

DESTINATION WESSEX

WESSEX GARDESN – 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 the 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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