

Reynolds, London

The Box

Although from Devon and maintaining his links with the West Country throughout his life, Reynolds loved the city and made London his home from the early 1750s onwards. The places where he lived, worked and socialised were primarily centred around Piccadilly and Leicester Square. This short walking tour connects some of the streets where he would have spent a great deal of his time and follows a circular route that starts at finishes at Leicester Square tube station.

Remember to wear comfortable shoes and allow at least an hour (or longer if you decided to spend some time at the National Portrait Gallery or Royal Academy). Take a break if you need to along the way – there are many different options for food and drink in this popular part of London.

- Take the tube to Leicester Square and leave the station via Exit 4 (Covent Garden) on to Cranbourn Street.
- Go left on exiting the station and walk down the road towards the pedestrian crossings. There is a small monument to author Agatha Christie near the crossings.



4 The Royal Academy of Arts

The Royal Academy is synonymous with Reynolds. He was one of its founding members in 1768 and its first-ever President. A statue of him, dating from 1931, by sculptor Alfred Drury (1856-1944) is located in front of the main entrance. The inscription on it was carved in 2002. Can you see the fountains near the statue? Installed in 2000, they are arranged in the pattern of the planets at the time of Reynolds' birth.

Reynolds combined his painting with running the Academy for some 20 years, helping to develop its theories and becoming its chief spokesperson. It was originally located in Pall Mall, before moving

1 Great Newport Street

Look to your left where you'll see a blue plaque marking the place where Reynolds once lived. Reynolds moved to No. 5 Great Newport Street in 1753 with his youngest sister, Frances. She lived with him as his housekeeper from the 1750s until the 1770s when they fell out and she was replaced by Reynolds' niece, Mary. This house was a work place as well as a home, with a gallery or 'shew room' and space for him to entertain.

- Turn around and cross over to the other side of Cranbourn Street.
- Take a right on to St. Martin's Lane.

2 St. Martin's Lane

This is the location where Reynolds established his portrait practice in the heart of London's artistic community following his 'Grand Tour' to Europe in 1752. It's believed he lived at No. 104 where the Duke of York's Theatre now stands.

- Walk to the end of St. Martin's Lane.
- Walk around to the right and cross over the road (Charing Cross Road) opposite the National Portrait Gallery which has just re-opened and has a number of works by Reynolds in its collections.
- Go right, walk a short distance around the back of the Gallery and then head down Irving Street which will bring you into Leicester Square.

5 The Literary Club

About two thirds of the way along Gerrard Street, on the left, you'll find the Xing Long Men Supermarket. Look to the left of the main door and you'll see a plaque on the wall dedicated to Reynolds and Dr Samuel Johnson. This is the site of the old Turk's Head Tavern where, from 1762-1784, the Literary Club they co-founded frequently met.

- Walk to the end of Gerrard Street and round to the right onto Newport Court.
- Take the second left onto Little Newport Street.
- You will see Leicester Square tube station at the end of the road.

3 Leicester Square

Reynolds lived at No. 47 Leicester Fields (now Leicester Square), in a grand house on the west side of the square, from 1760 until 1792. When he moved in he added studios and a picture gallery to the rear, refurbished it throughout and acquired fashionable furniture. He died here on 23 February 1792. Although the building has sadly been replaced, a plaque marking the spot can be seen high on the wall in between All Bar One and McDonalds. A bust of Reynolds was once located in the gardens in the middle of Leicester Square but has now been removed.

- Walk past McDonalds and take a left, heading towards Piccadilly Circus along Swiss Court and Coventry Street.
- Once you've passed Piccadilly Circus tube station cross over the road (use the crossing on your right) on to Piccadilly.
- Walk down the road past Air Street, Piccadilly Place and Swallow Street. The next turning on the right is Sackville Street – the location of the London home of John Parker II) of Saltram House in Devon. Parker was a good friend of Reynolds for many years and their meetings at his London house are well documented - both in Reynolds' own pocket books and in Parker family letters. Parker was even the recipient of a loan of £3,000 from Reynolds on 20 July 1777, secured on the property.
- Walk a little further along Piccadilly, and you'll arrive at the Burlington House – the home of the Royal Academy.

OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

Bond Street links Piccadilly to Oxford Street, and is the place where Reynolds dined in a pub called the Star and Garter Inn on 4 March 1771 with his friend, John Parker II (of Saltram). Not much further away, Mayfair's Conduit Street, which links Bond Street to Regent Street, is the place where John Parker II's parents (John Parker I and Lady Catherine) kept a London home. Lady Catherine passed away at the property on 11 August 1758. It is said that she gave a young Sir Joshua Reynolds his very first pencil!

St. Paul's Cathedral in the city of London is where Reynolds' funeral took place in 1792.

Further afield, if you ever find yourself in Richmond, you might like to know that Reynolds had a weekend home here called **Wick House, Richmond Hill**. The Grade II listed property is much changed since Reynolds' day but is located to the right of the Royal Star and Garter Home. The property has an excellent view, which Reynolds painted in 1780. It's said that when J.M.W Turner selected the location of his home in Twickenham, he chose it so he could see Wick House from his window.

to Somerset House and the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square before to its present location.

The annual discourses Reynolds gave to students were eventually published and remain with us as some of the earliest formal art lessons in England. Today the Academy's aim, in the words of its eighteenth-century founders, is 'to promote the arts of design' by presenting a broad range of visual art to the widest possible audience. Free and paid-entry exhibitions are on offer all year round. For more information about opening times and admission prices visit www.royalacademy.org.uk.

- Retrace your footsteps back to Piccadilly Circus and then towards Leicester Square along Coventry Street, turning left onto Wardour Street (by M&Ms London).
- Take the second right on to Gerrard Street, now in the heart of Chinatown.