

Masts and monsters



A TV transmitter tower and dinosaurs combine on this gentle south London stroll. **Jo Vaughan** is your guide

TUCKED BEHIND the famous television transmitter mast which, at 719ft high, can be seen stretching into the sky from quite some distance, is Crystal Palace Park.

Located in a heavily-residential area of south London, the park is surprisingly scenic, quiet and... full of dinosaurs! Yes, you did read that right – thankfully, these pre-historic monsters are not real, just very good models. Add to this lakes, children's playgrounds, sports facilities (in the shape of the National Sports Centre), a concert stadium, woodland, picnic areas and cafés, and you should find plenty here to keep the whole family entertained.

Keeping to a written walk in an environment with so many unsigned walkways isn't that easy but, with that TV mast right beside the Club site, you really

shouldn't get lost for long. If you prefer a guided tour of the park, then call the Crystal Palace Museum on 020 8676 0700 and join one of those that takes place on the first Sunday of every month between April and October.

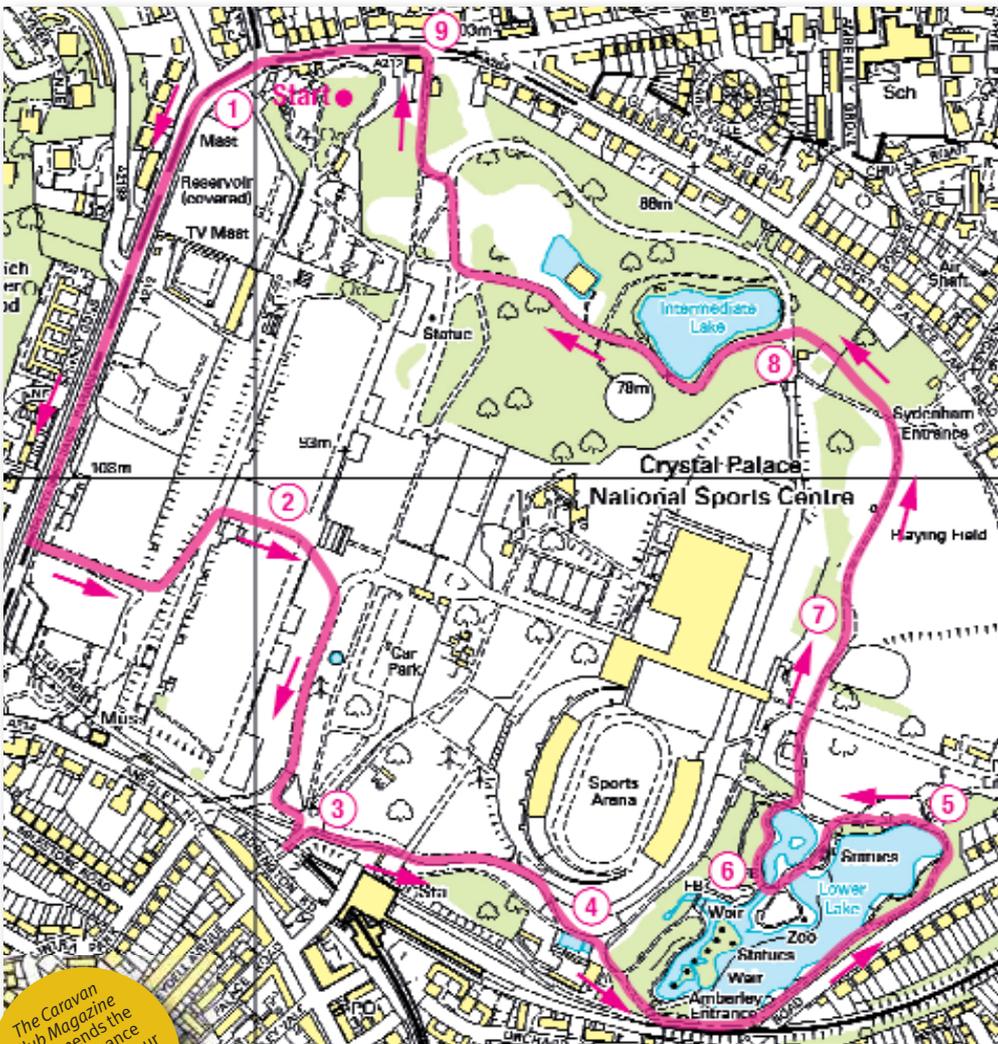
DIRECTIONS

1 At the entrance to the Club site, walk to the main road and turn left towards the Shell petrol station. Continue ahead until you reach a row of bollards on your left, just before the bus station. Turn left through these and walk up some steps and along the wide concrete alley. When you get to the terraces, veer left towards a statue. Soon, next to a sign marking 'Crystal Palace Park', veer right down the adjacent steps and



Ordnance Survey
Landranger Map 177

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then down another flight, before continuing ahead to a fence.

2 Turn right, following the fence to some more bollards. Pass these and, exiting the park temporarily, turn left along the road. Almost immediately, veer right to cross the road (towards some recycling bins) and continue walking in the same direction along the opposing pavement. Then keep right, leaving the line of the road, along a footpath, towards the sign for 'Crystal Palace National Sports Centre' (following a high brick wall).

3 Keeping to the footpath, pass the entrance to the sports centre. Descend some steps and keep straight ahead, passing the train station (and another 'Crystal Palace Park' sign) on your right. Continue past the athletics stadium which is on your left, following the public footpath which runs adjacent to the road but at a higher level.

4 Continue ahead at the yellow arrow, passing through two metal gates. At another yellow arrow, follow its direction slightly to the right (keeping a litter bin on your left). Immediately keep right again, and go through the park with its Darwin and the Dinosaurs Audio Trail (passing No 10). Almost immediately at the next

fork, veer slightly left and then right to follow the railings that run along the side of the lake, keeping the water to your left (look out for the dinosaurs on the islands).

5 At the end of the lake, follow the railings around to the left, then walk along the other side of the same lake, past some benches. Keep following these railings until you get to another path junction - take the left path, following the yellow arrow, then go left again at the statues of the stags. Keep left, continuing around the lake, but soon turn right, over a small hump-back bridge, past the information panel on the dinosaurs (still following the yellow arrow).

6 Veer right immediately after the bridge (the railings are on your right now). Continue to a wooden marker post at the end of the small lake. Go straight ahead, following the brown 'running-man' sign. At the next crossroad of paths, continue straight ahead (signposted 'Crystal Palace Station 1-mile, alternative route').

7 Pass the children's playground on your right and the 'HMS Crystal Palace' to your left. Continue straight ahead at the path's crossroads, leaving the main path for a muddy track. Immediately, veer slightly left - keeping to the left track which climbs a slight hill. Go straight ahead through the small patch of woodland until you can see some nice houses over a fence on your right and a tarmac path junction on your left. At the end of the muddy path, turn left (back to the same tarmac junction you could previously see) and then turn right to keep a partially-obscured lake on your right (there's a black litter bin on the left).

8 Continue towards the TV transmitter, past the partially-covered concert venue on your right. At a crossroads, next to a 'Heritage Trail 9' sign, walk ahead and continue as far as you can go, before veering right along a concrete pathway that soon takes you up a hill and out of the park (to the left of a green electricity box with red brick).

9 Go through Westwood Gate and then turn left along the pavement, beside the road. Go past a roundabout before turning left into Old Cople Lane and return to the Club site.



INFORMATION

Club site: Crystal Palace Caravan Club Site, Crystal Palace Parade, London SE19 1UF. Call 020 8778 7155. Open 18 March to 2 January 2012.

Distance: 3 miles/4.8km

Terrain: good pathways - one short (avoidable) stretch of muddy footpath

Number of stiles: 0

Essential equipment: map of Crystal Palace Park from places-to-go.org.uk/crystal_palace.htm

Level of difficulty: easy

Refreshments: near the children's play area

Toilets: near the children's play area

