



Royal  
Geographical  
Society  
with IBG

# Albertopolis

A free self-guided walk in South Kensington



Explore London's quarter for science,  
technology, culture and the arts

[www.walktheworld.org.uk](http://www.walktheworld.org.uk)

Find Explore Walk







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Walk the World is part of Discovering Places, the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad campaign to inspire the UK to discover their local environment. Walk the World is delivered in partnership by the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) with Discovering Places (The Heritage Alliance) and is principally funded by the National Lottery through the Olympic Lottery Distributor. The digital and print maps used for Walk the World are licensed to RGS-IBG from Ordnance Survey.



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# Albertopolis

## Explore London's quarter for science, technology, culture and the arts

Welcome to Walk the World! This walk in South Kensington is one of 20 in different parts of the UK. Each walk explores how the 206 participating nations in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games have been part of the UK's history for many centuries. Along the routes you will discover evidence of how many Olympic and Paralympic countries that have shaped our towns and cities.

Prince Albert and Sir Henry Cole had a vision: an area of London dedicated to education and culture. It became a reality 150 years ago in South Kensington, and became fondly known as 'Albertopolis' after its royal patron. Albertopolis is home to some of London's most spectacular buildings, world class museums and premier educational institutions.

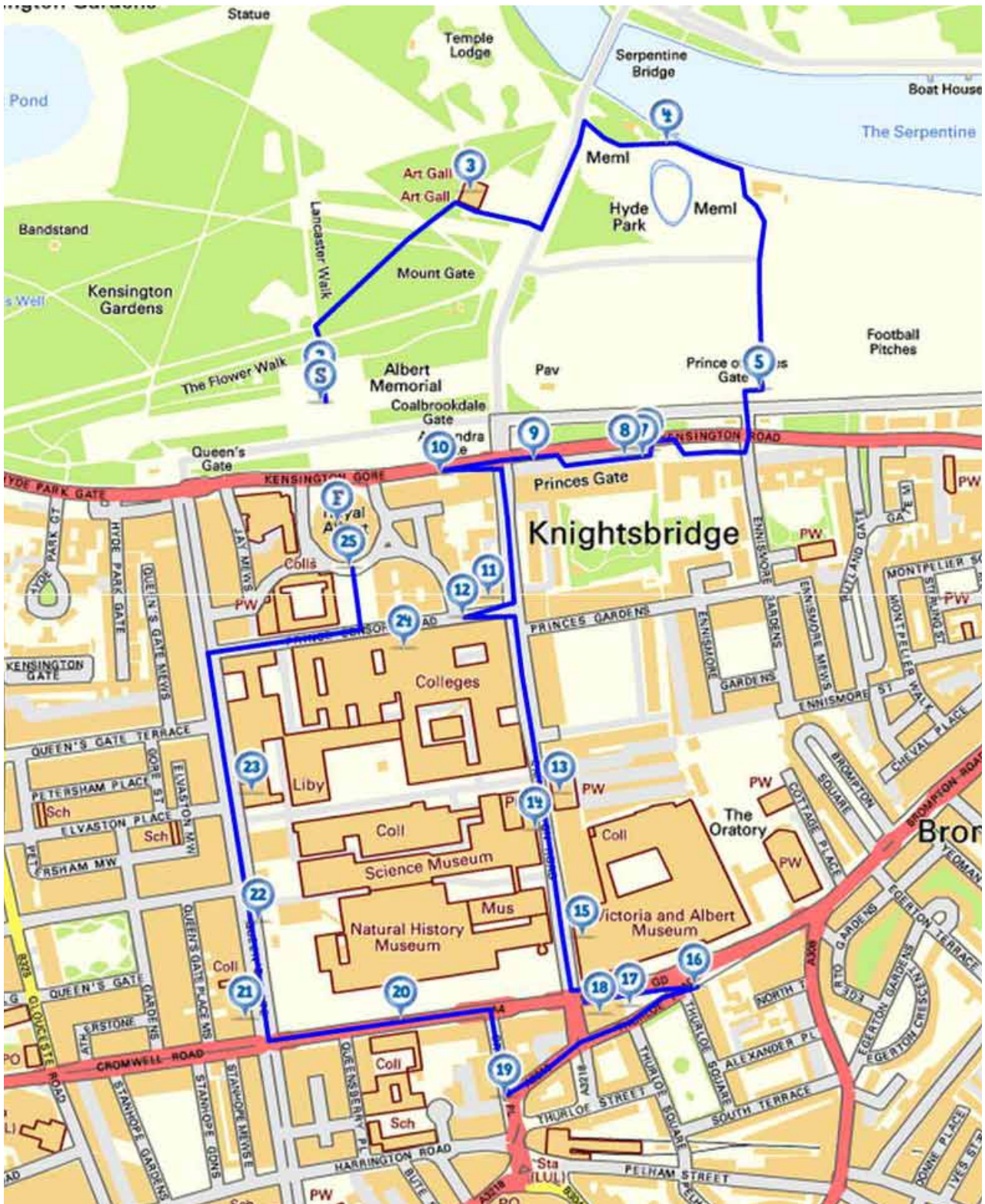
Albertopolis was designed to celebrate the achievement and grandeur of Britain and her Empire. Today, the area retains many links with the wider world and has a very international feel. It is home to dozens of embassies and cultural institutes, plus welcomes tourists and students from around the world.

Explore this cultural quarter with its magnificent buildings and great institutions. And hear some remarkable stories about diplomats and spies, musicians and artists, explorers and inventors, immigrants and refugees.



Aerial view of Albertopolis  
© Andreas Praefcke via Wikimedia Commons

## Route overview



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## Practical information

<b>Location</b>	South Kensington, Central London
<b>Getting there</b>	<p><b>Train</b> - the nearest mainline stations are London Paddington and London Victoria</p> <p><b>Underground</b> - nearest stations are South Kensington, High Street Kensington and Lancaster Gate</p> <p><b>Bus</b> - routes 9, 10, 52, 70, 360 and 452 stop near the Royal Albert Hall and Albert Memorial</p> <p><b>Bicycle</b> - several Barclays Cycle Hire docking stations in the area</p>
<b>Start point &amp; postcode</b>	Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens, SW7 2AP
<b>Directions to the walk start</b>	<p><i>From South Kensington station</i> - take the pedestrian tunnel inside the station concourse. At the end go up the steps and turn left onto Exhibition Road. At the end of the road turn left and use the traffic lights outside the Royal Albert Hall to cross to the Memorial.</p> <p><i>From High Street Kensington station</i> - turn right onto Kensington High Street. Find a safe place to cross over and continue on the left hand side. Pass Kensington Palace and after 5 minutes the Memorial will appear on the left.</p> <p><i>From Lancaster Gate station</i> - walk through Kensington Gardens along Lancaster Walk (a very wide pedestrianized road). Continue for around 10-15 minutes. The Memorial should be directly ahead.</p>
<b>Finish point</b>	Royal Albert Hall, SW7 2AP
<b>Onward journey</b>	To return to the museums or the park use Direction 26 at the end of the commentary
<b>Distance</b>	2 ½ miles
<b>Level</b>	<b>Gentle</b> - A flat route through a park and along city streets

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**Conditions**

The whole route is on pavements or paved footpaths. Be careful of cyclists in the park and traffic when crossing busy roads. The route can be very busy at weekends and tourist seasons.

**Suitable for**

**Families** – A busy but safe area. Lots of family-friendly attractions along the route

**Wheelchairs** – An entirely step-free route

**Refreshments**

Many places to eat and drink including cafes in the park and museums.

**Facilities**

Free public toilets in the museums, many with baby changing facilities. There are also toilets in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park (charges apply)

**Other info**

The route can be very busy especially during weekends, school holidays and tourist seasons

South Kensington underground station has steps to street level. There is no lift for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

Most of the museums and attractions are free to enter (apart from special exhibitions) and open 7 days a week. Visit their individual websites for opening hours and exhibition details:

**Natural History Museum** - [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk)

**Royal Albert Hall** - [www.royalalberthall.com](http://www.royalalberthall.com)

**Science Museum** - [www.sciencemuseum.org.uk](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk)

**Serpentine Gallery** - [www.serpentinegallery.org](http://www.serpentinegallery.org)

**Victoria & Albert Museum** - [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

**Tourist information**

Many of the museums and attractions have their own Visitor Information points.

The nearest Tourist Information office is at Victoria station, opposite Platform 8. Open Monday – Saturday, 7.15am to 9.15pm; Sunday and Bank Holidays, 8.15am to 7pm.

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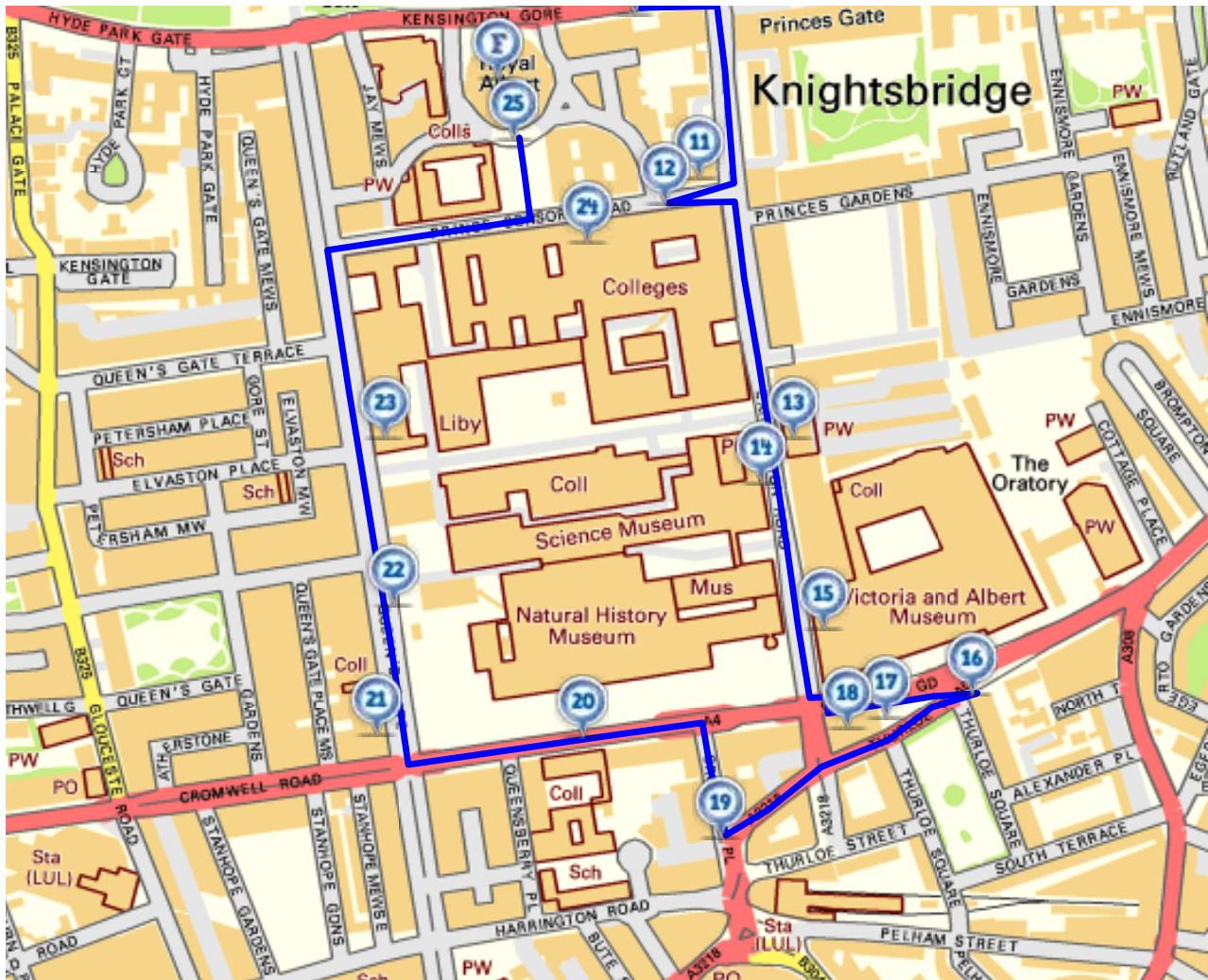
## Detail for the first half of the route



### Stopping points

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1.</b> Albert Memorial   | <b>6.</b> Princes Gate  |
| <b>2.</b> Albert Memorial   | <b>7.</b> The Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate |
| <b>3.</b> The Serpentine Gallery  | <b>8.</b> 16 Princes Gate   |
| <b>4.</b> The Serpentine lake, Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain and Isis sculpture | <b>9.</b> Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, 20 Princes Gate       |
| <b>5.</b> Great Exhibition information board  | <b>10.</b> The Royal Geographical Society                             |

## Detail for the second half of the route



### Stopping points

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>11.</b> Jamaican High Commission                        | <b>19.</b> Institut Français          |
| <b>12.</b> Royal School of Mines                           | <b>20.</b> The Natural History Museum |
| <b>13.</b> Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints | <b>21.</b> Baden-Powell House         |
| <b>14.</b> The Science Museum                              | <b>22.</b> The Darwin Centre          |
| <b>15.</b> Henry Cole Wing, The V&A Museum                 | <b>23.</b> 170 Queen's Gate           |
| <b>16.</b> Kazakhstan Embassy                              | <b>24.</b> Prince Albert statue       |
| <b>17.</b> Yalta Memorial Garden                           | <b>25.</b> Royal Albert Hall          |
| <b>18.</b> Ismaili Centre                                  | <b>F.</b> Royal Albert Hall           |

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## 1. Welcome to Albertopolis

### Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens

Welcome to Albertopolis! Though you may not have heard the name before you have probably heard of some of the landmarks here, including the Royal Albert Hall, V&A Museum, Science Museum and Natural History Museum.

In 1851, London hosted the Great Exhibition here in Hyde Park. This was a world fair showcasing different industries. It was a huge success. It also made a substantial profit which was used to buy 86 acres of land immediately to the south of Hyde Park. This area of South Kensington was laid out to be the home of some of the nation's greatest educational and cultural institutions. You'll soon find out about its curious nickname – Albertopolis.



The Albert Memorial  
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

You'll get a flavour for the grandeur of this cultural quarter with its magnificent buildings and great institutions. The Great Exhibition of 1851 was international with exhibits from across the world. More than one hundred and fifty years later this area still has a very international flavour.

This walk takes in 25 sights in South Kensington that reveal the links between Albertopolis and some of the 206 Olympic and Paralympic Nations around the world. We have found links to more than 110 different participating nations but we'd love to hear from you if you find any others on or near the route. The walk will also give you some ideas of how to look for international links near your home.

The walk is about 2 ½ miles long. We start at the Albert Memorial and finish just opposite at the Royal Albert Hall. Please do take care when crossing busy roads and always use pedestrian crossings. Exhibition Road can be very busy with tourists and visitors, so be prepared for crowds. I do hope you'll enjoy this walk.

**Directions 1** - Begin the walk at the Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens. Stand facing the gold statue.

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## 2. A man with a vision

### Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens

We start the walk with a magnificent memorial commemorating the man who had the vision for developing this cultural quarter of London – Prince Albert. And hence the nickname of the area – Albertopolis.

Prince Albert was German. He was born in 1819 in Saxony to a family that was connected to many of Europe's ruling monarchs. At the age of 20 he married Queen Victoria, his first cousin, and together they had nine children.

As Prince Consort, Albert had no official power or duty but he got involved in many public causes such as educational reform and the abolition of slavery.



Prince Albert presiding over Albertopolis  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

He also became President of the RSA – or the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce to use its full name. And it was through this connection that he became involved in the Great Exhibition of 1851. The success of that Exhibition gave him a vision for an area dedicated to the arts and sciences that we shall explore in this walk.

Prince Albert died of typhoid at the age of just 42. Queen Victoria went into deep mourning for the rest of her life. She commissioned this enormous memorial which was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott and took over 10 years to complete.

Take your time to have a good look at the memorial. Can you see what Albert is holding in his hand? It is a catalogue of The Great Exhibition. Also take a look at the sculptures on each corner of the memorial. The inner group depicts Victorian industrial arts and sciences – agriculture, commerce, engineering and manufacturing. The outer group represents each of the four corners of the world – a camel for Africa, a buffalo for the Americas, an elephant for Asia, and a bull for Europe.

**Country links** - Asia, Africa, America, Europe, Germany

**Directions 2** - With the Memorial behind you, take the path in line with Albert's back. Then take the second path on the right following the sign to the Serpentine Gallery. The Serpentine Gallery is the first building that you reach.

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### 3. Afternoon tea and contemporary art

#### The Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens

This lovely building was built in 1934 as a tea pavilion. You can quite easily imagine the prosperous residents of South Kensington having a stroll in the park and then coming here for afternoon tea.

Since 1970 it has been a gallery specialising in modern and contemporary art. Although it is a relatively modern addition it is very much in keeping with Prince Albert's vision for the area. It's also very popular and receives about 800,000 visitors a year. The gallery is open every day and admission is free so if you have got the time why not take a look inside before continuing the walk.



The Serpentine Gallery  
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Each year since 2000 a famous international architect has been invited to design a temporary summer pavilion to be placed on the gallery lawn. Previous pavilions have been designed by architects from Iraq, Poland, Japan, Brazil, Portugal, the Netherlands, Sri Lanka, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Canada, USA, France and Switzerland. Very international indeed!



Summer pavillions from 2010 (left) and 2011 (right) by French architect Jean Nouvel and Swiss architect Peter Zumthor  
Rory Walsh / Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The 2012 pavilion was by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron and Ai Weiwei from China, the team that also designed the 'Bird Nest' stadium for the Beijing Olympics. The exhibition inside was of works by Japanese artist Yoko Ono.

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There's another gallery in the park, due to open in 2013. It is also in an old park building – the old Magazine building. It was built in 1805 in the style of a Palladian villa. But it was used for storing gunpowder for the army in case of a 'foreign invasion or popular uprising'! The redesign and conversion into a gallery is by the famous prize-winning Iraqi-British architect, Zaha Hadid. She also designed the London Aquatics Centre for the 2012 Games. The new Serpentine Sackler Gallery just goes to show that Prince Albert's vision for a cultural quarter continues to expand today.



The Serpentine Sackler Gallery under construction  
© Julian Osley, Geograph (Creative Commons License)

**Country links** - Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Iraq, Japan, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, the Netherlands, United States of America

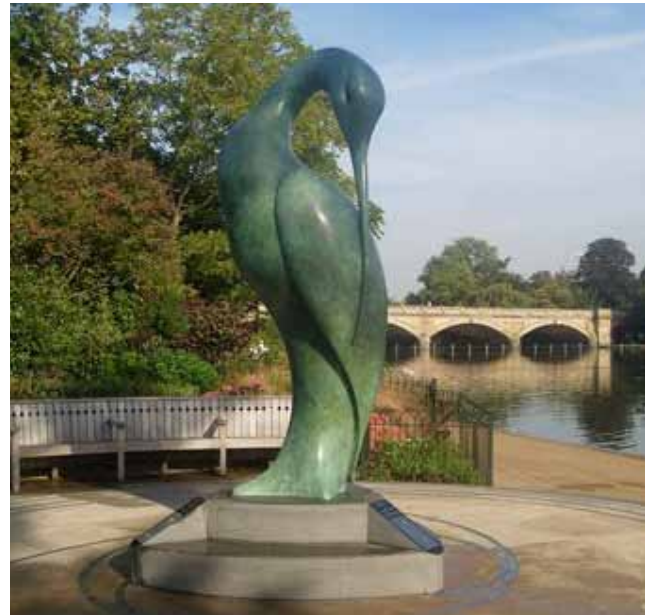
**Directions 3** - From the front entrance to the gallery, turn left. Cross the road and be particularly careful as you cross the cycle tracks. On the other side of the road, turn left, past the red telephone box and the entrance to the car park. Then take the path to the right signposted for the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain. Continue to the Serpentine Lake and stop by the statue of a bird.

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## 4. Splish splash

### The Serpentine, Hyde Park

This graceful sculpture is called 'Isis'. In ancient Egyptian culture Isis was the goddess of nature and motherhood who sometimes took the form of a bird. The sculpture by Simon Gudgeon was unveiled in 2009 – the first new sculpture in Hyde Park for over 50 years!



We are on the banks of the Serpentine Lake which was created in 1730 in the reign of King George II. It was originally planned as an ornamental feature but soon became used by Londoners for recreation. As far back as 1830 it was used for a swimming race and in 1864 the first Christmas Day Swimming Race was held by the Serpentine Swimming Club. The Club still hold races every Saturday and competitions every Christmas morning for the 'Peter Pan Cup'.

Isis and the Serpentine Bridge  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The Serpentine was chosen as the venue for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic open water events – the 10 kilometre marathon swimming and the 1,500 metre swim of the triathlon. Outside the Games, only members of the Serpentine Swimming Club can swim in the lake. But there is also an open-air lido next to the Serpentine which is open throughout the summer if you fancy a dip! The Lido Café is also a nice place to stop for refreshments.



Hyde Park and the Serpentine shown on a map of 1833  
Wikimedia Commons (Creative Commons License)

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Also in this part of the park is the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain. This was designed by American landscape artist Kathryn Gustafson to reflect Princess Diana's "inclusive" personality. Look at the fountain and you will see that water flows from the highest point in two directions as it cascades, swirls and bubbles before meeting in a calm pool at the bottom. You can often see people of all ages splashing about in the fountain and enjoying the many different textures and shapes formed by the Cornish granite.



The Princess Diana Memorial Fountain  
Christine Matthews, Geograph (Creative Commons License)

**Country links** - Egypt, United States of America

**Directions 4** - Walk towards the Lido Cafe Bar, the building with the clock. Turn right on the path immediately before the café. Follow the path and then cross the sandy horse ride. Go straight across the flat grassy area. When you reach the path at the other side, you will find an information board and a round plaque in the ground. Stop by the plaque.

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## 5. An exhibition of all nations

### Great Exhibition information board, Hyde Park



The Great Exhibition of 1851 building  
Wikimedia Commons

The flat grassy area you have just crossed was the 26 acre site of the Great Exhibition, or to give it its full name 'The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations'. The exhibition was the brainchild of Henry Cole and we will hear more about him later. He was a member of the Society of Arts and there he was introduced to Prince Albert. Together they developed the idea for a great exhibition. Queen Victoria was persuaded to establish a Royal Commission for the exhibition with Prince Albert as its president.

The aim of the exhibition was to display the wonders of industry and manufacturing from around the world but in particular to bring attention to Great Britain as a world industrial power. The exhibition took place between May and October of 1851 in a temporary building on this very site. The building was over 560 metres long and 125 metres wide. You can get a feel for the size of it by looking at this flat area of grass. The structure itself was made of cast-iron and glass and it was designed by Sir Joseph Paxton, a horticulturist who built glass houses. It was essentially a giant greenhouse. Punch magazine mockingly dubbed it the 'Crystal Palace' and this name stuck.

Look at the old photos on the information board. It must have been an awe-inspiring sight! The writer Charlotte Bronte visited and described it as "vast, strange, new and impossible to describe". If the outside was spectacular, the inside was just as incredible. There were over 13,000 exhibitors and over 100,000 exhibits from 50 different nations and 39 colonies or protectorates.

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Charlotte Bronte again: "Its grandeur does not consist in one thing, but in the unique assemblage of all things. Whatever human industry has created you find there..." From steam engines to glittering diamonds, from a newly-invented voting machine to a barometer that used leeches. It was a celebration of science, technology, invention and creativity. She wrote: "It seems as if only magic could have gathered this mass of wealth from all the ends of the earth – as if none but supernatural hands could have arranged it thus, with such a blaze and contrast of colours and marvellous power of effect."



Queen Victoria opens the Great Exhibition of 1851  
Wikimedia Commons

Over its six month duration, the exhibition had an incredible six million visitors. But it was a one-off exhibition. After it closed the Crystal Palace was dismantled and rebuilt on Sydenham Hill in Southeast London. That area has ever since been known as Crystal Palace. The palace burned down in 1936 but you can still see the foundations, terraces and steps. There's also an excellent little museum and it is well worth a visit if you are interested.

People had been charged to see the exhibition. Entrance cost five shillings for the first three weeks and one shilling thereafter. The organising committee made a substantial profit and the surplus was used to buy 86 acres of land to the south of Hyde Park. Centred around Exhibition Road, this was to be developed for educational and cultural institutions that would be a long-lasting legacy of the Exhibition. The Royal Commission of 1851 still exists today as a grant-making educational trust.

**Country links** - Algeria, Antigua & Barbuda, Australia, Austria, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Bermuda, Bolivia, British Indian Ocean Territory, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, France, French Polynesia, The Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Jamaica, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Montserrat, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, St Kitts & Nevis, St Helena, Sweden, Switzerland, Trinidad & Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United States of America

**Directions 5** - Cross the horse ride then South Carriage Drive and leave the park through Princes Gate. Cross Kensington Road here at the traffic lights and turn right. Pass Kingston House North and stop at the beginning of a terrace of white houses.

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## 6. Upmarket housing

### Princes Gate

This splendid terrace of white townhouses is Princes Gate. Originally there were two terraces either side of a fine mansion called Kingston House. The eastern terrace has long since been demolished and you have just passed the large red brick building where the original mansion was.

During the Second World War the Norwegian Government in Exile had its headquarters here in Kingston House.

The west terrace which remains was designed by Harvey Lonsdale Elmes. He is most famous for designing the magnificent St George's Hall in Liverpool.



Princes Gate  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

By the time building began on Prince's Gate in 1846, Elmes was in poor health and went to Jamaica to recuperate. Sadly he died there of tuberculosis at the age of just 33 before either these houses or St George's Hall were complete.

While Elmes was the designer, the builders were John Elger and John Kelk, who later built the Albert Memorial. The houses were completed two years before the Great Exhibition took place across the road. But with the building of the Crystal Palace opposite blocking the view and bringing noise and disruption, many prospective tenants were put off. Only five tenants took up residence at the beginning and it wasn't until after the Crystal Palace had been dismantled that all the houses were occupied.

You might wonder what type of people lived in such grand houses. Residents included George Baker, a timber merchant; Henry William Eaton, a china-silk broker; Major-General James Caulfield, a director of the East India Company; and Edward Ladd Betts, a railway contractor. Other notable people who lived there were Sir Robert Peel, Member of Parliament and son of the Prime Minister; John Gellibrand Hubbard, Governor of the Bank of England and politician; and Edward Wyndham Harrington Schenley, a former soldier and commissioner for the suppression of the slave trade.

**Country links** - Jamaica, Norway

**Directions 6** - Walk along to Number 14 Princes Gate and stop outside.

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## 7. Art and ambassadors

### Royal College of General Practitioners

Number 14 Princes Gate is now occupied by the Royal College of General Practitioners. So why on earth are there Native American heads above the doorway and windows? The story starts when the famous American banker, Junius Spencer Morgan, acquired Number 13 in 1858.

When he died he left the property to his son, J Pierpont Morgan. For tax reasons he decided to house his large art collection here in England. This included paintings and miniatures by Gainsborough, Constable, Van Dyck, Rubens and Holbein. His art collection kept growing so he decided to buy the freehold of Number 14 and join the two buildings into one.



Native American head above the doorway  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

After he died in 1913 the house passed to his son JP Morgan Junior who is noted for playing a prominent part in financing the First World War. He made a loan of \$12 million to Russia and a loan of \$50 million to France in 1915. He chose not to live in Princes Gate himself but instead loaned it to the Professional Classes War Relief Council who used it as a maternity home.

When the war was over he offered the house to the American Government as a home for American Ambassadors. This offer attracted some negative press reaction in the United States where there was some concern about their government accepting patronage from a money-lender. But the American government eventually accepted and they employed Thomas Hastings, who was the architect of the New York Public Library, to refurbish the building. It is he who remodelled the front and added the distinctive Native American heads above the door and windows.

The American Embassy occupied the building until 1955, and John F Kennedy was a notable occupant, staying here as a young boy in the late 1930s when his father was Ambassador to Britain. After 1955 the building was taken over by the Independent Television Authority for a while before the Royal College of General Practitioners acquired it in 1962.

**Country links** - France, Russia, United States of America

**Directions 7** - Continue along the terrace to Number 16

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## 8. Who Dares Wins

### 16 Princes Gate

Number 16 Princes Gate was the Iranian Embassy, the site of a six-day siege in 1980 when gunmen took 26 people hostage.

The gunmen were protesting against the oppression of the province of Khuzestan by the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini. They demanded the release of 91 political prisoners who were imprisoned in Iran and they demanded a plane to fly themselves and the hostages out of the UK. They entered the building heavily armed with hand guns, Czech automatic rifles and Russian made hand-grenades.



Iranian Embassy flag  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The British government under Margaret Thatcher refused to provide the gunmen with what they wanted and a siege began. Over the following days police negotiators were able to secure the release of five hostages in exchange for some concessions, such as the broadcasting of the hostage-takers' demands on television.

But by the sixth day of the siege the gunmen had become increasingly frustrated at the lack of progress. They killed one of the hostages and threw his body out of the Embassy. The British Government immediately ordered an assault to rescue the remaining hostages. The assault was carried out by the Special Air Service Regiment, the SAS. It was codenamed Operation Nimrod and thrust the normally secretive SAS and its motto 'Who Dares Wins' into the public arena.

In broad daylight, and in the full glare of television coverage, soldiers abseiled from the roof of the building and forced entry through the windows. The raid lasted 17 minutes and the SAS rescued all but one of the remaining hostages, killing five of the six terrorists.

The building suffered major damage in the raid and for more than ten years it remained an empty shell. Eventually it was rebuilt by the Iranian government who replicated the original design at the front and back but built the interior to reflect traditional Islamic design.

**Country links** - Czech Republic, Iran, Russia

**Directions 8** - Continue along the terrace to Number 20.

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## 9. Diplomacy

### Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum

As you walk along Princes Gate you may notice that many of the buildings have flags outside them. These are all embassies – the Ethiopian Embassy, the Thai Embassy Visa Section, and the Embassies of Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Afghanistan. In fact there are many embassies in this part of London. See how many you can see throughout this walk.

There's an international link at Number 20 as well. This building houses the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum. This was set up in 1945 after the Second World War to preserve the memory of Polish armed forces in the West and their contribution to the war, when the communist takeover of Poland made it hard and dangerous for many Poles to return home.

It is named after Wladyslaw Sikorski who became Prime Minister of the Polish Government in Exile and Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Armed Forces during the Second World War. He was killed in a plane crash in 1943 and it is his memorabilia that forms the basis of this collection.



Wladyslaw Sikorski circa 1942  
Wikimedia Commons

**Country links** - Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Poland, Thailand, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates

**Directions 9** - Cross over the top of Exhibition Road. Walk past the statue of Livingstone and the metal road sign to a red brick building with iron railings outside. Stop by the railings and listen to Track 10.

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## 10. Age of exploration

### Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore

Lowther Lodge is probably one of the finest examples of 19th century architecture in London. It is built in the 'Queen Anne' style, with the characteristic use of red brick, tall Dutch gables, towering chimney stacks and the use of the sunflower motif in the brickwork.

It was the home of the MP William Lowther who bought the site in 1870 and pulled down the previous property.

He commissioned Norman Shaw – the most outstanding domestic architect of his day – to build a 'country house' on the edge of town. Imagine living in such a grand house overlooking Hyde Park!

Since 1913 the building has been home to the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers).

The Society traces its roots back to 1830 when the Geographical Society of London was founded as an institution to promote the advancement of geographical science.



Lowther Lodge with its spectacular chimneys and brickwork  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



Bust of Sir Clements Markham outside Lowther Lodge  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

In its early years it was closely associated with exploration in parts of the British Empire and beyond, including Africa, the Indian subcontinent, the Polar Regions, and central Asia.

Many of the most famous explorers were sponsored by the Society. From here you should see a bust of Sir Clements Markham. He was a geographer, explorer and writer and was the Society's president for 12 years. The memorial was erected by the Peruvian Nation for his services as a historian of their country.

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If you retrace your steps to the top of Exhibition Road, look up on the wall for a statue. Another is just round the corner. These two are David Livingstone, the Scotsman who explored and mapped much of Africa, and Ernest Shackleton, the famous Anglo-Irish explorer of the Antarctic. Because of these statues and the places the men explored – tropical Africa and the South Pole – London Black Cab drivers know it as ‘Hot and Cold Corner’.



Statues of David Livingstone (left) and Ernest Shackleton (right) at Hot and Cold Corner  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Today the RGS is a leading learned society that promotes research, education, fieldwork and expeditions. It tries to bring geography alive through a wide range of innovative programmes including the Walk the World project, of which this walk is a part.

**Country links** - Angola, Antarctica, Botswana, DR Congo, Ireland, Malawi, Mozambique, Peru, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

**Directions 10** - Retrace your steps and turn right into Exhibition Road. Pass the modern entrance of the RGS then cross over Prince Consort Road. Look back at the red brick building on the corner.

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## 11. Crossing the Atlantic

### Jamaican High Commission

Like Lowther Lodge that we saw at our last stop, this is another fine Queen Anne style building. It was built in 1876 as a pair of private houses. Notice again the use of red brick and the sunflower motif. Today this is home to the Jamaican High Commission.

The Italian explorer, Christopher Columbus, claimed Jamaica for Spain in 1494. In 1655 the English captured Jamaica and it was then established as part of the slave triangle. Manufactured goods were shipped from England to countries along the West African coast. There the ships were then filled with slaves who were transported to the Caribbean islands and mainland America. The ships then returned home with cargoes of sugar, tobacco and rum. Jamaica was one of the main centres for sugar production and English plantation owners became very rich as a result.



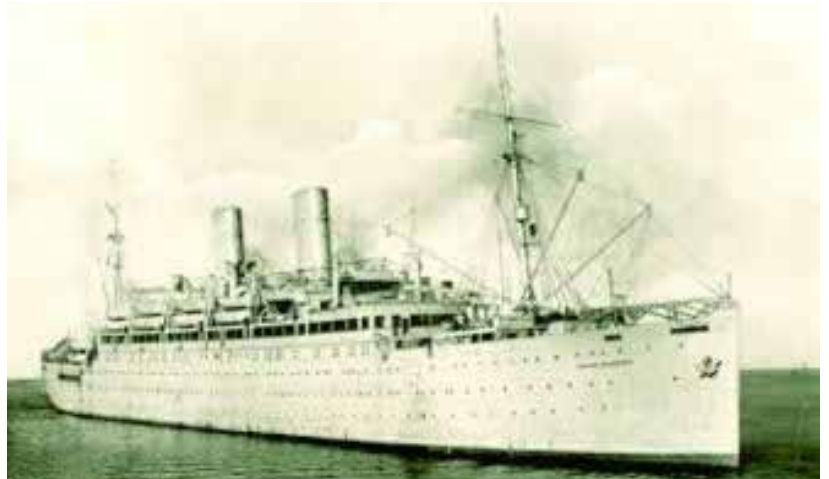
Jamaican High Commission  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Even after the end of slavery Jamaica remained an important part of the British Empire. In the 1940s many Jamaicans volunteered for war service and fought alongside British soldiers. After the war there was a shortage of labour in Britain and so immigrants from across the empire were invited to fill the gaps. The first wave of immigrants came from Jamaica in 1948 on the former troopship MV Empire Windrush. An advert appeared in a Jamaican newspaper offering cheap transport on the ship for anybody who wanted to work in Britain. All 300 places were taken and an extra 192 men made the voyage on the deck.

But there was a problem with housing all these immigrants. As a short-term measure the Colonial Office was forced to house 230 people from the Windrush in a deep air raid shelter in Clapham Common! The nearest labour exchange to the shelter was Brixton. As a result many of the settlers set up home in that area of London making it one of Britain's first Caribbean communities. Today there are estimated to be around 800,000 people of Jamaican background living in Britain.

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Now contrast the red-brick Queen Anne style building of the Jamaican High Commission with the terrace of white Georgian style buildings of Princes Gate on the opposite side of Exhibition Road. The building styles are quite different but the international connections continue. The Austrian Trade Commission is at Number 45, the Goethe-Institut – a German cultural institute – is at Number 50, and Number 55 is the Polish Hearth Club and its Ognisko Restaurant.



Empire Windrush photographed in 1949  
© Michael A. W. Griffin via Wikimedia (Creative Commons License)

**Country links** - Austria, Germany, Italy, Jamaica, Poland, Spain

**Directions 11** - Walk along Prince Consort Road for a short distance to the grand steps up to a large white building. Stop by the entrance.

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## 12. Mining gold and diamonds

### Royal School of Mines, Prince Consort Road

We are now outside Imperial College. In 1851 the government established its first ever technical higher education establishment – the Museum of Practical Geology. This later merged with the Royal College of Chemistry and became the Royal School of Mines. Later the Royal School of Mines joined with the Royal College of Science and the City and Guilds College to form The Imperial College of Science and Technology. Imperial College now occupies a substantial part of Albertopolis. It is rated amongst the world’s best universities. As per the original mandate, it focuses on engineering, medicine and science. It also has a Business School. There are about 13,500 full-time students and 3,330 academic and research staff.



Royal School of Mines entrance  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This grand building was originally constructed between 1910 and 1913 to house the Royal School of Mines. It was designed by Sir Aston Webb and was the last of many buildings that he designed in Albertopolis. It is in neoclassical style – that means copying the architectural style of ancient Greece – with Ionic pilasters and built out of Portland stone.

Notice the memorials either side of the doorway to two benefactors. One is Alfred Beit who was born in Germany and became a British-South African gold and diamond magnate. During his lifetime he made generous donations for scientific work and education. In his will he bequeathed a large sum of money for infrastructure development in the former North and South Rhodesia, which was intended initially to increase exploitation of diamonds, but was later modified to university education and research in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi.

The other memorial is to Julius Wernher, who was also German born. He moved to Britain when he was 21 and also made money from South African gold and diamonds. He was a passionate art collector and was made a Baron in 1905. When he died he was one of the richest men in the United Kingdom.

**Country links** - Germany, Greece, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe

**Directions 12** - Retrace your steps back to Exhibition Road and turn right. Go past the modern glass entrance to the Imperial College Business School. Stop opposite at the junction with Imperial College Road, opposite a modern church.

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## 13. Newer developments

### Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints

On the opposite side of Exhibition Road is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That's the official name of the religious denomination commonly known as the Mormons. The Mormon Church was established in 1830 by Joseph Smith and has its headquarters in Salt Lake City.

Mormons believe that families are eternal and the Church encourages its members to find their ancestors and preserve their family histories. They have been actively gathering records for over 100 years and the Church operates the largest genealogical library in the world in Salt Lake City. They also have Family History Centres around the world one of which is based here.



The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This church building is one of the newer additions to Albertopolis. It was built in 1961 on a vacant plot of land that had remained empty since being bombed in the Second World War. It was designed by Sir Thomas Bennett who was also responsible for developing the new towns of Crawley and Stevenage.

But an even newer addition is the road itself. In 2010 and 2011 Exhibition Road was redesigned to give greater priority to pedestrians. This was much needed as the area attracts over 11 million visitors each year and gets very busy. One local politician claimed that the new design would transform the street into "the most beautiful in London". Take a look at the coloured granite blocks that have been used to make the road. You might be surprised to know that these come from China. I wonder what Prince Albert would have thought of that?

**Country links** - China, United States of America

**Directions 13** - Continue down Exhibition Road. Pass the tunnel for the Underground station and stop by the entrance to the Science Museum.

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## 14. Inventions that changed the world

### The Science Museum

This is the Science Museum, one of the museums at the heart of Albertopolis. When the Great Exhibition was over, many of the exhibits needed a home. These were put in the South Kensington Museum built just across the road. They included exhibits of industrial and decorative art and a few miscellaneous science collections such as Animal Products, Food, Educational Apparatus, and Building Materials. There was also a separate exhibition of machinery from the patent office and a collection of ship models and marine engines.



Science Museum  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The South Kensington Museum building was an iron-framed structure clad in sheets of corrugated iron. It was ugly and was soon nicknamed the 'Brompton Boilers'. In 1899, Queen Victoria laid the foundation stone for a range of buildings to replace the 'Brompton Boilers' and decreed that it should be renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum. Both the science and art collections were expanding and it was decided that a new location should be found for the Science collection. So work began in 1913 to establish the Science Museum on its current site.

Although the Science Museum still has the original exhibits, it has grown and kept up to date with changes in science, technology, industry and medicine. The exhibition galleries are regularly changed and are constantly trying to illustrate and explain science to visitors. Although the museum celebrates British science and invention, look out for international objects too. For example, if you go inside see if you can find a hexagonal hot water bottle from Austria, an artificial leg built at a Prisoner of War camp in Singapore, a porcelain bowl that survived the atomic bomb explosion at Hiroshima, and an ornate French planetary clock.

**Country links** - Austria, France, Japan, Singapore

**Directions 14** - From the Science Museum, walk a few yards further then look across Exhibition Road at the ornate orange building - the Henry Cole Wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

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## 15. An unrivalled collection

### Henry Cole Wing, Victoria and Albert Museum

Across the road is the Victoria and Albert Museum. As we've already heard the Victoria and Albert Museum – known as the V&A – was established by Queen Victoria to house art collections. It is now the world's largest museum of decorative arts and design with a permanent collection of over 4.5 million objects in 145 galleries. The collection, which comes from all over the world, includes ceramics, glass, textiles, costumes, silver, ironwork, jewellery, furniture, medieval objects, sculpture, prints, drawings and photographs. Some of these objects date back 5,000 years.



The elaborate Henry Cole Wing, V&A Museum  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

You will see the grand front entrance at the next stop but the side of the building is no less spectacular! Directly opposite is the Henry Cole Wing. The building is a truly beautiful and monumental structure, with seven central bays flanked by corner pavilions and an open loggia on the top storey. It was first occupied by the School of Naval Architects, then by the Science School and then by Imperial College. It is an excellent example of how these buildings in Albertopolis have had different multiple uses.



Victory statue on the top of  
the V&A Museum

Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Joining this to the main building you can see a very elaborate wall with square Corinthian pillars above. It was designed by Sir Aston Webb, the architect of the Royal School of Mines that we saw earlier. You might wonder why such a large and elaborate wall was needed. It was built to hide an ugly boiler house from view from Exhibition Road!

You might now like to cross over to get a closer look at the details of the architecture and design. As you get closer you might notice that parts of the wall are less than perfect – there are various holes and pockmarks in the stone.

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These were caused by German bombs during the Second World War and have been left as a memorial. This part of London actually escaped much of the bombing but one double bomb did explode here in Exhibition Road. The windows of the museum were all knocked out and the museum lost most of its glass roofing, leaving it exposed to the elements for several days. The building across the road – the Geological Survey Museum, which is now part of the Natural History Museum – also shows similar signs of shrapnel damage.



Bomb damage and inscription, V&A Museum  
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

### Country links - Germany

**Directions 15** - Continue down Exhibition Road to Cromwell Road. Cross at the pedestrian crossing and turn left until you are opposite the main entrance to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Stop outside the white building, Number 33 Thurloe Square.

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## 16. Kazakhstan and Christmas cards

### Kazakhstan Embassy

At the beginning of the walk we met Prince Albert who was part of the driving force behind the Great Exhibition and its long-term legacy of Albertopolis. The other key character was Henry Cole, who lived here at 33 Thurloe Square (now the Kazakhstan Embassy). Henry Cole was a civil servant and a member of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce – or the RSA in short. With the encouragement of Prince Albert, who was the President of the RSA, he organised a successful Exhibition of Art Manufactures in 1847, with larger exhibitions in the following two years.



A copy of the world's first commercially produced Christmas card, made by Henry Cole in 1843  
(Wikimedia Commons)

Cole also visited the Paris Exhibition of 1849 but he felt that it lacked an international dimension. So he secured the backing of Prince Albert to adapt the next RSA exhibitions into one larger international event. This paved the way for the Great Exhibition of 1851 that we have already heard so much about.

It is Henry Cole who is credited with making the Exhibition the financial success it became. And we've already heard how that money was used to buy the land in South Kensington and create the institutions of education and learning many of which we have seen on our way down Exhibition Road. Cole was also appointed the first General Superintendent of the Department of Practical Art. This was set up by the government to improve standards of art and design education in Britain. It was in this capacity that he was instrumental in the development of the Victoria and Albert Museum and he became its first director.

You might not know that Henry Cole is also credited with devising the concept of sending greetings cards at Christmas time. He introduced the world's first commercial Christmas card in 1843. In 2001, one of Henry Cole's first Christmas cards, which he sent to his grandmother, sold at auction for £22,500!

**Country links - Kazakhstan**

**Directions 16** - With your back to 33 Thurloe Square, turn left. Cross Thurloe Place by using the traffic island and immediately enter the triangular garden ahead. Continue up to the sculpture in the middle of the garden.

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## 17. A secret betrayal

### Yalta Memorial Garden, Thurloe Square

This small triangular garden is known as the Yalta Memorial Garden. In the middle of the garden is a bronze sculpture called "The 12 Responses to Tragedy" by Angela Conner. It was unveiled in 1986 to replace an earlier piece that was destroyed by vandalism. This thought-provoking memorial is dedicated to those people who were forcibly repatriated to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union after the Second World War.

Shortly before the end of the war, American President Franklin D Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin met for a conference at Yalta in the Crimea (now in the Ukraine). It became known as the Yalta Conference and the outcome was the Yalta Agreement.



Twelve Responses to Tragedy sculpture  
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The main purpose of the conference was to discuss the reorganisation of Europe after the war. But there was a codicil to the agreement which was kept secret from the American and British people for more than 50 years. The Soviet government agreed to hand over several thousand western Allied prisoners of war who they had liberated from German prisoner of war camps. The Western Allies agreed to return Soviet citizens and Eastern European refugees, regardless of their consent.

There were millions of refugees from the Soviet Union in Western Europe after the war, particularly Russian Cossacks from the Ukraine. Vast numbers of people were forcibly repatriated regardless of their allegiance. Most were either executed or incarcerated in prison in the Soviet Union where they eventually died. Look carefully at the sculpture. It has been deliberately positioned so that its shadow falls over the script on the plaque. See if you can find the 12 faces on the sculpture. They represent different responses to tragedy including panic, fear and courage.

**Country links** - Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, United States of America, Ukraine

**Directions 17** - When you are ready, leave the garden and go into Thurloe Place. At the traffic lights, turn right and go into the pedestrianized street. Stop outside the grey building next to the Underground station entrance.

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## 18. A blend of eastern and western styles

### The Ismaili Centre

As with the Mormon Church that we saw earlier, this is another religious building and another twentieth century addition to Albertopolis. This is the Aga Khan Ismaili Institute, better known as the Ismaili Centre. Ismaili is the second largest branch within Shia Islam and the Aga Khan is the hereditary imam. Ismailis tend to concentrate on the deeper, esoteric meaning of the Islamic religion.

The largest Ismaili communities in the world are in Iran and Pakistan, with minorities in India, Syria, Yemen, Jordan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Lebanon and South Africa. Many have also emigrated to Europe, North America and Australasia. For the Ismaili community living in London residing here in London, this building serves as a religious, cultural and social centre.



Detail of the Ismaili Centre  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The exterior of the building was designed by British architect Neville Conder and the Islamic interior was designed by Karl Schlamming, a German-born Muslim. The design brings together traditional Islamic style with modern Western influences and also uses materials and colours which are compatible with the surrounding buildings, which are more than a century older. There is also a beautiful roof garden which is a spot of tranquillity above the busy road.

The building was opened in 1985 by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the presence of Mawlana Hazar Imam and government ministers, members of Parliament, diplomats and leaders of the Ismaili community from around the world. Before you move on, see if you can spot yet another embassy – that of Venezuela.

**Country links** - Afghanistan, Germany, India, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, South Africa, Syria, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Yemen

**Directions 18** - Continue along Thurloe Place past various cafes, restaurants and shops. When you reach Cromwell Place you should see the Institut Français directly opposite. Stop outside.

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## 19. Little France

### Institut Français, Cromwell Place

This area of South Kensington is known as Petite France. In the surrounding streets you will find Parisian-style restaurants and pavement cafes, baguette shops, bars and bookshops. There are about two million French people living outside France.

In an attempt to give these expatriates more political voice, the French government has created 11 new constituencies with effect from 2012. The constituency for Northern Europe covers 10 countries including the UK, Ireland, Scandinavia and the Baltic states. There are about 140,000 French voters across these countries ranging from over 113,000 in the UK to just 146 in Estonia!



French produce, Petite France  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

In fact, the UK has the third greatest number of registered French residents in the world. Because of this the new constituency for Northern Europe has been dubbed the South Kensington seat.

Here on Cromwell Place is the Institut Français, the official French government centre of language and culture in the UK. It comprises a cinema, a multi-media library, a language centre and a French bistro. It runs a programme of talks and films to promote French language and culture and to encourage cross-cultural exchange.



Institut Français entrance  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Also in this block of land is the Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle – usually referred to simply as “the Lycée”. It is named after the famous French statesman who took refuge in the school whilst in exile from Nazi-occupied France during the Second World War. The school now has 3,500 pupils between the ages of 3 and 18 and teaches predominantly in French. It is one of the most academically successful French schools outside of France.

Another occupant of this block is the French Embassy which also represents three of its former colonies in Africa – the Central African Republic, Djibouti and Mauritania.

Feel free to explore this area a little and perhaps take some refreshments before continuing with your walk.



Shop front, Petite France  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

**Country links** - Central African Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Estonia, Finland, France, Greenland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Mauritania, Norway, Sweden

**Directions 19** - When you are ready, follow Cromwell Place and turn left along Cromwell Road noting the French school on your left. Stop when you are opposite the main entrance of the Natural History Museum.

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## 20. 70 million specimens

### The Natural History Museum

This is arguably one of the most beautiful Victorian buildings in London. After the successful Great Exhibition this site was earmarked for further exhibitions. In fact it was used for the International Exhibition of 1862. This exhibition was deemed a success but not so the building it was housed in. So two years later it was demolished and this magnificent place was built. It was designed by Alfred Waterhouse who was a young architect from Liverpool. It is one of Britain's most striking examples of Romanesque architecture.



The Natural History Museum  
© David Liff via Wikimedia (Creative Commons License)

It is home to the Natural History Museum whose origins go back more than 250 years to when physician and collector of natural curiosities, Sir Hans Sloane, left his extensive collection to the nation. He spent time travelling in France and Jamaica and his specimens originally formed part of the British Museum. Other collections were added including specimens from Captain James Cook's first voyage of discovery from 1769 to 1771 aboard HMS Endeavour. On this voyage Cook visited Tahiti and various other Society Islands (now French Polynesia), New Zealand, Australia and the Dutch East Indies.

As the number of specimens grew a new home was needed for the nation's natural history collection. Thus the Natural History Museum here opened its doors to the public on Easter Monday of 1881. Look carefully at the outside of the museum. It is decorated with an astonishing series of sculptures of plants and animals. The designer placed extinct animals and plants to the east and the living to the west.

The museum is now home to a staggering 70 million life and earth science specimens! There are items from all over the world divided into five main categories – Botany, Entomology, Mineralogy, Palaeontology and Zoology. If you were to go into the museum you will probably be able to find a specimen from every one of the nations participating in the 2012 Games.

**Country links** - Australia, Brunei, France, French Polynesia, Indonesia, Jamaica, New Zealand, Tahiti, Yemen

**Directions 20** - Continue along Cromwell Road. Don't forget to look out for more international links such as the offices of Royal Brunei Airlines and the Embassy of Yemen. At the junction with Queen's Gate, use the pedestrian crossings to cross over the opposite corner. Stop by the statue outside Baden-Powell House and listen to Track 21.

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## 21. Scouting for Boys

### Baden-Powell House

This building celebrates someone who had the inspiration for an international movement that would unify people across the world. Look for the statue outside the entrance. This is Robert Baden-Powell. He served in the British Army from 1876 until 1910 in both India and Africa. During the Second Boer War in South Africa, he famously defended the town in the Siege of Mafeking.

On his return from Africa in 1903, Baden-Powell found that his military training manual, *Aids to Scouting*, had become a best-seller, and was being used by teachers and youth organisations. He decided to re-write it to suit a youth readership.



Robert Baden-Powell statue  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

In August 1907 he held a camp on Brownsea Island in Dorset for twenty-two boys from local Boys Brigade companies and sons of his friends to test out his ideas. This camp is now seen as the beginning of the Scout and Guide Movement. His first book, *Scouting for Boys*, was published in six instalments in 1908 and has sold approximately 150 million copies since. It was the fourth bestselling book of the twentieth century! Baden-Powell lived his last years in Nyeri, Kenya, where he died in 1941 at the age of 84.

Baden-Powell's legacy lives on. There are now over 31 million registered Scouts and 10 million registered Guides around the world from 216 countries and territories. This building was the headquarters of The Scout Association until 2001. Now it is a Scouting hostel and conference centre. Inside you can see a collection of Baden-Powell's memorabilia.

**Country links** - Ghana, India, Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe

**Directions 21** - Cross back over Queen's Gate and turn left, keeping the Natural History Museum on your right. Stop by the second set of railings by the sign for the Darwin Centre. Look at the modern glass building.

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## 22. Seventeen million creepy crawlies

### Darwin Centre, Natural History Museum

The new building that you can see is the Darwin Centre, a recent expansion to the Natural History Museum. Again, Prince Albert and Sir Henry Cole would be proud that the institutions of South Kensington keep on thriving and growing.

Look carefully at the glass building and inside you should be able to make out a beige structure. It is an 8 storey cocoon which is the largest curved, sprayed concrete structure in Europe. It's worth a visit for that alone but to get inside you will need to go to the main entrance on Cromwell Road.



HMS Beagle at Tierra del Fuego by Conrad Martens (1833)  
(Wikimedia Commons)

At the core of the cocoon are 17 million insects and 3 million plant specimens which have been collected by different people over the last 400 years! Inside you can look at some of the oldest specimens and learn about the people who collected and identified them. It's worth noting that they are not just museum specimens, many are used by scientists for research into fighting disease and climate change.

It is fitting that this new addition to the Museum is named after Charles Darwin who formulated his theory of natural selection after his voyage in the Beagle. On his five-year trip around the world, starting in 1832, he visited the Azores, Tenerife, the Cape Verde islands, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, the Falkland Islands, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands, Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia, Mauritius and South Africa.

In the museum courtyard is a 115-tonne piece of granite that was quarried in France. It is a memorial to the British victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. This was one of the worst natural disasters in living memory with hundreds of thousands of people losing their lives. The worst hit country was Indonesia. The names of more than 150 British citizens who lost their lives in Thailand, Sri Lanka and the Maldives are inscribed on the monument.

**Country links** - Argentina, Australia, Azores, Cape Verde, Chile, Ecuador, Falkland Islands, France, Galapagos Islands, Indonesia, Maldives, Mauritius, New Zealand, Oman, Peru, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tahiti, Thailand, Uruguay

**Directions 22** - Continue up Queen's Gate, noting more embassies. Shortly after the Oman Embassy at Number 167, turn right at Falmouth Gate and stop outside Number 170, a redbrick house.

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## 23. Cement

### 170 Queen's Gate

Although they look completely different there is actually a connection between the contemporary glass Darwin Centre that we saw at our last stop and this Victorian brick building. You probably won't guess – the connection is cement!

Number 170 Queen's Gate was designed by Norman Shaw, the same man that designed Lowther Lodge, the home of the Royal Geographical Society that we saw earlier. It was completed in 1889 for Frederick Anthony White, a wealthy cement manufacturer who had an interest in art and architecture.



The White family crest above the door  
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

His family crest forms part of the decoration above the front door and his and his wife's initials are visible on the rainwater heads on the south façade. White was the first chairman of the Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Limited, formed in 1900 by the amalgamation of 24 different cement companies. This company later became Blue Circle Industries which itself was bought out by the French company Lafarge in 2001.

Cement has played a major role in shaping our modern urban landscape. The ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman empires all used types of cement, but modern cement did not come along about until the 1800s. It all started when Joseph Aspdin of Leeds took out a patent in 1824 for 'Portland Cement'. This was a material he had produced by firing finely-ground clay and limestone. He called it Portland Cement because the concrete made from it looked like Portland stone which was a widely-used building stone in England. A few years later, in 1845, Isaac Johnson made the first modern Portland Cement by firing a mixture of chalk and clay at much higher temperatures similar to those used today.

Cement is the key component in making concrete and concrete is used more than any other man-made material in the world. It's used so widely as a building material for two main reasons – it can be moulded into different shapes and it is very strong. We heard at the last stop how concrete has been used in creative ways to make the cocoon inside the Darwin Centre. Thus it is no surprise that the cement industry is an enormous global industry. Currently China produces over 40 per cent of the world's cement. But its production is also a significant source of greenhouse gases producing about 5 per cent of man-made CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.



25kg bags of Lafarge / Blue Circle cement  
Stara Blazkova via Wikimedia (Creative Commons license)

**Country links** - Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Thailand

**Directions 23** - Continue up Queen's Gate. See if you can spot three more embassies – Thailand, Bangladesh and Bulgaria. Turn right into Prince Consort Road. Continue for about 200 yards then cross over and walk up the steps towards the Royal Albert Hall. Stop at the statue in front of the Royal Albert Hall.

**Note:** For a step-free route continue further along Prince Consort Road and turn left into Kensington Gore. Then follow the road round to the Royal Albert Hall.

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## 24. Making music

### Great Exhibition memorial, Royal College of Music & former Royal College of Organists

We're just a few hundred metres from where we started this walk at the Albert Memorial. And here is another statue of the same man! This is a memorial to the Great Exhibition and was originally situated in the Royal Horticultural Society's garden before being moved here in 1891.

First look back down the steps at the building on the other side of the road – the Royal College of Music. The College is part of the University of London and is one of the world's leading conservatoires, providing specialised musical education and professional training at the highest international level for performers, conductors and composers. You may be able to hear students practicing.

Some of the world's best classical musicians have studied here. They include: the Sarajevo-born pianist Ivana Gavric, Singaporean violinist and conductor Chan Tze Law, South African composer and pianist Surendran Reddy, Chinese violinist Chen Jiafeng, Uruguayan bassoonist Gustavo Núñez, Australian concert pianist David Helfgott, and Ukranian violinist Valeriy Sokolov.



Prince Albert statue, Great Exhibition memorial  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



The Royal College of Music  
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

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Looking the other way – to the left of the statue of Albert – is another musical building – built in 1874 to accommodate the National Training School for Music. It was the home of the Royal College of Organists from 1904 to 1991 and is now a private house.

It was designed by Lieutenant H H Cole – the son of Sir Henry Cole, who we met earlier. He was not an experienced architect and he worked with his father and a committee of the great and the good developing the design over a period of several months.

What makes the building so unusual are the reliefs and plaster decorations (known as 'sgraffito'). There are musical instruments of all sorts, portraits of composers and musical cherubs. But ironically for the home of organ music, there is no organ! A writer in the magazine Country Life suggested that the lively façade of this building made it look like the building had strayed here from Istanbul!



Detail from the Royal College of Organists façade  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

**Country links** - Australia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, China, Singapore, South Africa, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay

**Directions 24** - Pass the statue and stand outside the Royal College of Organists building. Look back at the Royal Albert Hall and listen to Track 25.

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## 25. The advancement of the arts and sciences

### Royal Albert Hall

This is the last stop on our walk around Albertopolis and it is appropriate that it is the Royal Albert Hall. The hall was fundamental to Prince Albert's vision for the area. It was originally to be called the Central Hall of Arts and Sciences and be used for multiple purposes. But it didn't open until after Albert's death and Queen Victoria had it renamed the Royal Albert Hall of Arts and Sciences.



Take a walk round the building and look up at the inscription. It starts: "This hall was erected for the advancement of the arts and sciences and works of industry of all nations in fulfilment of the intention of Albert Prince Consort."

Royal Albert Hall  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Below the inscription is a terracotta mosaic frieze. There are 16 themes including music, sculpture, painting, workers in stone, workers in wood and brick, astronomy and navigation, pottery and glassmaking, and horticulture and land surveying. See what other themes within the arts and sciences that you can spot.

The Royal Albert Hall was the venue for four international exhibitions, and it is a little known fact that the final exhibition in 1874 led to the creation of the Wine Society. It included an exhibition of food and drink, and a large quantity of wine was sent over from various countries and stored in the cellars of the hall. It seems that these were largely overlooked and the Portuguese growers who had gone to great expense appealed for help. The British Government could do nothing officially but arranged with the secretary of the International Exhibition that he should give a series of large lunch parties and that the wines from the cellars should be placed on the table. It was these luncheons that were to lead to the creation of The International Exhibition Co-operative Wine Society which still exists today.

Today, the Royal Albert Hall is one of Britain's most loved and distinctive buildings. It is best known today for its annual Promenade Concerts. These culminate in September with the Last Night of the Proms and its rousing British patriotic pieces. But the Hall is a multi-purpose building as Albert had intended. It also hosts rock and pop, ballet and opera, tennis competitions, award ceremonies, school and community events, charity performances and banquets.

**Country links** - Portugal

**Directions 25** - Remain at the Royal Albert Hall

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## 26. An international hub

### Royal Albert Hall

I hope you have enjoyed this walk around Albertopolis and learned something new about this part of London. As you have heard, it all started with the Great Exhibition in 1851 which showcased exhibits from around the world.

With the vision of Prince Albert and Henry Cole, this area south of the Park was established as a long term legacy to celebrate science and technology as well as culture and the arts. More than 150 years later their legacy is still alive and well. Albertopolis is home to some of the world's leading museums, premier academic institutions and national organisations.



The men with the vision, Prince Albert and Henry Cole  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain /  
Vanity Fair cartoon (Wikimedia Commons)

While Albertopolis was essentially a celebration of all things British, these included the country's links with the wider world, particularly through the Empire. Those international connections continue today.

South Kensington is home to dozens of embassies, the largest French community outside France and the clubs and cultural institutes for other nationalities. Each day the area is thronging with tourists from around the world while hosts of international students come to study here every year.

Exploring the international connections in Albertopolis and South Kensington is a great way to celebrate London 2012. And as you've walked around you've probably heard many different languages being spoken. On the walk we have found evidence of links to about 110 of the 206 Olympic and Paralympic participating nations. Maybe you spotted more. If you did, please let us know. And if you enjoyed this walk, look on the Walk the World website and you will find more in different parts of Britain that you can try. Why not think about creating your own walk?

**Directions 26** - To return to the museums, go down the steps and turn left into Prince Consort Road. The Exhibition Road museums and South Kensington underground station are on the right. To go into the park, turn left from the end of Prince Consort Road.

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## Further information

Find out more about the walk story and places of interest along the route:

**The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints United Kingdom**  
[www.lds.org.uk](http://www.lds.org.uk)

**The Crystal Palace Museum**  
[www.crystalpalacemuseum.org.uk](http://www.crystalpalacemuseum.org.uk)

**Goethe-Institut London**  
[www.goethe.de/ins/gb/lon/enindex.htm](http://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/lon/enindex.htm)

**Imperial College London**  
[www3.imperial.ac.uk](http://www3.imperial.ac.uk)

**Institut Français**  
[www.institut-francais.org.uk](http://www.institut-francais.org.uk)

**The Ismaili Centre**  
[www.theismaili.org](http://www.theismaili.org)

**Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle Londres**  
[www.lyceefrancais.org.uk](http://www.lyceefrancais.org.uk)

**Natural History Museum**  
[www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk)

**The Polish Club**  
[www.ognisko.com](http://www.ognisko.com)

**Royal Albert Hall**  
[www.royalalberthall.com](http://www.royalalberthall.com)

**Royal College of Music**  
[www.rcm.ac.uk](http://www.rcm.ac.uk)

**Royal College of Organists**  
[www.rco.org.uk](http://www.rco.org.uk)

**Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)**  
[www.rgs.org](http://www.rgs.org)

**The Royal Society of Arts**  
[www.thersa.org](http://www.thersa.org)

**Science Museum**  
[www.sciencemuseum.org.uk](http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk)

**Serpentine Gallery**  
[www.serpentinegallery.org](http://www.serpentinegallery.org)

**Serpentine Swimming Club**  
[www.serpentineswimmingclub.com](http://www.serpentineswimmingclub.com)

**Simon Gudgeon**  
[www.simongudgeon.com](http://www.simongudgeon.com)

**Victoria & Albert Museum**  
[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

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