

# 14 trail

## Discover London Trails 08

### map & introduction

#### TAKE A TRIP TO THE EAST. . .

#### Themed trail - full day/half days

In celebration of an Olympic year for both Beijing and London, the *CHINA NOW* festival launched in London at Chinese New Year, is a nationwide series of events which will run up to the Beijing Olympics. This, the largest festival of Chinese culture ever in the UK, is an inspirational celebration of vibrant, dynamic 21st-century China. It is a showcase of art, design, cuisine and culture, science, business and technology, education and sport.

On this trail, you will have a snapshot of the development of design in today's China at the Victoria and Albert Museum's *China Design Now* exhibition, the first major exhibition to present China's recent history through contemporary design. You will visit London's colourful Chinatown, see beautiful Chinese exhibits at both the British Museum and the Museum of Croydon, Chinese musical instruments at the Horniman Museum and discover stories of Chinese people at the Museum in Docklands.

We have also included two art galleries for further exploration. Last but not least, see the impressive Chinese Pagoda at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

- 1 **Victoria and Albert Museum**
- 2 **Chinatown**
- 3 **British Museum**
- 4 **Museum in Docklands**
- 5 **Horniman Museum**
- 6 **Riesco Collection at Croydon Museum**
- 7 **Chinese Pagoda at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew**
- A **Asia House**
- B **Saatchi Gallery**

Not to scale



**TAKE A TRIP TO THE EAST. . .**  
Explore London's Chinese connections and collections



© Discover London Trails have been produced by The Campaign for Museums, a registered charity, on behalf of London's Smaller Museums and Galleries, with support from Mayor of London, MLA London and Renaissance London.



...go to next page for addresses & summary

#### Victoria and Albert Museum

Cromwell Road, South Kensington, SW7

[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

Tel: 020 7942 2000

Open: 1000-1745 daily (1000-2200 Fri)

One of the world's leading museums of art and design

#### Chinatown

Gerrard Street

#### British Museum

Great Russell Street, WC1

[www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

Tel: 020 7323 8299

Open: 1000-1730 daily (later on Thu and Fri)

Historical artefacts from prehistoric times to the present day

#### Museum in Docklands

West India Quay, Hertsme Road, E14

[www.museumindocklands.org.uk](http://www.museumindocklands.org.uk)

Tel: 0870 444 3850

Open: 1000-1800 daily

Admission charge

The 2000 year-old story of London's river, port and people

#### Horniman Museum & Gardens

100 London Rd, SE23

[www.horniman.ac.uk](http://www.horniman.ac.uk)

Tel: 020 86991872

Open: 1030-1730 daily

An illustration of the cultural and natural world

#### Museum of Croydon

Croydon Clocktower, Katharine St, Croydon

[www.museumofcroydon.com](http://www.museumofcroydon.com)

Tel: 020 82531030

Open: 1100-1700 Mon-Sat; 1200-1700 Sun

Outstanding collection of Chinese porcelain

#### Chinese Pagoda at Kew

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

[www.kew.org](http://www.kew.org)

Tel: 020 8332 5655

Open: 0930-1800 weekdays, -1900 week-ends

Admission charge

Reconstruction of a Chinese building

#### Marble Hill House

Richmond Road, Twickenham, TW1 2NL

[www.englishheritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.12809](http://www.englishheritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.12809)

Tel: 020 8892 5115

Open 21 March – 31 Oct: Sat 1000-1400; Sun BH 1000-1700

Palladian villa in a riverside park.

#### Asia House

63 New Cavendish Street, London W1G 7LP

[www.asiahouse.org](http://www.asiahouse.org)

Tel 020 7307 5454

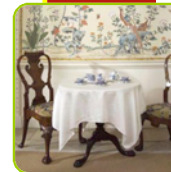
#### Saatchi Gallery

Kings Road, Chelsea, London SW3

[www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk](http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk)

Images:

1. British Museum, Ming dynasty
2. A Handkerchief Tree, British Museum/Kew
3. Marble Hill House
4. The 2008 Beijing Stadium
5. Pagoda at Kew



### TAKE A TRIP TO THE EAST . . .

#### TRAIL SUMMARY

The trail begins at the **Victoria and Albert Museum** South Kensington (Circle, District, Piccadilly Lines). The museum's *China Design Now* exhibition offers an insight into the development of design in today's China, focusing on 3 major cities. There is also an important permanent collection to explore. From here, you take the Piccadilly Line to Leicester Square to enjoy the vibrancy of London's **Chinatown** and perhaps some dim sum in one of the many restaurants.

From Leicester Square, it is an easy walk to the **British Museum** (or take one stop on the Northern Line to Tottenham Court Road) to view a collection of art and antiquities from ancient and living cultures including many from both Ancient and Imperial China. There is also a Chinese landscape exhibition in the museum's forecourt.

To visit the **Museum in Docklands**, take the Central Line from Tottenham Court Road to Stratford and change to the Docklands Light Railway for West India Quay. This museum tells the story of Londoners from across the world from Roman settlers to city workers, including the arrival of Chinese immigrants.

The **Horniman Museum**, with its unique collection of musical instruments, including Chinese examples from the past, can be visited on a different day or combined with a visit to the Museum in Docklands. From Canary Wharf, take the Jubilee Line to London Bridge and an overground train from London Bridge to Forest Hill. From Forest Hill, travel to East Croydon for the **Museum of Croydon** housing the **Riesco Collection**, an outstanding collection of Chinese pottery and porcelain, dating from 2500 BC. (Croydon can also be reached by overground train from Victoria).

A visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the **Chinese Pagoda** is worth leaving for another day or could be combined with the V&A (District Line South Kensington to Kew Gardens or vice versa). And across the River is **Marble Hill House** at Twickenham with wonderful display of Chinese wallpaper. There is a café in the grounds open during the Summer.

*Asia House, an art gallery, is worth a visit by art-lover. This Central London gallery specialises in showing contemporary artists from China and the Far East (good café). The new Saatchi Gallery at Sloane Square is due to open in the Summer of 2008 with an exhibition of contemporary Chinese art. Check the website for details.*

## TAKE A TRIP TO THE EAST. . .

The trail begins at the **Victoria and Albert Museum** (V&A) in South Kensington (Circle, District and Piccadilly Lines). During the last 20 years, the Chinese have rediscovered their pre-socialist past and begun to combine their own traditions with global influences to produce a cultural rebirth. At the heart of this lies a new culture of design. At the *China Design Now* exhibition (until 13 July), travel on a journey along China's coastal cities to experience the country's creative landscape. From the far south where graphic designers in Shenzhen began to explore new directions in the early 1990s, travel to Shanghai, where consumerism and urban culture have combined to produce astonishing fashion and lifestyles, before a visit to Beijing where monumental architecture for the Olympic Games is transforming the skyline of this ancient capital.

In addition to temporary exhibitions, the V&A has more than seven miles of galleries including one of the most comprehensive and important collections of Chinese art dating from 3000 BC to the present time. Magnificent textiles, exquisite porcelain and elegant furniture are among the many treasures of the finest quality and design. They are displayed according to use - living, eating and drinking, burial, the court, temple worship and collecting. Other collections date from 3000 BC to the present day with the British Galleries offering the most comprehensive collection of British art and design from 1500-1900. The Café is located in the V&A's original refreshment rooms, the Morris, Gamble and Poynter Rooms.

Take the Piccadilly Line to Leicester Square, enjoy the buzz of London's **Chinatown** in Gerrard Street and sample some delicious Chinese food. From Gerrard Street, it is easy to walk to the British Museum by walking up Shaftesbury Avenue

(parallel to Gerrard Street), cross New Oxford Street and into Bloomsbury Street. From Leicester Square, you could also take the Northern Line to Tottenham Court Road or the Piccadilly Line to Russell Square.

In partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the **British Museum** hosts a China Landscape exhibition in the museum's forecourt until October 2008. Inspired by the collections of both Kew and the British Museum, the landscape reveals some of the connections between China's natural habitat and its culture. Trees, shrubs and flowers are both cultural symbols and resources, used for building materials, food, drink, clothing and medicine. Visitors wander around the fragrant trails of wisteria (*Wisteria sinensis*), admire the beautiful White Mulberry (*Morus alba*) and historic handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucrata*), whilst also absorbing a strong conservation and sustainability message.

The Hotung Gallery of Oriental Antiquities covers both ancient and imperial China. It includes the Neolithic period (10000 -2000 BC), the Shang dynasty (c1500-1050 BC) and the Zhou dynasty (1050-221 BC). Each age was distinct, but common to each period were grand burials for the elite from which a wealth of objects have been excavated. During the Neolithic period, stone workers used jade to make prestigious, beautifully polished versions of utilitarian stone tools. The status of jade continues throughout Chinese history. The Shang dynasty was notable for casting bronze using ceramic moulds while the period of the Zhou dynasty had courtly displays of sumptuous material goods.

The 'Imperial China' Gallery is divided into two periods. China was a highly literate society. Poetry,

brush-written calligraphy and painting, were called the 'Three Perfections', reflecting the esteemed position of the arts in Chinese life.

Until 14 September, there is also a free coin and medals display **Icons of Revolution: Mao Badges (then and now)**. This exhibition explains some of the highly charged images on Chairman Mao badges and other relics of that time and shows how they have evolved over the last 40 years.

*The outstanding collection of Chinese porcelain from the Percival David Foundation (now closed) will be displayed at the British Museum from 2009.*

*The British Museum has two cafes and a restaurant.*

The following museums could be left to another day. Alternatively, to reach the Docklands Museum from the British Museum, walk to Tottenham Court Road, take the Central Line to Stratford and change to the Docklands Light Railway for West India Quay. Here, the **Museum in Docklands** is located within a splendid late Georgian warehouse. Several major galleries explore the history of London's river, port and people - from the founding of the Roman port through to the recent regeneration of London's former Docklands. Centuries of social and economic change of the area are shown within the galleries and there are also stories of the people who arrived to help build and shape the city including the Chinese who created the first Chinatown at Limehouse. For many years, Chinese art and goods were far easier to find in London than Chinese people. However, a small number of seamen worked at the docks in Limehouse whilst London's first Chinatown grew in the area in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Little remains of the original Chinese presence in that area now.

## TAKE A TRIP TO THE EAST. . .

A lively mix of traditional displays and multi-media technology animates the 2000-year storyline. Artefacts, engravings, paintings, testimonies and photos drawn from the outstanding collections of the Museum of London and Port of London Authority emphasise the skills and ingenuity of the Docklands community. Temporary exhibitions and events showcase the region's rich cultural heritage.

The area around the museum in West India Quay has been completely transformed and you can now enjoy refreshment at one of the cafes and restaurants overlooking the river as well as in the Museum in Docklands.

If combining the Museum of Docklands with the Horniman Museum, take the Jubilee Line to London Bridge and an overground train to Forest Hill. From here, walk along London Road – approximately eight minutes' walk or take a short bus ride (numbers 176 and 185) from the station.

The **Horniman Museum**, with a collection of 350,000 objects, illustrates the cultural and natural world with a range of exhibitions, events and activities. The Musical Instruments gallery has an internationally renowned collection of musical instruments including a wonderful collection of Chinese instruments ranging from a modern drum kit to the Sho Mouth organ, a collection of 15 pipes – ideally made from bamboo that has been smoked in the roof of a house for many years. The interactive displays at the Horniman allow you to 'choose' a virtual instrument and learn more about it. There are also changing temporary exhibitions and a cafe. The lovely gardens cover 16 acres, have good views over London and are ideal for picnics.

The **Museum of Croydon** could be visited on the same day as the Horniman Museum by taking a train from Forest Hill to East Croydon. Located within the Croydon Clocktower, the museum houses the **Riesco Collection** of Chinese pottery and porcelain dating from 2500 BC to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The collection is named after Raymond Riesco, a businessman who loved collecting Chinese ceramics. He lived in Croydon and left his collection to the people of Croydon when he died. There are more than 200 stunning pieces on display covering nearly 4000 years of Chinese history. As well as Tang dynasty tomb models and beautiful Ming dynasty bowls, the collection includes grave goods, religious statues, wine and teacups and snuff bottles.

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, a World Heritage Site with botanical collections from round the globe is probably best left for another day but could be visited on the same day as the V&A as it is easy to travel from one to the other on the District Line. There are glasshouses, museums, galleries, temples dating back to the period of royal ownership of the gardens in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and, of course, the **Chinese Pagoda**. The ten-storey octagonal structure, completed in 1762, is 163 ft (nearly 50 m) high and was, at that time, the tallest reconstruction of a Chinese building in Europe. It tapers, with successive floors from the first to the topmost being 1 ft (30 cm) less in diameter and height than the preceding one. The original building was very colourful; the roofs being covered with varnished iron plates, with a dragon on each corner. There were 80 dragons in all, each carved from wood and gilded with real gold. There have been several restorations, mainly to the roofs, but the original colours and the dragons have not been replaced.

Across the River Thames at **Marble Hill House**, a new display recreates the Chinese wallpaper Henrietta Howard hung in the dining room in 1751. Using historical references and motifs, a unique paper has been designed to fit the room, each sheet different and, like the originals, hand painted by Chinese artists. From Kew, take the tube to Richmond and walk (1 mile); there is a ferry crossing in the Summer. From Central London, take an overground train to St. Margaret's from London Waterloo.

**CHILDREN'S/FAMILY ACTIVITIES**

**Victoria and Albert Museum** – free family events from special exhibition-related created workshops to permanent interactive exhibits as well as a selection of trails with activity sheets.

**British Museum** – children's trails and activity backpacks with puzzles, games and other activities.

**Museum in Docklands** – free entry for under 16s, children's gallery with hands-on interactive exhibits, regular family events.

**Horniman Museum** – wide range of family activities and events, including story telling and art and craft sessions. The 16 acres of gardens are ideal for play and picnics.

**Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew** – open spaces, play zone, children's trail