

• Distance 6½km/4 miles • Time 2-3hrs • Type City, family themed walk



Plan your walk



WHERE: Linear walk from Notting Hill Gate to Sloane Square.
START: Notting Hill Gate tube station (TQ252804).
END: Sloane Square tube station (TQ280786).
TERRAIN: Pavements and park footpaths. Some busy road crossings.
MAPS: OS Explorer 176 - but a London A-Z is best.
GETTING THERE: London Underground is the quickest option, with numerous buses also operating along the route (© 020 7222 1234, www.tfl.gov.uk).
EATING & DRINKING: There are hundreds of options en route, but the café at the Science Museum is recommended (© 0870 870 4868, www.sciencemuseum.org.uk) and you can picnic in the Royal Hospital grounds (© 020 7881 5200, www.chelsea-pensioners.co.uk).
SLEEPING: Lots of B&Bs, hotels and guesthouses in the area, including a youth hostel in nearby Holland Park ▶



During the Cold War - the period of stand-off between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies that lasted from 1945 until 1989 - a war of spies and spying was played out on the streets of London. Kensington - with its central location, winding streets, public buildings and many foreign embassies - was at the heart of clandestine activity. On this short walk you'll find out where the real spies did their dead letter drops and discover where fictional spy heroes James Bond and Alex Rider live.

1. START Come out of the tube station on the south side (TQ252804) and follow the signs for Notting Hill Gate and Kensington Church Street. Turn L and keep going up Notting Hill Gate until you reach the third turning on the R. Walk through the gates into Kensington Palace Gardens. This half-mile-long tree-lined avenue is one of the most exclusive addresses in London. This street saw wartime action as the location of the 'London

Cage', a prisoner of war camp run by MI9, who gleaned information from enemy prisoners during World War II. Walk most of the length of the road but before reaching the end take the turning on the L into Kensington Gardens alongside Kensington Palace, where Queen Victoria was born and lived until she moved into Buckingham Palace on her accession to the throne. The Palace is open to the public.

2. Stride out across the park towards the Round Pond, leaving the front entrance of the Palace behind you. Look out for the spire of the Albert Memorial on the horizon further ahead on the R and make a beeline for it. A memorial to Prince Albert, it celebrates the Prince's passions and Victorian achievements. During the two world wars German bombers used it as a landmark.

3. Cross Kensington Gore just opposite the Royal Albert Hall, one ▶

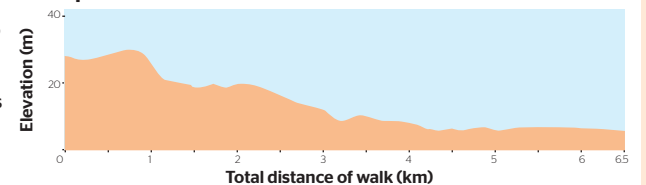
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VISITOR INFORMATION:
 Visit London (© 08701 566366, www.visitlondon.com)
GUIDEBOOKS: *Tales of a City: London Adventure Walks for Families* by Becky Jones and Clare Lewis (£8.99, www.franceslincoln.com, ISBN 9780711230675).
LOCAL RAMBLERS AREA/ GROUP: Kensington, Chelsea & Westminster Ramblers (© 020 7486 7447, www.ramblers.co.uk/groups/groupInfo.php?group=ILO6).

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Steepness of walk



of the very few round (strictly speaking oval) buildings in London. Walk round the back of it and down some steps towards the Royal College of Music. Cross Prince Consort Road and turn L. Turn R into Exhibition Road and walk towards Cromwell Road, past Imperial College and the Science Museum. As you are walking, imagine you are fourteen-year-old agent Alex Rider parachuting in on a mission to save the world and crashing through the roof of the museum, as Alex did at the end of the film *Stormbreaker*. Pop into the museum for a pit stop and check out the spy stuff in the shop.

4. Turn L at Cromwell Road and walk past the Victoria and Albert Museum to the Brompton Oratory, the second-largest Catholic church in London after Westminster Cathedral. This is the location of a KGB 'dead letter box' where, during the Cold War, espionage communications were dropped off to be collected without direct contact. The exact place the agents used was the gap behind the pillars to the L of the pieta statue of the Virgin Mary holding the dead Christ, tucked in a side chapel on the R-hand side just as you enter the church. Coming out of the church, turn L then L again down Cottage Place, through a car park, to the Holy Trinity Church. In the flower bed on the L is a large tree shading a statue of St Francis of Assisi, where agents used to hide

microfilms. Walk back to Brompton Road, towards the Oratory.

5. Cross over Thurloe Place at the lights and turn R - past the embassy of Kazakhstan - and then L into Thurloe Square. Turn R at the end, then L, crossing Pelham Street into Pelham Place. Then turn L into Pelham Crescent.

6. Turn L and cross Fulham Road at the lights by the Michelin building, then turn R down Sloane Avenue. Turn R down Petyward and then L into Elystan Street. Cross over Whiteheads Grove and Cale Street, and continue along Markham Street until you hit King's Road.

7. Cross straight over and turn L. Smith Street will soon be on your R. Stop here and look across King's Road to see where the Cambridge Five - a ring of British men recruited into MI5 or MI6 at Cambridge University who became KGB moles

and gave secrets to the Soviet Union - used to meet. Now a building society, it was then a pub called the Markham Arms. Keep going, passing Wellington Square, made famous as James Bond's suitably glamorous fictional residence. Continue to Royal Avenue, then turn R. Ahead is the Royal Hospital, home of the British Army veterans known as Chelsea Pensioners.

8. Turn L into St Leonard's Terrace, the street used in *Stormbreaker* as the Chelsea home of Alex Rider. Walk to the end and turn L up Cheltenham Terrace back to King's Road. Turn R past the old Chelsea Barracks (now shops and the Saatchi Gallery), up to Sloane Square and the tube station (TQ280786).
Route devised by Becky Jones and Clare Lewis