



Kew Bridge to Twickenham walking guide

Follow the Thames Path from Kew Bridge to Twickenham, and admire some grand homes on the way

From the Royal Botanic Gardens and Kew Palace, George III's family home, there are excellent panoramas across to Syon House as you meander along the south bank to Richmond, once a royal town. After crossing to the north bank, with views up to Richmond Hill and the imperial-looking Royal Star and Garter Home (pictured above), the route continues to Marble Hill House, a villa built for George II's mistress, and on to the Orleans House Gallery. There is a detour by ferry to Ham House, from where you can return to Richmond station or continue to Twickenham station.

Leave Kew Bridge station to cross the bridge and join the Thames Path, signed. After crossing the river, take the steep flight of steps on your right down to the towpath and turn left. The path along this route is shared with cyclists, so be aware. There are views across the river to barges and houseboats. In about 250 yards, there is a sign directing you left to the Botanical Gardens (open daily from 09:30, and worth a day's visit on its own). Keeping straight on, you may see green parakeets, which have successfully bred in this area. Kew Palace (due to reopen in 2006), in the Botanical Gardens, shortly comes into view on your left and, in stark contrast, the high-rise buildings across the river in Brentford.

After about a mile, Syon House, the London home of the present Duke of Northumberland, appears on your right. A mile further on, pass a sign on your left to the Old Deer Park—now the Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club—where you can view the site of the King's Observatory, built to satisfy George III's interest in astronomy. Ahead, as the Thames turns, is the decorative Richmond Lock footbridge, followed by Twickenham bridge, then a railway bridge and finally Richmond bridge, where a sign tells us we've come nearly three miles from Kew bridge. Stop for lunch at a pub or café along the Richmond Riverside—a modern recreation of classical architectural styles of the 17-19th centuries by architect Quinlan Terry. The White Cross has excellent riverside views and good pub grub.

The route now crosses Richmond bridge to follow the towpath on the north side of the Thames. The red-brick Royal Star and Garter Home appears on your left, perched high on Richmond Hill, with a commanding view of the Thames and the meadowlands. It was built in 1916 for disabled ex-service men and women.

After passing Cambridge Park on your right, there is an entrance gate to Marble Hill House and Park, the retreat of George II's mistress, Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk. Follow the signs to the café, passing a majestic black walnut tree and Lady Suffolk's Grotto on the way.

Leave the park by the left of the Coach House Café, returning to the riverside, and take Hammerton's Ferry (from 10:00 to dusk, Nov-Feb, weather permitting, adults 60p, child 30p) to Ham House. This is a Stuart mansion built in 1610 and, although the house closes at the end of October, the gardens remain open (free entry to National Trust members). The Cherry Garden, named after the 40 morello-cherry trees growing there in the late-17th century, is planted in a formal diamond pattern. The evergreens, box topiary and hornbeam hedge look very good in winter.

On leaving Ham House, you can turn right to follow the towpath back to Richmond station—a walk of about 1¼ miles—or return on the ferry to the north bank, turn left on to the riverside past Orleans House Gallery, right at the cobbled Church Lane below Eel Pie Island, left on to Church Street and right on to London Road to arrive at Twickenham station.