

Coach Potato Special

Royal Greenwich Thames History Watermans Hall



Cost £39.50

Based on coach travelling 30 miles to venue

Enjoy the best views of London from Observatory Hill
Your guide will identify the sites and building
Visit three of the most beautiful historic buildings in London
The Painted Hall & Chapel at Greenwich plus Watermen & Lightermen's Hall
With an option to explore Inigo Jones' Queens House

Free time at Greenwich for lunch before we cruise the River Thames from Greenwich to the City visiting the Georgian Waterman's Hall where you are met by your expert guide wearing his uniform as a winner of the famous Doggett's Coat and Badge race. Hear stories of his life on the river and how he won the oldest professional race in the world

A day of short walks downhill and level ground

Price includes Coach. All day Guide, River Thames cruise Greenwich to the Tower Entrance and expert guides to Painted Hall, The Chapel & Waterman's Hall

Greenwich has so much to offer. Your expert guide will describe the Painted Hall, its wonderful decoration and show you where Admiral Lord Nelson lay in state after his death 200 years ago.



The Painted Hall, probably the finest dining hall in the western world, is decorated with stunning paintings by James Thornhill. This was planned to be the retired sailors' hospital dining hall. Christopher Wren submitted the designs in 1698 and the roof and the dome above were in place five years later. Thornhill's decoration, by contrast, took nineteen years to complete. While Thornhill worked more and more pensioners were coming to Greenwich. Soon this great hall was too small to accommodate them and rooms in the basement had to be used. The Hall stood empty until January 1806, when the body of Admiral Lord Nelson was brought here to lie in state: he had been killed at the moment of his victory over

Napoleon's fleet at Cape Trafalgar. Soon afterwards the Hall became a naval museum where many pensioners made extra money by showing visitors round. In 1939 the Painted Hall was once again in use as a dining room. It remained in daily use until the Royal Navy's departure in 1998 and is now one of the most spectacular function venues in the country.

Thornhill's ambitious painting shows *Peace* and *Liberty* triumphing over *Tyranny*. Enthroned in heaven and with the *Virtues* behind them, are William and Mary themselves. Below William, clutching a broken sword is Louis XIV. Within the oval frame are the four seasons - Winter was modelled by one of the pensioners, John Worley, an energetic Greenwich pensioner still being punished for drunkenness and swearing at the age of 96. Beyond the arch is the Upper Hall. The Thornhill paintings here reflect Britain's triumph as a maritime power. The ceiling celebrates Queen Anne and her husband Prince George of Denmark. Figures representing Europe, Africa, Asia and America - the four corners of the world - acclaim them. Australia, the fifth "corner", still awaited discovery. *America* is dressed in the regalia of an Indian chief, while *Asia* is a camel, *Africa* a lion and *Europe* a white horse. Your guided tour will also include a visit to the beautiful Chapel of St Peter and St Paul designed by Wren and rebuilt after a fire in 1779.

Watermans Hall. Special permission has to be granted for you to visit the home of the Watermen and Lightermen City Company. Probably the best preserved hall in the city. The Hall was first mentioned in 1603 and in Hollars' View of the Thames in 1647 it is shown as being the mansion of Cold Harbour but when the Company actually took possession of it from Earl Gilbert is not recorded. The mansion was *completely destroyed* in the Great Fire of London and with it almost all the Company's records. The Company rebuilt on the same site in 1670 and again in 1721, eventually moving to the present Hall upon its completion in 1780. The architect of the existing hall, William Blackburn, designed a small but beautiful hall in Georgian style, comprising a Court Room, Parlour and offices. In 1939/45 war damage was sustained in the bombing, but happily not of an extensive nature, and reparations were completed in 1951. Ten years later the parlour was greatly enriched and a decorated ceiling introduced.

Doggetts Coat and Badge Race. Your guide is from a family of five generations of Thames watermen and a winner of the Doggetts Coat and Badge race the oldest continuing rowing race. The race came about after a famous Irish Comedian named Thomas Doggett, then manager of the Drury Lane Theatre, fell into the Thames whilst crossing the river at Embankment in 1715. A Waterman rescued Doggett and as a mark of gratitude he set up the Doggetts Coat and Badge Race. Each year Doggett put up a 'wager' to buy a traditional red coat and badge for the winner of the race. The Fishmongers Company now supports the race. The race begins at London Bridge and finishes at the Albert Bridge, passing under a total of 11 bridges en route. Your guide is a race winner and will be dressed in his uniform. The racers are all apprentices of the Watermen's Company of the City of London.

To win Doggett's was seen by others within the river Thames workforce as a great achievement and therefore a perceived ranking system arose - if you won the Doggetts Race you were seen as a better Waterman.