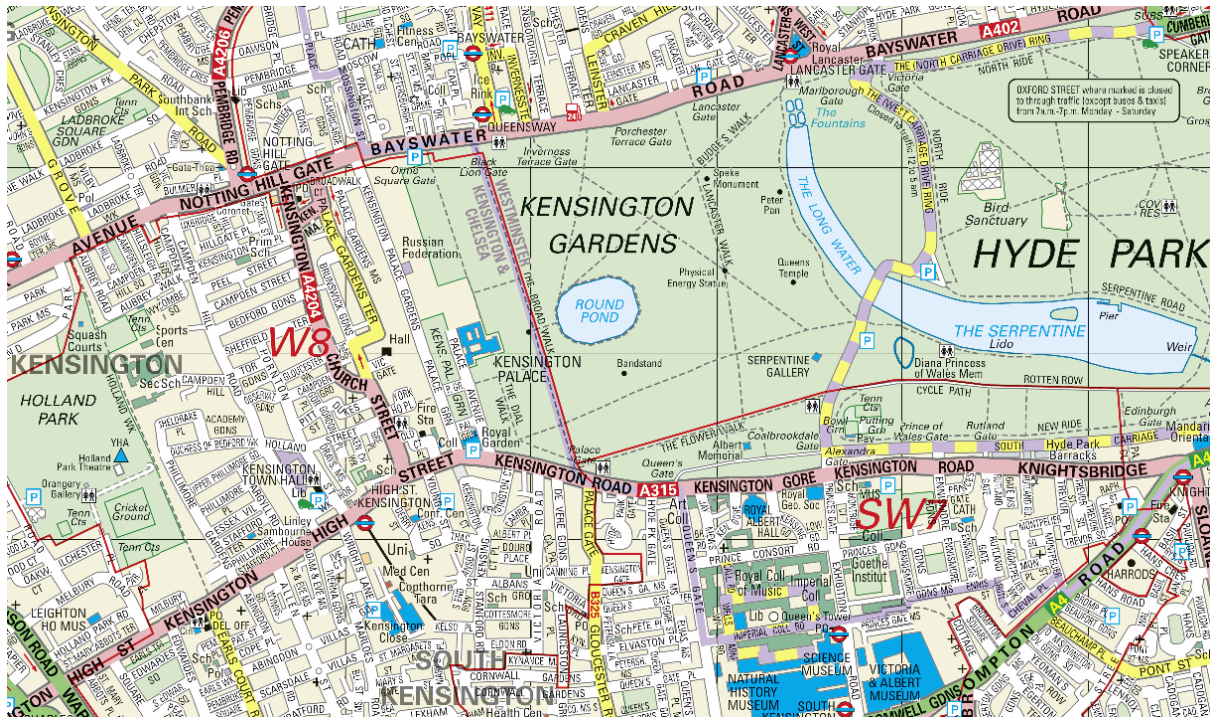




Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Kensington Palace



The original early 17th-century building was constructed in the village of Kensington as Nottingham House for Heneage Finch, 1st Earl of Nottingham. It was acquired from his heir, by William III, in 1689, because the King wanted a residence near London but away from the smoky air of the capital, because he was asthmatic.



At that time Kensington was a suburban village location outside London, but more accessible than Hampton Court, a water journey on the Thames. A private road was laid out from the Palace to Hyde Park Corner, broad enough for several carriages to travel abreast, part of which survives today as Rotten Row. The Palace was improved and extended by Sir Christopher Wren with pavilions attached to each corner of the central block, for it now needed paired Royal Apartments approached by the Great Stairs, a council chamber, and the Chapel Royal. Wren re-oriented the house to face west, building north and south wings to flank the approach, made into a proper *cour d'honneur* that was entered through an archway surmounted by a clock tower

For seventy years, Kensington Palace was the favoured residence of British monarchs, although the official seat of the Court was and remains at St. James's which has not been the actual royal residence in London since the 17th century. After William III's death, the palace became the residence of Queen Anne who had Christopher Wren complete the extensions that William and Mary had begun, resulting in the section known as the Queen's Apartments, with the Wren staircase, known as "The Queen's Entrance", which currently serves as the exit point, with shallow steps so that Queen Anne could walk down gracefully.

The Cupola Room, designed by William Kent, 1722: the monumental musical clock, which once played tunes by Handel, Corelli and Geminiani, remains in the room.

George I spent lavishly on new royal apartments from 1718. William Kent painted a staircase and some ceilings. In 1722 he designed the Cupola Room, the principal state room, with feigned coffering in its high coved ceiling; in 1819.

The last reigning monarch to use Kensington Palace was George II. For his consort, Charles Bridgeman swept away the outmoded parterres and redesigned Kensington Gardens in a form that is still recognizable today: his remaining features are The Serpentine, the basin called the Round Pond, and the Broad Walk.



After George II's death in the palace in 1760, Kensington Palace was only used for more minor royalty, including the young daughter of the Duke of Kent who was living in the Palace with her widowed mother when she was told of her accession to the throne as Queen Victoria. Queen Mary (grandmother of the present Queen) was born at Kensington Palace in 1867

In 1981, apartments 8 and 9 were combined to create the London residence of the newly married Prince and Princess of Wales, Charles and Diana, and it remained the official residence of Diana, Princess of Wales after her divorce until her death

Tickets and prices (Every day)

Book your tickets online to beat the queues and save money.

For visits 26 Mar '12 - 29 Feb '13

Individual rate Adult £14.50 online rate £13.50

Concessions Full-time students, over 60yrs with ID £12.00 online rate £11.00.

Note: Tickets purchased in advance are valid for seven days from the date selected.