HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES



WELLBEING AND MINDFUL NATURE WALK

SPACE TO STIR AND BE STIRRED

TOWER OF LONDON • HAMPTON COURT PALACE • BANQUETING HOUSE
KENSINGTON PALACE • KEW PALACE • HILLSBOROUGH CASTLE AND GARDENS

MINDFUL NATURE WALK

Explore mindful walking in Nature by following these circular walks around Hampton Court's Gardens. Follow step-by-step directions with suggested sensory and grounding exercises, and insights into the benefits of Nature connection for mental and emotional wellbeing.

Take this opportunity to slow down, connect with the present moment, and gently tune into Hampton Court's natural world.

WHAT IS MINDFUL WALKING?

Mindfulness is a widely practised approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing, bringing attention to the present moment. Mindful walking also helps to ground us in our bodies and surroundings and can be incorporated into everyday life.

Mindful time in Nature can help lower cortisol levels, reduce blood pressure and steady the heart rate, making it a powerful way to relieve stress and support a balanced lifestyle.



BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This guide offers suggestions rather than rules. There is no right or wrong way to mindful walk, do what feels right for you.

Remember these key principles of mindful walking and you can't go wrong:

1. Give yourself permission

Taking time out just for you is essential. See this walk as an act of self-care.

2. Remove distractions

Silence or switch off your phone if you can. A little digital detox allows you to be less interrupted and more connected to the environment around you.

3. Slow down

How often do you walk quickly, always on the move? Let this walk be different — slow your pace and notice what you see and feel. This is about connection, not completion.

4. Connect with your senses

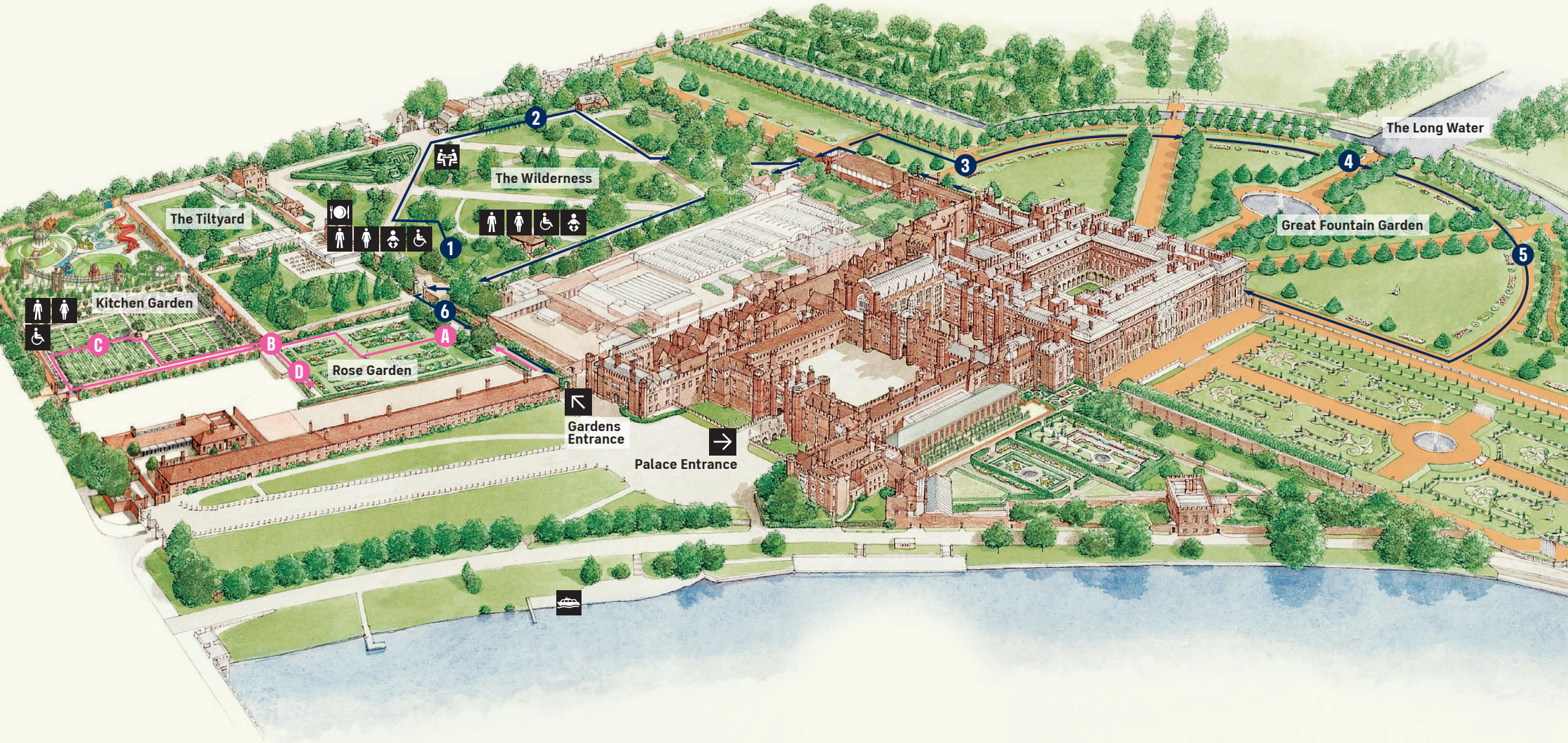
Your senses connect you to the present moment. Listen, look, smell, hear: sound of birdsong, scent of herbs, texture of leaves. Let your senses guide you.

5. Be curious

Let yourself explore, look closer at patterns, textures or tiny movements. There is so much to discover.

MINDFUL NATURE WALK MAP

20 minute trail
1 hour trail



NATURE WALK ONE: 20–40 MINUTES

A. Rose Garden

Arriving mindfully

Pause before you begin: notice your breath, your body, and how you're feeling. Release your mental to-do list and give yourself permission to be here. Begin walking slowly and notice the transition into this peaceful green space.

Greet the space

Find a space in the Rose Garden to pause. Stand still and let your feet feel rooted. Let your eyes scan the space: colours, textures, and movement. Notice the scents in the air and the sounds near or far.

B. The Tiltyard

Among trees

Take a moment to notice the beautiful trees gathering around you. Wander slowly through the Tiltyard, observing the shapes of the leaves, the textures of the bark and how their branches stretch or twist.

If a particular tree draws your attention, pause beside it. You don't need to know its name – just enjoy its form and imagine its journey of growth.

Did you know?

Slowing your walking pace sends a signal to the brain that you're safe and helps reduce stress.

Did you know?

Soil contains a natural microbe (*Mycobacterium Vaccae*) that boosts serotonin levels. Simply breathing in while walking, gardening or sitting outdoors can lift your mood. Nature is powerful medicine.

C. Kitchen Garden

Cultivation and senses

Hampton Court's gardens grow fresh produce year-round. Walk mindfully see what is currently growing. Tune into the textures, colours, and scents of the aromatic herbs and vibrant earth.

Get up close, observe the detailed patterns of leaves, flowers, and stems. Take a seat on one of the benches and absorb the richness of the garden.

D. Finish

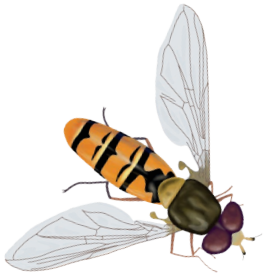
Observing nature

Returning to the Rose Garden, you'll notice the Palace rising in the distance; these gardens have long been a place for people to pause, reflect and find peace.

Reflect on the footsteps that came before you. Take a moment to reflect on your journey: what did you notice? How do you feel now compared to when you began?



NATURE WALK TWO: 60–90 MINUTES



Before beginning this Nature Walk, why not try Stop A in the Rose Garden. When you're ready, make your way to Stop 1.

1. The Wilderness

Into the wild

As you enter The Wilderness, notice the shift into the wilder, free-flowing feel of this space. Follow the pathway towards the centre and pause here. Let your gaze soften. Is there a tree that draws your attention? Stand or sit with your tree and take in its presence.

Did you know?

Trees release phytoncides, a natural compound that supports your immune system. Breathing in while among trees can boost your wellbeing.

2. The Wilderness

Secret garden

Follow the pathway until you find what feels like a secret garden, a place filled with greenery and open grass. Find a spot to stand or sit, observe the movement around you: leaves swaying, insects drifting, light dancing. Let your eyes wander high into the trees and down to the soil. Watch the soft rhythms of nature at play.



Did you know?

Natural settings offer 'soft fascination' – effortless attention that restores clarity, concentration, and mental energy.

3. Great Fountain Garden

Space and stillness

Walking into the Great Fountain Garden, the garden opens out with neat rows of trees. Can you feel a sense of space and structure?

Take a deep breath and notice how the openness of this garden allows your body to feel more relaxed and expansive.



4. The Long Water

Flow and reflection

Move alongside the gentle stream and engage your senses. Notice the light reflecting, how it ripples or falls still. Listen for the sounds: birds, breeze, voices.

Pause when you reach the stunning Long Water canal stretching out before you. Let the water's vast expanse create a sense of stillness and perspective.



5. Yew Trees

Strength and shelter

As you continue to walk, you'll notice the striking collection of Yew Trees: symbols of strength and endurance. Walk among them. Observe their trunks and feel their texture. Let one draw your attention and spent a moment beside it.

6. Finish

When you're ready, return to The Wilderness the way you came and follow the straight path ahead that leads you back to the Rose Garden where your walk began. How did it feel to move slowly through Nature? Check in once more with your body and breath. Has anything shifted?

Even 20 minutes of mindful walking in Nature can ease stress and boost wellbeing. Consider how you might make space for it more often.



TRY MORE MINDFUL EXERCISES AT HAMPTON COURT

Notice and connect

Find somewhere to sit and notice three good things in Nature. Try doing this every day and notice how your connection to Nature increases and boosts your wellbeing.

Rooting Like A Tree

Follow these six simple steps to practice grounding:

1. Stand or sit comfortably with your feet firmly on the ground
2. Focus on your breath: slow, natural, steady
3. Visualise roots growing into the earth
4. Notice Nature around you: sounds, movement, air
5. Repeat silently: 'I am steady. I am supported. I am here'
6. Take a deep breath and return to the present

Did you know?

Time in Nature reduces cortisol levels (our main stress hormone) and activates the body's rest and recovery system. That's why you may feel calmer and clearer after just a short time outdoors.

HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES

Discover more places to relax and recharge across Historic Royal Palaces, along with a range of wellbeing resources

qrco.de/hrp-wellbeing