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opening extract from

Adventure Walks for Families in and around London

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12. Let's Go Fly a Kite

Hampstead Heath, London



The Adventure
This is an action-packed visit to Hampstead Heath, an area of 791 acres of heath, ancient woodland and bog managed by the City of London. Climb Parliament Hill (otherwise known as Kite Hill), fly your kite from the second highest land point in London and spot famous buildings on the skyline. Fish in the fishing pond (licences required – see page 93) or sail a model boat in the boating pond. Enjoy some bird watching – you might even spot a kingfisher if you're lucky. Discover some of the many mini beasts that proliferate here including meadow brown butterflies. Some of the best adventures can be had from just climbing the trees and whittling sticks. There is the added attraction of Kenwood House, a neoclassical villa remodelled by Robert Adam, that has an impressive art collection by such greats as Vermeer, Rembrandt, Turner, Reynolds and Gainsborough. There is also a handsome collection of Elizabethan and Stuart portraits.

Map Ordnance Survey Map 173 and *London A–Z*

Distance 2 km / 1.2 miles

Terrain You can stick to the paths but it's quite nice to romp over the open countryside too. It can get very muddy.

What will I need?
- A kite
- Bread for feeding the ducks
- A model boat or paper for a paper boat (see page 90)
- A fishing rod

How to get there
Head for Hampstead Heath's Gospel Oak car park on Gordon House Road, London NW5. This is at the Highgate Road end of Gordon House Road and is near the railway bridge. Alternatively take the train to Gospel Oak station. For information call Transport

for London on 0207 222 1234 or vist www.tfl.gov.uk.

What can we listen to on the way?

- *Mary Poppins Original Soundtrack* (Walt Disney) and fast-forward to the track 'Let's go fly a kite'
- *The Great Poets: Keats* (Naxos)

Walk the Walk

1 Walk out of the car park on the tarmac path to the right of the lido. Turn right at the crossroads, walk past a small bandstand and a café (great Italian café with excellent coffee, pasta, risotto, and if you haven't a picnic they also sell sandwiches).

2 Head left up the path just beyond the café. You will pass on your right the stone of free speech that two hundred years ago was the forum for political and religious debate.

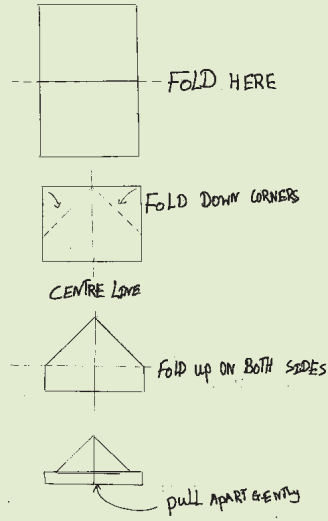
3 Walk to the top of the hill and enjoy the stunning view. This is Parliament Hill, also known as Kite Hill, and at 95 m / 312 feet, it is the second highest natural point in London (the highest is Whitestone Pond, Hampstead at 130 m / 427 feet). Have fun flying your kite. In the autumn this is also a good vantage point to watch migrating birds such as swallows and house martins.



MAKE A PAPER BOAT

What you will need:
An A4 piece of paper
Crayons

1. Lay the piece of paper out on a flat surface. Fold it in half vertically into a smaller rectangle.
2. Fold down each corner on the creased edge into the centre line to form the sail shape.
3. Fold one piece of the slim rectangular band up along the bottom of the triangle to form the side of the boat. Turn over and do the same on the other side.
4. Colour in your boat, give it a name and sail number.
5. From the bottom gently pull apart the sides of your boat. It is now ready to sail.



4 From the top of the hill look back down in the direction you came from and head off slightly to the left cutting across the grass. When you get to the tarmac path next to the ponds turn left. There are twenty-five ponds in total on the Heath; they were built approximately three hundred years ago to supply London with water and are fed by the Fleet River. These days each pond has a specific use: bird sanctuary where you might see herons,



cormorants, great-crested grebes and maybe a kingfisher; model boating; men's bathing, ladies' bathing etc. You are allowed to fish too (you need to get a licence from the park keeper near the tennis courts and café, and if you are over the age of twelve you need both a real licence and a park licence – see page 93 for details). Follow the path alongside the ponds.

5 After the model boating pond the path does a three-way split. Take the left-hand fork, keeping the last pond on your right. This pond is hidden behind black railings. At the split follow the black railings round to the right. Cut straight across the mud path into the meadow and walk up to the far top corner. The grass is left long here to encourage invertebrates (mini beasts) and wild flowers. Stop and search to see what you can find.

6 At the top by the trees turn right on to the path and you will pass through a gateway into the Iveagh Bequest (if you have a dog you will need to put him/her on a lead at this point). Keep going on the gravel path straight ahead (ignoring any other paths) and down hill. At this point look through the rhododendron bushes on the left to see the back of a fake bridge (you will see the front in a minute). The path then climbs the hill and you will see Kenwood House ahead.

As you walk up the hill turn around for a view of the ornamental lake and bridge (you may have to come off the path to get a proper view). Just as you pass a small kiosk on your right (only open in the summer selling ice cream) look directly over to the other side for a good view of a Henry Moore sculpture, the *Two Piece Reclining Figure No 5*. Listen out for the exotic and brightly coloured parakeets that have rather bizarrely made their home in the adjacent woodlands. There are also jackdaws here which is unusual so close to London.

7 Kenwood House is a good stopping-off point for loos and café at the very least. The house is free to visit and even if you just see

one of the many famous paintings it is worthwhile. This is also a lovely place for picnic and some roly-poly down the hill.

8 Walk past the house and look for *Monolith*, a sculpture by Barbara Hepworth, on the lawns in amongst the rhododendron and azalea bushes to the right of the gravel path. Back on the gravel path go through the gateway on your right just opposite the Henry Moore sculpture. Just ahead are some sweet chestnut trees so if it's the autumn you might be able to collect chestnuts to roast on the fire when you get home. To continue the walk you need to keep to the left-hand gravel path and walk round in a large arc all the way to Westfield Gate.

9 You will eventually come to another gate. Walk through here and follow the path round to the left. You will emerge by a large oak tree, surrounded by a low twig hedge. Keep walking straight ahead here, into an oak and birch wood.

10 At the end of the woods is a crossroads of paths. Walk straight across, on the path through the open grass. There are lots of lovely trees to climb along here. Soon there is another small crossroads. Keep going straight on. Shortly the path splits two ways ahead of you. Take the left path through the trees. On your left, across the grass is a clump of trees on a slightly raised mound encircled by railings. This was at one time thought to be Boudicca's burial chamber.

11 Keep going straight on across minor junctions of paths. The path now narrows and cuts across grass, emerging to climb very gently in a straight line to the top of Parliament Hill once more. Keep walking straight across, past the kite flyers and down the other side on some wooden steps.

12 Ahead of you on the heath below is the athletics track, the lido and car park.

Eat Me, Drink Me

- Parliament Hill Café (at the start and end of the walk near ponds at Parliament Hill) serves fresh pasta, risotto and soup.

- The Brew House and the Old Kitchen, Kenwood House, Hampstead Lane is a smart canteen that serves soup and a hunk of bread and sausages and mash.
- The Steward's Room, Kenwood House, Hampstead Lane sells ice cream.

Useful Information

- For information on Kenwood House call 0208 348 1286 or visit www.englishheritage.co.uk.
- For information about London parks visit www.cityoflondon.gov.org/openspaces or www.wildweb.london.gov.uk.
- A rod licence is required for anyone over the age of twelve. You can buy this online from www.environmentagency.gov.uk/rodlicence. You will also need a free permit from the tennis hut at Parliament Hill.

Did you know?

- Hampstead Heath was notorious for highwaymen. Dick Turpin used to ride off on horseback to the wilds of Hampstead.
- In Victorian times they used to give donkey and pony rides here.
- Many artists and poets were attracted to Hampstead, including Constable, Keats, Blake, Byron, Shelley, H.G. Wells (who reputedly sailed paper boats on the pond) and Coleridge.

Rainy Day Options

- Keats House Museum, Keats Grove, Hampstead. Tel 0207 435 2062 or online at www.cityoflondon.gov.uk. Re-opening in October 2008, this is where Keats lived and wrote *Ode to a Nightingale* and where he fell in love with the girl next door, Fanny Brawne.

