

HERITAGE IN CHELSEA

🕒 Time to walk
Approx 60. mins

Chelsea's heritage dates back to Roman times but more lately it's known for being the epicentre of the Swinging 60s. From Henry VIII and his Court to famous literary and artistic residents, it's a popular place to live and work and history resides around every corner. This tour will take you passed iconic establishments as well as famous homes starting at Sloane Square Station and finishing on the Royal Hospital Road so you can enjoy the **Chelsea Heritage Quarter**.

Start your journey at **1 Sloane Square tube station**, which opened in December 1868 and operated between South Kensington and Westminster stations. The River Westbourne still runs through the station to this day and can be seen above the tracks in a pipe suspended from green girders.

If you walk a little to your right on exiting the station you will see **2 Royal Court Theatre**, known as the writer's theatre. It first opened its doors in 1956 and gained fame almost immediately when John Osborne's 'Look Back in Anger' debuted, considered by many to be the first modern British Drama. The theatre was later the home of the Rocky Horror Picture show which started its initial run in 1973.

At the Royal Court end of the central square you will find the **3 Sloane Square War Memorial**, a Grade II listed memorial made of Portland stone which was initially unveiled in 1920. Created by Sir Reginald Blomfield it follows the design of the 'Cross of Sacrifice' he designed for the Imperial War Graves Commission cemeteries. It marks the memory of the men and women (which is unusual) of Chelsea who gave their lives in the Great War (WWI). Since then, it has evolved to be a memorial to those who served in the Second World War. On the ground you will notice commemoration paving stones, these are to mark the service of specific individuals who were awarded the Victoria Cross.

Opposite the other end of the central square is **4 Peter Jones**, the department store, named after founder Peter Rees

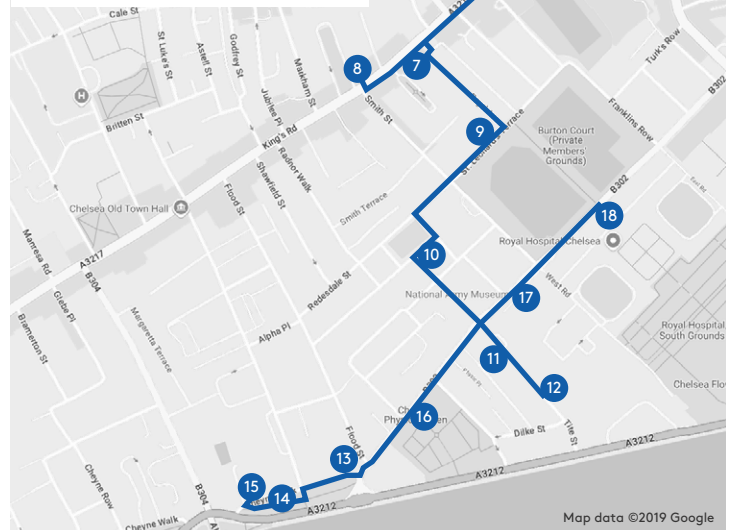
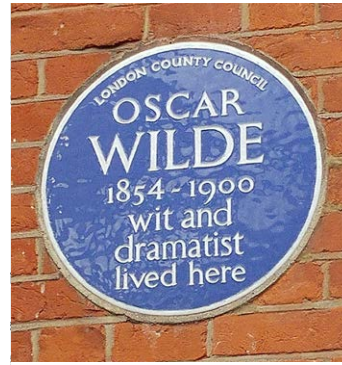
Jones, the son of a Welsh hat-maker, who came to London in 1867. He set up his first shop in 1871 a few streets away in Draycott Avenue which at the time was seen as the poorer part of Chelsea. Six years later, Jones would buy a small shop on this location to entice the busy carriage trade that frequented the area. By 1890 his small shop was replaced with a five-storied building of red brick, generating profits in 1903 of around £1million in today's money. Its success led to the complete rebuilding in 1936-9 by W. Crabtree, Slater Moberly and C. H. Reilly, in a streamlined modern style more adventurous than the larger department stores on Oxford Street. It is now a Grade II* listed building.

Now start walking down the King's Road but take a quick detour to the right on Blacklands Terrace where you'll find one of the quaintest and oldest independent bookstores in London. **5 John Sandoe Books** was opened in 1957 by John Sandoe with Félicité Gwynne, sister of the cookery writer Elizabeth David. Having expanded into the two adjacent shops, there is room for 30,000 books.

With your newly-acquired book enjoy a stop at the beautiful **6 Duke of York Square** whose main building is the former Royal Military Asylum. Built in 1801-3, it was opened as a school for children of servicemen killed in the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars; it was later the headquarters of the Territorial Army and is now home to the Saatchi Gallery.

Now it's time to explore the King's Road, once a private road used by King Charles II to travel from St James's Palace to Hampton Court. Now it's famous as the home of counterculture and punk life and synonymous with Mary Quant, Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren. The **7 McDonalds** was home to The Chelsea Drug Store (a chemist with a soda fountain upstairs that was referenced by the Rolling Stones in 'You Can't Always Get What You Want'), its basement featured in the film 'A Clockwork Orange'. On the other side of the King's Road, a little further down, you'll find a Blue Plaque on the wall at 138a, marking it as the home of **8 Mary Quant's Bazaar**. The Blue Plaques scheme was established in the 1860s to mark the homes of famous people and is now run by English Heritage.

Turn around at this point and go back down the King's Road to take a look at the view down Royal Avenue towards the Royal Hospital. This vista was deliberately created by King William III as part of a proposed carriage way between the Hospital and Kensington Palace. Many famous people have lived here including James Bond!



Walk down Royal Avenue towards the Hospital and turn right on to St Leonard's Terrace where you'll find almost immediately on the right a white fronted house set back from the road. This is the former home of **9 Bram Stoker**, author of 'Dracula'. Continue walking down St Leonard's Terrace until you come to Tedworth Square. Turn left into the square where on the far side you'll find the former **10 home of Mark Twain**, the American author of 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn'.

Here you can turn left and pick up Tite Street and walk towards the river, crossing over Royal Hospital Road. Tite Street was a new street created in the 1870s when the Chelsea Embankment was made. There are many Blue Plaques here but make sure you see the one remembering **11 Oscar Wilde at number 34**. Tite Street was particularly popular with artists and was home to Augustus John, James McNeill Whistler and **John Singer Sargent - 12 the latter is remembered with a stone carving at number 31**.

If you take Dilke Street to the right you can walk back up to Royal Hospital Road and continue down to Cheyne Walk, a very well-preserved terrace of 18th century houses where **13 George Eliot, English novelist and poet, lived** and the artist **14 Dante Gabriel Rossetti**. In his garden Rossetti kept kangaroos, marmots, wombats and wallabies as well as noisy peacocks which annoyed the neighbours. That artists favoured this area contributed to the success of the Chelsea Arts School, set up in 1904, and the Chelsea Arts Club which was established in 1890 and is still a thriving private members' club today. At the end of this row of houses you will see **15 Cheyne Mews - originally home of King Henry VIII's Manor**.



Finally, re-trace your steps back to the Royal Hospital Road to enjoy in your own time the three main venues of the Chelsea Heritage Quarter, which can all trace their heritage back to the 17th century. Founded in 1673 by the Society of Apothecaries and leased to them in perpetuity by Hans Sloane in the early 18th century, the **16 Chelsea Physic Garden** is a four acre walled garden, a restorative haven of natural beauty that proudly continues a 350-year tradition of using plants to promote well-being. Along the road is the **17 National Army Museum**, the home of the history and heritage of the British Army. Through its fascinating displays the Museum tells the inspiring stories of the lives of our soldiers from 1660 to the present day demonstrating how they have shaped our world. Their neighbour is **18 The Royal Hospital Chelsea**. Founded in 1681 by Charles II to care for injured and elderly soldiers it has been, since its opening in 1692, home to the world-famous Chelsea Pensioners. You can now visit the newly-restored Soane Stable Yard, originally designed by architect Sir John Soane, before taking a tour of Sir Christopher Wren's beautiful building.

www.chelseaheritagequarter.co.uk

