

# Belsize Walk

Primrose Hill to Parliament Hill



# Belsize Walk

## Primrose Hill to Parliament Hill

Few capital cities are as blessed with parks as London. Belsize Walk links two of its best-loved oases – Primrose Hill and Parliament Hill – with an architectural walk passing through the Belsize conservation area. Belsize takes its name from The Manor of Belsize which is known to have existed since 1317. The walk takes about two and a half hours and more if you stop for refreshments along the way.

### How to use this guide

The numbers appearing in the text refer to points on the map. You can also find information about the main architectural styles that shaped Belsize at the back of this leaflet.

Discreet footway discs have been provided to way mark the route. The London Plane design is based on an actual leaf found on the route.



Printed walking guides is available for viewing, downloading and printing from [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk) and [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)



# The Route

**1** The Walk commences on Prince Albert Road, on the northern side of Regent's Park by the entrance to St Mark's Bridge. You can use this footbridge to enter Regent's Park or to walk to London Zoo. Walk west along Prince Albert Road towards Primrose Hill park. When you reach the park cross Prince Albert Road at the traffic lights by Albert Terrace. Walk along Albert Terrace (outside the park boundary) and continue left into Regent's Park Road. Originally part of the great chase appropriated by Henry VIII, Primrose Hill was secured as public open space by an Act of Parliament in 1842. Much of the Primrose Hill area was once owned by Eton College and this history can be seen in local street names. The area is known for its independent retailers and restaurants and for the many writers, artists, actors and musicians who have made it their home over the years.

**2 OFF ROUTE**  
The summit of Primrose Hill offers one of London's six statutory protected views of St Paul's Cathedral. You'll find a viewing panel to help you identify all the capital's landmarks. (The other protected views are from: Kenwood; Parliament Hill; Alexandra Palace; Blackheath Point and Greenwich Park).

▼ View towards central London from Primrose Hill summit



As you reach the corner of Regent's Park Road and Primrose Hill Road

**3**

you'll see the shops curving around to your right. The terrace



▲ **No.122 Regent's Park Road**  
Friedrich Engels (pictured) retired here in 1870. A blue plaque is visible from the entrance to the park by the junction of Regent's Park Road and Primrose Hill Road.



opposite was the home of Friedrich Engels, co-author of The Communist Manifesto. A blue plaque at 122 Regent's Park Road, records his stay from 1870 until 1894. He and his co-writer Karl Marx – who lived close by in Maitland Park Road NW3 – took countless walks on Hampstead Heath in the years up until Marx's death in 1883.

The next part of the route continues on the other side of Primrose Hill Road. So cross over here, turn left and begin walking up the hill – on the side of the road opposite the park. Continue straight ahead along Primrose Hill Road, crossing Oppidans Road (oppidan being the name given to an Eton scholar not benefiting from a scholarship).

**4**

straight ahead along Primrose Hill Road, crossing Oppidans Road (oppidan being the name given to an Eton scholar not benefiting from a scholarship).

**5**

You'll soon walk opposite a church on the corner of Elsworthy Road – St Mary the Virgin (Grade II listed), built in 1871-2 in the Early French Gothic style. Cross over Adelaide Road and continue along Primrose Hill Road, crossing

**6**

Fellows Road until you reach the zebra crossing in front of The Washington public house. This Grade II listed building is thought to take its name from the Sussex village which was originally home to the Tidey family. Daniel Tidey built many of the Victorian houses of Belsize as

well as this pub. (The association with George Washington came later). The pub was built in about 1865, but its interior tiles, etched glass and mahogany fittings date from 1890.

Cross over to the pub and turn right into England's Lane and walk towards the red post box outside Allchin's chemist. Just before you reach it you'll come to a parking ticket dispenser.

**7**

Pause here and look directly across the street into Chalcot Gardens, a narrow roadway set back from England's Lane. The house at number 16 bears a blue plaque and was the home of Arthur Rackham, the celebrated book illustrator, from 1903-20. This Grade II listed house, which was built in 1881, is distinguished by the front and rear extensions added by the Arts & Crafts architect CFA Voysey in 1898. Rackham illustrated titles including Rip Van Winkle (1905), Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens (1906) and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1907).



▲ 16 Chalcot Gardens

▼ Allchin's chemist on England's Lane features a beautiful carved shopfront and cast-iron railings on the first-floor balcony.



8 The walk continues along England's Lane, to the chemist on the corner with its fine Victorian shopfront. Turn left around the corner now into Primrose Gardens, arranged as two crescents facing a central garden. Walk to the top of Primrose Gardens, then continue left into Belsize Grove. (Or leave the route to see one of Belsize's oldest surviving buildings, below).



9 **OFF ROUTE**  
The stuccoed, Grade II listed terrace (above) at 26-38 Belsize Grove dates from 1825. To view it, take a right-hand turn from Primrose Gardens into Belsize Grove.

From Belsize Grove the route soon takes a right hand turn into Belsize Park Gardens. After you have crossed into Belsize Park Gardens, look

10 across the street to number 67, former home of Bloomsbury-set writer Lytton Strachey. Here in 1909 he proposed to Virginia Woolf. She accepted, but he immediately effected what he described as "a fairly honourable retreat". This part of Belsize Park was developed in the 1850s and 60s in a fashionable 'Kensington' stucco style to compete with the houses on offer in west London. The English composer Frederick

11 Delius, born in Bradford to German parents, lived at number 44 Belsize Park Gardens.

▼ Belsize Village



12 Now cross from Belsize Park Gardens to pedestrianised Belsize Terrace – at the heart of Belsize Village. The mews and shops were located here by developers to keep useful, but unattractive, services away from the pristine new stucco estates.

*Belsize Avenue, the road you've just crossed, was once the driveway to the former Belsize House (c.1500-1853) and the scene of 18th century traffic jams when the grounds were used as a pleasure garden.*

*The Manor of Belsize (Bel Assis = beautiful seat or situation) is known to have existed since 1317.*

*Belsize Park Gardens (part of the walk route) runs close to the eastern boundary of the Park of old Belsize House – from which the whole area gets its name.*

13 From Belsize Village our route climbs up Belsize Crescent opposite – a street of tall, handsome houses – and curves right into Lyndhurst Gardens. This road was developed from 1886 by William Willett and Son in an elaborate and ornamented version of the Queen Anne style. The houses here were solid and quite distinguished artistically by the standards of speculative building.

*William Willett junior is now remembered as the originator of daylight saving or 'summertime'. Without him we might not turn the clocks forward an hour each spring. He published a pamphlet in 1907 entitled 'The Waste of Light'. Willett died in 1915 and Parliament finally adopted daylight saving in 1916 as a measure to save coal during World War I.*



14 **OFF ROUTE**  
As you cross Wedderburn Road look to your right. In the distance you'll see one of the area's few early 19th century buildings, built in a Gothic style with two turrets. Hunter's Lodge (Grade II listed) at 5 Belsize Lane (above) was built in about 1811.

▼ **No 26 Lyndhurst Gardens**  
Home to the Maria Montessori  
Training Organisation.



**15** Towards the end of Lyndhurst Gardens another Willett house of 1886, No. 26 (Grade II listed), is home to the Maria Montessori Training Organisation. Founded by Mario Montessori, Maria's son, the centre has operated in London for 40 years.

Reaching the end of Lyndhurst Gardens, we take a right turning into Lyndhurst Road. We soon pass the Olave Centre on the right, home to the World

**16** Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. This was once the site of Rosslyn House, home to Alexander Wedderburn, who served as Lord Chancellor in the government of William Pitt the Younger and later became 1st Earl of Rosslyn.

**17** Now walk on to the former Congregational Church at the corner of Lyndhurst Road and Rosslyn Hill. Completed in 1884 this Grade II listed building is now Air Studios, a recording studio founded by Beatles producer Sir George Martin. The church is the work of Natural History Museum architect Alfred Waterhouse.

**18** Before crossing Lyndhurst Road look across to St Stephen's (Grade I listed), built from 1869 at the corner of Pond Street and funded by public subscription. Designed by S.S. Teulon in the Early French Gothic style, the church is being redeveloped as a Lifelong Learning Centre.

Now follow the Belsize Walk footway discs across Lyndhurst Road and then Rosslyn Hill. Continue left up Rosslyn Hill until you reach Downshire Hill, the last residential street on our route. Downshire Hill was developed during the Regency period (1811-1820) and beyond.

Many of the houses in the street are listed **19** buildings. Numbers 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 Downshire Hill are Grade II listed and can be seen in the illustration below. No 6 Downshire Hill has a bowed, cast-iron bracketed balcony on the second floor with lattice work and a tented canopy. Numbers 7 and 8 are Gothic style semi-detached villas with battlements. Note the pointed lights in the sash windows and the drip moulds over the windows.



▲ **Hopkins House** No. 49a Downshire Hill

**20** Directly opposite these is the Hopkins House at 49a. The house was built by and for architects Sir Michael and Lady Patty Hopkins in 1975-6. Radically modern, the house is cleverly sited and barely noticeable from the road. Its two storeys are entirely glazed on the front and rear elevations.

Continue along Downshire Hill, noting a small 1930s Modernist house on your left at number 13 (designed by M. Bunney).

▼ **Numbers 4-8 Downshire Hill**



21

The walk now continues towards what was described as “the new church” when artist John Constable resided in Downshire Hill. He and his family later moved to nearby Well Walk, where you can find a blue plaque. The Grade I listed St John’s Church (1818-23) remains the only privately owned chapel in the diocese of London. No.14A (Grade II listed) opposite the church was St John’s Chapel School, founded in 1830. It had become an artists’ studio by World War I, used by Sydney Carline and others known as the Hampstead Set or the Downshire Hill Group.



▲ **St John’s Church**  
The freehold was bought by Leslie Wright in 1916 who leased it to the congregation for a nominal rent. At his death he requested it should not be sold while there was a congregation to support it. St John’s remains the only proprietary chapel in the diocese of London.

Now continue walking along Downshire Hill past the Freemason’s Arms public house (of 1819) and cross Willow Road. (Or leave the route to see 2 Willow Road – Ernő Goldfinger’s house stands just to your left).



◀ **2 Willow Road**  
Built as a family home in 1939, this important Modernist building (Grade II\* listed) has been acquired by The National Trust and is now open to the public.

After you cross between the two ponds the path ascends a hill and curves right. After a few moments you’ll reach a fork – take the right-hand path here. Very soon you’ll glimpse the open fields of Parliament Hill ahead of you. Keep walking straight on for a few minutes and you’ll reach the summit of Parliament Hill.



25

Enjoy the panoramic view over the West End, the City and Docklands. You’ll be able to pick out landmarks such as Battersea Power Station, the BT Tower, St Paul’s Cathedral and Sir Norman Foster’s much-loved 30 St Mary Axe – also known as ‘the Gherkin’.



◀ **Parliament Hill**  
View towards City of London from Hampstead Heath

23

### OFF ROUTE

The architect Ernő Goldfinger designed and built 1-3 Willow Road as a terrace of three houses from reinforced concrete with external walls faced in brick. He lived at Number 2 until his death in 1987. For opening times please check [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

Goldfinger is perhaps best known for Trellick Tower (1972) in Golborne Road, W10, visible from the Westway. James Bond author Ian Fleming drew upon Goldfinger’s name for the villain of his 1959 novel, changing his first name from Ernő to Auric.



The final part of Belsize Walk takes us on a pedestrian route to the top of Parliament Hill. Cross over East Heath Road onto Hampstead Heath. Now follow the tarmac path which continues the line of Downshire Hill. You’ll soon reach a junction where you look down on to two ponds. Turn left here and walk up the shared pedestrian and cycle path. Stay on this path as it curves around to the right, then descends between two ponds. The Mixed Bathing Pond on your left may even have some swimmers in it if you are taking this walk during the summer.

24

▼ Keats House in Keats Grove



22

### OFF ROUTE

No. 10 Keats Grove (Grade I listed) was built as a semi-detached pair of houses in 1815-16 and is now a museum. John Keats lived here from 1818-1820 in the left-hand house, nearest Hampstead Heath. He had the good fortune to meet Fanny Brawn here, whose mother conveniently rented the other half of the pair. For opening times please check [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk)

### Heath History

If it wasn’t for the long, hard-fought battle of the 1860s, some of this land would lie underneath residential estates today. The legal quarrel was partly resolved by 1871 when both the Hampstead Heath Act and the Bank Holidays Act came into being. Hampstead Heath station had opened in 1860 and was instrumental in transporting East Enders in their tens of thousands on public holidays. Crowds of 50,000 visitors were commonplace on Victorian Bank Holidays. Parliament Hill Fields were finally secured as public open space in 1889.

# Architectural periods



## Georgian

Classical architecture influenced English design during the reigns of George I to George IV (1714-1830). Georgian architecture is informed by order, proportion and symmetry. It followed the classical principles of the Italian Palladio, which were imported to England by Inigo Jones who created England's first classical building – the Queen's House at Greenwich.



## Regency

Regency architecture refers to the latter years of the Georgian era when the Prince of Wales served as Regent (1811-1820) and supported major projects such as the Royal Pavilion in Brighton and John Nash's great town plan for London of 1811. Nash's plan, which included the development of Regent's Park as we know it today, was designed to connect Carlton House – the Prince Regent's residence in Pall Mall – with the Park.



## Victorian

Victorian architecture (1837-1901) departed from the classical order and homogeneity of the Georgian era and introduced greater diversity. While early Victorian architecture shared a taste for understatement, very late Victorian architecture often featured elaborate ornamentation. A number of historical styles came and went during the Victorian period, including Gothic Revival (Houses of Parliament and St Pancras Chambers), Queen Anne and Arts & Crafts.



## Arts & Crafts

William Morris (1834-96) and his ideas were the driving force behind this movement which began in 1867. Morris took inspiration from nature and promoted craftsmanship by traditional methods (as opposed to mass production). Although he was a designer of wallpaper and textiles rather than an architect, Morris had a major influence on architects of the day – including Voysey, Lutyens and Mackintosh – through his lectures.



## Queen Anne

Popular from about 1860 until 1900, this style of architecture is notable for its decorative red brickwork, asymmetric designs and dramatic roofscapes. The Queen Anne style has little connection with the architecture of Queen Anne's reign (1702-1714) but is influenced by Dutch and Flemish architecture and simpler English brick houses of the 17th century.



## Modernism

This Continental movement was driven by the availability of modern materials and construction techniques – such as reinforced concrete construction and new structural techniques using steel and glass. Modernists rejected the perpetuation of bygone styles of architecture and 'gratuitous' ornamentation. Many of them, including Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier, saw their work as part of an idealistic project to create a better world.

# Walks in Camden

## The Belsize Walk

For more information about walking in the Borough of Camden check the websites on [www.camden.gov.uk/camden-health-walks](http://www.camden.gov.uk/camden-health-walks) and [www.belsize.org.uk/belsize-walks](http://www.belsize.org.uk/belsize-walks).

This guide and map may also be viewed, downloaded and printed from the same web pages.

The Jubilee Walkway covers some 15 miles and is divided into five sections, each one containing some of London's most iconic landmarks.

The five sections are:

1. The Western Loop - 6 miles/9.5 km
2. The Eastern Loop - 3.4 miles/5.5 km
3. The City Loop - 2 miles/3 km
4. The Camden Loop - 3.9 miles/6.3 km
5. The Jubilee Loop - 2 miles/3 km



The TfL [website](#) gives details of start and finish points, nearest public transport to the start, sights to be seen and signage; discs which feature the cross of a crown pointing in the direction of travel and are placed on the footway at every junction. There are also gold discs which mark out special events in history.

The Regent's Canal Towpath offers great walks within the borough to places such as Regent's Par., London Zoo, Camden Lock Market and Camley Street Nature Park. It connects with Little Venice in the west and Victoria Park, Mile End Park and the Thames at Limehouse in the east. For further information, visit [Canal River Trust](#).

## About the Belsize Walk Plane Leaf

Plane trees are particularly characteristic of London, where they contribute a huge amount to greening up the urban landscape, a task for which they are well suited. The tree has successfully survived the tough, polluted conditions in London for hundreds of years, from the Industrial Revolution until the introduction of the Clean Air Act. The bark renews itself by peeling off in plates. This aids the tree's resistance to airborne pollution as clogged pores are shed with the bark.



▼ **37 Belsize Park Gardens**  
Former home of Henry Brailsford, writer and champion of equality and free humanity.

◁Y Ibh [TiX TaI dhXeXf be j bh\_W  
\_ ^X Yheg [Xe \aYbe TgIba TUbhg  
6T` WXa j T ^fZ c\_XTfX VbagTVg

Fcbegf TaW ?XIfheX  
London Borough of Camden  
5 St Pancras Square  
London, N1C 4AG  
Phone: 020 7974 4444  
Email: [walking@camden.gov.uk](mailto:walking@camden.gov.uk)

G[X?baWba 5bebhZ [bY 6T` WXa \f ZeTgYh\_Ybe g [XTf fVgTaVX`  
bYg [X`5X fVmX`EXfWXagf`4 ffbVTgIbaZ` j j !UX\_fVmXIbeZ!h^`  
(now the Belsize Society, Registered Charity no. 1180842)

First published September 2005. Belsize Park Walk 2005.

