

Holland Park: Entertainment In Tranquil Surroundings

By: Karen Dabrowska

Holland Park, off fashionable High Street Kensington, is a romantic park with wooded walks, a Japanese garden, cafes and its own opera. Peacocks and squirrels have made the park their home. The most common birds are moor hens, magpies, feral pigeons, blue tits and blackbirds.

Outside the Belvedere restaurant



The park has a variety of exotic and native trees including Beech, Red Oak, Cedar and Chestnut trees originally planted by Charles Hamilton and later, Baron Holland of Foxley. This woodland area in

the park is eight hectares, making it the largest semi-natural woodland in Central London.

The natural beauty of the park is enhanced by the Kyoto Japanese Garden, an ecology garden and rose gardens built for the 1991 London Festival of Japan by a team of Japanese gardeners sponsored by the Kyoto Chamber of Commerce.

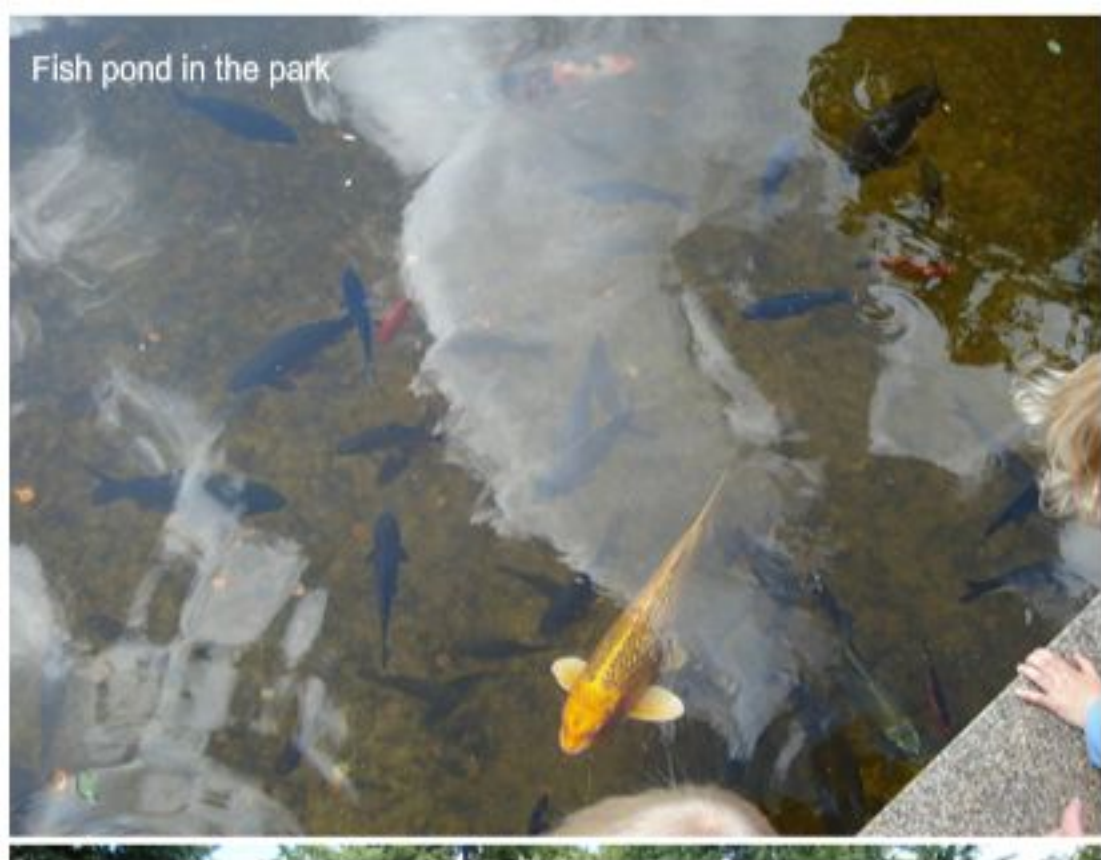
Its fairly large 15ft waterfall feeds a medium sized pond filled with

colourful koi (carp). A lovely stone path outlines the pond with a little bridge and viewing platform which crosses the pond at the base of the falls. Other highlights of Kyoto Garden are a stone washbasin, Japanese style shrubbery and red maples. With the sounds of the rushing waterfall enhancing the bucolic feel of this garden, it's easy to forget you're only a short walk away from Notting Hill or Kensington High Street.



The garden in bloom

Fish pond in the park



There is also a formal garden made up of geometric arrangements. It was created in 1812 by Buonaiuti and was originally known as the Portuguese garden until England's relationship with Portugal deteriorated and the garden was renamed.

The park is spread across 54 acres of what used to be the grounds of Cope Castle, a large Jacobean mansion hidden in the woods. It was built by Sir Walter Cope in the early 17th century,

who became Chancellor of the Exchequer under King James 1. It was renamed Holland House after the Earl of Holland's wife Lady Rich inherited the property.

Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother and King George VI attended the last great ball held at the house a few weeks before the outbreak of World War II. In September 1940, the building was badly hit during a ten hour bombing raid and largely destroyed.

.One wing was saved and is used

as a youth hostel. A remaining section of the front terrace now forms a distinct backdrop for the park's summertime open-air theatre productions and classical concerts. The Orangery has been turned into an exhibition and function space, and the former icehouse a gallery space.

The 'Belvedere' restaurant occupies the former summer ball room of Holland House. Offering an oasis of tranquillity, it is surrounded by lawns, stunning

flower gardens and a picturesque fountain. The restaurant serves a variety of British and French dishes. With high ceilings and draped windows, original mouldings and arches, Belvedere combines old fashioned charm with the contemporary feel lent by recently added modern works of art and sleek furnishings.

An annual series of opera performances are staged under a temporary canopy by the Opera Holland Park, a summer opera

The park in winter





company. The venue is fully covered but open at the sides. The canopy was installed in 1988 and was initially used for a variety of music. Concerns about noise levels led to an increasing focus on opera from 1989, with productions staged by a variety of small opera companies. For the 2007 season, the theatre was expanded by the addition of a spectacular new canopy underneath which is new seating

and other improved facilities. There are now 1,000 seats.

The grounds of Holland House provide sporting facilities, including a cricket pitch/football oval and 6 tennis courts. There is also an adventure playground for children.

There are many popular shopping destinations located near Holland Park: High Street Kensington, Notting Hill, Portebello Market and Westbourne Grove.