



VISIT GUIDE 2026

Kew Gardens

London - From 29.15€

<https://kewgardens.visittickets.com/en/> - Skip the line tickets & rates



ORIGIN & HISTORY

From Royal Retreat to Global Icon

GOOGLE **4.7** ★★★★★ 54 492 reviews

TIQETS **4.7** ★★★★★ 7 847 reviews

Kew Gardens began its life in the late sixteenth century as a modest estate known as Kew Park House, situated on the banks of the River Thames. Over the following centuries, the property changed hands several times until it reached the royal family. In 1734, the Dutch House adjacent to the gardens was leased by the Crown, and in 1781, King George III purchased the entire estate to create a private botanical retreat for his growing family. This royal acquisition marked the beginning of Kew's transformation from a simple country house into a world-class scientific institution.

The true architectural and botanical revolution occurred under the direction of Sir William Chambers, who designed the iconic Chinese Pagoda in 1761. This structure reflected the Georgian era's fascination with exotic Asian aesthetics and remains a dominant visual focal point today. However, it was during the Victorian era that Kew achieved global prominence. Under the leadership of William Jackson Hooker and later his son Joseph, the gardens expanded dramatically from thirty hectares to their current size of one hundred and twenty-one hectares. This period saw the construction of the Palm House between 1841 and 1849, a pioneering feat of cast iron engineering that defined the Victorian industrial spirit.

The scientific ambition of this era was immense. The herbarium at Kew grew to become one of the largest in the world, now housing over seven million specimens preserved with meticulous precision. These collections were not merely decorative; they served as vital tools for British imperial strategy. Scientists at Kew successfully acclimatized rubber trees in Malaya, quinine plants in India, and coffee in Sri Lanka, demonstrating how botanical knowledge could reshape global economies. The garden thus became a living archive of biological diversity and a center for international research.

Today, Kew is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, inscribed in 2003 for its outstanding universal value in plant conservation. With over thirty thousand living species and two million annual visitors, it stands as the largest botanical garden in the world. The site continues to evolve, hosting major exhibitions like Henry Moore's 'Monumental Nature' and maintaining the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership. It remains a place where history, science, and beauty intertwine, offering a sanctuary of greenery amidst the bustling capital.

THE EXPERIENCE

Stepping through Victoria Gate, you are immediately enveloped by a profound sense of tranquility that contrasts sharply with the energy of London. The air feels cooler and fresher, carrying the scent of damp earth and blooming flowers. As you walk along the wide, paved paths, the scale of the landscape becomes apparent; towering oaks and ancient beeches frame your view, creating natural cathedrals of light and shadow. The initial impression is one of vastness and order, where every path leads to a new discovery, whether it is a hidden pond or a vibrant bed of seasonal blooms.

Entering the glasshouses, the atmosphere shifts dramatically. Inside the Palm House, the humidity rises, and the light filters through layers of lush foliage, creating a tropical twilight. You can hear the gentle rustle of leaves and perhaps the distant call of a bird, sounds that seem impossible so close to the city center. This sensory immersion invites you to slow down. The experience is not just visual but tactile and auditory, engaging all your senses. Whether you are walking on the Treetop Walkway or strolling through the Japanese gardens, the feeling is one of peaceful escape, a rare moment of stillness in a fast-paced world.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS

South-West London · Metro: Kew Gardens (District Line) or Overground train. Direct exit onto Victoria Gate.

OPENING HOURS

Hours vary by season (10am-5pm in winter, until 8pm in summer). Check exact dates before your visit.

PRICES

From €29.15 for adults. Child and family rates are available online.

VISIT DURATION

Plan for at least 4 to 5 hours to enjoy the greenhouses and main gardens without rushing. A full day is recommended to explore the wild trails and complete coll

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed everywhere except in certain temporary exhibitions. Avoid using flash in the greenhouses so as not to disturb visitors or affect light-se

AUDIENCE

Ideal for families thanks to play areas and accessible paths, as well as for botany enthusiasts. The paved paths make walking easier for people with reduced mob

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

**Bus**

: Kew Road / Victoria Gate (Stop R) — 5 min à pied
Kew Gardens Station (11 min) · Paddington Station (45 min)

**Car**

Kew Gardens Station (5 min) · Paddington Station (34 min)

**Bike**

Kew Gardens Station (5 min) · Paddington Station (45 min)

**On foot**

Kew Gardens Station (9 min) · Kew Bridge (17 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve Kew Gardens ?



Richmond — TW9 3AB London

51°28.725' N, 0°17.734' O



ORGANIZATION

Navigating the Garden Layout

Ground Level: Main Gardens & Historic Structures

This level encompasses the majority of the 121-hectare site, featuring the iconic Chinese Pagoda and the main lake. Visitors can explore the Victorian-era glasshouses, including the Palm House and Temperate House, which house diverse plant collections. The Nippon Teien Japanese Garden offers a serene contrast with its red bridges and koi ponds. Wide paved paths connect these key areas, making it accessible for most visitors.

Elevated Views: Treetop Walkway & Suspension Bridge

The Treetop Walkway provides a unique aerial perspective, allowing visitors to view the canopy of the Temperate House from above. This elevated path offers spectacular photo opportunities, particularly of the Chinese Pagoda against the backdrop of the Thames. The suspension bridge near the Pagoda is another vantage point, ideal for capturing the river and the garden's layout. These elevated sections provide a different angle on the garden's architecture and landscape design.

Wild Trails & Remote Areas

For those seeking a more immersive experience, the wild trails lead to less crowded areas of the garden. These paths wind through woodland and meadows, offering a glimpse into the natural habitat of various plant species. The Wild Wood section features a tree tunnel and dense foliage, creating a sense of seclusion. Exploring these remote trails requires comfortable footwear and time, as they are further from the main entrance and amenities.

ACCESSIBILITY



Disabled Access

Wide paved paths, ramps into the greenhouses, and wheelchair rentals available at reception.



Families

Picnic areas, playgrounds, and shaded benches for regular family breaks.



Audio guide

English, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Must-See Wonders of Kew

01

Main Glasshouse

Palm House

Built between 1841 and 1849, the Palm House is a masterpiece of Victorian engineering, constructed entirely of cast iron and glass. It houses over 5,000 tropical plants, including giant palms that reach the ceiling. The interior is humid and warm, creating a microclimate that supports diverse ecosystems. Walking through its corridors feels like stepping into a prehistoric jungle.

💡 It was the first large-scale building to use cast iron for its structural framework, setting a precedent for future glasshouse designs worldwide.

02

SIR WILLIAM CHAMBERS Main Lawn

Chinese Pagoda

Completed in 1761, this 50-meter tall structure is the tallest man-made building in the UK outside of churches. Its distinctive silhouette dominates the garden's skyline and reflects the Georgian era's fascination with China. The pagoda offers panoramic views of the garden and the Thames from its upper levels. It serves as a central landmark for navigation within the park.

💡 The pagoda was originally built to display a collection of Chinese artifacts, though it has since become a symbol of the garden itself.

03

East Side

Nippon Teien (Japanese Garden)

Opened in 2002, this garden is a collaboration between Japan and the UK, featuring traditional Japanese landscaping elements. Red bridges, stone lanterns, and koi ponds create a tranquil atmosphere distinct from the rest of Kew. The garden changes appearance with the seasons, from cherry blossoms in spring to maple leaves in autumn. It is a popular spot for photography and quiet reflection.

💡 The garden was gifted by the Japanese government as a symbol of friendship between the two nations.

04

Main Glasshouse

Temperate House

Larger than the Palm House, the Temperate House contains over 6,500 plant species from temperate regions around the world. It features a variety of habitats, including a Mediterranean garden and a rainforest section. The Treetop Walkway runs through the center, offering a unique perspective on the plant canopy. The house is divided into three distinct zones, each representing a different climate.

💡 The house was renovated in the early 2000s to improve energy efficiency and visitor experience, adding the Treetop Walkway.

05

Science Center

Herbarium

One of the largest herbaria in the world, it holds over 7 million plant specimens preserved for scientific study. These collections span centuries and continents, providing an invaluable record of global biodiversity. Researchers use these specimens to track changes in plant distribution and climate impact. Access to the herbarium is limited, but its existence underscores Kew's role as a scientific institution.

💡 Some specimens date back to the 18th century, collected during early European explorations of the Americas and Asia.

06

New Building

Evolution House

A relatively recent addition, the Evolution House explores the evolution of plants through five vertical biomes. It showcases how plants have adapted to different environments over millions of years. The building is designed to be sustainable, using renewable energy and water recycling systems. It offers a modern interpretation of botanical science for visitors.

💡 The house was opened in 2018 and quickly became one of the most popular new attractions at Kew.

07

North East Corner

Kew Palace

Originally the Dutch House, this 18th-century residence was acquired by King George III in 1781. It offers a glimpse into the aristocratic lifestyle of the era, with ornate interiors and historical artifacts. The palace is surrounded by its own small garden, separate from the main grounds. Visiting the palace provides context for the royal history of the site.

💡 The palace was used as a temporary residence for the royal family before the main Kew House was demolished in 1802.

08

South West Area

Wild Wood

This area features a dense woodland ecosystem with a tree tunnel and naturalistic planting. It is designed to mimic a native British forest, supporting a variety of wildlife. The paths here are less formal, inviting visitors to wander freely. It is a great place to observe birds and insects in their natural habitat.

💡 The Wild Wood was created to demonstrate the importance of preserving native woodland habitats in urban areas.

TIPS

Smart Tips for Your Visit

TIMING

Arrive at 10:00 AM to enjoy empty paths and ideal morning light before tour groups arrive after 11:30 AM.

BILLET

Book online in advance to guarantee entry and avoid queues, especially on weekends and during peak season.

PARCOURS

Start with the glasshouses while they are cool, then move to the outdoor gardens in the afternoon when the sun is higher.

PHOTO

Photograph the Chinese Pagoda from the suspension bridge to include the Thames in the background for a classic view.

PAUSE

Bring a picnic to save money and enjoy shaded benches near the river, as cafe prices vary and can be high.

ENFANTS

Visit the Nippon Teien Japanese Garden, which captivates children with colorful bridges and statues, and plan frequent breaks.

AUDIOGUIDE

Download the official interactive map app for offline access to identify open glasshouses and temporary exhibitions.

CONFORT

Wear comfortable sneakers, as a complete visit involves at least 15,000 steps on mixed paved and grassy paths.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I need to book my tickets for Kew Gardens in advance?

Yes, booking online is highly recommended to avoid queues, especially during peak season and on weekends. By purchasing in advance, you get direct access to priority entrances, saving valuable time. This is particularly

Can I buy tickets on site?

It is possible to buy tickets at physical ticket booths, but queues can be long during peak times. To guarantee stress-free entry, prefer online purchase which often allows you to choose a specific time slot. This option

Are there discounts for students or seniors?

Reduced rates generally exist for students presenting a valid card and for seniors. Check the specific conditions on the official website before your purchase as they may vary depending on the period. Remember to bring v

How long does it take to visit Kew Gardens?

Budget at least 4 to 5 hours for a complete visit covering the greenhouses and main gardens. If you wish to explore more remote trails and specialized collections, plan for a full day. Arriving at opening will allow you

What are the must-see attractions not to miss?

Don't miss the Palm House, the Temperate House and the famous Chinese Pagoda. The Nippon Teien Japanese gardens also offer a peaceful setting for a contemplative break. These sites form the historical and aesthetic heart

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

Imperial Botanical Strategy

Kew played a crucial role in the British Empire by acclimatizing valuable crops. Scientists successfully introduced rubber to Malaya, quinine to India, and coffee to Sri Lanka. This work demonstrated how botanical knowledge could drive economic power. The garden was not just a place of beauty but a strategic asset for the empire.

UNESCO Recognition

Inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2003, Kew is protected for its outstanding universal value. The recognition highlights its central role in scientific research and plant conservation. It is one of few botanical gardens to receive this distinction, underscoring its global significance.

Henry Moore Exhibition

Currently, Kew hosts 'Monumental Nature,' Henry Moore's biggest ever outdoor exhibition. The sculptures interact with the natural environment, creating a dialogue between art and nature. This temporary event adds a modern artistic layer to the historic gardens.

Seed Conservation Legacy

Kew manages the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership, the world's largest seed conservation project. It stores seeds from thousands of plant species to ensure their survival. This effort is critical for preserving biodiversity and restoring damaged ecosystems globally.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Beyond the gates of Kew, the surrounding area offers rich cultural and leisure opportunities. Just a short walk away lies **Kew Palace**, an 18th-century residence that provides insight into the aristocratic history of the site. For those seeking modern architecture, the **De La Warr Pavilion** overlooks the Thames, offering stunning views and contemporary art exhibits. After a day of walking, you might enjoy a meal at the historic **Pagoda Tea Rooms**, nestled at the foot of the pagoda. If you wish to extend your outdoor adventure, **Richmond Park** is adjacent to the gardens, home to wild deer and expansive lawns. For entertainment in the evening, **Cineworld Richmond** provides a modern cinema experience. These nearby attractions make Kew a perfect hub for a full day of exploration, blending history, nature, and culture seamlessly.



Leaving Kew Gardens, you carry with you more than just memories; you carry a renewed connection to the natural world. The sheer scale of the collection, combined with the intimate beauty of each individual plant, creates an emotional resonance that lingers long after you have returned to the city. It is a reminder that nature is not just a backdrop but a dynamic, living force. Whether you visit in the crisp autumn or the lush summer, Kew offers a timeless sanctuary. Come back when the cherry blossoms bloom or the winter lights glow; each season reveals a different face of this magnificent garden. Your next step should be toward the gate, ready to explore once more.