

Historic Royal Palaces

HAMPTON COURT PALACE

Frequently asked questions about Hampton Court Palace

Who owns Hampton Court Palace?

The Queen. Ever since Tudor times, Hampton Court has been owned by the reigning monarch. Today, The Queen owns the palace 'in trust of the Crown', so instead of treating it as her own personal property, it is her responsibility to look after it for the next King or Queen. Responsibility for looking after the palace on a day-to-day basis has been passed from The Queen to the Government who, through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, have in turn passed it on to Historic Royal Palaces.

How much did it cost to build Hampton Court Palace?

Lots! Because the palace has been continuously being built/rebuilt for centuries, it's impossible to say exactly how much it would cost to build. We do know, however, how much some monarchs spent on building work here: Henry VIII spent £62,000 (approximately £18 million today) on Hampton Court in just ten years, and William III spent £131,000 (about £9.5 million today) here during his reign.

How long did the King stay at Hampton Court Palace?

It was very rare for any monarch to stay at Hampton Court longer than a week. When the King or Queen came to stay, hundreds of nobles, servants and other guests would come with them. After a few days of all these people living here, each eating at least two full meals a day, all the food bought from local farmers to feed them would be close to running out. With so many people in the palace the drains might eventually become blocked and unusable, and so the royal party would want to move on. Next stop Windsor Castle!

Did Henry VIII take Hampton Court Palace from his Chief Minister, Thomas Wolsey?

Yes and no! From the very beginning, Wolsey intended that Hampton Court Palace would be used by Henry and his family to entertain the court whenever they wished. After all, Wolsey, like everyone else in the country, was a servant of the King. When Henry didn't need to use Hampton Court, Wolsey could and did use it for his own purposes, including hosting lavish, large-scale events there. Whenever Henry wished to use one of Wolsey's houses, including Hampton Court, he would offer the Cardinal and his household one of his in return. It was only when Wolsey fell from power in 1528 that he was forced to surrender his ownership of the palace to the King. The land, however, was still under the ownership of the Knights of St John. It was during the 1530s, when the possessions of most monastic orders were seized by the crown, that Hampton Court became entirely a royal possession.

Which of Henry VIII's wives were killed here?

Although several people have died, either by accident or by natural causes, at Hampton Court, nobody has ever been executed here. Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard (whose ghost is said to roam the Haunted Gallery) were actually beheaded at the Tower of London. The only one of Henry's wives to have died at Hampton Court is Jane Seymour, who died here a few days after giving birth to Edward in 1537.

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Where did Henry VIII sleep?

Henry VIII's bedchamber was the last room in his set of state apartments. Although the first two rooms, the Great Hall and the Great Watching Chamber, still survive today, the other apartments were later changed or demolished to make way for later additions to the palace.

Where did the servants sleep?

It depended on their role. Higher-ranking servants would often sleep in those rooms allocated to the courtiers they served. Others might sleep on beds of straw in the Great Hall. Those who worked in the kitchens would often sleep there.

What did people eat at Hampton Court Palace in Tudor times?

Contrary to what most people think, people living in Tudor times had a varied and quite healthy diet. Everyone would eat a combination of meat, fish, grain (bread, pies, cakes) and vegetables. Exactly what foods you ate and how they were cooked would depend on your social status. The most expensive way of cooking meat, for example, was to roast it in front of a fire; the sheer volume of wood needed meant that only the wealthiest people could afford to do this.

Does anyone still live here?

Even though grace and favour was stopped in the 1970s, there are still grace and favour residents living at Hampton Court Palace (recipients are given their apartments until they no longer need them). You can see the names of ex-residents on the name plates next to some of the doors in Fountain Court. Although most of the old residents have now moved elsewhere, including to houses on the palace estate, a few still live in the palace.

Is Hampton Court Palace haunted?

It depends who you ask... nobody has ever found any proof that the palace is haunted, however, people have reported seeing ghosts (including soldiers, queens and cats...) here for hundreds of years, so who can tell?