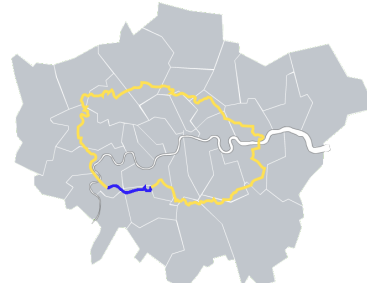




Capital Ring
Section 6
Wimbledon Park to Richmond Bridge

Version 3 : November 2010

Walk
London



Start: Wimbledon Park station (TQ252721)

Station: Wimbledon Park station

Finish: Friars Lane (TQ177746)

Station: Richmond

Distance: 7 miles (11 km)

Introduction: At 7½ miles (12km), this is one of the longer sections of the Capital Ring, with some quite long and steep ups and downs, mainly on rough tracks or paths and grass. There are steps on a footbridge over the A3.

The walk goes through Wimbledon Park, Wimbledon Common and past Wimbledon Windmill, before going through Richmond Park, London's largest national nature reserve. It also takes in Petersham Meadows, famous in the paintings of Turner.

There are pubs, cafés and toilets along the way at Wimbledon Park, Wimbledon Common, Richmond Park, Petersham and Richmond.

There are break points at Wimbledon Park and Richmond, both on the underground, and a railway station at Richmond as well as buses along the way. To get to Wimbledon Park Station, use the District Line Service (Wimbledon branch).

Directions: On exiting Wimbledon Park Station, turn left and then first right into Home Park Road. Continue along Home Park Road and then turn right through the gates **A** into the park, and then down the steps or ramp. Keep to the left, by the children's playground and along the lake shore.

Wimbledon Park dates from the 16th century; then it formed part of the extensive grounds of the earliest Wimbledon Manor House and was used for deer hunting and hawking. It is more famous for its modern usage as across the lake you can see the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club.

At the brick water-sports building turn right and then immediately left and follow the path straight ahead alongside the tree-lined fence. At the end of the fence go straight ahead across the grass (or follow round the tarmac path) to the park exit at Wimbledon Park Road.

After leaving the park, turn left and continue to the bottom of the hill where you turn right and cross over into Bathgate Road. **B** Turn right into Queensmere Road and at the end turn right and cross the road at the traffic lights to enter Wimbledon Common.

As you enter the Common take the left path straight into the wood – not the path with the map signboard. Continue ahead until you reach the Windmill **C** – the most prominent feature in the area. There is a seasonal museum there, as well as a café and toilets.

Wimbledon Windmill is the last remaining hollow post flour mill in the country. In this unusual design the main body of the mill, with all its machinery, turned on a central post, through which a hole was bored for a drive shaft taking power to the machinery.

Keep the Windmill on your left as you head for the woods and take the left path, passing the Clubhouse of the London Scottish Golf Course with its red lion on each gable. Turn right down the hill to the lake.

At the lake take the second turn on the left, up a steepish hill and at the top follow the main track across the golf course. Continue down the hill and at the bottom turn left. Turn right at a triangular clearing and follow the path, keeping the Beverley Brook on your left.

Before the sports pavilion turn left over a brick bridge. Follow the gravel track to the pedestrian lights and cross Kingston Vale, the A3. **D** Proceed straight ahead to enter Richmond Park at the Robin Hood Gate. There are public toilets just inside the park.

Richmond Park is London's largest Royal Park, covering 2,500 acres. It is a national nature reserve and has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest; it is also Europe's largest urban park. It has some ancient trees with the oldest oaks some 700 years old.

As you enter the park, go diagonally across the corner of the car park on your right, exiting by the "Out" sign, cross the road and take the worn path across the grass. Go up the hill with Spankers Hill Wood on your right. Continue on this path between the two lakes which form Pen Ponds.

Over to the right, among the trees, is White Lodge, **E** built in 1727 and now home of the Royal Ballet School; it featured in the film *Billy Elliot*.

Look for the next waymarker which indicates a left turn just before the brow of the hill. At the next fork turn right - on your left is a bench and very old hollow oak tree.

When Oak Lodge appears on your right, follow a tarmac access road to the main road. Cross over and turn right if you want to go to Pembroke Lodge, **F** a popular restaurant with glorious view across the Thames Valley.

The Lodge was originally the home of the Park's molecatcher but became a grand house for the Countess of Pembroke in 1788. In 1847 it was the residence of the then Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, and so became the childhood home of his grandson, Bertrand Russell.

The main route continues ahead; look to the left for the viewing point from where there are extensive views of the Thames and the Surrey Hills and Windsor. Follow the path down to the right around the fence of Pembroke Lodge Gardens – keep to the higher path. From here you can see Richmond Bridge over the Thames, Ham House and Twickenham Rugby Ground.

Before forking left down the hill towards Petersham Meadows, take a detour to the right to the metal gate into Pembroke Lodge Gardens to find Henry's Mound up on the left.

This is actually a barrow or burial mound, but legend says that Henry VIII stood here in 1536 waiting for a flare that would tell him that Anne Boleyn had been executed and he was free to marry Jane Seymour. From the top of the mound you can see St Paul's Cathedral through the telescope. This is a protected view – no tall buildings can be built to obscure the view of St Paul's Cathedral, 12 miles away.

Return to the path and down the hill to Petersham Gate where the route leaves the park. Petersham Gate is in a gap in the 8 mile (12.8km) long, 8 foot-high brick wall that encloses the park.

Cross the road and take the footpath to the right of the Dysart Arms. Follow this round and at the end turn right to take the footpath across Petersham Meadows; the Thames is just visible across these fields to your left.

Leave the meadows and continue in the same direction, following the path and onto the Thames towpath. On the right you will pass a huge plane tree, designated one of the Great Trees of London.

The route now follows part of the Thames Path National Trail. **G** As the Thames is tidal at this point you may have to walk inland if there is a very high tide.

Follow the towpath beneath the elegant 18th century Richmond Bridge and continue along until you reach Friars Lane where this section ends.

To get to Richmond Station turn right up Friars Lane, across Richmond Green and follow the signs for the station.