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**GORGEOUS YET DANGEROUSLY POLLUTED:
AIR QUALITY in LONDON'S PARKS**

London, the capital of the UK, is a great place with a lot of opportunities and attractions, but it can also be rather polluted due to the high population density - 9,748,033 people (2024 estimated) - and heavy traffic - road traffic, river transport, air and rail traffic. The capital city has historically suffered from various pollution forms such as river pollution, air pollution and park pollution.

London has been grappling with air pollution for many years, primarily caused by traffic congestion, industrial emissions and wood-burning stoves. The city is the ninth-largest emitter of CO₂ in the world. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) is a regulated air pollutant in the UK. Most NO₂, in large cities like London, comes from the combustion of fossil fuels, in particular diesel vehicles.

In the analysis of the annual air quality levels in green spaces across the capital's 33 boroughs, researchers from Imperial College London and the University of Leicester used nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) estimates, comparing them against safety limits set by the European Union and World Health Organization. They found that 24% of play spaces and 27% of public parks had NO₂ limits exceeding safety standards, with 67% of private parks failing to keep within safe levels. Nearly a quarter of the capital's open parks have over 40 micrograms of nitrogen dioxide per cubic meter of air, which represents the EU limit, with some having more than double that quantity.

In London there are 111 parks and gardens, the most famous of which are Hyde Park, Sunny Hill Park, Victoria Park etc. Victoria Embankment Gardens has the highest NO₂ level of 59.7 µg/m³, followed by Parliament Square Gardens - in the shadow of the Palace of Westminster - at 58.7µg/m³. Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, has hailed what he said was remarkable progress in improving London's air quality under his tenure as mayor, after a study showed roadside pollutant levels falling faster in the city than elsewhere in the UK.

According to the research, roadside levels of NO₂ pollutants fell by 49% between 2016 and 2023, and were lower last year even than in 2020, when there were extended periods of lockdown during the Covid pandemic. The Mayor of London today encouraged boroughs to apply for a share of £5.3 million in new funding made available to support ambitious projects that reduce air pollution, protect public health, and make London a cleaner and healthier city for everyone.

The Mayor and Transport for London's are also working together to convert London's bus fleet to be entirely emissions-free, having already delivered the largest zero-emission bus fleet in Western Europe, as well as facilitating the transition to zero emissions for cars and vans with London having more than one third of all the UK's electric vehicle charge points.