

Nunhead, Honor Oak and Peckham Rye		
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## Nunhead, Honor Oak and Peckham Rye

**Start:** Nunhead Station

**Finish:** Peckham Rye Station

**Length:** 8.0 km/5.0 mi

**Ascent:** 170m

**Time:** 2 hours

**Transport:** Nunhead Station is served by Thameslink services to Sevenoaks and by Southeastern services from Victoria on the Dartford via Bexleyheath line. Peckham Rye Station is served by the East London (Overground) Line, Thameslink and Sutton & Mole Valley services; trains go to Dartford, London Bridge, Victoria, Highbury & Islington, Blackfriars, Sevenoaks, West Croydon, Beckenham Junction and Clapham Junction. Both stations are in Travelcard Zone 2.

### Walk Notes:

This south east London route links up several noteworthy green open spaces. It starts by meandering through the atmospheric Nunhead Cemetery, one of the Magnificent Seven cemeteries of Victorian London and now, after having been resurrected from decades of neglect, a Local Nature Reserve.

You then walk along residential streets to Camberwell New Cemetery and the Honor Oak Crematorium in Honor Oak, and on up to One Tree Hill, the most northerly part of what was the Great North Wood and is now a wooded Local Nature Reserve with a magnificent viewpoint.

Walk through the linear Brenchley Gardens park and past Camberwell Old Cemetery and on to the large green spaces of Peckham Rye Park and Common. From there it is just a short walk past a cluster of cafés and modish restaurants and then along Rye Lane, one of the most aesthetically varied, culturally mixed and unique streets in London, to Peckham Rye station, with a plethora of food and drink options nearby.

**Note:** All cemeteries en route close at 19.00 hours (and earlier in winter). But while it would be a strange choice to not walk through the magnificent Nunhead Cemetery, an alternative route past Camberwell New Cemetery is described, to enable doing the walk with an early evening start.

### Refreshments

[The Ivy House](#) (London's first co-operatively owned pub), [Watson's General Telegraph](#), [Colicci](#), [The Angel Oak](#), [The White Horse](#), [The Nag's Head](#), [Four Quarters](#), [John the Unicorn](#). [Levan London](#) Unit 3 & 4, 12-16 Blenheim Grove, London SE15 4QL (020 7639 1106). Lunch served 12.00-15.00 Tue-Sun. Dinner served from 18.00 Tue-Sat. [The Brick Brewery Tap Room/Slow Richie's](#) (burger joint) Arch 209, Blenheim Grove, London SE15 4QL (020 3583 9640). Open Tue-Thu 17.00-22.00, Fri 15.00-24.00, Sat 12.00-24.00 and Sun 12.00-22.00. [The Coal Rooms](#) 11a Station Way, Peckham Rye Station, London, SE15 4RX (020 7635 6699). Housed in the former Peckham Rye train station ticket office. Open all day (Sun to 18.00 only). Lunch served Sat 12.00-16.00 and Sun 12.00-18.00. Dinner served Wed-Sat 18.00-23.00. [Yada's Green Kitchen](#) 104 Rye Lane SE15 4RZ.

### Plus several other options in:

[The Bussey Building](#) (best: [CLF Art Café](#)), [Copeland Park](#) and [Peckham Levels](#) (best: [Frank's Café](#)).

## Notes

### Green Chain Walk

The Green Chain Walk, also known as the South East London Green Chain, is linking 300 open spaces between the Thames and Nunhead Cemetery. In 1977 four London Boroughs (Bexley, Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich) and the GLC created it to protect the open spaces from building activity. Since then, it has been extended to include sections in Southwark. <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/walking/green-chain-walk>

### Nunhead (All Saints) Cemetery/Magnificent Seven Cemeteries

Nunhead Cemetery, originally known as All Saints' Cemetery, is the second largest of the Magnificent Seven cemeteries although perhaps the least famous and celebrated of them. The Magnificent Seven Victorian cemeteries were established in a ring around what were then the outskirts of London, but only two of them are south of the river. It occupies Nunhead Hill and was consecrated in 1840 and opened by the London Cemetery Company and contains examples of the imposing monuments to the most eminent citizens of the day. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the cemetery was nearly full, and so was abandoned. With the ensuing neglect, the cemetery gradually changed from lawn to meadow and eventually to woodland. In the early 1980s the 'Friends of Nunhead Cemetery' were formed to renovate and protect the cemetery. It was reopened in May 2001 after an extensive restoration project and is now a Local Nature Reserve. <https://www.fonc.org.uk/> Open daily 08.30-19.00 (Apr-Sep), -17.00 (Mar and Oct) and -16.00 (Nov-Feb).

### Camberwell New & Old Cemetery

Camberwell Old Cemetery, located on Forest Hill Road. It is part of the second wave of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century cemeteries that were established to solve the problem of overcrowding in churchyards. [The first wave of cemeteries is commonly known as the Magnificent Seven.]

The Gothic Revival lodge and two chapels (one CofE and one Non-Conformist) were designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott's architectural firm. Both chapels were subsequently demolished in the 1960s.

Camberwell New Cemetery is located on Brenchley Gardens, a short distance from the old cemetery.

Following its acquisition in 1901, much of the land was rented out for other uses, including a golf club and there are large portions that still remain unused for burials. Some of it is now a recreation ground and there is strong local opposition to this land being used for its original purpose of burials.

Both are open to 19.00 Apr-Sep and to 17.00 Oct -Mar.

### One Tree Hill, Honor Oak/The Oak of Honor

One Tree Hill is a public park, Local Nature Reserve and Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation, Grade 1, which is owned and managed by Southwark Council. It was once a part of a larger landscape called The Great North Wood, a natural oak woodland which ranged from Croydon to Camberwell. Before the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the East India Company built a semaphore station on the top of the hill to signal when ships were sighted in the Channel, and it was used as a beacon point by the Admiralty during the Napoleonic Wars.

Its name, and that of the Honor Oak area, derive from the Oak of Honor, a tree on the hill which marked the southern boundary of the Norman Barony of Gloucester's Camberwell estate.

According to legend, QE I rested with Sir Richard Bulkeley of Beaumaris under an oak at the summit on her way to Lewisham on 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1602. The current oak is the third on the site, planted in 1905.

The hill is reputed by a long-standing rumour to also have been the site of the final defeat of Queen Boudica by the Romans in AD61, while Dick Turpin is also said to have used it as a look-out post.

During WWI, a gun emplacement was erected on the hill to counter the threat of Zeppelin airships.

To the north of the hill (across Brenchley Gardens road and linear park) is the Honor Oak Reservoir, the largest underground brick reservoir in the world when finished in 1909. It remains the largest in Europe.

### Peckham/The River Peck/Peckham Rye/Peckham Rye Common/Peckham Rye Park

"Peckham" is a Saxon place name meaning the village of the River Peck, a small stream that ran through the district until it was enclosed in 1823 (parts of it can still be seen in Peckham Rye Park). Archaeological evidence indicates earlier Roman occupation in the area, although the name of this settlement is lost.

Peckham became popular as a wealthy residential area by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century the area was a commercial centre and attracted industrialists who wanted to avoid expensive rents in central London. It boasted extensive market gardens and orchards growing produce for London.

Peckham was the setting of the television sitcom *Only Fools and Horses*.

Peckham Rye is an open space and road. The roughly triangular open space consists of two congruent areas, with Peckham Rye Common to the north and Peckham Rye Park to the south. The road *Peckham Rye* forms the western and eastern perimeter of the open space. With the arrival of the railway, most of the Peckham fields were built over with housing, but in 1868 the vestry of Camberwell St. Giles bought the Rye to keep it as common land. Concerned about the dangerous overcrowding of it on holidays the LCC bought the adjacent last remaining farm in the area in 1894 and opened it as Peckham Rye Park.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

From the platform at **Nunhead Station** go down some steps and follow a tarmac path to a road. With the railway line on your left, you cross a road a little to the right and continue in the same direction uphill along **Oakdale Road**, passing a Link to Green Chain Walk sign. In 100m at a mini-roundabout, cross **Linden Grove** and *turn right* along its opposite pavement. In 25m you have **Nunhead (All Saints) Cemetery** on your left behind a wall, one of the **Magnificent Seven Cemeteries**. In 200m *turn left* with the pavement around a car parking area and in 50m, just after passing an info panel, *turn left* to enter the cemetery through its **Linden Grove Entrance** with **East** and **West Lodges** (both Grade II listed) to the sides.

In 30m, at a four-way junction of gravel paths by a round flower island, and with the dominant **Anglican Chapel** (also Grade II listed) up ahead on a rise along **The Avenue**, you *turn right* along **Dissenters Avenue**. In 40m *fork to the right* of the **Scottish (Political) Martyr's Memorial** (an info panel on its background is located just before it on the left) to ignore West Crescent curving up to the left and continue in the same direction along **Dissenters Avenue**. In 100m you ignore the left forking **Welsh Path** and in 50m curve to the left with the main path. In 40m ignore a narrow path forking up to the left. You keep ascending **West Hill** and in 140m curve to the right with the path, where a minor track joins from the left by a fenced pond. In 70m you reach a bench with a **view of St. Paul's Cathedral** (and to the left of it, Alexandra Palace), one of the protected views maintained by Southwark Council.

Continue along the path over the brow and in 40m by a bench *curve left* with the path, gently descending (there is another sight corridor on a bearing of 110°, looking across to Lewisham). In 100m *turn left* at a T-junction with a wider gravel path by an info panel on selected nearby **famous graves and memorials**. Ignore several minor paths joining from the left, and in 150m also ignore a wider tarmac path joining from the left (this is West Crescent again) and continue towards the **Anglican Chapel**. In 40m you pass an info panel on wildlife in the cemetery and then another one on the chapel and in 15m reach the entrance of the part-ruined chapel, which is now roofless (general neglect plus arson in 1976 did for the damage, a much later lottery funded refurbishment finished in 2001) and has an interesting octagonal chancel at the rear.

To the left down The Avenue and beyond the Linden Grove entrance there are **fine views** to some high rises near Elephant & Castle and **to the London Eye** (315°). From the chapel retrace your steps past the info panels and *turn left* along a broad track with a Green Chain Walk marker post, with the chapel now on your left across a grassy area. In 75m you pass a **GCW** marker post on your right by a large grassy clearing on your left with some recent, mostly Muslim graves. The path *bears right* and in 100m, where a narrow path joins from the left, you pass a memorial site for members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Walworth Scouts Troop who drowned off the Isle of Sheppey on 04/08/1912, (the current memorial replaced a vandalised earlier one by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott), as well as the first of two **WWI Commonwealth War Graves** sites en route.

You continue in the same direction past an **info panel on the Music Halls** in this part of southeast London and its many representatives buried here. The path then starts to descend and curve to the left and in 80m you emerge into an open area with a grassy slope on the right. In 30m on the left you pass another **WWI Commonwealth War Graves** site. A GCW sign indicates you should turn right on leaving. In 70m leave the cemetery by another info panel (WWI Hospitals in the South) and a **WWI Memorial** for British Troops, through its **Limesford Road Entrance**. *Turn right* along Limesford Road, gently uphill, and in 120m by the corner of the cemetery on the right, *turn left* with the Green Chain Walk along **Inverton Road's** right-hand pavement.

In 40m at a wall corner, **to visit the Ivy House** (London's first co-operatively owned pub), *turn right* through barriers along a tarmac path (this continues as Stuart Road). In 170m, with **The Ivy House** 30m ahead, *turn left* along **Borland Road**. In 110m *turn left* along **Hichisson Road** and in 80m *turn right* along **Rye Road**. In 60m *turn left* along **Surrey Road** at a T-junction and in 130m *turn right* along **Inverton Road**.

**Alternatively**, follow Inverton Road for 150m, cross Surrey Road and continue ahead.

**Both:** In 60m continue in the same direction along **Merttins Road** past **St. Antony with St. Silas Church** on the left. You then cross **Athenlay Road** and continue in the same direction along **Brockley Way**. In 90m you ignore **Brenchley Gardens** to the right and continue in the same direction with **Camberwell New Cemetery** on your right behind a metal fence. In 30m and again in another 160m on the left by St. Norbert Road and Turnham Road respectively, you have **(partial) views towards Canary Wharf**. In another 40m, **[!]** 10m before a two-way Green Chain Walk signpost, a narrow tarmac path turns right between metal fences.

**This alternative route around the Crematorium and Cemetery to One Tree Hill, is necessary out-of-hours and when a funeral is taking place:** *turn right* along the path and follow it for 220m around several turns until you reach the far end of the fenced crematorium grounds. Continue a little to the right through a gap into **Honor Oak Sports Ground** and *bear right* diagonally across it towards the far-right corner (210°, lately with some fine views on the left across the **Ravensbourne Valley**). In 300m *turn left* along a concrete path between two fenced parts of the cemetery and in 50m walk into a car park. *Turn right* and in 60m *turn left* past some allotments on the right. In 90m *turn right* uphill along **Honor Oak Park** (road), and in 90m *turn right* past bike barriers along a signposted path up to **One Tree Hill**. In 100m cross a drive by **St. Augustine's Church** and in 80m reach a four-way signpost at a five-way junction of paths by an info panel on the left. **The Honor Oak** is away to the right. Pick up the directions below at the asterisk \*).

**During the crematorium opening hours** (at least to 17.00 Oct-Mar and to 19.00 Apr-Sep): in 10m *turn right* with the GCW signpost and enter the fenced **Honor Oak Crematorium** site through its double car wide entrance gate. In 30m follow a crescent path on the right to in 120m re-join the tarmac drive and *turn right* along it. In 60m you leave the crematorium site through a metal gate (the **Alternative Route crosses** from the right between fences and continues to the left into the sports fields). You have **Honor Oak Sports Ground** behind a fence on the left, **One Tree Hill** with its church a little ahead to the left and **Camberwell New Cemetery** to the right. Continue in the same direction through another metal gate and in 20m pass a GCW marker post and continue in the same direction towards the large **Chapel and Columbarium** 120m away. Walk to the right of the building and in 40m *turn right* along a tarmac drive towards the main car exit down on the right. In 80m walk between some **Lodges** (now office and toilet blocks, respectively) and leave the cemetery onto **Brenchley Gardens** (road). *Turn left* along its left-hand pavement. In 150m, **Kelvington Road** joins from the right by a usually locked cemetery gate on the left.

**Here you have a choice:**

**For a Shortcut**, avoiding the steep ascent up to One Tree Hill, you *turn right* to cross the road and go through a metal gate into the linear **Brenchley Gardens** and *turn left* along a tarmac path through it, parallel to Brenchley Gardens (road). Look right/north for a good view over the reservoir, the golf course covering it and to Central London. In 340m a path joins from the left through a metal gate. This is the main walk re-joining. Continue in the same direction along a paved section of the path and pick up the directions below at the double asterisk \*\*).



**For the Main Walk**, you continue in the same direction along the road and in 70m *turn left* through a bike barrier and follow an engineered path up the steep wooded slope of **One Tree Hill**. Ignore a right forking gravel path in 50m and in another 250m you emerge in a clearing on the top and *turn right* along the path. In 30m you pass **The Oak of Honour**. In 40m you reach a four-way signpost at a five-way junction of paths. There is an info panel opposite the junction, and a left-turn down the hill would get you to **St. Augustine's Church** (seen earlier from the cemetery) in 90m.

**\*)** *Bear right* (i.e.: *bear left* if coming up the Alternative Route) to the right of remnants of a **WWI gun emplacement** and in 30m reach a **fantastic viewpoint** including a protected view of St. Paul's, by a couple of benches and an info panel. Return to the four-way signpost and *turn left* along a gravel path ('Link to Ruth Sale Rise, Brenchley Gardens'), soon descending along a railed stepped section. In 120m *turn right* with the path by a residential road on the left. In 100m leave the wooded hillside through bike barriers and cross Brenchley Gardens (road) a little to the left and go through a metal gate into **Brenchley Gardens**. *Turn left* along a paved path through the park.

**\*\*)** Follow any of the paths to the far-end exits 330m away. As this is a linear narrow park (following the route of the old railway line to the Crystal Palace), you cannot possibly get lost. There are two gates at the end 50m apart, both leading out onto the busy **Forest Hill Road** (the B 238). *Turn right* down the road and in 70m/20m cross to its left-hand pavement at some lights and *turn right* along the opposite pavement.

[**Or**, if skipping Watson's General Telegraph pub, and **to avoid the busy road**, turn right into Marmora road. In 400m this leads to the entrance to the Reservoir/Aquarius Golf Course. Turn left and follow Homestall Road (unmade-up) with houses on the left and a wide verge with tress and the wall to the reservoir on the right, for 240m until it narrows to an alleyway with a football pitch on the left side and the wall of the reservoir on the other. In 170m reach Colyton Road. Turn left and follow the road for 150m, before crossing over to the right to enter **Peckham Rye Park** through a metal gate.]

Towering ahead in the distance: the **London Eye** and the **BT Tower**. In 70m you have the entrance to **Camberwell Old Cemetery** on your left. **If the cemetery is still open** for the day, a short loop through the picturesque sloping wooded part of it is recommended (see the route map for a suggested route, adds 700m). **Else** continue in the same direction down the road, ignore **Therapia Road** on the right and in 150m pass the recommended **Watson's General Telegraph** pub. *Turn right* to cross Forest Hill Road (i.e.: if coming out of the pub, cross the road a little to the left) and continue down the residential **Mundania Road** (some of the road names around here are thought to be references to places of significance during the Crimean War). In 80m ignore a left turn (Dovedale Road) and in 100m another (Shelbury Road). In another 80m *turn left* along **Scutari Road**. In 200m *turn right* at a T-junction with **Colyton Road** and in 70m *turn left* through a metal gate into **Peckham Rye Park**.

The aim now is the park exit in the far-left corner. A suggested route is described below. Continue along a tree-lined tarmac path between large grassy areas towards a wooded area, with the top of **The Shard** briefly visible in the distance. In 130m you have a fenced **Arboretum & Picnic Area** on your left and in 60m at a five-way junction you continue in the same direction a little to the right between trees. In 70m *turn left* at a path junction by **The Lake** on your right. In 15m you have the unfenced **American Garden** on your left and in another 80m, by a **Bowling Green** on your right, you *turn left* into the **Sexby Garden** (built 1893 in the way of an 'Old English Garden' and dominated by its full-length **wisteria-topped pergola**; named after Colonel J.J. Sexby, the London County Council's first Chief Officer of Gardens).

Take any route through Sexby Garden and exit on the opposite side by the Arboretum and *turn right* at a T-junction. In 65m *turn right* at a four-way junction, with some woodland on your left. In 90m *turn left* at a four-way junction by a metal gate in a fence ahead. In 30m *turn right* and in 40m *turn right* again at a four-way junction. You have the **Japanese Garden** on your right behind a metal fence and in 50m *turn right* through a double metal gate into it. Follow the tarmac path through the garden, crossing a stream in 50m and in 20m *turn left* at a path T-junction. You pass the **Japanese Shelter** on your right and *turn left* at a T-junction just after it. In 50m, at a path junction, there is a **Community Wildlife Garden** ahead, which is worth a visit, if open (access at least 10.00-15.30 winter and 10.00-17.00 summer).

[!] But *turn right*, crossing the stream on a bridge. The stream, which is fed by **The River Peck**, criss-crosses the path a few times along this scenic section and in 50m you have **The Rockery** on your right, then a small ornamental pond on the left just before reaching an oval-shaped planted area (**The Oval**). *Turn right* to an exit from the park 30m away. Leave the park through the gate and emerge on a tarmac path around **Peckham Rye Common**. **Colicci**, the park's café, is 100m to your right. Cross the common to its far-left corner 450m away (335°). At the junction of Peckham Rye (road) on the left and East Dulwich Road, cross **East Dulwich Road** in the previous direction at some lights and enter a small park wedged in between the two arms of Peckham Rye (road) which converge at the top end of this park.

You could just follow the road to the left of the park, but a more interesting and quieter route goes as follows: *bear right* along a tarmac path through the park and in about 90m, 30m before a road, *turn left* pathless across a grassy area with a few large grassy hummocks and a large defunct blue fountain (the last remains of a now demolished lido). In 60m follow a well-trampled path across an earth bank and emerge in the narrowing grassy end of the park to continue towards its apex. In 100m, you have **The Angel Oak** pub on the right across the road and *bear left* to cross Peckham Rye (road) and *turn right* along its left-hand pavement. You pass several food and drink outlets on this stretch and in 150m pass **The White Horse** pub 40m away down the left along a road. Continue along the left-hand side of the main road, now called **Rye Lane**. In 80m *bend left* with Rye Lane, where the main traffic turns right with Copeland Road. Follow Rye Lane for 450m to **Peckham Rye Station**, en route passing an eclectic collection of shops, reflecting the local demography (the largest Nigerian community in London), and a few pubs: **The Nag's Head**, **Four Quarters** and **John the Unicorn**.

**In the station building**, you find a recommended restaurant: **The Coal Rooms**.

**Just before the station**, on the left along **Blenheim Grove** you find The Brickhouse Sourdough Bakery & Bar, **Levan London**, an Honest Burger outlet and in a backyard beyond that, **The Brick Brewery & Slow Richie's** burger joint. A little further along are **Peckham Springs** and **Bar Story**.

**Opposite Blenheim Grove** on the right, you can follow a covered path signed '133 Rye Lane, Copeland Park & Bussey Building'. In **The Bussey Building** is the **CLF Art Café** and a roof top bar. Or continue to **Copeland Park** and more food and drink options.

**Further along Rye Lane past the station**, **Yada's Green Kitchen** is on the right in a yard between the railway lines and further along, also on the right, **Peckhamplex** cinema and the staircase entrance to **Peckham Levels** with the roof top **Bold Tendencies'** art space and **Frank's Café**.

Trains to the various destinations leave from the following platforms:

Platform 1 West Croydon, Clapham Junction;

Platform 2 London Bridge, Surrey Quays, Highbury & Islington;

Platform 3 Victoria, Blackfriars, St. Pancras;

Platform 4 Lewisham, Bromley South, Orpington, Dartford, Sevenoaks, Swanley.