

# Pub promenade



Time **2½ hours**  
Start **Forest Hill station**  
Finish **Sydenham station**  
Miles **4.6**



**Michael Hodges** encounters nature, Victorian engineering, the birthplace of colour television, glam rock and, most importantly, pubs

## 1 FOREST HILL STATION

This is more of a pub climb than a pub crawl, snaking up, along and then down the ridge that defines the south-east London skyline. Much of this corner of south-east London – Forest Hill and Sydenham – was common land and dense woods until recently. If **Forest Hill station** looks unimpressive it's because a German flying bomb blew the tower off in 1944. Cross the road to **The Capitol**, formerly a 1920s cinema then a bingo hall, now a Wetherspoons pub. You'll find a small altar-like tribute to local boy **David Bowie** inside.

## 2 HORNIMAN MUSEUM

Walk up London Road to the **Horniman Museum**, given to Londoners in 1901 by tea millionaire Frederick John Horniman. Turn left for the steep pull up Sydenham Hill. Skirt the top of **Dulwich Woods**; dank basements overgrown with creepers are all that remains of the large Victorian houses that once stood on the right. Go into the **Dulwich Wood House pub**. The beer garden backs on to art-deco house **Six Pillars**. On the other side of the road is the villa where **John Logie Baird** invented colour TV.

## 3 CRYSTAL PALACE

Staying with television, follow Sydenham Hill on to Crystal Palace Parade with south London's Eiffel Tower, the **tall television mast**, in front of you. On your right, views across London. On your left, the site of the Crystal Palace and Kent beyond. Beneath your feet are the remains of the palace's tiled



*The White Hart (top right), Dulwich Wood House (above right) and the Horniman Museum (above)*

entrance hall. Keep going along Church Road until you come to the **White Hart**. The food is good, there is an eccentric back yard and it is, I'm pretty sure, the only pub in London with a vintage clothes shop inside – the excellent **Hart Vintage** (one of *Time Out's* top 100 shops). This area's great change came with two Victorian innovations – the railways and Sir Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace. Featuring a spectacular glass and iron building, the largest fountains ever built and the world's first dinosaur theme park, the Crystal Palace and park beneath were the wonder of the day. Although the palace burned down in



1936, much of the original layout can still be seen.

## 4 BRUNEL'S WATER TOWER

Walk back to Crystal Palace Park and the Anerley Hill entrance.

Wander through the flower gardens and you'll emerge by the **Crystal Palace Museum** and the remains of **Isambard Kingdom Brunel's water tower** (the top-hatted engineer was brought in to fix the water pressure). Watch out for used condoms. Now walk through the park to the Penge Gate.

## 5 DINOSAURS

Depending which way you go, you'll either see **concrete dinosaurs** or the grade II-listed **National Sports Centre**, an elegant example of early-1960s modernism. Step on to Penge High Street. After a few yards you'll see the **Bridge Tavern** under a fine Victorian arched brick railway bridge. If it's a bright day, there's a very large beer garden, with barbecues at weekends and bank holidays.

## 6 SYDENHAM STATION

Come out and walk up to Lawrie Park Road on the right. At the end of the road turn right and down to **The Railway** by Sydenham station. The landlord is Irish, so raise a Guinness in memory of the many navvies who worked on the Palace and the railways and made this walk possible. Then, catch the train one stop back to Forest Hill and start all over again.



**CULTURE STOPS** **The Horniman Museum** 100 London Road, SE23 (020 8699 1872). Open daily 10.30am-5.30pm. Adm free.  
**Crystal Palace Museum** Anerley Hill, SE19 (020 8676 0700). Open Sat-Sun 11am-4.30pm. Adm free.