

Royal Pavilion BSL introductory video transcript

Royal Pavilion

The Royal Pavilion lies at the heart of the Cultural Quarter in central Brighton. It started life as a modest lodging house acquired by the Prince of Wales, who first visited the town in 1783. Initially, he approached architect Henry Holland, who transformed the property into an understated 'Marine Pavilion'. But it was the exotic designs of John Nash that truly captured the flamboyant, artistic character of the then Prince Regent, who succeeded to the throne in 1820.

Nash's work began in 1815, but it was not completed until 1823, four years before George IV's last visit to Brighton. The Pavilion remained in use as a royal residence until 1845, but Queen Victoria preferred the Isle of Wight to Brighton and in 1850, the building was purchased by the town for its people.

The glorious interiors of Nash's Pavilion, which featured hand-painted wallpapers, gilded surfaces and the finest English, French and Chinese furniture, were the work of artist-designers Frederick Crace and Robert Jones. The decoration of the Music Room, with its sumptuous red and gold canvases in the Chinoiserie style, and the Banqueting Room, with its spectacular chandelier, set the stage for the lavish banquets, concerts and dances that George IV loved to host. Equally impressive was the Great Kitchen, which was innovative and modern for its day.

By 1850, however, the building had been stripped of many of its riches. A restoration programme began in the mid-19th century, and work has continued to conserve the interiors approved by George IV. Many original pieces have been reinstated, and archival evidence has allowed restorers to recreate some of the

building's unique decorative features. Today's visitors can view the opulent state rooms and the more restrained galleries and private apartments of this celebrated building, which reveal how it might have been used by George IV and his guests. The gardens have also been restored to reflect the original designs.

The Royal Pavilion hosts an occasional programme of talks, tours and exhibitions for adults and children. A permanent gallery commemorates its use as an Indian Military Hospital during the First World War, while temporary displays and installations are used to interpret the building in new ways. Video and audio tours are on offer, and a video presentation is available on the ground floor. There is a shop for gifts and souvenirs, and a tearoom. The ground floor of the building is easily accessible to wheelchair users.

