



# The Best of England and Wales

10 days

## Tour Description

*This tour covers the breadth of England and Wales including impressive castles, fairytale cottages, porcelain factories, iconic monuments and more. In between visits to a historic university, the birthplace of Shakespeare and impressive museums, you will delight in the scenic views of Wales and the English countryside.*

## Highlights

- ❖ Investigate mysterious Stonehenge
- ❖ Learn the history of the Roman Baths
- ❖ View the large Impressionist collection at the National Museum and Gallery in Wales
- ❖ Savor a Welsh Banquet
- ❖ Admire the scenery of Snowdonia National Park
- ❖ Visit 'the Potteries' and area famous for fine porcelain and china
- ❖ Learn the process of making a piece of China on the Wedgwood Factory Tour
- ❖ Enjoy a performance by the Royal Shakespeare Company
- ❖ Visit historic Oxford University, also a site of the Harry Potter films
- ❖ Visit the largest inhabited castle in the world, Windsor Castle
- ❖ Full day tour of London's most famous sites including Parliament, Big Ben and the Tower of London

## Sample Tour Itinerary

### ***Bath – 1 night***

#### **Day 1: Arrive London - Bath**

Upon arrival in London, you clear customs and your welcoming coach driver and tour director will escort you to your waiting motorcoach. We will head out through England's West Country. Travel through quaint towns with thatched roofs and red bricked cottages to Salisbury where we will visit mysterious Stonehenge. More than 4,000 years ago, the people of the Neolithic period decided to build a massive monument using earth and stones, placing it high on Salisbury Plain. Marvel at this work of primeval architecture. We continue on to the historic City of Bath. First settled by the Celts, whom legend has it discovered the hot springs' medical qualities. Later occupied by the Romans, Bath became a fashionable resort for the Victorians.

### ***Cardiff – 2 nights***

#### **Day 2: Bath - Cardiff**

This morning after breakfast we will first visit the magnificent Roman Baths. We then head to the beautiful country of Wales and the capital city of Cardiff. The capital of Wales is one of Europe's youngest capitals, with a progressive and confident personality to match. A century ago, it was the



busiest coal port in the world. Today those very docks have been transformed into a dazzling waterfront complex of restaurants and visitor attractions.

### **Day 3: Cardiff**

This morning after breakfast we will set out to explore some of Cardiff's history at magnificent Cardiff Castle. Situated in the very heart of the capital, alongside city center shopping and the magnificent Bute Park, the Castle's enchanting fairytale towers conceal an elaborate and splendid interior. Contained within its mighty walls is a history spanning nearly 2,000 years, dating from the coming of the Romans in the first century AD. The balance of the day you are free to explore on your own. You will never be at a loss for something interesting to see or do in and around Cardiff - arts, heritage; sports, family attractions and many more are within easy reach. With Cardiff's proximity to the coast and mountains the city truly has something for everyone. The city's arts facilities are exceptional, with the National Museum and Gallery housing the second largest Impressionist collection after Paris. Cardiff's Bay has been transformed into a stunning waterfront with a wealth of attractions, leisure facilities and its own Visitor Center 'The Tube' full of information. This evening enjoy a Welsh Banquet at Cardiff Castle.

### ***Colwyn Bay area – 2 nights***

#### **Day 4: Snowdonia National Park – Colwyn Bay**

This morning after breakfast we will be heading to north Wales and the Colwyn Bay area. Our first stop of the day is Portmeirion, the fascinating Italianate fantasy village created by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, and home to the Portmeirion pottery. Here, the Tour Director will offer an optional exciting ride on one of Wales' Great Little Trains from Minffordd to Blaenau Ffestiniog. This narrow gauge steam railway takes you back in time while enjoying some of the stunning scenery of the Snowdonia National Park.

#### **Day 5: Isle of Anglesey and Conwy**

This morning we head to the Isle of Anglesey where we will visit the village most commonly known as Llanfairpwllgwyngyll. The longer name of the town is officially the longest recognized place name in the UK and one of the longest in the world standing at 58 letters in length (51 in the Welsh alphabet). Visit the train station and have your picture taken with the station sign or visit the nearby Visitors Center. While in Anglesey keep a close eye on the locals as this is now the home of HRH Prince William and the Duchess of Cambridge, Princess Catherine. We will then head to Conwy where we will visit Conwy Castle, a masterpiece of medieval military architecture. Walk along walls that are over 700 years old.

### ***Stratford Upon Avon – 2 nights***

#### **Day 6: Chester, Stoke on Trent – Stratford Upon Avon**

This morning after breakfast we will head to Chester. Upon arrival we will have a tour of this town before you are free to explore. With 2,000 years of history, this is one of Europe's top heritage cities – and it is easy to see why! Chester boasts a complete circuit of walls, sections of which date back to Roman times, as well as a Norman cathedral. The famous Rows, unique two-tiered galleries built in the traditional black and white 'maggie' style, contain a wide range of shops selling goods from antiques to high fashion. In fact the city is one of the top retail centers in the UK, boasting large branches of national stores and attractive shopping malls. Our route then brings us through the bustling heartland of England and by the towns of Stafford and Stoke on Trent, both famous for their fine porcelain and china. Here we will stop to explore the creative delights of the famous Wedgwood Factory. At Wedgwood we shall tour the working factory and see the processes that go into creating a Wedgwood piece. There is also time for shopping not just for Jasper, but also Black Basalt, Queensware and others. We continue on to Stratford where we will spend the next two nights.



### **Day 7: Stratford Upon Avon, Cotswolds**

Today after breakfast we will explore Stratford-Upon-Avon, the birthplace of William Shakespeare. Set in the beautiful rural Warwickshire countryside, on the banks of the river Avon, it is one of the most historic destinations in the United Kingdom. The house has been owned by the Shakespeare family from the time of Shakespeare's father, John Shakespeare. Today it is owned by The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. The house holds 400 treasures in 8 rooms, including documents, portraits, pictures and old coins. This afternoon we will enjoy a tour of the Cotswolds, enjoying the charm, stunning scenery and charming towns and villages that this area has to offer. After an early dinner we will attend a performance of Twelfth Night at the Royal Shakespeare Company Theatre.

### ***London – 2 nights***

#### **Day 8: Oxford, Windsor, London**

This morning we head south to London. Our first stop is Oxford, situated on the River Thames, best known for Oxford University. It is one of the oldest universities in England, founded in the twelfth century and dominates the life and culture of the city. The University is divided into many different colleges, each with their own style and featuring beautiful architecture and sometimes ancient chapels and churches – the most famous colleges are Balliol, Trinity and Christ Church. The great hall at Christ Church was used as a location for Hogwarts School in the Harry Potter films. We board our coach again and head south to Windsor Castle, the residence of Her Majesty the Queen is the largest inhabited castle in the world. View the guard change, the fantastic Doll's House and St George's Chapel where many Kings and Queens are buried. The lavish staterooms are of breathtaking elegance and beauty. After a busy day we arrive in London and check into our hotel for our last two nights.

#### **Day 9: London**

This morning after a full breakfast, we board our coach for a full day tour of this exciting city. We will see such historic sites as Buckingham Palace, the colorful pageantry of the Changing of the Guard, Westminster Abbey, where the Kings and Queens of England are crowned, Parliament and Big Ben, Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly - the traditional "Heart of London", and the massive Tower of London. It is here, the history of intrigue, injustice, treason and torture lingers at every turn, the Traitor's Gate at the edge of the River, the Bloody Tower, where tradition says the Little Princes, Edward V and his brother, the Duke of York were murdered and Sir Walter Raleigh was imprisoned for a year. The Jewel House with its priceless treasures of the Royal Regalia, and the surrounding grounds, and the Yeoman Warders (also known as Beefeaters) in their Tudor uniform, provide a contrast to the grim, yet fascinating interior. This evening you are free to explore the multitude of restaurants and bars in this cosmopolitan city, where every taste under the sun is catered for.

#### **Day 10: Depart London**

After breakfast, we bid farewell to England and Wales as we board our coach for transfer to Heathrow Airport. There will ample time to browse and shop in the Duty Free Mall before boarding your return flight. Then, it's on board leaving behind this land of history & majesty.

### **INCLUSIONS**

- Accommodations: Bath 1 night, Cardiff 2 nights, Colwyn Bay Area 2 nights, Stratford Upon Avon 2 nights, London 2 nights



- Meals: Continental breakfast daily, lunch and dinner as noted in itinerary
- Ground transportation via air conditioned luxury coach
- English speaking assistants and guides
- Admission tickets as outlined in the itinerary