# The Georgian Story Audio Tour

# Hampton Court Palace

## Overview

Step into the world of the Georgian kings in the 18th century.

## Stop 1 The Georgian Story

### Narrator

This tour is in the Baroque part of the Palace. It starts from the Queen's Stairs. There's an image of it on your screen. You can follow the signs to The Georgian Story and ask our Warders for directions. When you're ready to begin, play the next track.

## Stop 2 Introduction

### Narrator

You are about to enter a very special world. The 18th Century Georgian Apartments include not just public rooms, where grand occasions of state took place, but also private ones. We'll be walking in the footsteps of Kings and Queens. We'll be experiencing where they held court, but also where they really lived. If you want to find out more about any of the stories you hear today, then do stop and talk to one of our very knowledgeable State Apartment Warders. And on our tour today, we'll be accompanied by Hampton Court Palace's very own experts, including Chief Curator Lucy Worsley.

### Lucy Worsley

Welcome to the Georgian Age. You’re standing on the Queen’s Staircase. The Georgian Period begins in 1714 with the Hanoverian succession. The Monarchs we are talking about here are King George I, King George II, his son, and his rather brilliant wife, Queen Caroline. These stairs went up to her apartments.

Now this was originally a Tudor part of the palace. Actually, it was apartments built for Anne Boleyn. But what you are standing in now isn’t Tudor at all!

The shell of the room was built in the Stuart period - that’s in the late 17th century - and this new palace was constructed for them by Sir Christopher Wren. And it was finished off by the Georgian Monarchs here at Hampton Court.

### Narrator

Combining Wren's work with Georgian splendour made this part of the palace quite different from the others, and that starts right here on this staircase. Looking around the walls and up to the ceiling, what you see here is still exactly what the Georgians would have seen as they climbed these stairs.

### Lucy Worsley

So this stupendous, fantastic ceiling in here was created by William Kent. He was the favourite designer of these Georgian monarchs.

And these Hanoverians came over from the German state of Hanover in 1714. That’s where they were from. And they brought with them a clue, a reminder of that. If you look up in the corner of the room. Can you see the white horse? That is the symbol of the state of Hanover.

### Narrator

Now, let's take our first step into the Georgian world. Follow the signs to The Georgian Story and enter through the tall doors at the top of the staircase.

## Stop 3 Queen’s Guard Chamber

### Narrator

Welcome to the Queen's Guard Chamber. Curator Sebastian Edwards.

### Sebastian Edwards

We are now entering the Queen’s Guard Chamber which was the traditional room where a monarch displayed all their arms and armour to impress and put fear into their members of court. Look around you and you will see there’s nothing on the walls and that’s because they never finished the job. But it was an important room – it’s the first threshold into the State Apartments for all visitors; and only those in favour would be allowed to proceed into the rooms ahead.

### Narrator

These rooms were guarded by the Watch – so called because they kept watch all through the night to protect the monarch. Though it feels large and spacious, this room would often have been packed with people hoping to gain an audience with the Royal Family – most often in vain.

### Sebastian Edwards

As you move through the rooms, fewer and fewer people were granted access towards the monarch. Your rank and favour with the monarch, even how you dressed, and how you deported yourself - your etiquette - determined how far you would get. And to reflect the intimacy and significance of the rooms, they would get smaller, and more and more splendid as you went forward.

### Narrator

Are you in or out of favour at court? Is your name on the list? Will the guards let you through?

Before we try our luck, if you'd like to know more about the huge fireplace here, select the option on your screen. Otherwise, present your credentials to the Watch, and move on into the next room.

## Stop 3a Large Fireplace

### Sebastian Edwards

With such an enormous fireplace you would need an enormous fire, which was a luxurious thing to have in its own right. And in order to make such a large fire draw well and burn properly, you would raise the logs off the ground on “firedogs”, large pieces of iron. And in this case they're very splendid ones, made in Venice in the early 17th century, with the figures of the ancient roman god Mars and Venus, the goddess of love, decorating them.

## Stop 4 Queen’s Presence Chamber

### Narrator

This room is called the Queen's Presence Chamber, because it's the first place where you might, if you were very lucky, be in the presence of royalty. Like the Guard Chamber, it would have been full of people wanting to meet the new King, and his son and daughter-in-law. So, after centuries of English rule, why did Britain suddenly have a King from Germany? Lucy Worsley.

### Lucy Worsley

So who were these Georgian monarchs? In the year 1714, Queen Anne died. She was the last of the Stuarts; and she died with no surviving children, and that’s despite the fact that the poor woman went through 17 pregnancies! All of her near-relatives were Catholics and because of the Act of Settlement, the Protestant aristocracy had decided that they only wanted a protestant monarch. So at that point they looked back up the family tree of the Stuarts in search of a protestant branch of the family.

### Narrator

You can find an introduction to the Stuart and Georgian dynasties on the wooden barrier in this room. Over 50 candidates had been passed over before they found someone who fitted the bill.

### Lucy Worsley

They had to look really quite a long way, but they ended up in Hannover, in Germany, where there was a protestant potential king. His name then was ‘Geh-org’ and he was Elector of Hanover; and in 1714 he was invited to come over to become King George of Great Britain. That was the Hanoverian succession.

### Narrator

Time to move on. Turn left at the crossroads, into the staircase landing and select the next track when you get there.

## Stop 5 Staircase Landing

### Lucy Worsley

You’re now in a funny little passage room, lots of doors here. And this is slightly behind-the-scenes. This is the sort of place where you might have seen the little Princesses – George and Caroline’s children – running in and out of the apartment to their own rooms or you might have spotted servants in here.

### Narrator

If you'd like to know more about the people in the paintings here, select the option on your screen. Otherwise, move on into the next room, the Public Dining Room.

## Stop 5a Ante Room, Portraits of Mehemet and Walpole

### Narrator

First, look for the gentleman in the red coat, on the left hand wall. Here's Lucy Worsley to tell us about him.

### Lucy Worsley

He is called Mehemet, and he had an extraordinary life story. He was born in Greece, He was brought up a Muslim, then he was captured by Christian soldiers from the Habsburg Empire and he ended up being taken to Hannover in Germany. And he entered the service of the Elector of Hanover. Then in 1714 when this Elector of Hanover became King George I of Great Britain, Mehemet – his valet – came with him, ended up living and working at the British Royal Court.

Now, although Mehemet was only a lowly valet, he was a very important person at court, because he had this privileged access to the King: he helped him to get dressed in the morning. And this meant that a lot of people asked Mehemet to ask the King for favours. But because he was so powerful, a lot of other people were jealous of him.

### Narrator

Now turn to the opposite wall, and the picture next to the door you came in by.

### Lucy Worsley

The portrait of the gentleman with the rather florid red face, the wig and the golden suit, is Sir Robert Walpole. He was the longstanding Prime Minister of Kings George I and George II. Sir Robert Walpole had a hearty respect for the cleverness – shall we say – of George II’s wife, Queen Caroline. He knew that she was the person to go and see if he wanted to get business done at court. He would say, ‘I have the right sow by the ear’.

### Narrator

Walpole's impact on British politics was incredibly significant. He still holds the record as the longest serving Prime Minister, in British history – an uninterrupted term of 20 years.

## Stop 6 The Public Dining Room

### Narrator

Take a moment to take in this scene. The magnificent paintings, the huge dining table, the gleaming place settings and the ornate folded napkins. This large dining room was designed to impress and had a very specific purpose. The rail around the table, reconstructed from descriptions in the historic records, gives us a clue. Sebastian Edwards:

### Sebastian Edwards

The slightly unusual rail around the table was to prevent the crowds that came to watch on ‘public days’, as they were known, from getting too close to the monarch, and heaven help them from touching the monarch or perhaps even trying to steal the food or perhaps the silver. One of the first things that George I did on coming to Hampton Court and completing the Queen’s apartments was to create a grand public dining room for the fashion of public dining which was common at all the courts in Europe at that time.

### Narrator

Inviting a crowd to watch you eat sounds rather odd to us today. Food Historian Marc Meltonville can tell us more.

### Marc Meltonville

Public dining for monarchs is the social media of the time. You need to see the King, you need to see the Queen. You want to look at their health. What are they eating? What are they wearing?

### Sebastian Edwards

George I was a surprisingly shy and reluctant monarch and it took him a while to get used to the idea of public dining.

He seemed to have ate with a very small crowd of people, perhaps even on his own on occasions in this enormous great room, surrounded by his servants with dish upon dish coming towards him on the table.

### Marc Meltonville

We are looking at luxury and one of the luxuries in food is choice. Most people in the world then had no choice. They ate the same thing day after day. When you get to noble dining, royal dining you get choice. So instead of having a menu like we have in a restaurant today, where you choose something from a list he got to choose from the whole lot laid out in front of him.

### Narrator

Now let's move on. Follow the floor matting into the next room.

## Stop 7 Queen’s Privy Chamber

### Lucy Worsley

Welcome to the Queen’s privy chamber. This is the room in which you might, in Georgian times, have had the chance of actually talking to a royal person.

### Narrator

The first thing you'll notice in here are the two thrones, which look very different. When George I was abroad, his son George, Prince of Wales and his wife, Princess Caroline would hold court and receive visits from ambassadors to the court on the King's behalf. The one on the right is the 18th Century throne used by Prince George - the one on the left represents the shape of the lost original of Caroline's throne.

As a visitor to the Palace, you may be wondering why most of these rooms look so empty, with just a few pieces of grand furniture.

### Lucy Worsley

There’s very little furniture in the palace because when it was party night, these rooms would literally be packed shoulder to shoulder. There’s a description of the court gathering, which I really love, as stinking and sweating in abundance. A lot of these people would know each other already. Court factions were political, yes, but they were also social in origin.

### Narrator

This room would have seen quite a few of these occasions.

### Lucy Worsley

Imagine it at night, with the candles lit, with the mirrors sparkling, with the ladies coming in in their court dresses that are fantastically elaborate, very heavy, widely hooped skirts, and they would have glittered. Georgian furniture is gilded and Georgian clothing is sequinned, all so that it would glint at candle light.

### Narrator

Our journey as courtiers continues, and it's time for the evening's entertainment. Move on into the next room.

## Stop 8 Queen’s Drawing Room

### Narrator

As you come into this room, take in the sumptuous decoration on the walls and ceiling. Curator Brett Dolman can tell us about it:

### Brett Dolman

The walls and ceiling are covered in the grand Baroque approach to interior design. This was a flamboyant style, much in vogue throughout the late 17th and early 18th centuries, replacing tapestries as the trendiest way to decorate the most important rooms in your house.

### Narrator

In here, you'll also notice the harpsichord, a replica of a 17th century instrument. Some of the music you may hear in this room is by George Frideric Handel, the favourite composer of George I and George II. King George I didn't get on with his son, the future George II, and he in turn disliked his own son, Frederick, Prince of Wales. But while other courtiers scrambled to curry favour and take sides, Handel managed to stay close to the royal family across generations. Stately Drawing Rooms like this were a space for entertaining.

### Sebastian Edwards

The courtiers were standing in a circle waiting for the Prince and the Princess who would approach them and converse with them, provided they had been introduced in the first place.

### Narrator

Some less formal gatherings could take place in the evenings, with courtiers allowed to sit rather than stand, and invited to do some gambling. But even then there were rules, etiquette - and real risks.

### Marc Meltonville

The games at court here look very genteel, but really they are all gambling and these were sums of money that were unimaginable to ordinary people outside of the court. You could lose the equivalent to a thousand pounds and people’s salaries ten times over, just gone on one throw of a dice; and something like this could break a courtier. You can’t be seen to stop gaming when the Prince is in the room, so you’re losing money hand over fist and wondering whether you’re going to have to sell the estate.

### Narrator

Before you leave this room, feel free to sit down at one of the gaming tables and try your hand at one of the 18th century games that have been laid out for you. It's perhaps best to avoid staking any money on them, though!

## Stop 9 Queen’s Bedchamber

### Narrator

In the 18th Century, a State Bedchamber was not just a place to sleep, but an important place to meet the monarch in a less formal setting. Political conversations would have been held here, and the most important courtiers could be invited to a special ceremony – the morning reception, or “levée”. Sebastian Edwards.

### Sebastian Edwards

The morning levée and it's evening counterpart, the couchée, meaning to get up in the morning and to go to bed in French, came about as a result of the length of time it took to dress the King...and as that ritual dressing was taking place, some of the members of the court pressed to come into the King's bedchamber and to watch him get dressed. And on those occasions the King would have private conversations with the most intimate members of his court.

### Narrator

This bed was made for show and was probably never slept in – the King and Queen have private bedchambers nearby. It was actually the state bed of George and Caroline when they were Prince and Princess of Wales, made in 1715. It was principally a symbol of a bed, a backdrop to state occasions, in a court where some controversial events took place. Curator Brett Dolman tells us more.

### Brett Dolman

It was in a bedroom, similar to this one, where in 1717 a row over the christening of George and Caroline’s new-born baby became a complete falling-out between the King and his son. The court was split down the middle, and George and Caroline were banished from court with their infant son and young daughters taken into the custody of the King.

### Narrator

You'll hear more of that particular story in the next room. If you'd like to hear more about the gilded bed rail or the spectacular ceiling here select the options on your screen.

## Stop 9a The Gilded Bed Rail

### Sebastian Edwards

Perhaps the rarest thing in the bedroom is this carved and gilded wooden bed rail. This was used to keep the people away from the royal person, and the bed...this rail would have had gates in the middle for the Prince and his servants alone to enter. George had a simple gold wire and cedar wood screen, but this amazing example is thought to have been made much earlier, for King Charles I, in about 1640.

### Narrator

If you look carefully, you'll see the screen has carved “C”s on it, for Charles, which have been crudely made into G’s. This is because it was reused by George I, in the 1720s, before the royal levée went out of fashion.

## Stop 9b Painted Ceiling by James Thornhill

### Brett Dolman

A Royal Bedroom needs an appropriate theme for its decoration. George I employed James Thornhill to decorate this room in 1715. Antonio Verrio had died in 1707 and the position of senior court mural painter was very much up for grabs. Thornhill won the commission and went on to become the first English painter to be knighted for his services.

The centrepiece tells the story of Aurora, the Goddess of the Dawn, and her attempted abduction of Cephalous, the mortal shepherd with whom she had fallen in love. Aurora’s aged husband Tithonus is still asleep underneath the blanket of the night along with Morpheus, God of dreams, with his poppy headdress.

Now this is part of a much longer myth about trust and faith between married couples. The story may have been particularly appropriate for George I who had after all imprisoned his wife for her adultery. Perhaps there was a message here, for his own son and daughter-in-law.

## Stop 10 Queen’s Gallery

### Narrator

Move into this magnificent long gallery, filled with beautiful tapestries and ornate vases.

### Sebastian Edwards

We are now standing in the Queen’s Gallery. This was the first private space in the Royal apartments. It could be used as a place to exercise when the weather was bad or to promenade. And on certain occasions, it was used as a grand entertaining space. But mostly, this room was used to relax in or to have discussions between members of the Royal Family. On some occasions, the King himself would come here to discuss things with Prince George or Caroline.

### Lucy Worsley

He might well have come in here to give them a telling off. The most ridiculous quarrel they had happened in 1717 when Caroline, Princess of Wales, had just given birth to yet another George, a little baby; and the christening was gate-crashed by the Duke of Newcastle.

### Narrator

The Duke was actually made godfather by the King, and sent to the christening, against the will of the Prince of Wales. Though only those present know exactly what happened, Lucy Worsley recounts one popular version of the evening's events:

### Lucy Worsley

Caroline’s husband, the Prince of Wales, did not want this nasty old Duke at the christening so he said to him ‘I will find you later’. Unfortunately the Prince of Wales spoke with such a strong German accent. What the Duke of Newcastle heard was ‘I will fight you’, and he took this as a challenge to a duel. The Duke of Newcastle went running after the King and he said ‘Your son has challenged me to a duel in your palace. What are you going to do?’ And the King said, I’m going to expel my son and daughter-in-law right out of the Royal Palaces.

Finally, three years after the stupid christening quarrel, King George I and his son were eventually reconciled and they sort of tolerated each other for the rest of his reign.

### Narrator

Move on into the next room.

## Stop 11 George II and Queen Caroline

### Narrator

We've now left the public apartments. Walking through this room, you can see portraits of the second generation of the Georgian dynasty, who used these private apartments more than George I. Prince George and Princess Caroline became King and Queen in 1727.

### Lucy Worsley

They came and went, as Royal people always do. They didn’t live permanently in any one particular palace. But as you walk through these rooms today, it’s the spirit of Caroline that really dominates. I think she’s a really brilliant woman.

Queen Caroline had a significant political impact. She spoke English better than either her husband or her father-in-law, and she had something that they didn’t have. She had charm. She was able to slightly, slowly win over the British courtiers in support of these strange new Kings and Queens from Germany.

This room was used by the Ladies of the Bedchamber who were Caroline’s top female servants. They were the closest thing she had to friends.

### Narrator

If you'd like to hear more about Caroline's courtiers, select the option on your screen. You are about to enter the private world of Caroline and her closest courtiers.

## Stop 11a Henrietta Howard

### Lucy Worsley

Now the Ladies of the Bedchamber were technically servants, but they were pretty grand. They were all aristocrats in their own right. Underneath them was a lesser rank of servants called the ‘Women of the Bedchamber’ and those were the ones who actually did the work of physically getting Caroline, the Princess, dressed.

### Narrator

Have a look at the image on your screen.

### Lucy Worsley

One of Caroline’s ‘Women of the Bedchamber’ was a woman of the bedchamber in another sense as well, this particular lady, whose name was Henrietta Howard was also Caroline’s husband’s mistress. The court as a whole were pretty pleased that their German speaking master had chosen an English mistress, at least, they thought, she’d help improve his English conversation.

## Stop 12 Private Drawing Room

### Narrator

This is the first main room of the private apartments, where the royal family really lived while in residence here. The setting is now less formal, there are books, cards and porcelain on the tables, and the room would have been lit with candles. Joint Chief Curator Tracy Borman tells us more.

### Tracy Borman

In contrast to the public drawing room, this is the private one. And only a few of the most highly favoured courtiers would have made it over the threshold to join Queen Caroline in playing cards, gambling, gossiping and possibly plotting as well.

As well as surrounding herself with people, Queen Caroline liked to surround herself with books. She was a very learned lady - one of the most intelligent Queens we’ve ever had. Her gatherings tended to bring together intellectuals, scientists, great thinkers from across the world, and that’s reflected here in her private drawing room.

It would have all happened here in what is an incredibly intimate space. And I think you really do get a sense of the Georgian court here and how it operated. Because at Hampton Court there weren’t just the public assemblies, the great gatherings in the State Rooms, it was also about what happened in the evenings. And there tended to be sort of private parties where only a few favourites were invited.

### Narrator

It seems we have been truly favoured by the Queen, to be counted among such company. Move on into the next room when you're ready.

## Stop 13 Private Bedchamber

### Narrator

The King and Queen had separate bedchambers. Tracy Borman has insights into their relationship:

### Tracy Borman

George II’s relationship with his wife Caroline was the opposite to what you would expect in royal history. He certainly kept mistresses, but he did that out of duty, and actually adored his wife, was passionate about Caroline, said that no other woman was fit to buckle her shoe; and that was borne out in all of his actions.

As soon as he got back to court from being away, he would whisk her away to her private bedchamber, much to the amusement and shock actually of the courtiers waiting beyond.

The King had quite a nifty shortcut to get from his own apartments through to his wife’s private bedchamber, and he could do that quite discretely without being seen.

But as for his mistresses, George realised he had to have a mistress. It was expected for a Prince of Wales and then a King of England to have a mistress. So he did that bit out of a sense of duty, but always with a bit of reluctance and almost apology to Caroline.

### Narrator

George II and Caroline's marriage produced 8 surviving children, and during her pregnancies Caroline would have spent a great deal of time in this room.

### Tracy Borman

Now Queen Caroline had a lot of children and for each birth she observed English Royal tradition whereby a Royal wife when she’s in her eighth month would go into what was known as a confinement or ‘lying in’ so she would be in complete seclusion from the rest of the court and served only by ladies. Even natural light was kept out of the apartments because it was believed to be bad for the child, so this was the function of the Private bedchamber.

## Stop 14 Private Bathroom

### Narrator

Even in a room as intimate as her bathroom, Queen Caroline was never really alone.

### Tracy Borman

So this is Caroline’s private dressing room, bathroom and closet; and actually bathrooms were quite a new fad during the Georgian period. In the past, people just had a bath brought into their chambers.

But Caroline wanted to do things differently. So she had a separate bathroom with a screen separating it off from the rest of her apartments. And there were some lovely descriptions of Caroline who loved the ritual of bathing and would have worn a bathing gown and cap in the bath to preserve her modesty. The bath would also have been lined with linen. This was to stop the royal body getting splinters.

### Narrator

There would have been a constant bustle of her closest servants preparing everything for her, to get ready for the day ahead.

### Tracy Borman

It was quite a military operation to give the queen a bath. Her ladies, such as Henrietta Howard who was also her husband’s mistress, would have carried the hot water up in buckets and then kept filling the bath to keep it nice and warm. The water would have stayed hot because there was a fire nearby; and after the bath, or sometimes before, Caroline would have cleaned her teeth. Now this was done with a sponge and warm water and would take about four or five minutes of brushing.

## Stop 15 Water Closet

### Narrator

This is Queen Caroline’s water closet – one of very few purpose-built toilets in the palace from this time. She would have gone through the door at the far end of the room into her water closet, attended by her women of the bedchamber.

Let's not linger in here. Move on as soon as you are able.

## Stop 16 Private Dining Room

### Narrator

You may have noticed that almost every room has a fireplace. Imagine the crackling warmth from them throughout this long stretch of rooms, and the smell of the wood smoke. We are now in the dining room. Marc Meltonville.

### Marc Meltonville

This is George and Caroline’s private dining room and the first thing you notice is it’s a much smaller, more intimate room. And to dine away from people is a real luxury. And the luxury is just added to because everything here is sumptuous.

The food on this table would be laid in courses, but when we think of a course we think of one dish being given to us. That’s a long way off in dining history. Here all of the dishes for each course – 17, 18, even 20 – are laid out in front of you so that you can choose the things you want. You can pick the items that you think go together. No one is here to tell you what to eat or in what order. You take those dishes and then when you’re finished the table is cleared and another course of sumptuous dishes is brought to you.

You might notice though that there are no glasses on the table. If you’re helping yourself, especially with those huge sleeves you see in the paintings, you are just going to knock your glass over. No, the glasses are going to be held by your servant.

In the next room you have a side board with all the bottles and glasses and running water to rinse everything out. When you want to drink, you simply call for it and a footman brings you that glass. You take a sip, a little, some, all of it, then hand the glass back. Next time you call for a drink, it will be a full glass, clean again.

### Narrator

You can take a closer look at these glasses in the next room, and then, when you're finished, pass through into the final room, the Oratory.

## Stop 17 Oratory

### Narrator

This room was Queen Caroline's private Oratory. For those who could afford it, it was very common to have private prayer rooms. The Queen’s chaplain and servants would read the Bible to her here. Prayer was a daily activity.

### Sebastian Edwards

Although Queen Caroline was remarked on for her piety, she did on occasion like to hear the prayers read to her by her chaplain through the door to her dressing room or her bedchamber while she prepared for the day, having the women of the bedchamber prepare her hair and her make-up.

### Narrator

On the 20th November 1737, Queen Caroline died at St. James' Palace, after a short, sudden illness. George was deeply affected by Caroline's death, and rejected her suggestion that he should re-marry. This marked the end of the Georgian monarchs' regular use of Hampton Court Palace.

Stay in this room and listen to one final stop, as we say goodbye to the Georgian age.

## Stop 18 The Georgians Leave

### Lucy Worsley:

Now, these Georgian Monarchs of ours, they had a fantastically dysfunctional family life. That’s given us hours of entertainment ever since. But in public they behaved pretty well as constitutional monarchs. They respected the limits of their power. They basically let parliament get on with things and Britain had a long period of security; and unlike Henry VIII, the Georgians certainly did very well at the business of producing heirs. They had loads of children, so many of them that there were heirs to spare.

Queen Caroline died 1737 and after her death King George II didn’t really have the heart to hold a glittering court without her. George II died himself in 1760, and his grandson became King George III. He never lived at Hampton Court Palace.

After that, it sort of fell asleep. The palace was no longer used as a Royal residence. The Royal Story ends here.

### Narrator

We've been fortunate enough to visit the private apartments as courtiers, and our visit to the Georgian world ends here too. But there's plenty more of the Palace to explore. If you take the nearby stairs down into Fountain Court, you can begin another tour of the Palace, and please don't forget to hand back your guide when you're finished. Thank you for listening.

## [End of Tour]