

Ebb and flow

A self guided walk along the River Thames from Molesey to Kingston



Explore life and leisure along the non-tidal Thames
Discover how its meanders and islands were formed
Find out how the water is managed and maintained

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*the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks*





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Cover image: Rowing boats and steamer by Hampton Court Bridge © Rory Walsh

Ebb and flow

Explore the River Thames between Molesey and Kingston

Rivers are a vital resource for human life on Earth. Most of the world's biggest cities are located by large rivers. These waterways are so important that they are respected, venerated, even worshipped.

While the River Ganges in India is deified as Mother Ganges, a life-giving nurturing goddess, in London the river is personified as Old Father Thames.

This walk between Molesey and Kingston explores a short section of the non-tidal Thames to find out about the physical characteristics of the river – its flow and floods, its islands and meanders.



A motor boat going through Molesey Lock
© Rory Walsh



House boats at Tagg's Island
© Rory Walsh

The walk also tells the story of the river's many roles - as a place to live, a place to work and a place to play.

Find out how the River Thames has shaped people's lives and led to their deaths. See royal palaces and former squats. Discover how the river became a source of food and drink, and a site of trade and sport.

Also find out how the Thames is managed and discover the physical and political battles to keep the water flowing.

Practical information

Location	Hampton and Kingston-upon-Thames, Greater London
Start point	Molesey Riverbank information board, Hampton Court Bridge (southern end), KT8 9BH
Finish point	Kingston Bridge, KT1 4BJ
Distance	3 ½ miles
Getting there	<p>Train - The nearest station is Hampton Court on the south bank of Hampton Court Bridge. Half-hourly South West Trains services run to and from London Waterloo, Clapham Junction and Wimbledon.</p> <p>Bus - Hampton is served by several buses from Kingston and Richmond including routes 111, 216, 267, 411, 461, 513 and R68. Alight at Hampton Court Bridge or Hampton Court railway station.</p> <p>Car - The south bank of the Thames at Hampton is alongside the A3050. Access is from the A308, A3 or the M25 Junctions 10 or 12. There is limited parking at the walk start. Charges apply to park at Hampton Court Palace.</p> <p>Bicycle - The route follows National Cycle Route 4 (Thames Path).</p> <p>Boat - In summer, riverboats stop at Hampton Pier from Kingston, Richmond and Westminster. Private moorings are available at Hampton Court Palace Privy Gardens and Kingston Bridge.</p>
Onward journey	To return to Hampton from Kingston you can take a local bus (routes 111, 216 or 411) from Cromwell Road bus station or try a river cruise from Turks Pier (Stop 17) or Parris Pier.
Level	Gentle - A flat route along the riverbank following the Thames Path.

Terrain

The walk is on urban pavements and riverside paths. The towpath can be uneven in places and muddy after rain. Note that the riverside path is shared with anglers and cyclists.

Suitable for

Families - Plenty for children to spot along the river including boats, birds and other wildlife.

Wheelchairs / Pushchairs – Step free though some sections of the towpath are uneven

Dogs - Must be kept on a lead

Refreshments

There are plenty of shops and cafés at the start and end of the route including a café at Molesey Lock (Stop 4). You may like to prepare a picnic to enjoy beside the river.

Toilets

Toilets are available at Molesey Lock (Stop 4) and in Kingston town centre at the end of the route.

Places to visit

Hampton Court Palace, maze and gardens are open daily from 10am. Closing times vary seasonally. Admission charges apply. Tel: 020 3166 6000 Email: hamptoncourt@hrp.org.uk

Things to do

Turks River Cruises operate from March to September between Hampton, Kingston and Richmond. Tel: 020 8546 2434

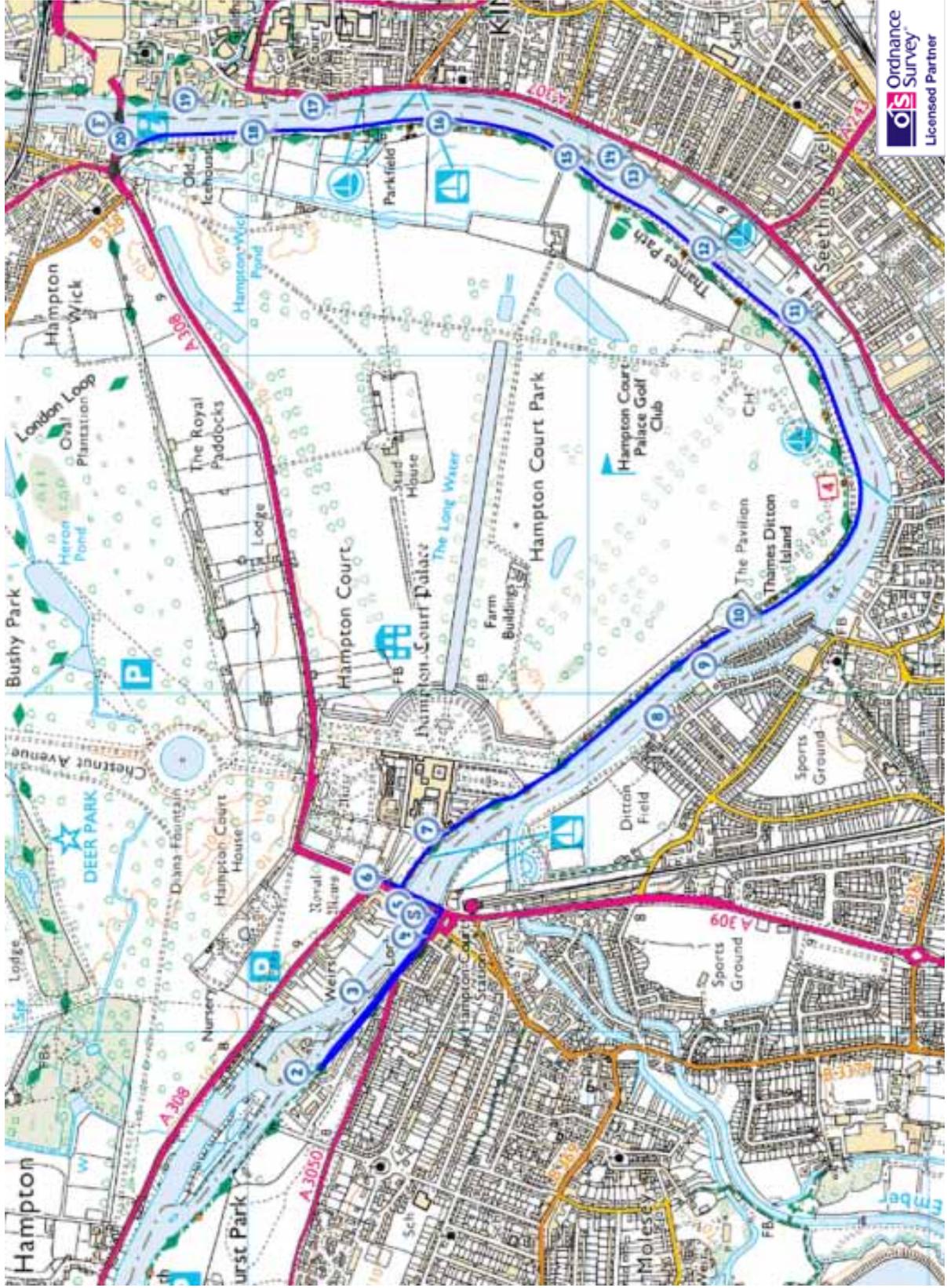
Rowing and motor boat hire is available at many places along the river (charges and conditions vary), including:

- J Martin Boat Hire (Stop 3) Tel: 020 8979 5515
- Parr Boat Hire (by Stop 5) Tel: 020 8977 8850
- Ditton Cruisers and Harts Cruisers (by Stops 9 and 13) Tel: 020 8398 2119

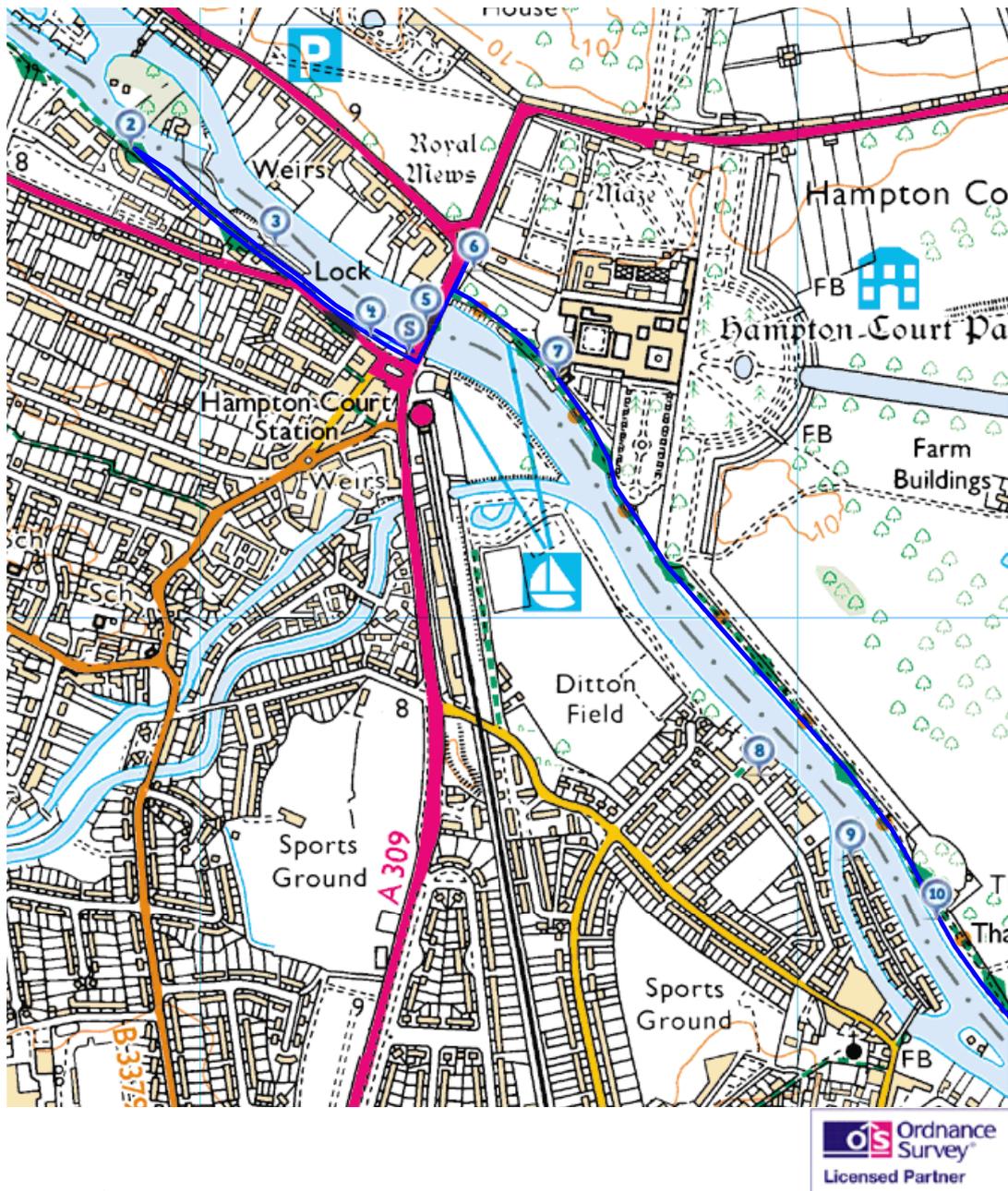
Visitor information

Kingston Visitor Information Kiosk is located opposite Kingston railway station, Wood Street, Kingston-upon-Thames KT1 1UJ.

Route overview



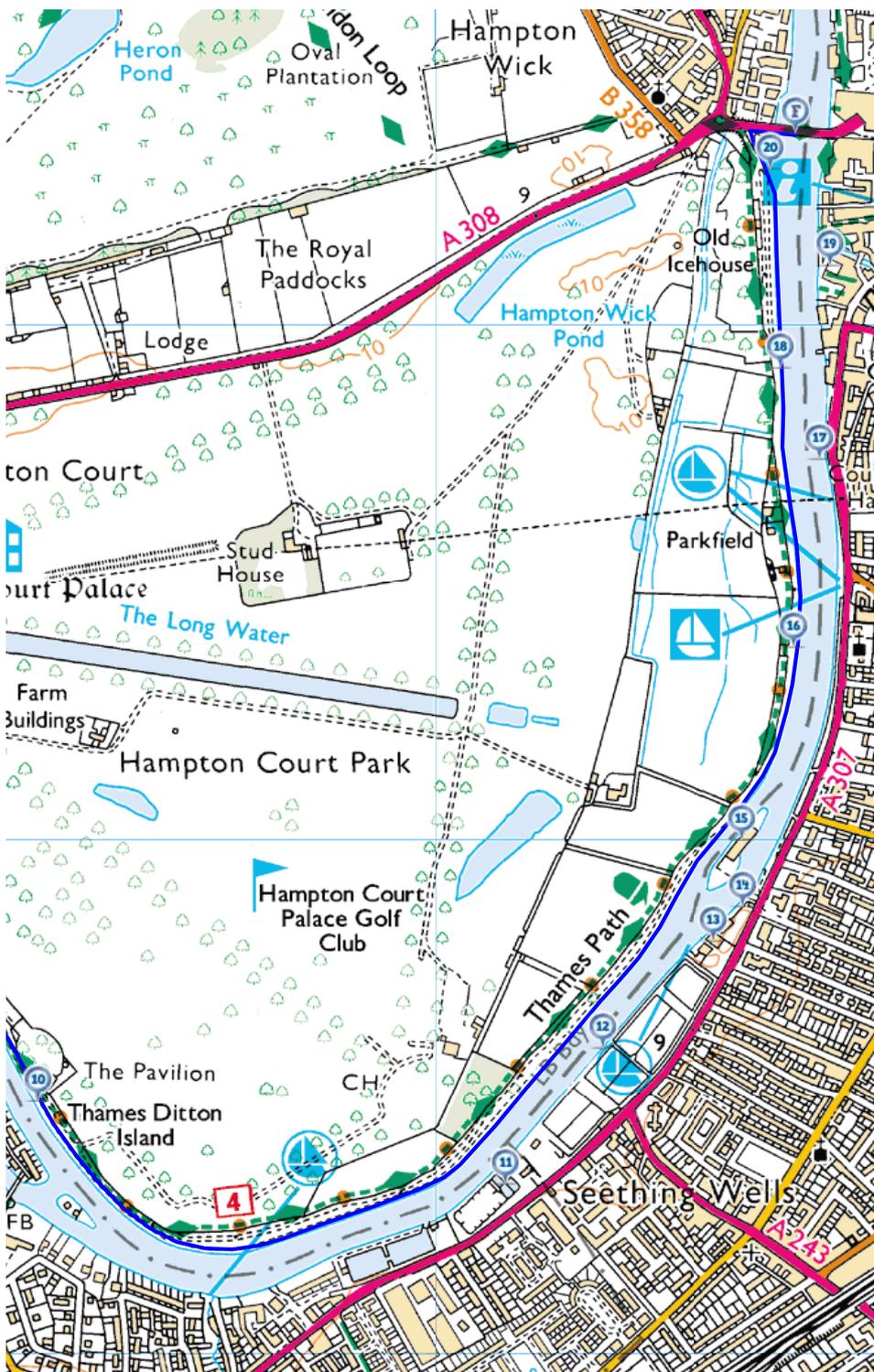
First half of the route



Stopping points

- 2.** View of Ash Island and Tagg's Island
- 3.** Molesey Lock
- 4.** J Martin Boat Hire and opposite Thames Motor Yacht Club
- 5.** Hampton Court Bridge
- 6.** Trophy Gate, Hampton Court Palace
- 7.** Flood marker, wall of Hampton Court Palace Banqueting House
- 8.** Opposite Dittons Skiff and Punting Club
- 9.** Opposite Thames Ditton Island
- 10.** Angling notices, entrance to Barge Walk

Second half of the route



Stopping points

11. Opposite Seething Wells water works
 12. Opposite British Waterways barge and broken boat
 13. Opposite Harts Boatyard
 14. Opposite Thames Sailing Club
 15. Opposite Raven's Ait
 16. Bench opposite St Raphael's Church
 17. Opposite Town End Pier and landing stage
 18. Decking by small boatyard
 19. Opposite Charter Quay
 20. View towards Kingston Bridge
- F. View of the river from Kingston Bridge

Directions

These directions are for use with the audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

1. A great waterway

Molesey Riverbank info board, southern end of Hampton Court Bridge

Directions 1

With the information board behind you turn right (keeping the river on your right). Follow the Thames Path signpost down to the river bank. Take care as the path is uneven and can be muddy. Continue along the path past Moseley Lock and weir. Stop just before a metal barrier and look across the river to the opposite bank. Listen to Track 2.

2. Island life

View of Ash Island and Tagg's Island

Directions 2

Retrace your steps back along the path (with the river now on your left) and stop beside Moseley Lock. Listen to Track 3.

3. Controlling the flow

Molesey Lock

Directions 3

Continue along the riverside path. Stop before the bridge next to the sign for Martin's Boat Hire. Listen here to Track 4.

4. Saucy hats and silken rugs

Martin's Boat Hire and Thames Motor Yacht Club

Directions 4

Continue along the riverside path and turn left onto the nearest side of the bridge (facing upstream). Stop when you are about halfway across and look back towards Molesey Lock. Listen to Track 5.

5. An historic crossing

Hampton Court Bridge

Directions 5

Continue over the bridge. At the end use the traffic lights to cross the road. Stop by the ornate gates that lead into Hampton Court Palace. Listen here to Track 6.

6. A royal trophy

Trophy Gate, Hampton Court Palace

Directions 6

With the gates behind you turn left towards the bridge. Continue a short way to a bus stop then immediately turn left to re-join the riverside path beside Hampton Court Palace. Pass the sign for the Landing Stage then stop by the Banqueting House, a square building that edges the path. Look for a pale stone in the bottom corner of the wall marked 'Flood 1894'. When you have found it listen to Track 7.

7. Floods and droughts

Flood marker, Hampton Court Palace Banqueting House

Directions 7

Continue past the palace grounds. Take time to look through the elaborate railings into the gardens. Beyond the palace the riverside path forks. The higher left fork is a shared path for pedestrians and cyclists. For the rest of the walk we recommend taking the lower right fork closer to the riverbank. Take care as the path can be uneven in places. Stop when you can see Dittons Skiff and Punting Club on the opposite bank. Listen to Track 8.

8. Worth a punt

Opposite Dittons Skiff and Punting Club

Directions 8

Continue along the riverside path. Notice the varied chalets and bungalows on the opposite side of the river. Soon the river forks around an island. When the end of the island comes into view stop and listen to Track 9.

9. Pieces of art

Opposite Thames Ditton Island

Directions 9

Continue along the riverside path. Stop when you reach a gate and set of small bollards. There is a signpost for Barge Walk and a notice for anglers. Listen here to Track 10.

10. Water life

Angling notices, entrance to Barge Walk

Directions 10

Continue along the path as it bends round to the left. After the path becomes lined with a hedge, look on the opposite bank for Thames Marina (a white building with a petrol pump outside). Look a little further along the bank for a large yellowbrick building set back from the river. When you have a good view of it listen to Track 11.

11. Cleaning up

Opposite Seething Wells water works

Directions 11

Continue along the riverside path, now lined with trees on both sides. Look out on the opposite bank of the river for the walls of the filtering reservoir. When you are past the water works look for a group of boats tied together. They include a barge with a broken boat in the back and narrowboat with a British Waterways sign on the side. When you have found them stop and listen to Track 12.

12. Managing the river

Opposite British Waterways barge and broken boat

Directions 12

Follow the path and a row of narrowboats will appear on the opposite bank. Continue until you are opposite Harts Boatyard, a pale building with balconies outside. (In summer months a ferry crosses the river here and you will see the notice boards). Listen to Track 13.

13. Staying afloat

Opposite Harts Boatyard

Directions 13

Look to the left of Harts Boatyard for the Thames Sailing Club. There should be a banner outside and several boats with tall masts. Listen to Track 14.

14. River racers

Opposite Thames Sailing Club

Directions 14

Continue along the riverside path as the two tracks merge beside Raven's Ait. Take care for cyclists on the path from this point. Stop opposite the largest building on Raven's Ait and look at the island. Listen to Track 15.

15. A place of debate

Opposite Raven's Ait

Directions 15

Continue along the path as it curves to the left. Stop when you reach a bench that faces a church with a square tower on the opposite bank. Listen to Track 16.

16. At great length

Bench opposite St Raphael's Church, Kingston

Directions 16

Continue along the Thames Path as it becomes tarmac paved. Pass the Riverside Café on the opposite bank then a group of large houses on the left. Stop at the next riverside bench. Depending on the time of day there may be large white paddle steamers moored by the pier on the opposite bank. If they are not moored there they will be travelling on the river. Listen to Track 17.

17. Cruising along

Opposite Town End Pier and landing stage

Directions 17

Continue along the path. Stop by the decking outside a small boatyard. Look along the river towards the bridge and see if you can spot any swans on the water. Listen to Track 18.

18. Swanning up and down

Decking by small boatyard

Directions 18

Continue along the riverside using the path or the tarmac road. If you use the road take care for occasional traffic. Stop when you are across the river from a modern red and white housing block. Look for a quay to the left of the block spanned by a footbridge. Listen to Track 19.

19. Quayside keys

Opposite Charter Quay

Directions 19

Continue along the tree-lined path. Stop just before it slopes uphill and look towards the the bridge. Listen to Track 20.

20. A royal border

View towards Kingston Bridge

Directions 20

Bear left and follow the path uphill to the end of the bridge. Then turn right and make your way across the right hand side of it. Stop in one of the alcoves on the bridge and look back along the river. Listen to Track 21.

21. Ebb and flow

View of the river from Kingston Bridge

Directions 21

From the bridge you may like to explore the riverside and town at Kingston. You can visit the Coronation Stone and historic market square. To return to Hampton Court you can take a bus from Kingston town centre, retrace your way along the towpath or enjoy one of the many boat cruises to Hampton Court Palace.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

- **Dr Toby Butler**, History lecturer at **The University of East London**, for inspiring the walk with his 'Drifting' audio trail - available at www.memoryscape.org.uk/Drifting.htm
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