

Area Overview

Parks and Green Spaces



South East London has a higher percentage of parks, woods and open spaces than any other area in the city. Here are some of the major ones:

Greenwich Park

Historic Greenwich Park is huge and rambling with a great uphill walk to the Observatory. Once at the top the views of London are amazing and people walking their dogs below you look part of a Lowry picture. Two minutes from the park are the marvellously eclectic market stalls (every weekend and very busy in the summer months), great for antiques, old clothes, crafts, furniture, textiles, jewellery - just about anything!

Dulwich Park

The park occupies 72 acres of land presented to the people of London by Dulwich College, together with land from Dulwich Court Farm and Ruston's Fields. In May, the Rhododendrons, as old as the park itself, are amazing. The many facilities include a boating lake, tennis courts (lessons available), riding facilities, the Recumbent Cycle centre (hire bikes by the hour) and a very snazzy café which attracts people throughout the year.



Crystal Palace

Crystal Palace Park has lovely walks (huge models of dinosaurs hiding in the wooded areas to catch you and the kids out) and a great Farmyard which is open all year round. They have pigs, sheep, cows, cockerels and hens, guinea pigs and rabbits and you can buy bags of food for the very fat goats who roam around (watch out if you have a picnic on the back of the buggy - they'll have it). During the summer they have pony rides and you can sometimes catch the big horses being shod.

Sydenham Woods

Lovely and unspoilt, Sydenham Woods is the place to go to really get away from the hurly burly. Next to a nature reserve, it is one of South London's woodland gems. In summer, it is the coolest place to be, literally; in winter, a frosty wonderland. Take Cox's Walk up from Dulwich Common to Sydenham Hill and discover the old railway which used to take visitors to Crystal Palace. It has been unused for decades but you can still walk the old track once a month, through the abandoned railway bridge. Great for walking dogs, kids, enjoying a picnic or simply chilling out.

Peckham Rye



Peckham Rye Park is more like an open common in some areas (great for exercising big dogs) but has lovely hidden away rose gardens, ponds and formal gardens. There are swings and slides, good football pitches and a popular one o'clock club housed in the midst of the greenery. Zippo's Circus visits every October (awaited with much anticipation) and there are other events throughout the summer.

Because Peckham is a designated area for regeneration, many of the local smaller parks are being overhauled and done up. One such is Warwick Park Gardens (behind Lyndhurst Grove and Lyndhurst Way). This much loved park is about to be improved

with landscaping, designated dog-walking and dog-free areas and a small playground for toddlers. There may even be a multipurpose surface which has been long awaited by the locally organised Saturday morning football club.

There are other parks such as Ruskin Park in Camberwell and Burgess Park in Peckham (best firework display for miles!) too many to mention here and if by chance you do get bored of all these Battersea Park and its kids zoo is 10 minutes from Camberwell or you can hop on the fast train from Peckham Rye to Victoria and walk (with your picnic) to one of London's most beautiful, St. James's.



South East London Areas

Dulwich

Including East Dulwich (SE22), Sydenham (SE26), Forest Hill (SE23)

Beside the Fountain crossroads in Dulwich village stands a milestone telling us that Whitehall is just over 4 miles away. Despite being so close to Central London, Dulwich still has the aura and charm of a real English village and is considered to be the "green oasis" of South London.

The ancient thoroughfare which separated the manors of Dulwich and Friern is now Lordship Lane, a haven of shops, both speciality and the large chains, restaurants, bars and all manner of local amenities and businesses. The area is renowned for its high quality schools, Dulwich College being the most famous. Established in 1619 by Edward Alleyn, a Jacobean actor and entrepreneur, the College has several famous old boys, among them the Antarctic explorer Shackleton and the writers Raymond Chandler, C S Forester and P G Wodehouse – the latter referred to the College as 'Valley Fields' in his books and described it as the setting of 'six years of unbroken bliss'.

Dulwich not only has very old schools - here you will also find Britain's oldest public art gallery, The Dulwich Picture Gallery was designed by Sir John Soane in 1811 to house a collection originally intended for King Stanislaus Augustus of Poland – he had abdicated by the time the collection was ready and could not take delivery! Mostly put together between 1790 and 1795, the paintings include treasures by Rembrandt, Rubens, Poussin and Gainsborough. The gallery reopened in 2000 after extensive refurbishment and in addition to its glorious permanent collection, it holds regular exhibitions. The fantastic, new restaurant is open every day except Monday but, be warned, you need to book on busy days. The Gallery also runs many courses, for adults, children and families, and there are regular lectures too.

The area is well served by train stations (East Dulwich, North Dulwich, West Dulwich and Sydenham Hill) providing regular services into Central London and the City. There are numerous buses too.

Peckham SE15

Including Nunhead

The London borough of Southwark has been the focus of one of the biggest urban renewal programmes in the UK. As a result of both private and public funding over recent years, this synergy of planning, funding and consultation process has enabled Southwark to undergo rapid and dramatic restructuring of its local economy, and none more so than Peckham.

Under the auspices of the Peckham Partnership and localised schemes such as the Bellenden Renewal Area, Peckham is being regenerated to the tune of £260m.

Two of the most outstanding achievements of recent years have been the establishment of the UK's first Healthy Living Centre, The Peckham Pulse, and the opening of the award winning Alsop and Stormer designed Peckham Library in May 2000. The Peckham Pulse exemplifies municipal architecture at its best with its light, airy and welcoming interior and complemented by the plethora of services on offer. The facility is designed to appeal to as wide a cross section of the community as possible and visitor figures have since topped the 300,000 mark.

The outstanding library is now considered to be one of the finest state-of-the-art buildings in the country. With its exterior copper cladding, suspended 'pods' within the main lending area, and the stunning views of London's skyline from the glass and chrome elevators, it has been a roaring and well deserved success with the local community it was designed to serve. These two buildings overlook the civic square where you will also find a very popular Farmer's Market every Sunday morning.

Standing alongside this burgeoning and innovative development you will still find a wealth of Period properties, particularly early and mid-Victorian villas and cottages, many of which lie within the bounds of designated areas of conservation. This is particularly true of Nunhead, famous for its cemetery and nature reserve, but also renowned locally for its period properties and

where the perfect Victorian cottage can still be found!

Peckham and its surrounds is extremely well served by transport links with Peckham Rye Station, Queens Road Peckham, Nunhead Station and Brockley Station offering services to Central London and the City. One of the most exciting prospects for the future of Peckham is the southern extension of the East London Line, the biggest building programme since the Jubilee Line extension. The plan is to build a new, short section of track linking the existing line from south of Surrey Quays to the South London Line between South Bermondsey and Queens Road Peckham. A new station will be inserted at Surrey Canal Road before trains continue on an all stations service to Clapham Junction. Hooray!! The project will also extend from the existing station at New Cross Gate onto the National Rail network south, giving commuters all station services to Crystal Palace and West Croydon.

Peckham Pulse



The first thing you notice is what a beautiful building this is. If you ever thought that municipal architecture was dull this proves otherwise (and I haven't even mentioned the stunning new library next door). The space is light and airy and welcoming. The facilities are modern and very well utilised. This is in fact the country's first Healthy Living Centre - you will find a beautiful big swimming pool, a smaller hydrotherapy pool (the floor can be raised and lowered to change the depth - tiny tots love it), a very trendy looking, high-tech gym that is in fact friendly and uncompetitive - everybody goes, not just the lycra lovelies! There's also a spacious studio where all manner of exercise classes are taught, a spa suite with Jacuzzi (bit too cosy for me) and sunbeds. A good cafe does the ubiquitous chips and more interesting baguettes etc.

Pool

Overlooking the pool is a modern ball adventure play area with a babies/toddler bit and a death-defying, practically vertical, slide for older kids! Upstairs, there is a mezzanine, where you can have children's parties incorporating use of the pool and the ball area.

Health Suite

Finally, there is the health suite which is a real community health centre with midwives, well-woman clinics, various alternative low cost therapies including massage, counselling and homeopathy.



Peckham Library

Designed by award-winning architects it restores your faith when you see what could so easily be an ordinary community building emerging as an innovative state of the art one with copper cladding, suspended 'pods' within the main library and a 'stop you in your tracks' orange hat on top !



It has been designed specifically to meet the needs of the local community (at last!) and will be a test bed for a range of new and innovative services; particularly in the area of IT. Apart from the main lending library (Saturday morning library visits with the kids will suddenly be the cool thing to do) there is a fantastic children's library with homework areas, Internet connections and an under 5's area.

Peckham library is also home to a dedicated Black and African-Caribbean Literature Centre, learning and study facilities for up to 50 people at a time, a training, career and open learning centre, a meeting room for hire, a first stop shop for access to council services and information, with trained specialist staff on

hand to help and finally a foyer cafe. Simply can't wait!

Brixton SW2

Including Tulse Hill, Streatham Hill

Apparently dating back to 1067, Brixton remained more or less untouched until residential developments began in the early 19th century, which lead eventually to what is now perhaps London's most vibrant neighbourhood.

Brixton has a lively and cosmopolitan street life and contains the largest shopping centre within the Lambeth borough, with proposals in hand for a new central development. The area is also renowned for its other leisure attractions such as the Academy music venue, the Ritzy cinema, the Fridge venue, and a good variety of restaurants. Locals flock to Brixton market, open daily and selling just about the best fresh produce and widest ranging foodstuffs in the whole of London.

Well served by transport links with Tube, trains and buses making Central London within easy reach.

Camberwell SE5

Including Myatt's Fields

Camberwell in many ways is the epitome of what people mean when they talk about London's "villages". Since the 11th century it has been a thriving community and is mentioned in the Domesday Book.

Camberwell Green at its heart is surrounded by a very diverse mixture of buildings including conservation areas containing some of London's finest Georgian terraces. Camberwell Grove is a good example, where development began in 1776. The earliest houses are at the foot of the hill on the east side, the latest are Grove Crescent, built in 1819.

The area has long held a reputation for the arts with Camberwell College of Arts and the South London Gallery, now owned and run by Southwark Council. Established in 1891, the gallery was designed to bring the best in contemporary art to working people and now enjoys an international reputation and famous in recent years for introducing the work of Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin.

Good transport links with trains (Denmark Hill, Loughborough Junction) serving the City and Central London and numerous buses.
