

LOOK EAST!

Angela Sharp takes a trip round Greenwich

Henry VIII and Elizabeth I were born in Greenwich, Nelson lay here in state after his death in the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. With its centuries of maritime heritage, and its place as home to the Prime Meridian, the centre of the world's time and dividing line between the eastern and western hemispheres, Greenwich well deserves its World Heritage Site status. It's so easy to get here too. You can either hop on a 53 or 188 bus from central London, arrive on the Docklands Light Railway near the Cutty Sark, or sail here on a River Thames boat (ask about discounts for Travelcard holders).

One of Greenwich's oldest buildings is the Royal Observatory in Greenwich Park. It was built in 1675 to house the first Astronomer Royal, John Flamsteed, with a view to his finding an astronomical solution to the problem of calculating a ship's longitude at sea. Now the Observatory holds exhibitions on both astronomy and time, and it's here that you'll find the much-photographed Meridian line.



Another of Greenwich's oldest buildings is the Queen's House, which houses the National Maritime Museum's art collection. This was the first neoclassical building in the country and was designed by Inigo Jones the 17th-century. The rest of the National Maritime Museum is in the former Naval Asylum and features a fantastic range of displays on a maritime theme, including 'Nelson' and 'Future of the Sea'. The Royal Observatory, National Maritime Museum and Queen's House are all free to get into (except for special exhibitions).

Nearby is the Old Royal Naval College, designed by Sir Christopher Wren as a baroque palace and completed in 1695. It contains the Painted Hall, a masterpiece by James Thornhill which took

Top: Captain Cook at the National Maritime Museum
Left: The Queen's House
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him 19 years to complete. You should also go down to the river to the Cutty Sark, one of the last surviving sail-powered tea clippers. Launched in 1869, she spent eight years carrying tea from China and then 10 years carrying wool back from Australia. Once, she made that voyage in only 72 days.

In the centre of Greenwich you'll find the beating heart of this lively town which includes Greenwich Market. The market is open Thursday to Sunday with different specialities on offer each day. All sorts of arts and crafts are for sale every day, antiques feature on a Thursday, there's a food fair on the weekend and a farmers market on Fridays.

Nearby is Greenwich Park, the oldest Royal Park. It contains a boating lake, a deer park, a bandstand and numerous paths through formal flower borders and tree-lined avenues. Around the fringes of the park you'll find the select delights of the Fan Museum, the only one of its kind in the world, and the 18th-century Ranger's House, now housing the Wernher collection.



Spending an evening in Greenwich? Visit Greenwich Theatre, a 19th-century venue with a wide-ranging repertoire (in August it's the turn of the family show *Robin Hood*). Up the Creek is one of London's most eccentric comedy venues, the Trafalgar Tavern one of its most historic pubs – Dickens drank here. For a meal choose from cuisines such as Italian, Thai, noodles or even pie and mash.

One thing's for sure. You won't fail to enjoy your day out in maritime Greenwich.

For contact details in Greenwich see page 57.

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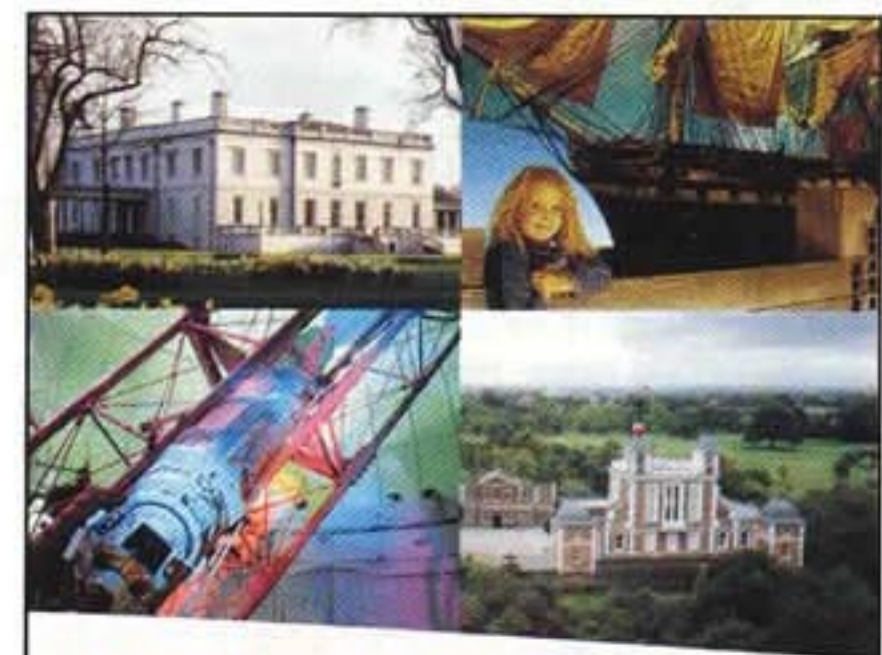
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