

# Country Houses & Gardens

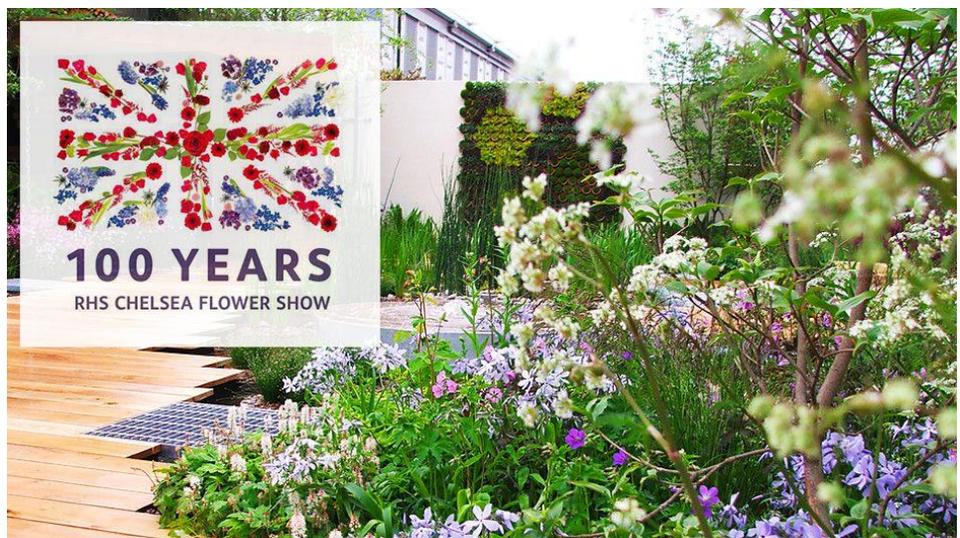
## 8 Day Programme

Day 1	Berkshire
Day 2	Somerset
Day 3	Somerset
Day 4	Hampshire
Day 5	London
Day 6	London
Day 7	London
Day 8	Depart



Sissinghurst Castle & Gardens

England offers some of the most stunning and beautiful country gardens and estates in the world. Spend a week in the English countryside talking to country house owners, head gardeners and estate managers and absorbing the background stories of how some of these picturesque gardens have evolved into renowned and celebrated landmarks. Visit gardens which were created and designed by enduring gardeners such as Capability Brown and Vita Sackville West; learn about what it takes to maintain these wonderful estates and visit the most illustrious and glorious flower show in the world today, the Chelsea Flower Show. Chelsea, which celebrated its centenary in 2013, is the very pinnacle of today's imaginative garden design.



# Country Houses & Gardens

## Day 1 – Welcome to England

- Arrival into a London airport.
- You will be met by your Blue Badge Guide who will welcome you to your **Country Houses & Gardens Programme**.
- Enjoy lunch at Drakes Restaurant .
- Visit the flagship garden of the **Royal Horticultural Society, Wisley** which captures the imagination with richly planted borders, luscious rose gardens and the state-of-the-art Glasshouse.
- Transfer to **Cliveden House**. Cliveden was once the glittering hub of society, visited by virtually every British Monarch since George I and home to Waldorf and Nancy Astor in the early 20th century. Cliveden was renowned for hosting exclusive parties and political gatherings and later became infamously associated with the Profumo Affair.
- Private dinner and overnight stay at Cliveden.



RHS Wisley



Cliveden House

## Day 2 – Somerset

- You will be transported through the beautiful English countryside to **Goodwood House**. Nestled in the spectacular Sussex countryside, surrounded by mature parklands and home to the Dukes of Richmond for centuries, Goodwood House combines the glamour of a great English country house with the warmth of a family home. In addition to the spectacular estate, enjoy an opportunity to view the outstanding collection of art throughout the house.
- Lunch in **Goodwood House**.
- Travel through Wiltshire and past the famous stones of Stonehenge to the picturesque Roman City of Bath. Discover a whole city designated as a **World Heritage Site by UNESCO**. Since 1987, the city of Bath has been listed as a 'cultural site' with outstanding value and cultural significance and is a must see for any visitor to the west country.
- Dinner and overnight stay in Bath at the Bath Spa Hotel.



Goodwood House



Royal Crescent in Bath

# Country Houses & Gardens

## Day 3 – Somerset

- This morning, enjoy a private guided tour of **Hillesley House Gardens** with head gardener Stewart Taylor, who has singularly been responsible for lovingly developing the gardens during his 25 years tenure.
- Lunch at Jesse's Bistro.
- This afternoon visit the **Stowell Park Estate** where you will enjoy a personal welcome by **Lord or Lady Vestey**. Stowell lies in the heart of the Cotswold Hills and is an extensive private agricultural and sporting estate. It has magnificent gardens and extends over 5,500 acres. The estate has been owned by the Vestey family since 1921.
- This evening enjoy an exclusive takeover of the **Roman Baths** for a private tour. Built around England's only hot spring, the extensive ruins and treasures from the spring are beautifully preserved and presented using the best of modern interpretation.
- Private dinner in the **Pump Rooms** which is without doubt one of the most elegant and atmospheric venues in the country. It makes a memorable setting for any dinner.
- Overnight in Bath at the Bath Spa Hotel.



Stowell Park



## Day 4 – Hampshire

- This morning travel to **Blenheim Palace** in Woodstock, where a personal welcome by a member of the family of the **Duke of Marlborough** can be organised. **Blenheim Palace** was a gift from Queen Anne and a grateful nation to John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, following his famous victory at the Battle of Blenheim. Visit the gilded State Rooms, which house one of the finest collections in Europe, and the Churchill Exhibition which includes the room where Sir Winston Churchill was born 1874.
- Lunch at Blenheim Palace.
- Leave Woodstock for Hampshire and the relaxing surroundings of the **Four Seasons Hotel**. The hotel is set in 500 acres of landscaped grounds and offers fantastic facilities catering for the most discerning of guests.
- Private dinner and overnight stay.



Blenheim Palace

# Country Houses & Gardens

## Day 5 – London

- The first stop for today is **Saville Gardens**, arguably Britain's finest ornamental garden, it is a true wonder. It's a garden for all seasons and a place of beauty and colour that is loved by horticulturalists and enthusiasts alike. Visitors can journey through 35 acres of interconnecting gardens and exotic woodland. Every garden has its own unique attraction, featuring a distinctive group of plants which introduce a fresh burst of vibrant colour throughout the seasons.
- Lunch at The House on the Bridge.
- Travel into London to **St. Paul's Cathedral** where you will enjoy a private tour of this spectacular building which is a lasting monument to the glory of God and a symbol of the hope, resilience and strength of the city of London and the United Kingdom. The cathedral is home to an impressive array of art; from the delicate carvings of Grinling Gibbons to Sir James Thornhill's dome murals, as well as the Victorian mosaics and Henry Moore's 'Mother and Child'.
- Check in to Rocco Forte's flagship London hotel, **Brown's**. Proudly perched at one of the most desirable addresses in Mayfair since its Victorian heyday, **Brown's Hotel** underwent an extensive renovation at the hands of **Olga Polizzi** that has blended fresh colours, mosaic floors, and antique furnishings with the hotel's historic wooden panelling, gilt mirrors and stained glass. Its ageless good looks, combined with the jazzy glamour of the Donovan Bar and a moving, shaking guest list, have made it one of London's must-stays.
- Dinner in Brown's signature restaurant.



Saville Gardens



St Paul's Cathedral



Brown's Hotel

# Country Houses & Gardens

## Day 6 – London

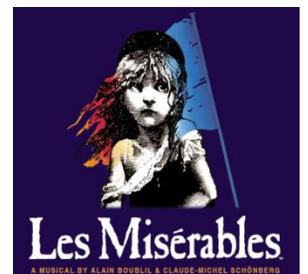
Spend the day at possibly the most famous flower show in the world, **The Royal Horticultural Society's (RHS) Chelsea Flower Show**. The RHS Chelsea Flower Show is held for five days in May, in the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Highlights to the Chelsea Flower Show include the avant-garde show gardens designed by leading names with the floral marquee at the centrepiece. The Chelsea Flower Show truly receives a lot of publicity. A mark of its cache and popularity is the number of visitors who attend; more than 157,000 each year, with the first two days only open to RHS members. Traditionally, several members of the British Royal Family attend a preview of the show as part of the royal patronage of the RHS. The area of land devoted to show gardens increased steadily between 1970 and 2000 and the show has become an important venue for watching trends. New plants are often launched at the show and the popularity of older varieties revived under the focus of the horticultural world. It is the garden design equivalent of a catwalk at a fashion show.

*In previous years, we have been able to work with the head gardener of the show to offer truly unique access to elements of the show and a highly personalised show round of the various show gardens.*

You will go on to enjoy an evening at one of London's famous West End shows, in combination with a pre and post theatre dinner, at one of the many exclusive eateries the capital has to offer.



Floral displays at Chelsea Flower Show



# Country Houses & Gardens

## Day 7 – London

- Spend the morning at **Great Dixter** in Sussex. Great Dixter was the family home of gardener and gardening writer Christopher Lloyd – it was the focus of his energy and enthusiasm and fuelled over 40 years of books and articles. Now under the stewardship of Head Gardener, Fergus Garrett, **Great Dixter** is an historic house, a garden, a centre of education and a place of pilgrimage for horticulturists from across the world.
- Enjoy a typical country pub lunch in the Kent countryside.
- This afternoon visit **Sissinghurst Castle & Gardens**. The garden at **Sissinghurst** is owned and maintained by the National Trust and is among the most famous gardens in England. Sissinghurst's garden was created in the 1930's by **Vita Sackville-West**, poet and gardening writer, and her husband. The gardens are designed as a series of "rooms", each with a different character of colour and/or theme, the walls being high clipped hedges and many pink brick walls. The rooms and "doors" are arranged so that as you enjoy the beauty in a given room, you suddenly discovers a new vista into another part of the garden, making a walk a series of discoveries that keeps leading you into yet another exciting area of the garden.
- Your stay in England will culminate in a private tour of her Majesty's Royal Palace and Fortress, **The Tower of London** where you can take in the atmosphere of this iconic landmark building and view the priceless Crown Jewels, before watching the military **Ceremony of the Keys** which officially locks up the Tower of London each evening.



Great Dixter



## Day 8 – Departure

- Having enjoyed a memorable week and visited some of England's most beautiful country gardens and homes, you will head for Heathrow Airport and your return flight home.