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Sample London Itinerary – summer 2006

This is Day Three of a five day tailored itinerary created for a forty-something couple. It was the first visit to London for one and a return visit for the other. They were interested in full days with galleries, gardens, shopping and food all playing major roles in their plans.

day three - saturday

After two full days spent exploring the centre of London, today you will head beyond Zone 1 and discover 'south of the river'. Given your relatively early night last night you will be raring to go this morning and the day is packed! This itinerary is filled with more ideas than you will be able to comfortably fit in a day so do what interests you most and fits your mood.

overview of the day:

Today takes you to lovely village of Richmond-upon-Thames in the morning, then over to the Southbank for the afternoon and ends with some classical music and a picnic in Hampstead Heath. Put on those comfy shoes and let's get going!

morning

After breakfast at your B&B walk up to Victoria Station and hop on the District Line tube going south to **Richmond** (please note that not every train goes to Richmond so be sure to confirm the final destination is indeed Richmond before you hop on). It will be the last stop and should only take about 20 minutes. Depending on which TravelCard you decided upon you may need to purchase a ticket for Zone 4 today.

Once you arrive in Richmond you will be surprised by the small village feel of this special place. It is picturesquely situated on the River Thames with many small cobbled streets and more green space than any other London borough. A town map is enclosed. If you feel inclined to stop at the Tourist Info Centre it is located at the Old Town Hall on Whittaker

Avenue and the friendly locals will all be able to direct you there (open on Saturday from 10am-5pm). George Street is the main chain-heavy shopping street, but divert down any atmospheric alley leading to The Green. You'll pass small specialty shops and little cottages dating back to the 1700's. Don't miss the new master pâtissier, **William Curley**. His little shop sells delicious, award-winning pastries and chocolates. 10 Paved Court, 020 8332 3002.

Wander the small boutiques and artisan shops along Brewers Lane and Hill Rise, stroll along the riverbank or head up the hill to **Richmond Park**, a National Nature Reserve, where the resident red deer population wanders freely. We suggest taking in the view from Pembroke Lodge and continuing along Hornbeam Walk to take Tamsin Trail. A map of the park is enclosed.

A local **art exhibit** takes place today at the Vestry Hall and would be worth popping in to see paintings, drawings, prints and ceramics from members of the Richmond Art Society. We make a point of stopping in whenever this talented group exhibits their work. 21 Paradise Road, 020 8876 6026.

We love **The Bingham** for an early lunch. This is a beautiful, contemporary restaurant and bar in an old townhouse overlooking the river. It's worth sitting on the heated terrace to enjoy your delicious meal with a wonderful view. We like their halibut and can't resist finishing with their trio of chocolate! 61-63 Petersham Road, 020 8940 0902.

Walk past the **White Cross Pub** on the aptly named Water Lane and note the elevated entrance for the floods that can occur at high tide. A much quieter, local pub experience can be found at the **White Swan** on Old Palace Lane, 020 8940 0959.

Once you've explored the town and enjoyed a meal on the river, head back to the train station and hop on a SouthWest Train to Waterloo Station – your TravelCard will cover this trip so no need to make any additional ticket purchases. Trains run every few minutes on Saturday and the direct trip will only take around 25 minutes.

afternoon

Once you arrive at Waterloo Station follow signs for the short walk to the **London Eye**. We recommend taking the 30 minute 'flight' for a spectacular view of the city. Looking down at London from one of the 32 glass capsules, you'll quickly realize why this has become the most popular attraction in England. Discovery Flights are also offered and for a few extra pounds your trip will be enhanced by a guide. You can purchase tickets at the kiosks, but we suggest booking online in advance. A Standard Flight is £13 and a Discovery Flight is £17, londoneye.com, open 10am-9pm. A brochure is enclosed.

If you prefer to skip the trip, keep strolling east alongside the river and you'll pass gardens, the Royal National Theatre and several performance halls. We love this perspective of the city across the river. This area has come alive in recent years with both **Gabriel's Wharf** (56 Upper Ground) and **Oxo Tower Wharf** (Bargehouse Street) now housing many interesting designers of clothing, artwork, home accessories, jewelry, pottery etc. We love the bright clothing of Henrietta Park (henriettapark.co.uk) in Gabriel's Wharf as well as the quirky and innovative home and fashion designs at Fusion Design (studiofusion.co.uk) on the 2nd floor at Oxo Tower. The last time we were in we bought a few of the fun and practical magnetic tea towels. Be sure to stop in at another favourite in the Oxo Tower, Bodo Sperlein found on the 1st floor. Their contemporary bone china and home accessories are all handmade in the UK (bodosperlein.com).

This is certainly a great area for a leisurely stroll or you may want to grab a pint or a coffee from one of the many pubs and cafés that dot this walk. If you skipped lunch in Richmond and are now feeling a bit peckish we recommend the extensive menu, not to mention the many wines by the glass, at the new **tamesa@oxo** restaurant. It's perfect for a casual bite to eat while you watch the boats float up and down the river. 2nd floor of the Oxo Tower, 020 7633 0088.

Further along the river promenade you'll hit the **Tate Modern**, housed in a former power station. It is always worth a visit for its impressive permanent collection showcasing art from the last century. Don't miss the Mark Rothko paintings, originally destined for the Four Seasons restaurant in New York. Admission is by donation, but please give generously to support the gallery's work. The Frida Kahlo exhibit will be on so if you are interested you can either book tickets ahead of time or buy them on site. The cost for this exhibit is £10. The impressive gallery shop has an extensive selection of art and architecture books as you would expect, but it also has a quality children's section for unique gifts to take back home. Bankside, tate.org.uk, open 10am-11pm, 020 7887 8888. A brochure and floor plan are enclosed.

You're also close to the reconstructed **Globe Theatre** where open-air performances of Shakespeare's plays take place. This may be something to consider for another day and we've enclosed this season's programme.

After your gallery visit, head directly out front for a stroll over the once wobbly **Millennium Bridge**. We never quite make it to the bridge without a soft ice cream from the ever-present truck en route. Once on the north side of the river walk up to the grand **St. Paul's Cathedral** where Diana gave her first 'Princess' wave from the top of the steps. Depending on the hour, and your interest, you may wish to take a guided or audio tour to admire the work of Sir Christopher Wren. Or, if you're up for a 250-stair climb, you will be rewarded with a magnificent view from the Whispering Gallery. stpauls.co.uk, open 8:30am-4pm, 020 7236 4128, £9 (+ £3 for a tour).

Your legs are probably tired by now so hop on the Central Line tube, change to the Victoria Line at Oxford Station and wander home for a quick rest and wash before your evening begins – or hop in a cab for a quick trip back (it gives you a different perspective on the city and the drivers are often real characters!).

evening

Your classical outdoor concert begins at 7:30pm in **Hampstead Heath**. We suggest making your way by 6:30pm so you aren't rushed. Pack your blanket and a sweater for when the sun goes down – and don't forget your tickets!

Again, you'll take the Victoria Line tube (toward Seven Sisters or Walthamstow Central) to Highbury & Islington where you'll change to the Silverlink Train service (toward Richmond) and hop off at Hampstead Heath Station. From here you'll stroll through the park toward **Kenwood House**, the backdrop for tonight's concert. We've indicated the best route on the enclosed park map. The picnic you ordered yesterday from Marks & Spencer will be waiting so all you have to do is uncork your bottle and find a nice grassy spot to enjoy the concert as the sun sets. Stay until the very last song as the evening ends with spectacular fireworks.

Phew! You covered a lot of ground today and are probably exhausted. We suggest splurging on a cab to deliver you right to your doorstep for roughly £25. It's best to hail one on the Perimeter Road outside of the Kenwood Estate gate.

After all that fresh air tuck in for a good night's rest. Tomorrow you'll be off to our favourite Sunday market, pampering at a wonderful spa (for her), a visit to a small, unique museum (for him) and a fabulous evening meal. Sweet dreams!