

The World of Downton Abbey

A Tour to England with WFSU!

September 12 – 21, 2013

Limited to 25 participants

An exclusive presentation by WFSU



Highclere Castle

Join WFSU for a truly memorable trip to England this fall!

Masterpiece's *Downton Abbey* has seduced audiences both in Britain and here, "across the pond", by its superbly crafted script of simmering sub plots and four dimensional characters, deftly portrayed, upstairs and down, by an unforgettable cast. On a tour of historic England, we will discover what makes this world so fascinating in fact and fiction, past and present. The highlight will be attending a private charity event at Highclere Castle: for more than 300 years the home of Lord and Lady Carnarvon, the real Downton Abbey.

From Edwardian London and the iconic Houses of Parliament, to the Georgian splendour of Jane Austen's Bath and the hallowed halls of Oxford, invited scholars and expert guides will help us explore our enduring fascination with the aristocracy, their grand estates, and how they survive today. We will learn the codes they live by, their manners and customs.

Alastair Bruce, historical advisor for *Downton Abbey* and a Royal Commentator for the press, will address us in the House of Lords and at lunch in a London Club. We will stroll the streets of "Downton" village and our final dinner will take place in the home of the Dowager Countess portrayed by Maggie Smith.

We'll put all this in context with visits to other Masterpiece locations and historic sites. What did Jane Austen's bonneted women really get up to in Bath? Where is the Abbey in Downton, or Lacock? Was life below stairs so rosy? Do Inspector Morse's Professors really discuss Shakespeare in Pubs?

We'll enjoy an evening of Shakespeare in Stratford-upon-Avon. We'll lodge in select 4-star hotels, take over our own country house, dine in fine restaurants, and indulge in high tea. We hope you will join us for an unforgettable journey!

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Invitation to a charity event with Lord and Lady Carnarvon at Highclere Castle, location for exterior and interior scenes of *Downton Abbey*
- Dinner at Byfleet Manor, location of the Dowager Countess's home
- Private guides, talks and visits with experts on British history and the Edwardian era in particular
- Tours of major historical sites in London, Oxford and Bath, including the House of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Blenheim Palace, Oxford, its University and Colleges, Lacock Abbey, and Bampton village (Downton village scenes), among others
- Prime tickets to a performance of Hamlet in Stratford, plus evensong in Oxford
- Deluxe 4-star accommodations in London, Oxford, and Ston Easton, near Bath
- Private, air-conditioned motorcoach transportation to all destinations in the itinerary
- Free time for additional sight-seeing, shopping or relaxing



Blenheim Garden

TOUR COST: \$4985 per person, ground only; limited to 25 participants. The England tour is an exclusive presentation of WFSU and is organized by The Grand Tour Travel Company of Peterborough, New Hampshire.

Daily Itinerary

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

Flights depart US to London Heathrow, with arrival the following day.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 (Oxford)

Welcome

On arrival at Heathrow we are met by our Tour Manager, Alasdair Clayre, and a private coach transfer to Oxford, time TBA. We check-in at one of the most unusual boutique hotels, Malmaison. The hotel is set inside ancient Oxford Castle and some of the rooms are carved out of the former prison! This evening we get together over a **welcome drink and dinner** in a hallowed College Formal Hall, a privilege reserved for distinguished visitors to Oxford. Tonight or another night you'll have the option of attending evensong in Christ Church Cathedral, sung by the young boys of the College's own school.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 (Oxford)

The City of Spires

After **breakfast daily** at all the hotels, we'll take a morning walking tour of the city and its colleges. Too many names to mention are associated with Oxford, from Sir Christopher Wren to Tolkien to Harry Potter. The University can claim 47 Nobel Laureates, 12 Saints and 8 current Cabinet ministers. Alastair Bruce, OBE, the historical advisor for *Downton Abbey*, writer, broadcaster, and an expert on manners, military and dress, joins us for **lunch**. This evening we travel north to Stratford-upon-Avon for a performance of the immortal bard's great *Hamlet* by the Royal Shakespeare Company.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 (Oxford)

Downton Village

We begin today with a visit to the nearby village of Bampton for a stroll through the streets of "Downton." See the house given to Isobel Crawley, visit the church where Matthew and Mary married and the little library used for the village hospital exterior. **Lunch** is at the Trout Inn, the favoured Pub of Inspector Morse. Then a short drive brings us to magnificent Blenheim Palace, home to the Dukes of Marlborough and Winston Churchill's birthplace. Designed by Vanbrugh in the rare British Baroque style, Blenheim is perhaps best known for its park, landscaped by Capability Brown. We will tour the palace, as well as the lovely park and gardens before returning to Oxford.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 (Ston Easton)

To the Manor Born

After breakfast, we bid good-bye to Oxford and travel through the lower Cotswolds west to our next home near Bath. We stop off to visit the charming village of Lacock, preserved by the National Trust, where scenes

from *Pride and Prejudice*, *Cranford* and *Harry Potter* were filmed. Then we arrive at the Ston Easton Park Hotel, an 18th century Palladian mansion set amid 36 beautiful acres in the rolling hills of Somerset. The group will have the run of the hotel which includes an Edwardian era kitchen, a Victorian garden, and an elegant Saloon. We'll tour the house and garden before **dinner** at their award-winning restaurant.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

Jane Austen in Bath

A short drive brings us to the charming city of Bath. Historically an important religious site and Roman settlement, Bath later became a fashionable Georgian resort town and the setting for several of Jane Austen's novels. We'll discover the jewels of Regency Bath: the Assembly Rooms, the Parades, the Georgian baths, the Circus and Royal Crescent, and **lunch** in the Pump rooms where you also can taste the waters. We return to Ston Easton for **high tea** and a **late supper**. There Emma Craigie, a local writer and teacher, will talk to us about her childhood at Ston Easton. Her father, William Rees-Mogg, late editor of *The Times* of London bought and restored the crumbling mansion.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 (London)

Highclere

Your morning at Ston Easton is free, but the hotel will put on a demonstration of cooking in the Edwardian era kitchens which still remain in place. In the afternoon, we travel past ancient Stonehenge, as well as Watership Down, an area famous for its race-horse stud-farms, towards Sandham Memorial Chapel. Built to commemorate the unknown dead of the First World War, and housing the murals of war-time artist Stanley Spencer, this is a reminder of the momentous events that shook the world of *Downton Abbey*. Suitably refreshed by a **light supper** at the Dew Pond Inn, we proceed to Highclere Castle for a private charity event. The Castle has been in the Carnarvon family for over 300 years and our hosts are the current Earl and Countess of Carnarvon. Guides will be on hand to answer questions on the magnificent state rooms, so familiar to us from the series. Following the reception, we continue on to London and check in at the Waldorf Hotel in the heart of the West End.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 (London)

A City of Lords

We set off this morning to take a private tour of the Houses of Parliament, focusing on the "upper" house, the House of Lords. We'll also visit Westminster Abbey, begun in 1245 and the resting place of seventeen monarchs. Lunch is at a private London club, an exclusive retreat from the bustle of town life, where Alastair Bruce will join us again and speak of his experiences on *Downton Abbey*. The rest of your

afternoon and evening is free. One option is to attend a performance: the West End theatre district is very close to our hotel.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 (London)

The Dowager's House

Half of your final full day is free in London, to finish shopping, additional site-seeing or simply stroll about. Mid-afternoon we head to Eton College, where we enjoy a rare guided visit of the school. Founded by King Henry VI in 1440 to educate a new class of men for the Royal Court, Eton was more recently the school of David Cameron, The Archbishop of Canterbury and Princes Harry and William. By now we will have earned the right to relax with our private **gala farewell dinner** at nearby Byfleet Manor, Maggie Smith's house in *Downton Abbey*.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

Tour ends after breakfast. Flights return to the US with arrival the same day.

Itinerary is subject to change. Meals in bold are included in the price of the tour.



Byfleet Manor

TOUR REGISTRATION

\$4,985 per person, ground only, double occupancy (includes a \$500 tax deductible contribution to WFSU)
Single supplement: \$990

DEPOSIT: \$1,000 per person, —first come, first served— reserves your place

Balance due Friday, August 2, 2013.

Call Ashley Murrell at WFSU, 850.487.3170, ext. 316 to reserve your place on the tour with a credit card deposit, or send a check made to The Grand Tour for the deposit amount to: England Tour, WFSU, 1600 Red Barber Plaza, Tallahassee, FL 32310. Registration materials and further information will be provided upon request, or can be downloaded from wfsu.org.

QUESTIONS? Call Ashley Murrell at 850.487.3170, ext. 316 or The Grand Tour, 800.727.2995, or info@thegrandtour.com