

Hampton Court Palace

Guide for parents/carers of children and people on the autistic spectrum and related conditions

This guide was compiled with the help of the Hampton Court Palace Access Forum and some families with a child on the autistic spectrum.

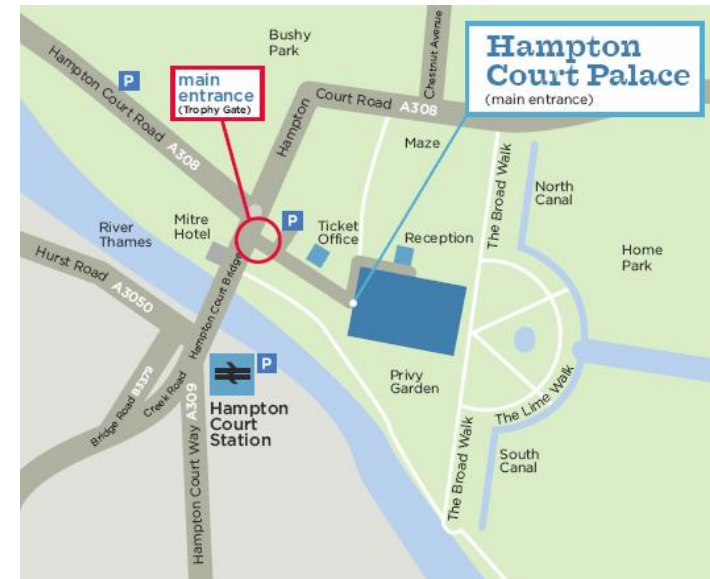


Family visiting the palace

Everyone on the Autistic Spectrum is different but we hope this guide will answer common questions and highlight relevant issues. If you have any additional queries please don't hesitate to contact the palace in advance (details are at the end of this guide). Members of staff on site, particularly the State Apartment Warders, are also very happy to help you get the most from your visit.

Arrival

- Hampton Court Palace is located next to the River Thames to the south west of London. It is within the M25 and look out for the brown attraction signs.
- South West Trains run services direct from London Waterloo to Hampton Court station and there are a number of buses that go past the palace.
- Limited car parking is available on site and on Hampton Court Green. Parking is also available at Hampton Court station. There is a charge to park in all the car parks and spaces are available on a first come first served basis. The palace car park has nine disabled parking bays.
- For more information about how to get to us, and for car park prices, please visit our website: <http://www.hrp.org.uk/HamptonCourtPalace/planyourvisit/gettingthere.aspx>



Visiting times

- If you wish to avoid as many queues as possible, try to arrive early preferably within the first hour of opening to be some of our first visitors. Hampton Court Palace opens at 10 o'clock every day.
- Our daily live interpretation programme runs from mid morning to mid afternoon, with actors in costumes wandering around and interacting with visitors.
- The peak visiting period is Easter to October, but Christmas and the Spring and Autumn school holidays are also busy. Weekends are busier than weekdays.
- For information on how to get to Hampton Court Palace, please look on our website: www.hrp.org.uk/HamptonCourtPalace or for help in planning your journey, visit www.tfl.gov.uk



Ticketing



The way in from the car park



The entrance to the ticket office (steps and ramp)

- If you are a member of Historic Royal Palaces, you can go straight to the main entrance. Membership is an exceedingly economical option if you hope to visit more than once and/or go to the other palaces in our group.
- If not, and you wish to avoid queuing, tickets can be purchased in advance from our website or by telephone. They will be posted if you order more than seven working days in advance. Tickets purchased in advance are valid for seven days from the date selected.
- Disabled visitors to Hampton Court Palace need to buy whichever ticket is appropriate but a necessary carer or personal assistant goes in free. If visitors can bring documentation showing that they are disabled – disabled parking badge, something to say they are in receipt of any disability living allowances, specialist's letter – that would be helpful. Many Health Authorities now issue cards to families with a child who has a hidden disability and these are also acceptable.
- If you buy your tickets through our website, you may need to collect carer tickets from the ticket office in the Welcome Centre as they cannot be issued in advance. This is so that a different carer may accompany someone each time they visit.

- Check our website or ask an assistant for what will be the best option for you and your family. Carer tickets are issued free of charge but a normal family ticket (and no free carer ticket) might be your best, and cheapest, option.
- If you prefer to buy tickets on arrival you may have to queue during school holidays and at weekends during the summer.
- If coming by train, Hampton Court Palace tickets can be purchased from staffed South West Trains stations.

- To get through the main entrance visitors cross a stone bridge over the palace moat. There are carved stone statues of heraldic beasts on either side - and a very large drop down to the moat (which is dry) shielded by a castellated border. The lower portion is only a couple of feet high.
- Bags may be searched on entry, so it is advisable to let children know this in advance so that they are prepared.

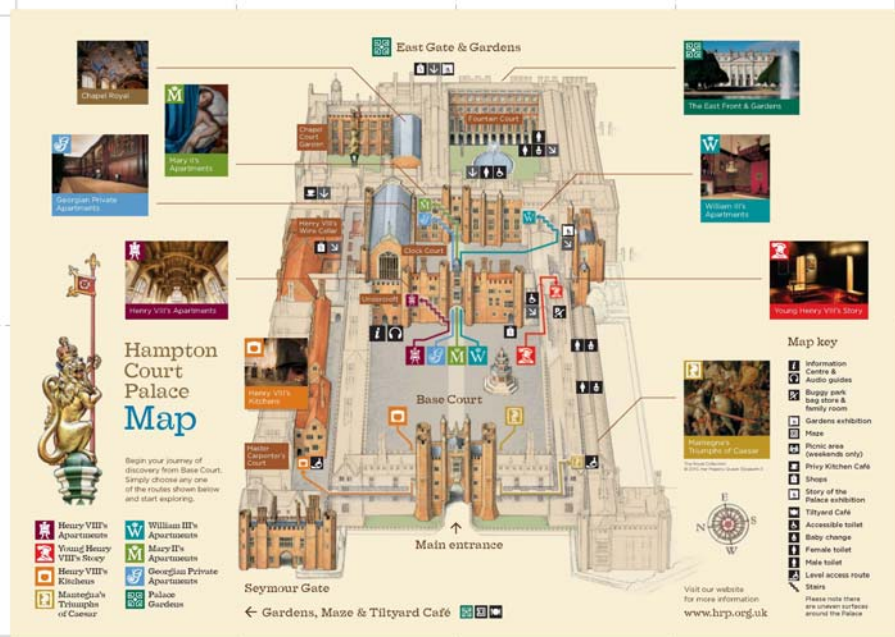
Entrance



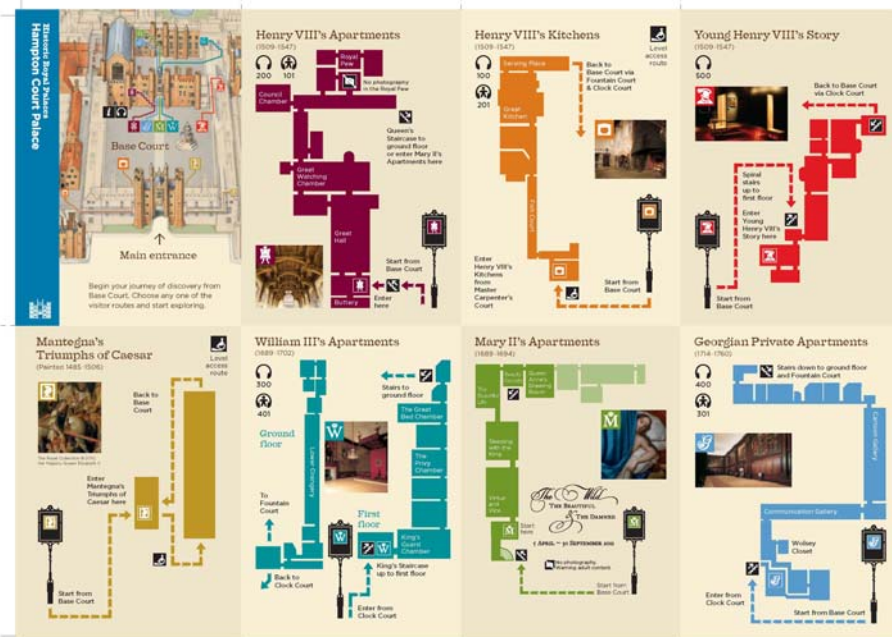
One of the beasts at the entrance

- Most visitors enter Hampton Court Palace via the main entrance (above). This leads into a cobbled courtyard, Base Court.
 - However, you can also enter via the gardens and the East Gate as long as you have admission tickets.
 - On occasion, the main entrance is closed to visitors so the way in is through Seymour Gate (the green door on the left of the picture above).

Visiting Hampton Court Palace



Palace orientation map – ground floor



Palace orientation map – first floor

- There is a lot to see and do at Hampton Court Palace and visitors are encouraged to explore it in their own time – there is no set route.
- Visitors may join the live costumed interpreters on their tours and at presentations. There are also audio tours available. Both of these are included in palace admission tickets.
- Visitors may also wander round on their own with a palace guidebook (which can be purchased at the ticket office and/or all the palace shops) and chat to the staff.

- The palace is divided into 'routes' which roughly correspond with when they were built. For instance, Henry VIII's Apartments were built during the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547) and William III's Apartments were built during William's reign (1689-1702).
- Some of the rooms have very little furniture in them, in keeping with what they looked like when they were new, but most have paintings or tapestries on the walls. Some of the paintings are very large and many of them are of naked figures.

- A real fire is lit in the largest of the rooms in Henry VIII's Kitchens on a daily basis except when the chimney is swept (twice a year, in the spring and autumn).



For those with a limited amount of time we have the following recommendations to get the most from your visit:

1 hour

- Enjoy Henry VIII's Apartments and the display in the Council Chamber (20 mins)
- Take a walk through the Tudor Kitchens (20 mins)
- Enjoy Young Henry VIII exhibition (20 mins)

2 hours

- Enjoy Henry VIII's Apartment and the display in the Council Chamber (35 mins)
- The Tudor Kitchens (20 mins)
- Enjoy Young Henry VIII exhibition (20 mins)
- Visit William III's Apartments (25 mins)
- Discover the Georgian Private Apartments (20 mins)

3 hours

- Enjoy Henry VIII's Apartment and the display in the Council Chamber (35 mins)
- The Tudor Kitchens (20 mins)
- Enjoy Young Henry VIII exhibition (20 mins)
- Visit William III's Apartments (35 mins)
- Discover the Georgian Private Apartments (20 mins)
- Discover The Story of the Palace (20 mins)
- Unearth The Story of the Gardens (20 mins)
- Visit the recreated Tudor Garden in Chapel Court (10 mins)

And if you're staying longer don't miss:

- Mantegna's *Triumphs of Caesar*
- The Formal Gardens and the Great Vine
- The Chapel Royal (*not on Sundays*)
- The famous Hampton Court Palace Maze

General information

- Hampton Court Palace is a large site and there are a number of places, both inside the palace and in the gardens, where children may hide or get lost. Visitors often comment that the palace itself is as much a maze as the world famous one in the gardens!
- We suggest that, upon arrival, you select a suitable location to meet up should you get separated. It needs to be simple to remember and easy to find particularly from several directions. Perhaps somewhere like the replica Wine Fountain which is usually in Base Court (if it isn't, then it'll be in Clock Court), but please feel free to choose your own location.
- There are several visual displays and/or interactives in the palace and a number of short films that set the scene. In Base Court there are also a few wooden models.
- The palace and gardens can feel very crowded although there are often areas that are quieter (see below). There are unlikely to be queues, though, except at the ticket office, in the cafes and at the audio tour distribution desk in the Information Centre.
- Henry VIII's Apartments and Henry VIII's Kitchens are the most popular parts of the palace, particularly between 11am and 3pm most days. If you wish to avoid crowds we recommend you visit William III's Apartments, Mary II's Apartments and the Private Georgian Rooms.
- There is a variety of surfaces and room sizes – everything from enormous rooms (like the Great Hall) to narrow or small areas with low door frames. There is also a number of steps, although many are shallow as most were built for the asthmatic William III, and even one spiral staircase.
- Please watch out for the rope barriers that protect the artefacts and/or act as path markers. Artefacts that are not behind barriers – for instance in Henry VIII's Kitchen and in the Great Watching Chamber in Henry VIII's Apartments – may be handled.
- You should have no trouble from the ducks, geese and swans that congregate in the gardens and along the river bank but they are wild and much larger than most visitors imagine. We recommend you do not attempt to touch them and please don't feed them!
- Dogs may be walked in the parts of the gardens that do not require an admission ticket as long as they are kept on a lead. Only guide, assistance and service dogs may enter the palace and formal gardens. As these are working dogs, please do not attempt to pat or distract them.



- We have a Horse Tram during the summer months that takes visitors around part of the formal gardens. There is an additional charge of £3-£4 to ride it - it is not included in palace or garden-only tickets. The horses are working Shire Horses and do not like to be touched.
- Please do not climb the trees in the gardens.

Costumed guided tours and presentations



A typical live interpretation presentation in one of the courtyards

- Everyday our costumed performers take visitors around the palace and give dramatic presentations about the stories and events that really happened. They generally focus on King Henry VIII.
- The 'Your Day at Court' leaflet showing the times of the tours and presentations is available on our website in advance, in the Welcome Centre on arrival or from the Information Centre inside the palace off Base Court.

- There is no need to book and you don't need to show your admission ticket to join as they all begin inside the palace. Just look in 'Your Day at Court' for the meeting place and turn up at the appointed time.
- The presentations are very entertaining, involve a lot of shouting and some moving around. Visitors are encouraged to react to and participate in the tours and presentations. Children are generally invited to come to the front but it is not compulsory.
- Tudor-style gowns in green or red velvet can be borrowed from the Wardrobe in the Information Centre so that visitors can feel appropriately dressed should they meet the interpreter playing the King. These need to be returned at the end of your visit.
- During school holidays, bank holidays, selected weekends, Christmas and Easter the costumed guides are joined by additional interpreters to really bring the palace alive. Additional activities may include the Tudor cooks in Henry VIII's Kitchens preparing a feast, Tudor etiquette lessons, falconry displays, Fool Shows, the chance to tilt at the quintain (beginner jousting) and dancing - subject to the time of year.
- If you have additional needs within your party, there is an access leaflet available in the Welcome Centre and the Information Centre, and detailed access information on our website: <http://www.hrp.org.uk/HamptonCourtPalace/planyourvisit/disabledaccess.aspx>
- Owing to necessary conservation work, occasionally routes around/within buildings are subject to change.



Audio tours

- There are four audio tours of different areas of the palace available in English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Japanese, Russian and Korean:
 - Henry VIII's Apartments
 - Henry VIII's Kitchens
 - The William III Apartments
 - Georgian Private Apartments

- We also have four family audio tours in English that are suitable for children aged 6 and over:
 - A beastly palace
 - Tudor rich and poor
 - William III's Apartments
 - The Georgian Rooms
- There is no need to book and you don't need to show your admission ticket. However, audio guides are subject to availability.
- They use drama and sound effects to set the scene and to deliver information about the different areas of the palace in an entertaining way.
- Please do not take the audio tour units into the cafes and gardens. They should be returned to the Information Centre or left in the deposit boxes by the east and west gates.



Audio tours being used

Family trails

- Packed with fun quizzes, activities, facts and illustrations, our free family trails for different age groups are the perfect way to explore Hampton Court Palace as a family.
- Hard copies are available in the Information Centre after you have purchased your tickets.
- When you've completed one, bring it back for a prize!



Tours and talks by palace staff

- These are generally seasonal and don't take place every day. They cover a range of specialist subjects - from the gardens (both their history and the work that goes on in them now) to the Great Vine in the summer months, from tours of the Verrio paintings to the recently conserved Queen Charlotte's State Bed in the autumn. And conservation tours or object talks on a more general theme at any time of year.
- Numbers at these tours and talks are often limited so please reserve a place on arrival. Details of where to go to reserve a space are in 'Your Day at Court'.
- We also offer private guided tours with one of our Institute of Tourist Guiding Level 2 Accredited Hampton Court Palace Guide Lecturers but these are at an addition cost. Prices start at £100 + VAT for a tour lasting 1½ hours. The guide will tailor the tour content to the needs and interests of the party, though. If you are interested in this option please telephone ++44 (0)20 3166 6752 or email customerservices@hrp.org.uk

Family activities

- During school holidays we often have craft activities for children and families in the Clore Learning Centre or in one of the schools activity rooms inside the palace.
- They are free to join and usually involve making and decorating a hat or mask to wear around the palace or contributing to an art installation e.g. a flower for a recreation of the palace gardens.

- The activities are very popular and therefore can get quite crowded and are often noisy. Parents/carers may prefer to take the component parts away with them to do at home; if so, please just ask the staff and volunteers running the activities.

Staff



- All our staff are happy to help you – please ask if you have any special requirements.
- The State Apartment Warders are particularly knowledgeable about the history of the palace and its inhabitants. They wear bright red coats – unless they are tending the fire in the Tudor Kitchens, in which case they will be in green protective clothing.
- One State Apartment Warden per day is the designated palace first aider. So if you have any first aid needs, please speak to any of the Warders in red and they will call their colleague. Generally, the first aider will come to the patient.
- We have a First Aid Room which, as long as it is not in use, is a good place to take someone on the autism spectrum who needs to have some quiet time. However, it is not marked on the palace map and is kept locked if not in use. If you feel you may like to use it, please ask to speak to the first aider.

Photography

- We allow visitors to take photographs for their own personal use as long as they take general pictures and do not focus on specific objects (for which they will need permission from the person who owns the object).
- There is only one exception: the Chapel Royal and Royal Pew. No photography is allowed in here.
- Photography in any special, temporary exhibitions is also prohibited.
- In crowded areas there may be a number of people with cameras. Although flash photography is discouraged for conservation reasons there may be some flash photography.
- Tripods may only be used in the courtyards and gardens, not inside the building.

Chapel Royal

- The Chapel Royal is still a place of Christian worship so is closed on Sundays, except in August when the choir and clergy are on holiday.
- It also closes at short notice for special services (i.e. on Good Friday), weddings and funerals. These closures are usually for a few hours rather than the whole day like on Sundays and are usually in the afternoon.
- Visitors are asked to respect it as a place of worship as there may be staff or visitors offering up private prayers. Everyone is asked to be quiet and talk in whispers.
- In keeping with places of Christian worship, gentlemen (men and boys) should remove their hat if they are wearing one.



- There is a separate leaflet about the Chapel but the staff on duty there are also happy to answer quiet questions.
- Visitors may attend Sunday services (details are on our website http://www.hrp.org.uk/HamptonCourtPalace/planyourvisit/reli_giousservices.aspx)



Catering

- There are two catering outlets at Hampton Court Palace – the Tiltyard Café, in the gardens, and the Privy Kitchen Coffee Shop, which is inside the palace and is smaller and often busier with less choice.
- Like most catering outlets, the busiest period is at lunchtime. We therefore recommend that you plan to have an early or late lunch to avoid too many crowds/queues.
- Menus are on signs at the entrances and sample menus are available on the Hampton Court website. Please note that they are subject to change at short notice.
- If you have any specific dietary requirements please feel free to contact the Catering Manager in advance to discuss options.



The Tiltyard Café



The Privy Kitchen Coffee Shop

- Most of the tables have 4 chairs around them but they can be put together to accommodate larger parties.
- The tables are quite close together and there is no clear route through them.
- Seating is available on the terrace outside, with many tables covered by large sun shades.
- During the summer, although often only at weekends, this area also hosts a barbecue.
- The Tiltyard Café is wheelchair accessible and toilets, including an accessible one, are available.
- They are open 10.00-18.00 (summer) and 10.00-16.30 (winter).
- Admission to the palace is not required to visit the Tiltyard Café.



Serving area in the Tiltyard Cafe



Dining area

The Tiltyard Café

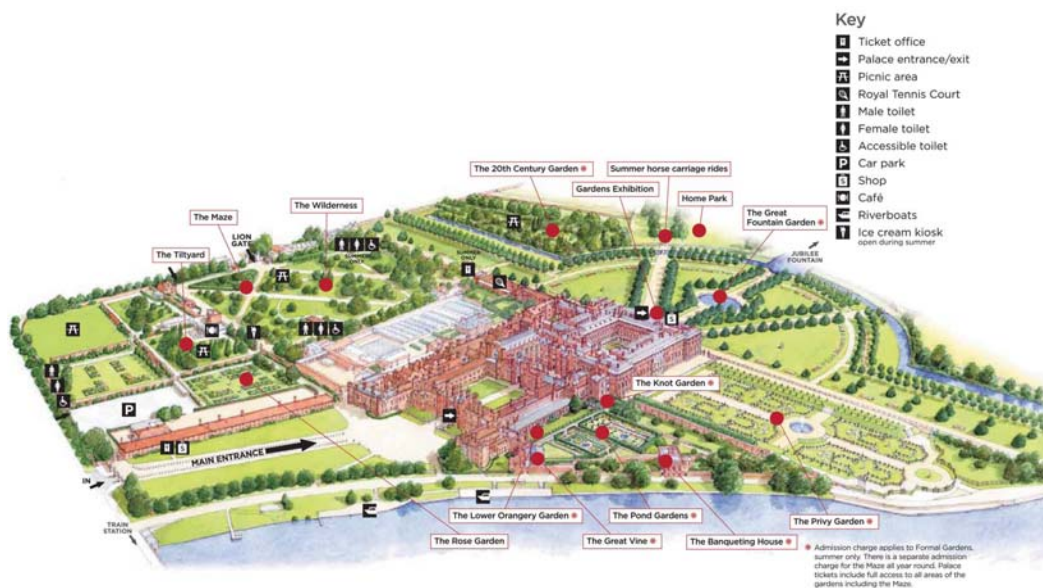
- This café, on the site of Henry VIII's jousting ground, is a large, warm and open space with a great choice of food and drink. The food and till points are at the far side of the large seating area.
- The food is homemade and changes seasonally. It includes sandwiches, salads, hot lunches and delicious cakes and pastries.
- Some gluten-free food is available while stocks last.
- Children's lunch boxes, child portions and meal deals are also available.
- Meals usually have set options which means that different elements from different meals cannot be mixed without incurring extra cost.
- The Very Hungry Caterpillar Den, in the corner of the Tiltyard Café, is furnished with books and games to keep children under 3 happy.

The Privy Kitchen Coffee Shop

- Located in the heart of the Tudor palace, the Privy Kitchen Coffee Shop was originally Elizabeth I's private kitchen.
- It provides hot and cold drinks, cakes and pastries, sandwiches and light lunches. A children's menu is also available.
- There is level access to the serving area but the seating area is down a small flight of steps. Wheelchair users or those who can't manage stairs should enter the seating area via the exit.
- There are no toilets inside the Privy Kitchen Coffee Shop. The nearest facilities are off Fountain Court.
- They are open 10.00-17.00 (summer) and 10.00-16.00 (winter).

Why not bring a picnic?

- Visitors may picnic on any of the benches in the gardens and there are picnic tables in the 20th Century Garden. See garden map below.
- Visitors may also picnic on the grass in the Tiltyard and Wilderness Gardens, which are free to visit. However, the only under-cover areas are the two small pavilions by the herbaceous border behind the Tiltyard Garden.
- Inside the palace, visitors may picnic on the seats in the courtyards. The schools lunchroom off Base Court is available at weekends as an indoor picnic area. No food or drink may be consumed inside the building.



Shops

- We have four gift shops at Hampton Court Palace each selling slightly different products.
- The Barrack Block Shop opposite the ticket office and the Henry Shop inside the palace have the widest range of children's and pocket-money-priced goods including some children's guidebooks.
- All the shops can get crowded at various times as most have narrow entrances and exits and often limited space in which to circulate once inside.

Contact details

Telephone information: 0844 482 7777
Textphone: 18001 0844 482 7777

Ticket booking line: 0844 482 7799
Textphone: 18001 0844 482 7799

Membership: 0844 482 7788
Textphone: 18001 0844 482 7788

Email: hamptoncourt@hrp.org.uk

Website: www.hrp.org.uk

Catering enquiries: call the Catering Manager on 020 3166 6971 or HCP@ampersandvenues.co.uk