

TUDOR ENGLAND TOUR

3 nights

Email jenny@britholidays.com for dates and pricing

This short theme tour introduces participants to perhaps one of Britain's most iconic historical periods - and in doing provides an interesting variant on the 'Homes and Gardens' theme. Certainly, and thanks in part to Hollywood, the main characters of the age have become known far outside their immediate 16th Century English world. There cannot be many places around the globe where the exploits of Henry VIII, William Shakespeare, 'Bloody' Mary, Francis Drake and the Virgin Queen Elizabeth are unknown. Fortunately, the Tudor monarchs left behind them a fabulous selection of palaces and castles. And there are many other lesser homes standing to help us understand life

for the common man, supplemented by the words of gifted poets and playwrights. This tour, while featuring life and events during the Tudor period (1485 to 1603) is a fascinating way for anyone to see the UK, whether it's for the first time or on a repeat visit (as we're sure there'll be places even a regular visitor will not yet have seen). On this tour we have tried to encompass not only the great and most commonly visited sites associated with the period, and with the recent film 'The Golden Age', as well as including a range of lesser-known ones.

SUMMARY - Tentative Itinerary

NIGHTSTOP

DAY ONE - SATURDAY

Departing London at 08.00, we first drive to Burghley House in South Lincolnshire. This sumptuous stately home was home for the great Cecil family, This largest and grandest house of the first Elizabethan age was completed by William Cecil, Lord Burghley in 1587. Today, eighteen state rooms are filled with wonderful paintings, furniture and fine art. The kitchens are truly amazing! We'll next take a brief stop at Kirby Hall, another of England's greatest Elizabethan and 17th-century houses. Begun by Sir Humphrey Stafford in about 1570, it was purchased six years later by Sir Christopher Hatton, one of Queen Elizabeth's 'comely young men' and later her Lord Chancellor. Kirby Hall's exceptionally richly decorated Great Hall and state rooms remain intact. Sir Christopher Hatton the Fourth added the great gardens (described as 'ye finest garden in England') in the late 17th century. They are now partly restored and laid out in an elaborate 'cutwork' design.

Finally, to the battlefield which marked the demise of the House of York and the ascendancy of the Tudors; Bosworth. Here, in 1485, Henry Tudor slew Richard III (his offer of a 'my kingdom for a horse' not being quite enough!). It's an interesting site and we'll take a guided walk of the battlefield.

Our night stop is close to the magnificent ruined castle of Kenilworth. Though the castle has a history preceding the Tudor period, it has connections with John Dudley, the Duke of Northumberland, who

became virtual ruler of England at the time of the rule of the pre-teen King, Edward. It was Dudley who tried to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne, and who was beheaded to the Tower for his efforts by 'Bloody' Mary. Warwickshire in accommodation dating from Tudor times!

DAY TWO - SUNDAY

Today, we'll change our focus and look at Tudor literature, medicine and how the common folk lived. What finer place to use as our 'classroom'! Then, Stratford upon Avon and nearby Warwick.

Patently, the great bard, Shakespeare, provides one major theme to the day, but we'll also learn about daily life during the late Tudor period as we take visits to some of the houses associated with his life and family. Amongst many other fascinating things, you'll hear how we come to use the phrase 'to let one's hair down' as a synonym for having fun!

We'll also see Harvard House which was the home of Katherine Rogers, mother of John Harvard, whose bequest made possible the foundation of Harvard University. Built in 1596, it is a fine example of an Elizabethan town house and also the home of the Museum of British Pewter.

Nearby, in Warwick, we'll visit the Lord Leycester Hospital. Robert Dudley (another one!), Earl of Leicester, and a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I, converted the picture-book buildings of the dissolved Warwick Guilds into a retreat for old soldiers and it has continued to serve that purpose until the present day.

DAY THREE - MONDAY

We turn south and drive to Oxford. Many of the colleges here were endowed during the Tudor period by such as Cardinal Wolsey and Henry VIII. We will see Christchurch, originally known as Cardinal College, and then King Henry VIII's college.

Next, touring through the magnificent Cotswolds. This sheep farming region was an important source of wealth throughout the Tudor period. We'll stop at Northleach, a typical village of the area and see the chapel built to commemorate the marriage of Henry Tudor and Elizabeth of York. One other reason for coming here is to visit Sudley Castle, a place with connections running through the Tudor Dynasty and court circle. It was the home of three queens; houses the marble tomb of Katherine Parr, the wife of Henry VIII who survived and a place where scandal left its impression on the young mind of the future Queen Elizabeth I. The Cotswolds

DAY FOUR - TUESDAY

We'll start the day seeing the imposing ruins of the first abbey to be dissolved by Henry VIII. Then, to perhaps the jewel in the Tudor crown, Hampton Court Palace. We'll be taking time to explore in detail, having lunch here beside the Thames. The gardens, kitchen and external architecture are all absolute gems.

Our final visit of the day, and tour, will be to Hever Castle, in Kent. For many this is the prettiest of all Tudor palaces and certainly redolent with its history. This was the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, mother of Elizabeth, and later given to another of Henry's wives, Anne of Cleves as part of her divorce settlement. Our tour ends in London where you'll be dropped at one of our main hotel drop off points.

TOUR EXTENSION DAYS

The following days are special days for those who might like to extend their time in the UK and see more of our Tudor heritage. They would be offered to all participants on the 4-day tour but may have to be booked as customised day tour packages if there were insufficient takers from the main tour.

Tudor London and Greenwich

The city is full of Tudor History, from the Tower of London, to Ely and Winchester Palaces. Our day would concentrate on exploring both the main city and the areas around Greenwich.

Cost: dependent on the number of participants.

Windsor and Portsmouth

We'd begin our day at Windsor Castle. Here, a highlight will be the tomb of Henry VIII in St George's Chapel.

The object of our explorations would specifically be Tudor Maritime history with a visit to Henry VIII's ill-fated warship, the 'Mary Rose'. We'd also see some of the coastal Tudor fortifications