



THE BEST OF ENGLISH GARDENS

INCLUDING THE CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW

MAY 15TH - 24TH 2018

Nowhere in the world is the passion for horticulture expressed more vividly than in Britain, where gardens have served as inspiration for painters, writers, and poets for centuries. From great country estates to miniscule inner-city gardens, the British use their exceptionally long growing season to fullest advantage, and we've timed our visit accordingly, to bring you *The Best of English Gardens*.

This is your invitation to see some of England's most famous gardens at a time of year when color runs rampant. From Vita Sackville-West's crowning achievement at Sissinghurst Castle to magnificent Stourhead Gardens, located in the midst of a 2,650-acre estate, we'll explore the countryside, basking in the glory of an English spring.

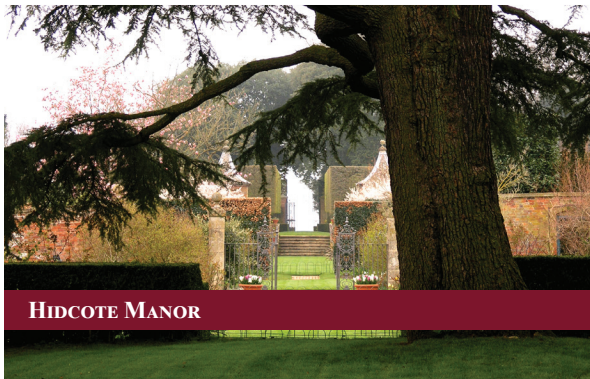
We'll visit the Royal Horticultural Society's flagship garden at Wisley, Mottisfont Abbey, Kiftsgate and Hidcote Manor. Royal schedules permitting, we'll also take a private tour of Prince Charles' estate at Highgrove. We'll explore Christopher Lloyd's gardens at Great Dixter, which offer up innovative ideas set against a backdrop of topiary, mixed borders, and natural ponds. Additional highlights include time in the Georgian city of Bath, and, crossing Salisbury Plain, we'll explore enigmatic Stonehenge.

Back in London we'll conclude with a full day at the Chelsea Flower Show. Our tour includes membership in the Royal Horticultural Society so that we can attend on members-only day when the crowds are slightly smaller than on the public days. And there will be free time in London to explore famous sights, museums and galleries you may wish to view, from the Tate to the tiny Museum of Garden History.

This spring, join fellow garden lovers for a stroll through *The Best of English Gardens*. At a relaxed pace, with wonderful meals, first-class hotels, and a panorama of magnificent blooms unfolding before us, it's a quintessential celebration of springtime.



MOTTISFONT ABBEY



HIDCOTE MANOR

THE COST OF THIS ITINERARY, PER PERSON, DOUBLE OCCUPANCY IS:

Land only (no airfare included): **\$4070**
Single supplement: **\$ 960**

Airfares are available from most U.S. departure cities. Please call for details.

The following services are included:

- HOTELS:** 8 nights' accommodation in first-class hotels
All hotel taxes and service charges included
- COACHING:** All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary
- MEALS:** Full breakfast daily, 4 dinners, 1 lunch
- GUIDES:** Discover Europe tour director throughout; local guides at Great Dixter and Wisley
- BAGGAGE:** Portage of one large suitcase per person
- TICKETS:** Membership in the Royal Horticultural Society and entrance to the Chelsea Flower Show
- ENTRANCES:** Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary

*Please note that travel insurance is not included on this tour.
Insurance information will be mailed to each registration on receipt of deposit.*





TUESDAY, MAY 15TH - Evening departure from your chosen U.S. gateway city. **OVERNIGHT: PLANE**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16TH - Upon arrival at any of London's airports, you will be met and transported to our hotel in the Royal Windsor area. After time to unpack and relax, your guide will conduct an orientation meeting and lead a short optional tour to points of local interest. This evening we gather for a welcome dinner at our hotel. **(D)**

OVERNIGHT: WINDSOR AREA

THURSDAY, MAY 17TH - Our first stop today is the 240-acre flagship garden of the Royal Horticultural Society at Wisley. Wisley is the jewel in the crown of the RHS and has been a living encyclopedia for gardeners for the past 100 years. We'll tour the garden's highlights with one of the local gardeners and have free time to browse the Wisley store and have lunch. This afternoon we'll visit the majestic and mysterious World Heritage site of Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain, where we'll spend some time admiring the monument, and its brand new visitor facilities. From here we drive into nearby Salisbury, on the banks of the River Avon. Its glorious cathedral is generally considered to be England's finest, with the tallest spire (404 feet) of any cathedral in the country. We'll dine together at our hotel in Salisbury this evening. **(B, D)**

OVERNIGHT: SALISBURY

FRIDAY, MAY 18TH - A short drive this morning brings us to Mottisfont Abbey. Originally a 12th-century Augustinian Priory, this wonderful estate is now the home of the National Collection of Old-fashioned Roses. We'll tour the garden and have lunch before returning to Salisbury for a free afternoon. Stroll the lovely medieval streets, visit the Antiques Center on Catherine Street, check out one of the four remaining originals of the Magna Carta, or walk to the Old Mill for a glorious view of the cathedral. You may wish to experience choral evensong at the cathedral. This evening, you're free to try a local restaurant. **(B)**

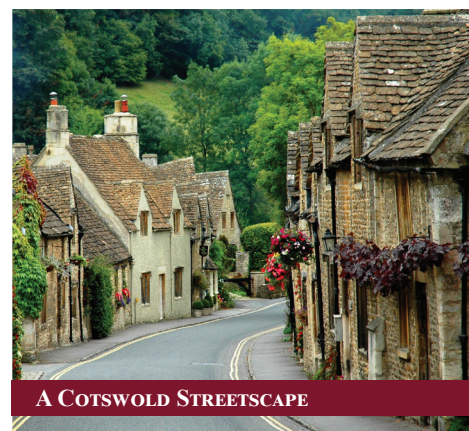
OVERNIGHT: SALISBURY

SATURDAY, MAY 19TH - Leaving Salisbury, a short drive brings us to the village of Stourton, where we'll walk around the magnificent Stourhead Gardens, which surround a series of peaceful lakes in the middle of a 2,650-acre estate nestled among rolling hills. After lunch, we continue to the city of Bath, where we will visit the Roman Baths, perhaps the best-preserved Roman remains in Britain. A drive north through the southern Cotswold Hills brings us to our hotel, where dinner awaits. **(B, D)**

OVERNIGHT: COTSWOLDS

SUNDAY, MAY 20TH - We'll spend the morning exploring the Cotswolds' quintessentially English landscape of honey-colored villages and green meadows. We stop in Bourton-on-the-Water, with the River Windrush flowing peacefully through the center of the village. After time for lunch, we'll visit the Hidcote Manor garden, England's foremost 20th-century garden, where a series of horticultural "rooms" have been created, each different in color, character, and intention. Next, we'll visit the beautiful Kiftsgate Court gardens, home of Heather Muir, a pioneer in the rediscovery of shrub roses (including the celebrated rambling *Rosa filipes* "Kiftsgate"). The evening is free to dine at a local pub. **(B)**

OVERNIGHT: COTSWOLDS



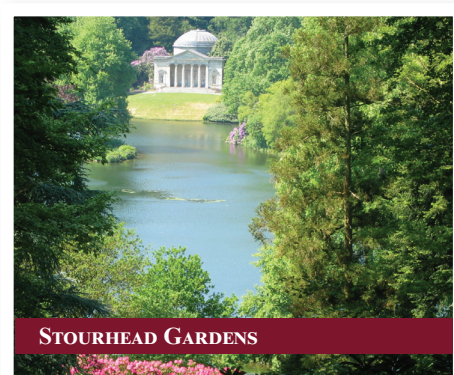
A COTSWOLD STREETSCAPE

MONDAY, MAY 21ST - This morning we drive to Rosemary Verey's personal garden at Barnsley House. We'll have a tour with the head gardener before enjoying lunch in the appropriately named, Village Pub. From here it's a short drive to Highgrove, HRH Prince Charles' private estate, where we'll enjoy a private tour (subject to availability) and then head to London. Upon our arrival in the city, the evening is free —why not take in a show in London's famous West End, or sample a wonderful local restaurant? **(B, L)**

OVERNIGHT: LONDON

TUESDAY, MAY 22ND - Today we visit Great Dixter for a tour of the garden of Christopher Lloyd, who devoted his life to developing one of the most exciting and experimental gardens of our time, incorporating medieval buildings, yew topiary, and a tapestry of mixed borders (including the famous Long Border). Then it's on to Sissinghurst, rescued in 1930 by poet/novelist Vita Sackville-West and her husband, historian Harold Nicolson, who bought the romantic ruins and began to create the gardens (10 gardens spread over a 6-acre area). Harold, a classicist, utilized the walls and buildings that were already in place, while Vita devised the inspired planting schemes, grouping plants according to color, texture, and season. The evening is free for you to dine at one of the city's many fine restaurants. **(B)**

OVERNIGHT: LONDON



STOURHEAD GARDENS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 23RD - Today we spend a full day at Britain's most famous spring garden event, the Chelsea Flower Show, where our membership in the Royal Horticultural Society allows us to attend on members-only day. The show gardens, each an exquisite jewel of design and execution, are designed by the finest international horticulturists. Spend as much time as you choose among the inspiring exhibits and make your way back to the hotel in your own time. This evening we gather for a farewell dinner at our hotel. **(B, D)**

OVERNIGHT: LONDON

THURSDAY, MAY 24TH - Morning transfer to one of London's airports for return flights to the U.S. **(B)**

Key to included meals: **B** - breakfast, **L** - lunch, **D** - dinner