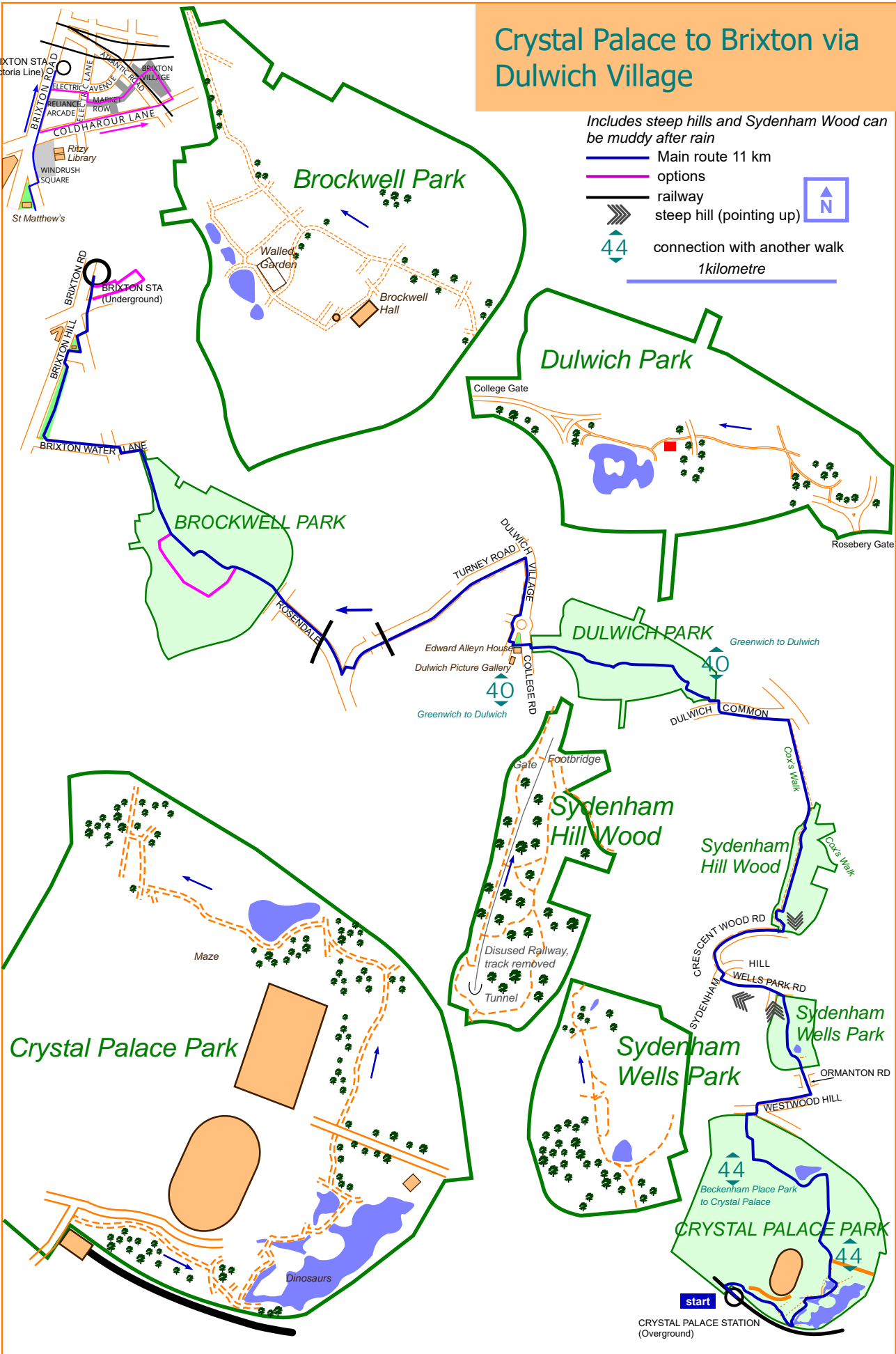


Crystal Palace to Brixton via Dulwich Village

Includes steep hills and Sydenham Wood can be muddy after rain

- Main route 11 km
- options
- railway
- steep hill (pointing up)
- connection with another walk
- 1 kilometre



walk notes

Crystal Palace to Brixton via Dulwich

This 11 km walk is mainly on footpaths, connecting 5 parks, but it includes a potentially muddy stretch in Sydenham Wood and has some steep hills.

Crystal Palace

The Crystal Palace and Park were built by Sir Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace Company between 1852 and 1855 to house the relocated building designed for the 1851 Great Exhibition in Hyde Park. Sadly the Crystal Palace itself was destroyed by fire in 1936. In the 1960s the National Sports Centre and Athletics Stadium were completed in the centre of the park. This walk takes in the southern part of the park and passes the dinosaurs. These life-size 'statues' were commissioned to accompany the Crystal Palace on its move to the park and unveiled in 1854. They were sculpted by Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins under the scientific direction of Sir Richard Owen, representing the latest scientific knowledge at the time. 21 distinguished guests dined in the belly of the Iguanodon before the opening. The models were Grade I listed in 2007. The walk also passes the maze. See walk 44 for the site of the palace with its fine views south and bust of Paxton. The park used to be serviced by two railway companies, however the high level Nunhead to Crystal Palace was closed in 1954 and part of it forms a short stretch of our walk. The Crystal Palace pneumatic railway was an experimental atmospheric railway that ran in the Park in 1864.

Sydenham Wells Park

The walk continues across Sydenham Wells Park. In the 1640s springs of water in what is now Sydenham Wells Park were discovered to have medicinal properties. Twelve wells were eventually opened, all still in existence in 1810, and crowds would come to drink the waters. Famous in the C17th and C18th, the spa was 'much frequented by the quality in the summer' according to John Evelyn; one of the visitors was King George III. It remained a spa until the early C19th, when the wells were covered by the church of St Philip in 1866, the site now housing a new church of 1983 and part of the Wells Park Estate. The campaign to acquire the land for the public began with a petition in 1895. In 1898 7 hectares were acquired by the LCC and the park was opened in 1901. The park today retains ornamental trees and shrubs; the water feature and rill planted with Juniper and

other shrubs; wooden shelter and kiosk beside the bowling green; a 1960s paddling pool system; serpentine paths; hollyhock, hornbeam, bedding displays. A serpentine path runs around the upper part of the rill that runs through an area of lawn planted with willow and other ornamental trees & shrubs.

Sydenham Hill Wood Nature Reserve

Sydenham Hill Wood forms part of the largest remaining tract of the old Great North Wood that once stretched from Deptford to Selhurst. The wood is home to more than 200 species of trees and plants as well as rare fungi, insects, birds and woodland mammals. The Nunhead to Crystal Palace (High Level) railway once passed through. There is also a Victorian folly, hidden in the wood.

Cox's Walk

Cox's walk was created by publican John Cox as a public path through the Fifty Acre Wood opposite his inn, The Green Man. With trees on either side, it became a short cut to the spa at Sydenham Wells. In 1739 Cox's son discovered a mineral stream in the grounds of the inn and opened pleasure gardens. Cox's Walk was acquired by Camberwell Vestry in 1898 and is now owned by Southwark Borough.

Dulwich

Dulwich College was founded by Edward Alleyn in 1619, with letters patent from King James I. Alleyn was an actor and an entrepreneur in the world of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre, a colourful and famous figure of his day. He bought the manorial estate of Dulwich for £35,000 in 1613.

The park was created by the Metropolitan Board of Works from former farmland and meadows. It was opened in 1890 by Lord Rosebery. In 2004–6, the park was restored to its original Victorian layout, following a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Brockwell Park

The original Brockwell Hall was in existence in Tudor times but a wealthy Ludgate Hill glass merchant John Blades, demolished it in 1811-13 and built a new one at the top of the hill. Some of the houses in Brixton Water Lane were built from 1815 for estate staff. When the Brockwell estate came on the market, Thomas Bristowe, MP for Norwood, took a Bill through Parliament to create the Park, led the committee to negotiate the price and raised the funds from contributions from local authorities and the community. The park opened in 1892. A major attraction is the Brockwell Park Walled Garden.