

DESTINATION WESSEX

Compendium of Seven 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".

After lunch, there will be a guided tour of the historic centre of the city, including 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 -3 nights - 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 the historic town of **Sherborne**. Stroll down the narrow High Street with its small shops so full of character. Visit **Sherborne Abbey**, once described as "the most important architectural monument in the country". **Sherborne "New" Castle** will be the next stop. This is the house of Sir Walter Raleigh who built it in 1594. Its gardens were designed by Capability Brown.

Lunch will be taken in the charming village of Montacute. After lunch, we cross the road and visit **Montacute House**. This outstanding Elizabethan house was built in 1588 for Sir Edward Phelps, the Speaker of Parliament.

Before returning to Salisbury, a visit to **Tintinhull Garden** which was created around a 17th century manor house. Its present design owes much to the work of Penelope Hobhouse.



Day 5

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 (2 nights). 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 6

This morning, the focus will be on Roman Bath, and more specifically on the almost 2000 year old **Roman Baths** themselves. The tour will be followed by a cup of tea in the famous **Pump Room** and a walk across the square to the magnificent 15th century Bath Abbey

After an early lunch, we will head **south to Glastonbury and Wells**. **Glastonbury Abbey** is thought by many to be the oldest Christian site in Britain. The legend is that Joseph of Aramethea brought the Holy Grail to Glastonbury and that King Arthur was buried in the Abbey.

The city of **Wells** grew up around its **12th century cathedral** which has been described as “the jewel in the crown of English cathedrals”. Return to Bath after the cathedral tour

Day 7

The morning will be free for you to **explore more of Bath**, perhaps to do some shopping. Departure for London will be after lunch.

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DESTINATION WESSEX

HISTORIC HOUSES OF WESSEX – Seven 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 **servicing 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. Leave for **Sherborne** where you will stay 2 nights.

Day 4.

Head south west into the beautiful countryside of Dorset and to the 15th century manor house of **Athelhampton**. The Great Hall was built in 1485 and a West Wing was added in the Elizabethan period. Surrounding it is one of the finest architectural gardens in England.

The next visit will be to **Forde Abbey**, which was founded in 1140 and survives externally almost as the monks left it in 1539. It is the home of the Roper family and of the famous **Mortlake tapestries**. The garden contains 30 acres of colourful borders, wide lawns, ponds and huge mature trees.

Leave for Montacute and a visit to **Montacute House**. This is a fine Elizabethan house built for Sir Edward Phelips and retained by the family for three centuries. It contains many **Renaissance** features, magnificent state rooms, a long gallery and formal gardens. Then it will be back to the hotel in **Sherborne** and perhaps a stroll around this historic market town.

Day 5.

This morning will feature a different form of architecture and ambience. First you will visit nearby **Sherborne Abbey**, the origins of which date back to 705. It has Saxon, Norman and early Gothic features but the core of the present **abbey dates from the 15th century**.

Continue to Wells and a guided tour of **Wells Cathedral** that has been described as the jewel in the crown of England's cathedrals. The original church, built in 705, was given cathedral status in 909. The cathedral was eventually built between 1180 and 1240 when its world famous West Front was completed.

Leave for **Bowood House** where lunch will be served. This will be followed by a tour of this beautifully proportioned Georgian house. A special feature is **Robert Adam's** fine Diocletian wing that includes a library plus painting and sculpture galleries. The house is set in over 2,000 acres of gardens and grounds, landscaped by Capability Brown in the 1760's.

On the way to Bath, there will be a visit to **Corsham Court**, a fine Elizabethan house built in 1582 and substantially altered in the Georgian period. It houses a collection of both 16th and 17th century Italian and Flemish paintings. Continue to **Bath** and check into your hotel for 2 nights.

Day 6.

The whole day will be in Bath. It 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 7.

The morning will be 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". It survives with its Victorian interior virtually intact, and 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 GARDENS - Seven Day Specimen Tour

Day 1.

Leave for **Winchester, the ancient capital of Wessex**. A guided tour of its 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 visit the beautiful **Mottisfont Abbey Garden** with its walled gardens, splendid trees and the **National Collection of old roses**. In the evening, a 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 returns 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 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, influenced by Gertrude Jekyll and 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 **East Lambrook Manor Gardens**. This is a Grade 1 listed cottage style garden that was developed by the famous Margery Fish. It contains many rare and unusual plants that have been saved from extinction. Return to **Sherborne** and enjoy this heritage rich town. If you did not **visit the abbey** on Day 3, make sure you do so now. It is worth it.

Day 5

Leave for **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. Depart for **Bath**. Check into your hotel (2 nights) and have lunch.

After lunch, visit **Prior Park**, an 18th century landscape garden created by Ralph Allen with advice from Capability Brown and Alexander Pope. It contains three lakes and a Palladian bridge set in a sweeping valley with great views over Bath. After returning from Prior Park, there will be time to visit the famous **Roman Baths** or to explore the many **other attractions of Bath**.

Day 6.

Leave for the **Courts Garden** near Bradford-on-Avon. This one of the area's best kept secrets, a relatively small garden but one with great charm and variety. There is an imaginative use of colour and interesting plants in its borders. The tour next heads south to **Stourhead**, one of the most stunning gardens in England. It was laid out between 1741 and 1780 and is an outstanding example of the English landscape garden. You will be taken on a walk around the lake and then, it will be time for lunch.

In the afternoon, you will visit the **Peto Garden at Iford Manor** an Italian style garden set on a hillside with colonnades, terraces, statues and ponds. It is a Grade 1 listed garden which won the Historic Houses Association award of **Garden of the Year in 1998**. Return to Bath and explore this **World Heritage Site**.

Day 7.

Begins with a visit to the world famous **Roman Baths**. Then, leave for **Corsham Court**, a fine Elizabethan house containing two collections of paintings by Italian and Flemish masters. A guided tour of the house is followed by a tour one of the garden designed by **Capability Brown** in the 1760's. It contains herbaceous borders, secluded gardens, broad lawns and many specimen trees.

Then, leave for Malmesbury and a special tour of **Abbey House Gardens** and lunch. It is in a historic location, next to the ruins of the 12th century abbey. It contains a wide variety of environments including the slopes down to the river and the ancient fishponds of the monks. It is particularly noted for its over 2,000 different roses, the largest private collection, and its nearly 2,000 herbal plants.

After Abbey House gardens, it will be time to head up the M4 motorway to London.

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DESTINATION WESSEX

MILITARY HERITAGE - Seven Day Specimen Tour

Day 1.

Leave London for the cathedral city of **Salisbury**. Check into your hotel which 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 one of the few copies of the **Magna Charter** signed by King John in 1215.

There will be a **welcome reception** in the evening hosted by the hotel's proprietor.

Day 2.

This 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 reknowned **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 **English County Regiments**.

Day 4.

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 Concorde, 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.

A short distance to **Winchester, capital of ancient Wessex**, where we will be staying in the every 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.

Today will be a quietish day in Winchester for a spot of shopping, spending longer in the Cathedral or taking advantage of Winchester's abundance of **military museums** and we can choose a couple of museums from either that of the **Gurkhas**, the **Royal Hussars**, the **Light Infantry**, the **Royal Green Jackets** or the **Red Cross**. There is also an abundance of attractions and beautiful countryside around Winchester to ring the changes.

After a relaxed day we will have a formal dinner modeled on a **British Army Regimental Ladies Guest Night** and there will be a speaker on a subject of interest to the group,

Day 6

Two very different aspects of military heritage today. First we will visit **Buckler's Hard** on the Beaulieu river which, at its height produced many of the **ships for Henry VIII's fleet**. The Museum is fascinating recollection of that time.

Not to be missed at any time of the year is the beautiful **Beaulieu River**. So we will use that as an excuse, tide allowing, to board a power boat at the Hard and travel down the river and, with the prevailing South Westerly wind, **cross the Solent to Cowes**. There we will stay for lunch at one of the Yacht Clubs which line the Medina River. We will continue by boat and disembark at the **Royal Navy Submarine Museum at Gosport** to end the day.

Day 7

After an early breakfast we go to **Portsmouth** which has always been the home of the Royal Navy. 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**.

We will then 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 and less modern warships 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.