

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 in the afternoon, you will 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 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.

