



Cripplegate Ward Club

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Guided Tour of Spencer House and Garden

27 St James's Place, London SW1A 1NR (nearest tube station Green Park), followed by lunch at Davy's Wine bar

11:00 am on Monday, 12 September 2022

Outside View



Spencer House is an historic mansion located in St. James's, London. The House is Grade I listed on the National Heritage List for England.

Spencer House was commissioned in 1756 by John Spencer (who later became the first Earl Spencer), as he required a large **townhouse** in London to augment his position and status. The architect he chose was John Vardy, who had studied under William Kent. Vardy is responsible for the facades of the mansion that we see today.

In 1758, James "Athenian" Stuart, who had studied the arcadian values of Ancient Greek architecture, replaced Vardy as the architect of the project. As a direct result, Spencer House was to have authentic Greek details in the internal decoration, and thus it became one of the first examples in London of the neoclassical style, which was to sweep the country.

Inside View



As the home of successive Earls and Countesses Spencer, the staterooms of the house became a theatre for the pageant that was London high society. Members of the **Spencer family** occupied the mansion continuously until 1895, when the house was let out. The Spencers returned for a brief time during the first quarter of the 20th century, after which the house was let at various times as either a club or offices. During the Blitz of the Second World War, it was stripped of its few remaining authentic treasures, specially made furniture, and fireplaces.

Garden View



Spencer House remains in the ownership of the Earls Spencer, the current freeholder being **Charles Spencer, 9th Earl Spencer**, brother of **Diana, Princess of Wales**. Since the Second World War, however, the House has been continuously let out. In 1948 it was leased to **Christie's** auctioneers, in 1956 to the British Oxygen Company, and in 1963 to the **Economist Intelligence Unit**. On the 25th December 1986, RIT Capital Partners the family company of Jacob Rothschild, 4th Baron Rothschild, secured a 96-year lease (with an additional 24-year option) with an annual rent of £85,000.

The House was restored, with the state rooms and garden being returned to their original appearances. The lease of Spencer House was valued at £35 million in the 2017 annual report of RIT Capital Partners.

Together with Lancaster House, Bridgewater House, Dudley House and Apsley House, Spencer House is one of the last of the many aristocratic townhouses which once adorned central London.

Tours of Spencer House take around 1 hour and include an additional 15-minute talk on the historical context of the garden and recent improvements to the space. You will then have the opportunity to explore the garden at your leisure.

Please arrive at 10:45 am so that we can start the tour on time. Dress smart casual. Access to Davy's Wine Bar, Crown Passage, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 6QY (very close to Spencer house) is down two flights of stairs where lunch is booked for 1 pm.