

## Wilson House

Located along Sussex Gardens, Wilson House comprises 20 connected Victorian houses with 273 single rooms. For the academic year of 2009/10, rooms at Wilson cost £98 or £109 a week, for the small rooms and big rooms respectively.

One of the most attractive things about Wilson House is its price. At £98 per week, it is almost certainly the cheapest single room you can get amongst all of Imperial's halls (along with Fisher Hall). The rooms vary largely in size; those worth £98 can be really small and slightly uncomfortable, but those worth £109 are generally quite a bit bigger and definitely worth the extra £10 per week in my opinion. All rooms come equipped with a sink, a small fridge, and a table lamp along with all other basic amenities (except a fan, which shouldn't be a concern till the summer term). The heating in the room is reliable and is not centrally controlled (i.e. you get to adjust it yourself). Furthermore, major defects (e.g. blown light bulbs and spoilt heaters) are very promptly dealt with once reported to the wardens. On the downside, unlike the newer halls like Southside and Eastside, the furnishing is not as modern or fanciful and there are no cool swipe-card doors for the rooms (which could actually be a good thing because it means that it is impossible to lock yourself out of your own room).

Since there are no en suite rooms, all bathrooms are shared (approx. 5 people to 1). However, they are cleaned every day of the week except weekends and are generally in quite a good state. The kitchens are of decent size, but are mostly shared between about 15 people. That said, on a personal note, having a really crowded kitchen has not really been a big issue for me, although that really depends on the people you share it with and your preferred cooking times.

Sport, music and other recreational activities are really well catered for at Wilson House. For example, Wilson House has a large music room that contains a grand piano. It also has a sports hall with a rock wall, which some clubs use in the afternoon and on weekends for their activities. However, every night, there is always at least an hour set aside for residents to use the hall for games like badminton, basketball and football (soccer). There are also squash courts and rooms for table tennis and table football, as well as a games room with a pool table and an Xbox with games like Guitar Hero, Winning Eleven and Halo. Furthermore, there is an indoor swimming pool just 5 minutes away at St. Mary's Hospital (free for Imperial students). That Imperial-owned building also has a library with a study gallery, which serves as a really good place for slogging it out when exams approach.

Perhaps one of the biggest downsides of Wilson House is the distance it is from school. It takes about half an hour to get to school by foot and even longer when the gates to the main park close at sunset. This becomes a problem especially during winter, when the sun sets by about 5pm. However, as long as the main gate to Hyde Park is open (it closes at midnight everyday), this longer route would only take an extra 5 minutes if you know the way. Moreover, the trek is not that laborious considering that a large proportion of the walk to and from school is through Hyde Park. Flora aside, there are plenty of dogs running around in Hyde Park during the day, weather permitting, and dog-lovers will undoubtedly enjoy the sights. Also, in the event you feel extremely lazy, or if it is really late at night, there is a bus that takes about half an hour (including walking time to get to the bus stop) to get back to Wilson House from campus. Cycling is also another viable option and will take 15

minutes or less on London's cyclist-friendly roads. Really, the only time when travelling to school becomes an immense pain is when it's raining or freezing.

For grocery shopping, residents at Wilson House are spoilt for choice. Somerfield and Tesco's are less than a 5-minute walk away, while those who want better quality can shop at M&S and Waitrose just about an extra 2 minutes away. Of all Imperial's Halls of Residence, Wilson House is also the closest to the shopping district (analogous to Orchard Road), with Oxford Street a mere 15-minute walk away. Transport to most parts of London is also convenient, with three tube stations in close proximity covering 5 different lines, and a train station which has trains to and from Heathrow airport.

That is basically all the technical stuff there is to be mentioned. In more personal terms, it has been an absolute joy for me to stay at Wilson House during my fresher year. Perhaps because it is far away from all the other halls, the community at Wilson House is more closely-knit, and this is evident by the sheer number of events Wilson House organizes and the amazing turnout at each event. Furthermore, because it is one of the cheapest halls around, people here tend to be more down-to-earth and friendly and there always seems to be someone you can chat to in the lodge (the lobby area) when you're feeling bored. The fact that it is an isolated hall has also made it easier for me to leave my shell to befriend and understand the culture of the locals and other international students. That said, it is not something that comes naturally, of course, because effort must be put in on your part to step out of your comfort zone. Nonetheless, Wilson House definitely provides the right environment and opportunities for that. This last factor has been the biggest reason behind why I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Wilson House.

In summary, Wilson House is the place to be if you want to expand your horizons. Other than the distance to school (which is undoubtedly a big, big factor), Wilson House and its surroundings provide students with an excellent hall life, and is probably one of the best Imperial has to offer at an extremely affordable rate. However, if you think that you won't be able to stand an hour of walking everyday that you have to go to school, then Wilson House is probably not for you. For others, do consider the many pros that Wilson House has to offer!