

The Castles and Gardens Guarding England and Wales

Option to extend stay to visit RHS Hampton Court Flower Show

June 25-July 3, 2012

Monday, June 25 Depart USA.

Tuesday, June 26



8.00am Andria will be waiting at Manchester International Arrivals Terminal 1 to welcome you and guide you to our coach. After your bags have been placed on the coach, the driver will take us along the Welsh coast to the pretty harbor town of Conway with its 800 year old castle. Enjoy a guided tour.

Then on to the Seiont Manor Hotel which will be our home for the next three days and nights. After freshening up, relax this afternoon and enjoy the expansive grounds of this perfectly situated hotel. Some may decide on an optional Spa treatment to be totally relaxed for the start of the tour, some to take the opportunity to learn how to fly fish in the Manors stream, or for some an afternoon with a book in the garden will be just the ticket. Your choice.



Dinner and early night at Seiont Manor Hotel

Wednesday, June 27



Each day will start with a traditional full English breakfast. This morning we set out for Plas Newydd. This gracious home is still lived in by the Marquis of Anglesey and is renowned for its associations with the Battle of Waterloo and the artist Rex Whistler. The garden was originally designed by Repton and has a spectacular site overlooking the Menai Straits. The head gardener is an absolute delight and you will certainly enjoy his explanations dealing with his work in the updating of this lovely garden.

Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwymdrobwillantysiliogogogoch otherwise known as Llanfair PG! is on our way to the Tudor House, our next stop. The railway station at this little town must be seen to be believed!

The Tudor House is a real gem. It is the fascinating home of Richard Cuthbertson, former President of the National Trust for Wales. This cottage is incredible! It was already old when its owner, Henry Tudor, picked up the crown from the Battle of Bosworth Field.

Our busy day ends as we drive to the pretty town of Beaumaris where dinner awaits us at Ye Olde Bulls Head - a fascinating ancient hostelry -which still prides itself on its cuisine. After enjoying a delicious meal, return to Seiont Manor Hotel.

Thursday, June 28

Bodnant Gardens has a world famous collection of plants, and this is our destination this morning. You will see the magnificent Himalayan shrubs, sweet smelling roses, and colorful herbaceous borders.



It is a beautiful drive through the wild Welsh mountains of Snowdonia to visit the garden of Plas Brondanw. This castle was the family home of Clough Williams-Ellis, a wonderful British eccentric. I think that you will find this a fascinating discovery of romantic Wales! Time permitting we will make a quick stop at Portmeirion, the Italian village that he designed and built, and, yes, the famous chinaware followed!



In the afternoon we visit Caernarfon Castle, site of the investiture of all Princes of Wales, including the present Prince Charles. By now you will be fast becoming an expert in Welsh history!

Overnight at Seiont Manor hotel with dinner.

Friday, June 29



Sadly this is the day we leave Wales but it is a beautiful drive through the Welsh Mountains to England. Time permitting we will make a quick stop at the Llangollen Aquaduct and admire the work of Telford. Then on to Chirk Castle. The castle has secrets to show us both inside and out. David Swan, the head gardener has many a curious tale to share as we walk the stunning herbaceous borders!



Preston Hall has been the home of the Corbet family since 1066. You will witness the pride that Leila Corbet takes in her family home with its ancient Corbet bed and its beautiful covers that have been hand sewn – even stitched by the present Queen of England for the ancient family bed. This is very special for anyone who appreciates fine needlework. Leila has created a unique garden for her Hall.



We will visit the Corbet family chapel. This has been a store of family history for many centuries and generations.

For the next three nights we split into two groups and stay at the Lion and Pheasant Hotel and the Hotel in the town of Shrewsbury. This is the only way that I can find enough twin bedded rooms in this town at hotels of the standards required for the Curious Traveler. Shrewsbury is a distinctive and individual market town of particular charm. Dine at your hotel.



Saturday, June 30

This tour has been packed with unusual sites to see and things to do. This is a morning to relax. For those who want to join, we will have a guided walking tour of the old town. There is much to see: the archeology, architecture, the old market, town life and so much more. This is the home town of Darwin and of Brother Cadfael!

After lunch your choice:

Either a challenging walk climbing up Caradoc Hill where the views are worth the walk. Caradoc is crowned with the remains of a Pictish fort.

Or a visit to Stokesay Castle. This medieval castle is substantially different from those other castles that we have seen.



To-night we will split up into small groups and dine at the homes of some delightful British families with whom I know you will have interests in common.

Sunday, July 1



This morning we visit an inspirational, private garden, Preen Manor. The owner of this garden is a charming lady. She is justly proud of the twenty years of work that she has put into creating a masterpiece.

This afternoon, we will visit Benthall Hall a fascinating Elizabethan Mansion and stories to tell about the Priest Hole and the adventures of Charles I as he escaped the Roundheads. I love the intimate and carefully restored garden. This is a real plantsmans garden.



We will return towards Shrewsbury by way of the old Roman City of Wroxeter. This fascinating site will tell you much about Roman Britain-how even the Romans were beaten by the British weather and gave up on their attempts to build an outdoor swimming pool!

Close by is the Mytton and Mermaid Hotel. We will stop for dinner at this charming old hostelry, one of my favourite hotels in England. I hope that you feel its magic as I do.

Return to Shrewsbury for the night.

Monday, July 2



A pretty drive today takes us to Chester via the lovely gardens of Wollerton Hall. The roses and borders will be at their peak.

A short drive further takes us Erdigg Hall, a fascinating country House that reflect *the Upstairs Downstairs* lifestyles of masters and servants in the British Country House. This family even had a tradition of writing amusing poems telling about each of their servants. The walled gardens have been restored to their 18th Century formal design and the head gardener is proud to show them to us.

Chester is a city of great charm and character. A guided walk around the ancient Roman walls is a great way to learn about the city or you may prefer to use the time to find a last few souvenirs.



Option to attend Evensong at Chester Cathedral.

Drive on to Radison Hotel, Manchester Airport for our final night and dinner.

Tuesday, July 3rd

Return flights to the US.

This tour is not for the faint hearted. You are advised to wear good walking shoes!

Option to visit Hampton Court RHS Flower Show

For those who would like to extend their stay, there is a fast direct train from Manchester to London. Attend the Royal Horticultural Society Hampton Court Flower Show, a not to be missed favourite amongst the British gardeners. This can be arranged to fit your schedule.

Please ask for more details.

Prices include land travel, lodging, traditional full English breakfasts, 7 dinners, Membership Royal Oak Society and entrance fees to all gardens.

Per Person, Double Occupancy \$3400.00

Single Supplement \$599.00

Price quote is based on 12 travelers in the group and is subject to exchange rate prevailing at time of final payment.

Insurance not included.

Deposit of \$500.00 payable by November 30, 2011.

Terms and Conditions

Inclusions:

- Membership of the Royal Oak National Trust and its quarterly magazine.
- 7 nights' accommodation in 4 star superior hotels with full English breakfast daily.
- Own coach and driver throughout.
- Entrances to key sites as per itinerary
- 7 Dinners - 4 nights at our hotel plus three special dinners at Ye Olde Bulls Head in town of Beaumaris, one at the Mytton and Mermaid at Atcham and, best of all, one at the homes of garden lovers.
- Lunch at Preston Hall
- Expertise of tour director and master gardener, Andria Rucker, so well-known in this area of the world by many of the famous gardeners and families of Britain - you will have her personal expertise and find that doors are opened to her. You will also have a chance to interact and speak to all head gardeners who will be happy to share with you their years of experience.
- 12 people max to fill this group.
- A detailed booklet giving history and information of all places that will be visited will be provided before departure.

-All land arrangements have been costed at current rates of exchange which could be subject to adjustment at time of final payment depending on rate of exchange.

-Price per person double occupancy \$3400.00
Single supplement \$599.00

-A deposit of \$500.00 is required by November 30, 2011 with full payment 60 days prior to departure.

Travel Insurance strongly recommended.