”. Pass the White Cross, a Youngs pub and a creek, followed by the beautifully restored Old Town Hall with its stepped terraces. Continue under Richmond Bridge. Here there are many opportunities for refreshment. The tow path passes a canoe club and a grassy bank. Soon the path bends right. Leave the tow path here by continuing ahead through a metal gate into a cow pasture belonging to Petersham Farm.*

Petersham Farm has survived like a green lung in a jostling townscape and preserves the wonderful rural sight-lines from the town across the river and beyond so that visitors from the 1700s would still feel at home. Until recently it had a dairy and the closure of that spurred the formation of the Petersham Trust to fight for its preservation in an area of sky-high land values.

- 3 At the end of the tarmac path, go through a swing-gate and along a track to Petersham Church, built in 1505 but with some much older fittings, alongside its picturesque little churchyard. On reaching the main Petersham Road, turn **left**. In 100m, opposite the *Dysart Arms*, go **right** through a metal gate into Richmond Park, passing a play area. Keep to the main gravel track ahead, avoiding paths going uphill. In about 400m, look out for a group of large spruce trees. These evergreens are easy to find because

they stand out from the usual oaks, beeches and other broadleaf trees that populate the park. There is a single spruce on your right and a group of them on your left. Here fork **left** on a narrower path uphill. Where the path curves left, leave it to continue uphill on a grassy slope. On reaching the fence at the top, go through a metal gate into the grounds of Pembroke Lodge. Turn **left** and go up steps to the terrace of Pembroke Lodge, a fine vantage point for taking tea and gazing at the view of the Thames valley, its historic houses and gardens.

In the mid-1700s, Pembroke Lodge was a just one-room cottage, occupied by a man whose duty was to protect huntsmen from molehills. The cottage, then enlarged, was rented by Elizabeth, Countess of Pembroke, a great beauty, who prevailed on King George III to grant it to her. In 1847 Queen Victoria gave the Lodge to Prime Minister Lord John Russell who conducted government business here. Visitors included Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort, Palmerston, Gladstone, Garibaldi, Thackeray, Dickens, Browning, Tennyson, Landseer and Lewis Carroll. The philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell spent his early years here. The Lodge then passed into private hands and during the war it was requisitioned by an Intelligence regiment known as the Phantom Squad. One member of the Squad was actor David Niven. The cottage suffered two direct hits from bombs in 1942 and 1944. Now the Lodge is a restaurant and centre for visitors, and a favourite location for weddings, because of these fabulous views. The gardens, as you will see, are also remarkable.

- 4 Turn **left** in front of the Lodge and follow a path through the gardens. Just past an oval flower bed, fork **right** and turn **left** up a hillock following the sign for King Henry's Mound. From this spot you can look through the telescope along a famous protected view.

This view is an unbroken one of 16km (more than 10 miles) all the way to St Paul's Cathedral in the City of London. The view was created in 1710. Even the trees of nearby Sidmouth Wood and several buildings in London had their plans changed or were reduced in size to preserve this precious view. You can also see Ham House, the famous Twickenham rugby ground and Windsor Castle (much further).

Continue through the laburnham walk and Poet's Corner. *Have a look here for Ian Dury's bench with the words "Reasons to be cheerful" on the back.* Exit through double metal gates into the main part of Richmond Park.

Richmond Park is a Royal Park whose connections began with Edward I in the 1200s when it was known as the Manor of Sheen. It was renamed when Henry VII built Richmond Palace nearby. In 1625 Charles I brought his court here from London to escape the plague and he turned it into a deer park, enclosing it with a fence (which still stands today) but he allowed pedestrians right of way. Today, the Park is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a National Nature Reserve, abounding in grasslands, ancient trees and wildlife, especially red and fallow deer. The Park contains several woodland enclosures, including the (truly!) stunning Isabella Plantation, and great houses, such as the White Lodge where the Queen Mother and other royals once lived. There is a fine bike circuit round the edge of 12km=7½ miles.

Keep to the wide track ahead that runs by the fence with Petersham Wood sloping down to the left. Exit finally through Richmond Gate.

- 5 Keep straight ahead on Richmond Hill, avoiding the road that forks off right past the *Lass of Richmond Hill* pub. *First on the left is the massive Star and Garter, originally a hospital for wounded servicemen. Also on the left is Wick House, bought by Pete Townshend of The Who. The creamy brick*

house, Downe House, that you will soon pass on the right was bought by Rolling Stone Mick Jagger and his lofty Texan wife Jerry Hall. Mick took his leave, but Jerry and their four children occasionally still live there. You now have the famous view of the Thames below at its bend, a scene painted by JMW Turner in 1819. Stay on the terrace that runs beside the road, soon passing through the top of the Terrace Gardens. Not long after, as Richmond Hill begins to descend, there are interesting individual shops on the right, followed by a little green on the left with a “boat of flowers”. Join the main road and bear right at House of Fraser on George Street, the main shopping street. Richmond Station is a few retail and nourishment stops further along on the right.

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