

My summer vacation: The Tower of London and Kensington Palace

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During our trip to London, we planned to visit Kensington Palace and the Tower of London. It turns out that for many family configurations, an annual membership costs about the same (sometimes even less) than separate tickets to the two venues.

Ticket	Separate	Membership
1 adult	42.20	53.00
2 adults	84.40	82.00
Child	20.40	
1 adult + 3 kids	76.90	76.00
2 adults + 3 kids	106.80	108.00

(Prices are as of summer 2019.)

Plugging the above values into common configurations yields this table:

Configuration	Separate	Membership	Notes
1 adult	42.20	53.00	
2 adults	84.40	82.00	
1 adult + 1 kid	62.60	73.40	Child buys separate tickets.
1 adult + 3 kids	76.90	76.00	
2 adults + 1 kid	104.80	102.40	Child buys separate tickets.
2 adults + 3 kids	106.80	108.00	

4 adults + 3 kids	191.20	190.00	(This was our group.)
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The only case where the membership is significantly more than buying separate tickets the single adult (with or without one child).

Sorry, single adults.

Getting an annual membership also gets you a 10% discount in the gift shop and cafe and (more important when traveling with young children) the freedom to show up whenever you like, rather than having to book a specific date and time.

It did feel weird buying an annual membership for something we were going to use once and throw away.

Some of my friends have found themselves in the same situation at other venues: It ended up being cheaper to buy an annual membership than to buy individual one-time tickets, especially if the annual membership comes with perks like guest passes.

Bonus chatter: If you're going to do the annual membership thing for Historic Royal Palaces, do so far enough in advance that you can receive your membership card in the mail. Otherwise, you have to stand in the regular ticket line at the venue in order to pick up your membership card.

Bonus bonus chatter: Having an annual membership means that I get monthly newsletters about all the exciting things going on and exclusive member events at a venue I cannot get to. I enjoy seeing all the great things going on, but it's frustrating not being able to attend any of them.

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