

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 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.