

DESTINATION WESSEX

Compendium of Five Day Specimen Tours

HERITAGE

Day 1

Leave London for the city of **Winchester**, the ancient capital of Wessex in the time of the legendary Alfred the Great. Check into your hotel, relax and perhaps take the Keats walk which inspired **John Keats** to write "To Autumn". Include a viewing of King Arthur's famous Round Table and a visit to **Jane Austen's** House. This will end with a special tour of the magnificent 900 year old cathedral where Jane Austen is buried.

There will be a welcome reception and dinner in the evening.

Day 2.

The morning tour begins with a short drive to the attractive town of Romsey and a visit to the 12th century **Romsey Abbey** which shows Norman and Early English architecture at its best. On then to the nearby garden at **Mottisfont Abbey** which contains the national collection of old roses.

The next stop is **Salisbury** where you can check into your hotel and relax before lunch. In the afternoon, a guided visit to **Salisbury cathedral** which has the highest spire in England and a visit to the cathedral close including the 14th century Memorial Hall where there will be a presentation on Salisbury history.

Day 3.

This morning, the first stop will be at the delightful garden of **Heale House** where the head gardener will show you around.. Then on to **Stonehenge**, one of Wessex's four World Heritage Sites and perhaps its best known landmark. After a guided tour of Stonehenge, the tour will head west to **Stourhead**, one of Britain's most beautiful gardens. After lunch and a talk on the garden, there will be time to take a leisurely stroll around the lake and to enjoy the stunning views.

Then, it will be back towards Salisbury through serene **Wessex countryside** and its picturesque villages. On the way you will visit **Wilton House**, for 450 years the home of the Earls of Pembroke. It was also a focal point in the planning of the D-day offensive in the Second World War. Return to the Salisbury Hotel.

Day 4

Leave for Longleat. Set in 900 acres of Capability Brown designed parkland, **Longleat House** is widely regarded as the best example of Elizabethan architecture. A special tour will be arranged for your visit. We will then take you to a historic inn for lunch.

After lunch, a short drive to **Bath** and check into your hotel. Following a brief city orientation tour, including the **Royal Crescent** and a stop for afternoon tea, there will be free time for you to explore the centre of Bath.

Day 5

This morning, the focus will be on the **Bath** of Roman times. First, a tour of the almost 2000 year old **Roman Baths** themselves. Across the square is the magnificent 15th century **Bath Abbey** which the tour will visit before picking up the Roman theme again and moving over to the newly completed restoration of the **Roman Spa**.

After lunch, there will be free time to stroll around more of Bath, perhaps to do some **shopping**. Departure for London will be in the late afternoon.



DESTINATION WESSEX

HISTORIC HOUSES OF WESSEX – Five Day Specimen Tour

Day 1.

Leave London for the cathedral city of **Salisbury**. Today's tour will feature the medieval period. When you check into your hotel, you will find that it has been serving its customers for over 700 years. Your first visit will be to **one of England's finest cathedrals** that has the highest spire in England. Next will be the 13th century **Medieval Hall** in the **cathedral close** and a presentation on medieval Salisbury. Before leaving the close, a stop will be made at the **Wardrobe**, built in 1254 for the Bishop of Salisbury. There will then be the opportunity for you to explore the heart of this city and perhaps visit some of the places mentioned in the presentation.

There will be a **welcome reception** in the evening.

Day 2.

The day will start with a visit to the 14th century **Palace House of Beaulieu**, a place with monastic origins and since 1538, the ancestral home of the **Montagues**. The return journey will pass through the **New Forest** which was set aside for hunting 900 years ago by William the Conqueror. A stop will be made for lunch in an old inn.

In the afternoon, you will visit **Breamore House**, a fine example of the Elizabethan Manor house. After the visit, return to the **Salisbury hotel**.

Day 3.

Today, two very grand houses and an outstanding garden will be visited. First will be **Wilton House**, for 450 years the home of the Earls of Pembroke. Much of the Tudor building was destroyed by fire in 1647. **Inigo Jones** and **John Webb** then rebuild the house in the Palladian style. The house has magnificent 17th century state rooms and a very fine art collection. Leave for **Stourhead**, one of England's most beautiful landscape gardens for a visit to the garden, followed by lunch.

After lunch, it will be on to **Longleat**, one of the very best examples of Elizabethan architecture, set in 900 acres of **Capability Brown** designed parkland. It was completed in 1580 and has been the home of the same family ever since, the **Marquesses of Bath**. Here again, there is a fine art collection. The day concludes at your **Bath hotel** where you will stay for two nights.

Day 4.

This will begin with a visit to the **Building of Bath Museum** and a presentation on the creation of **Georgian Bath**. After that, a tour of the city that will include a walk from the **Royal Crescent** down through the Circus to Queen Square. Featured will be No.1 Royal Crescent, a carefully restored Georgian house, **the Georgian Garden**, the **Jane Austen Centre**, the Assembly Rooms and, of course, a cup of tea in the **Pump Room**. And then, to conclude, a visit to the famous **Roman Baths**.

Day 5.

The morning will be given over to a visit to **Tyntesfield**, the spectacular Victorian country house acquired in 2002 by the National Trust. It has been described as "an extraordinary Gothic revival extravaganza". The house survives with its Victorian interior virtually intact. It is set in a 500 acre estate of gardens, park and farmland.

After lunch, there will be free time to **explore parts of Bath** that you have not seen or that you may wish to see again, or if you wish, to do some shopping. Departure for London will be in the late afternoon.

DESTINATION WESSEX

WESSEX GARDES – Five Day Specimen Tour

Day 1.

Leave London for **Winchester, the ancient capital of Wessex**. A guided tour of this magnificent 900 year old **cathedral** will be followed by visits to two small gardens. The first will be the Victorian **Dean Garnier's Garden** and the second, **Queen Eleanor's Garden**, a faithful representation of a medieval garden.

After lunch, leave for nearby **Romsey** and check into your hotel (2 nights). Later in the afternoon, you will visit the beautiful **Mottisfont Abbey Garden** with its walled gardens, splendid trees and the National Collection of old roses.

Welcome reception and dinner.

Day 2.

Leave for **Exbury** and its landscaped woodland gardens overlooking the **Beaulieu River**. They include the famous **Rothschild plant collection** (rhododendrons, azaleas etc.) as well as many rare trees plus rose, water, rock and heather gardens.

The next stop is at **Beaulieu Abbey** which after its dissolution by Henry VIII in 1538 became the ancestral home of the Montagus. Lunch will be taken after a guided tour of the house. After lunch, there will be time to stroll around the gardens.

The tour will then head back to Romsey and a visit to the **Sir Harold Hillier Gardens**. These will offer a contrast in that they were established only in 1953. This 180 acre area contains no less than **11 National Collections** and one of the greatest collections of trees and shrubs. On to **Salisbury** and, if you wish, a visit to its great **cathedral**. Overnight in Salisbury

Day 3.

Head south west into the beautiful countryside of Dorset and to the 15th century manor house of **Athelhampton** and one of the finest architectural gardens in England. The Historic Houses Association chose it as **Garden of the Year in 1997**.

Now for something quite different, the **Abbotsbury Sub-Tropical Gardens** which were established in 1765 and hold 20 acres of exotic and rare plants. Lunch will be taken during the visit to the gardens.

The third stop will be at **Forde Abbey**, which was founded in 1140 and survives externally almost as the monks left it in 1539. It is surrounded by an outstanding garden which was recognised as **Garden of the Year in 1992**. It contains 30 acres of colourful borders, wide lawns, ponds and huge mature trees.

Then it will be on to the hotel in **Sherborne** (2 nights) and perhaps a stroll over to the beautiful abbey and the charming high street of this historic market town.

Day 4.

First on the list will be **Tintinhull Garden** which was created around a 17th century manor house and enhanced in recent years by the well known garden designer, Penelope Hobhouse.. It is a wonderful collection of "rooms" with small ponds, varied borders and secluded lawns plus an attractive kitchen garden.

Next, it is **Barrington Court** originally a Tudor manor house that is best known today for the quality of its garden. This is a formal garden laid out in a series of walled rooms including the White Garden, Rose Garden, Iris Garden and Lily Garden. Lunch will be in Barrington Court's restaurant.

The third garden visited today will be **Hestercombe** where Grade 1 listed gardens cover 50 acres. The formal gardens have the distinction of having been designed by **Sir Edwin Lutyens** and planted by **Gertrude Jekyll** and are a supreme example of this famous partnership. They have now been joined by the Landscape Garden which was created in the 1750's and reopened in 1997 for the first time in 125 years.

Return to Sherborne.

Day 5.

Leave for **Hadspen Garden**. This charming garden in the grounds of Hadspen House is best known for its display of colour coordinated borders.

The tour now heads back towards London. On the way, two stops will be made. The first of these will be at **Stourhead**, one of these most finest gardens in England. It was laid out between 1741 and 1780 and is an outstanding example of the English landscape garden. Lunch will be taken here

The second and final stop is at a man-made structure that was created long before gardens were around. However, the road to London goes right past it and so it would be a shame not to make a stop. It is **Stonehenge**.

The tour will then continue to London and to your hotel.

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DESTINATION WESSEX

MILITARY HERITAGE - Five Day Specimen Tour

Day 1.

Leave London for the cathedral city of **Salisbury**. When you check into your hotel, you will find that it has been serving its customers for over 700 years. Tour **Old Sarum** with its spectacular views over its successor, the Salisbury of today.

Drop down into Salisbury Town to the **Cathedral Close** to visit the **Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment Museum** and hear from its curator of some of the famous actions in which its soldiers have taken part. Across the Close is the **Cathedral** with the highest spire in Europe and possessing one of the four remaining original copies of the **Magna Carta** signed by King John in 1215.

There will be a **welcome reception** in the evening hosted by the hotel's proprietor, a well known local military collector.

Day 2.

This is a day of variety. It will start with a visit to Lord Pembroke's **Wilton House** where much of the **planning for DDay** in 1944 was carried out. We will then move on to **Stonehenge** and a personal tour conducted by its Head. On then to Warminster, home of the British infantry, where we will be privileged to visit the renowned **Small Arms Museum** which houses one of the most comprehensive collection of working small arms in the world. On the way back to the hotel we will admire **Old Wardour Castle** and view the collection of **Cap-Badges** carved into the chalk hillside **at Fovant** by troops over the years.

In the evening we will visit the **New Forest**, which was set aside for hunting 900 years ago by **William the Conqueror**, for supper at an old inn, and meet the wild ponies who wander where they wish without let or hindrance.

Day 3.

Today is a mix of old and new. On the way for a one night stay at a beautiful country house hotel at **Evershot**, we will first call in at the small town and port of **Wareham** which is still almost all contained within its **Roman walls**. We then move a short distance to **Corfe Castle** and village which held out for two years during the **English Civil War**. The Royalists defending it finally capitulated and Cromwell's troops then tried to blow it up – but by no means succeeded as we will see. We then move on to the British Army's **Royal Armoured Corps Tank Museum** with its working exhibits of tanks, armoured cars and personnel carriers dating from the First World War onwards.

That evening after a peaceful dinner in the middle of the beautiful Dorset countryside we will hear about the history and development of the **English County Regiments**.

Day 4.

It is now time to concentrate a bit more on the air aspects of military **Wessex's military heritage**. Today will see us visiting two museums dealing respectively with the naval aviation and army aviation throughout their history. First will be a visit to the **Fleet Air Arm Museum** near Ilchester. Here we not only can wonder how on earth it is possible to take-off and land on a aircraft carrier but also have a good wander around one of the **prototype Concords**, the first supersonic passenger aircraft. We then, with lunch intervening, travel on to the **Museum of Army Flying** just north of Winchester. Here the emphasis is less high-tech and the difficulties and dangers of deploying troops by glider are well displayed.

We then have just short distance to go to **Winchester**, capital of ancient Wessex where we will be staying in the very centre of this lovely historic town. The evening will allow us to **visit the cathedral** and walk the old alleys and byways around it.

Day 5.

Finally, the sea! After an early breakfast we go to **Portsmouth** which has been the home of the Royal Navy for ever. In the morning we will stay on land and visit Henry VIII's favourite warship - the **Mary Rose**, Nelson's flagship at the battle of Trafalgar - **HMS Victory**, and the pride of Queen Victoria's fleet - **HMS Warrior**. After such a busy morning it will be time to relax a little. We will embark on a couple of **55ft classic wooden yachts** whose skippers are retired military men themselves and whose stories have to be heard to be believed (or not). They will show us around the Royal Navy base from the sea and tell us about the modern warships tied up alongside in the harbour.

After tea on board, and perhaps a **splicing of the mainbrace**, it will be time to disembark and return to London in late in the day.

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