

Visitor Welcome Volunteering at Chiswick House & Gardens

The Visitor Welcome Volunteer role is all about people: giving a warm welcome to visitors, giving directions and assistance, and engaging them with the stories of this place. Volunteers work alongside staff to deliver a consistent experience and help look after our historic collection. Together we provide wonderful visits.

You will be based in both Chiswick House and the Conservatory, which leads to the Kitchen Garden. In 2024, the Kitchen Garden is open to the public from 28th March – 27th October, and Chiswick House is open to the public from 23rd May – 29th September, on Thursday – Sunday, 10:30am-3:30pm, with last entry half an hour before closing.

You do not need to be a history expert to join the team – enthusiasm and a friendly demeanour are key! We will provide all the information you need.

Why does Chiswick House need your support?

Chiswick House and Gardens is a registered charity, responsible for the management of the 18th Century, Grade I listed villa, the 65-acre Grade I listed gardens, the Conservatory, and the Kitchen Garden. As a small charity, we rely on our volunteers to maintain the estate and engage new audiences with our history. We need friendly and enthusiastic people to help give an inviting and warm welcome to visitors of all ages and backgrounds, provide an overview of the day's activities and share information about Chiswick House & Garden's history.

What will you be doing?

Stewarding

- Welcoming visitors to the House, Conservatory, and Kitchen Garden, and helping with access needs.
- Helping visitors set up and use the audio guides around the House.
- Gently reminding visitors of our "House Rules"; some things cannot be touched, photography is permitted in some rooms, and we encourage visitors to be mindful of large bags. This helps to protect historic furniture and artwork.

Interpretation

- Sharing the stories of Chiswick House and Gardens, with visitors of all ages and backgrounds.
- Pointing out key aspects of the House collection and putting them in context for visitors.
- There are opportunities to deliver Spotlight Talks, 5-10 minutes of more in-depth information to a small audience.
- You can train as a tour guide, delivering House or Garden tours to both public and private groups.

Events

- Filming and events are our main sources of income. Volunteering during these activities involves directing visitors, providing visitor information, and "invigilating" – monitoring film crews to ensure the buildings and collection aren't damaged!

Retail

- Welcoming visitors and regulars, operating the straightforward, card-only till system to sell fresh produce at our produce stand.

How much time will you be expected to give and when?

We ask that you volunteer approximately one day per fortnight, ideally on a regular day. We ask for a commitment period of two months following your induction and training. Shifts are either a full day (10:15am-3:30pm with a half-hour break) or a half day (either 10:15am – 12:45pm, or 12:45pm – 3:30pm).

What are the requirements of a Visitor Welcome volunteer?

- Confidence to speak to visitors of all ages and backgrounds, one to one.
- A willingness to learn more about the history of Chiswick House and Gardens.
- To have access to the internet and an email account to stay up to date with us and sign up for shifts.

What will we expect from you?

- To arrive on time for a daily briefing (at 10:15 am for morning and full day shifts, or 12:45 pm for afternoon shifts).
- To attend an induction before starting volunteering, and relevant training.
- To understand and follow our security, safety, and evacuation procedures.
- Be supportive of other volunteers, staff, and members of the public, and have a good sense of humour!

What can you expect from us?

- To be treated fairly and with respect as a valued member of the team and be appreciated for your contributions.
- To be provided with ongoing training including Health and Safety, and historical context.
- Free entry to Chiswick House and Gardens for you and one guest, and discounts in the Shop and Café.
- Free English Heritage membership when you complete up to 60 hours of volunteering (membership cards are distributed in March, and the membership lasts for one year).
- Reimbursement of travel costs up to £5 per shift.
- Opportunities to meet and socialise with other Chiswick House & Gardens volunteers, including twice-annual volunteer parties.

If you are interested in volunteering at Chiswick House or have any further queries regarding this role, please contact Philippa by email at volunteering@chgt.org.uk quoting 'Visitor Welcome Volunteer'. There is no need to send us a CV or cover letter – as long as you are interested and meet these requirements, we are excited to hear from you.

This document is intended as a guide to volunteering at Chiswick House and is not legally binding.