

In and around... Hampstead An ode to Hampstead

From its humble beginnings to a chic north London village, Natasha Higgins finds out why Hampstead has grown to become one of London's most desirable places to live.

When 19th-century romantic poet, John Keats, put pen to paper and wrote 'Ode to a Nightingale', he is believed to have sat under a plum tree in his garden at Wentworth House, in Hampstead.

In 2009, Wentworth House (right), now a museum in honour of Keats, underwent significant restoration and a new plum tree was planted in the front garden of the Grade I listed property. Today, visitors can sit under the tree and paint, write, read or simply soak up the atmosphere of this stunning Regency garden.

Keats's house is one of the many properties in Hampstead where history unfolded. Famously, Sigmund Freud lived at 20 Maresfield Gardens with his family from the late 1930s. Today his house has become a museum and his study has been left untouched. The original couch that his patients reclined on during their therapy sessions, is still there.

Other Hampstead residents have included George Orwell who lived at 77 Parliament Hill, Richard Burton at 6 Lyndhurst Road, D.H. Lawrence at 1 Byron Villas and Sir Gerald du Maurier, the actor and theatrical manager, who lived at 14 Cannon Place and opened Hampstead's Everyman Cinema in 1934.

From its humble beginnings as fields and farmland to a chic north London village, Hampstead has grown to become one of London's most desirable places to live. With its quaint cobbled streets, dainty coffee shops, excellent restaurants, historic homes and museums and village like feel, people tend to stay for good.

As well as attracting the former intelligentsia and today's artistic and literary circles, it is also highly cosmopolitan and is home to many young City workers, overseas buyers and affluent business people with young families.



Wentworth House:
Once home to John Keats

Neir Gigi, Associate Director of Goldschmidt & Howland, gives an insight into Hampstead's architecture and prices: "Hampstead's architecture ranges from ambassadorial homes on Redington Road and Templewood Avenue to historic Georgian terrace houses in Church Row and a multitude of fine conversions together with luxurious purpose built developments and substantial detached houses near Hampstead Heath.

"Prices for the fine detached residences are broadly in the region of £1,500 to £2,000 per sq ft with luxury apartments trading a little less, in the region of £1,300 to £1,600 per sq ft".

In as far as the best roads in Hampstead go, most are highly desirable although some have the extra-factor. Daniel Zimmerman, Director of TK International, says that if money was no option, he would choose Gainsborough Gardens:

"Located in the heart of the old village, just off Well Walk and less than a stone throw from Hampstead Heath, it is idyllic and peaceful and is one of the lesser known locations in Hampstead. Houses tend to be passed down the generations and it is very rare to see a house enter the market. In certain instances you could 'name your price' and that could range from £7,000,000 to £15,000,000."

Alternatively, for something more modern, the new gated domain of four magnificent detached houses on Hampstead's Telegraph Hill, opposite The Heath, is equally stunning.



Heath Street: home to a great selection of coffee shops, cafes, pubs and restaurants



Villa Bianca in Perrin's Court. This Italian restaurant prides itself on traditional cuisine

Difficult as it is to find relatively good value per square foot for the most part in Hampstead, Marcus Parfitt, owner of Marcus Parfitt Sales and Acquisitions, says his road of choice in Hampstead would be Wedderburn Road with its stunning Victorian mansions:

"It's a tree-lined road with houses that are set back from the street with deep carriage driveways. You have the benefit of Hampstead and Belsize Park but you're on the edge of Hampstead Village so you don't have to contend with the traffic. Alternatively, if I wanted in my opinion an area that still offers good value for money I would look somewhere like Golders Hill Park, an enclave of about three roads just by The King Alfred School.

You're not quite in the suburbs of Hampstead nor are you in the hub, yet it's an easy walk over the Heath into Hampstead Village and the transport and facilities of Golders Green".

With properties in the millions and everyone wanting a piece of this north London residential hotspot, here are a few of the gems that make it so appealing...

Coffee and cake shops

The Coffee Cup on Hampstead High Street, has become an institution. It first opened in 1951 and has seen a world of celebrities, politicians, actors, comedians and musicians come in and out of its doors. If your idea of a cosy Sunday afternoon spent sipping a macchiato in this wood-panelled interior, then you're in luck – this is just the place for you!

A little off Heath Street, in cobbled Perrin's Court, lies Ginger & White. This rustic looking coffee shop is exactly the sort you'd want on your doorstep to help kick start your day!

For something entirely different and a taste of traditional Hungarian



Hampstead
Antique and
Craft Emporium



The Freemasons Arms

of Hampstead station. Although famed for their grilled-chicken skewers, they also serve a selection of fresh sashimi and sushi. It's a small place – book ahead!

Goldfish restaurant on Hampstead High Street serves delicious modern Chinese cuisine. The likes of Wasabi Prawn – prawns tossed in an avocado and wasabi dressing hits the spot perfectly.

Alternatively, there's Villa Bianca in Perrin's Court. This Italian restaurant prides itself on traditional cuisine and has been going strong since opening 30 years ago. Live music is played every evening and in the summer you can dine alfresco.

Hampstead also had a fantastic array of cosy gastro pubs. The Spaniards Inn on Spaniards Road does a legendary roast on a Sunday. It also has a huge outdoor area, and the pub is dog friendly. There's The Flask on quaint Flask Walk – just off Hampstead High Street. This Victorian gem caters for almost any occasion be it a night out with friends, a relaxed Saturday afternoon or a mid-week meal.

Finally, there's The Freemasons Arms. For an afternoon of alfresco dining this has to be the gastropub of choice. After a walk on Hampstead Heath why not unwind with a zesty cocktail and some tasty options from the very reasonable menu.

Hampstead Heath and the ponds

For those brave enough to jump into the cool waters of Hampstead Heath, there are some stunning ponds within the grounds: the Ladies' Pond, the Men's Pond – these being the only life-guarded open-water swimming facilities open to the public every day of the year – the Mixed Pond and the Lido on Parliament Hill.

Hampstead Summer Festival

Hampstead will be hosting its annual Summer Festival from 18 - 24 June this year. For The Big Fair Day (24 June), all sorts of fun has been organised: children's fairground rides, circus acts, chess tournaments, an open air art exhibition, bands on the big stage and donkey, unicorn rides along Heath Street and plenty more. There will also be stalls with food and goodies.

All funds raised will be donated to the Henderson Court Age UK resource centre, and the Children's Society.

Shops and antiques

Worth knowing about, is the Hampstead Antique and Craft Emporium, one of London's last remaining indoor antique markets. Stunning pieces of vintage jewellery from designers such as Georg Jensen stocked at The Modernist or designer home wares from Maud and Mabel are tempting. Next door is the largest selection of antique handmade quilts for sale in the UK from The Antique Textile Company.

Besides vintage, more mainstream brands and classic designers such as Jane & Dada can be found all along Hampstead High Street.



The Coffee Cup. Opened in 1951, it has seen a world of celebrities, actors and the likes come through its doors.



Telegraph Hill, prices start from £6,950,000
TK International 020 7794 8700
A new development of four luxury detached houses behind secure gates and situated on the edge of Hampstead Heath close to the historic village of Hampstead. The houses are set at an elevated position above their own private drive.



Wedderburn Road, Price upon Application
Marcus Parfitt 020 7431 0000
A fabulous Grade II listed mansion built circa 1886 by Horace Field, the Victorian architect. The house, which is considered as one of his finest works, is set well back from the road behind a deep gravelled carriage driveway



Redington Road, £1,650,000
Goldschmidt & Howland 020 7435 4404
An outstanding three bedroom lateral apartment situated on the top floor of one of Hampstead's finest buildings commanding a prominent position on the corner of Redington Road and Templewood Avenue.

GET BOOKING

The Coffee Cup: coffeecupuk.com 020 7435 7565
Ginger & White: gingerandwhite.com 020 7431 9098
Louis: 020 7435 9908
Jin Kichi: jinkichi.com 020 7794 6666
Goldfish: restaurantprivilege.com 020 7794 6666
Villa Bianca: villabiancanw3.com 020 7435 3131
The Spaniards Inn: thespaniardshampstead.co.uk
020 8731 8406
The Flask: theflaskhampstead.co.uk 020 7435 4580
The Freemasons: freemasonsarms.co.uk
020 7433 6811
the Ladies' Pond, the Men's Pond, the Mixed Pond,
the Lido: 020 7485 3873
Hampstead Summer Festival:
hampsteadsummerfestival.com
Hampstead Antique and Craft Emporium:
hampsteadantiqueemporium.co.uk 020 7794 3297
The Antique Textile Company: antiquetextilecompany.co.uk
020 7433 3311

patisseries, pop into Louis on Heath Street. The array of delicately hand-made cakes using no preservatives and made by the owner himself are exquisite: "Dobos" a traditional Hungarian cake, made of sponge, butter cream and caramel is always very popular," says Louis Permajer, the Hungarian born owner.

Pubs and Restaurants
At 73 Heath Street, is top Japanese restaurant: Jin Kichi, conveniently located within a few metres

of Hampstead station. Although famed for their grilled-chicken skewers, they also serve a selection of fresh sashimi and sushi. It's a small place – book ahead!

Goldfish restaurant on Hampstead High Street serves delicious modern Chinese cuisine. The likes of Wasabi Prawn – prawns tossed in an avocado and wasabi dressing hits the spot perfectly.