



The Heart of England

From Village Views to Castle Keeps

June 10 - 9, 2013

Dreamy spires and picturesque villages capture the romance and gentle beauty of the Cotswolds, a beautiful corner of England where lush, rolling hillsides meet the horizon and life seems lifted from the pages of a storybook. From the soaring towers of Oxford University to the quaint, tumbling cottages that sleep by the riverside to the gorgeous Georgian architecture of ancient Bath, the Cotswolds seem to extend an invitation to slow down, stay a while, and dream.



Castle Combe

But first, we'll start off in the vibrant capital city of London. Our hotel is ideally situated for exploring, and we'll have a guided tour of the city as well as free time for personal interests. With a wealth of history, art, theater, and restaurants at your fingertips, your time will fly by. As Dr. Samuel Johnson so famously said, "The man who is tired of London is tired of life!"

From London we'll wend our way to the Cotswolds, which stretch from Stratford-upon-Avon in the north to Bath in the south, and Gloucester in the west to Oxford in the east. The Cotswold Hills hide a multitude of treasures: the beautiful gardens of Sudeley Castle and the elegant grandeur of Warwick, the best-preserved medieval castle in the country; the magnificence of Oxford University's more than 30 individual colleges; Stratford-upon-Avon, the Bard's birthplace; Bath, with its mix of ancient Roman remnants and graceful Georgian buildings and terraces; and an assortment of some of the prettiest villages imaginable. The base of our explorations is the lovely Grapevine hotel in the village of Stow-on-the-Wold.

We'll explore the hills and dales, villages and towns, at a relaxed pace that allows you to appreciate the full glory of an English spring. From the byways of Castle Combe, perhaps the prettiest village in England, to medieval Warwick Castle, why not join us in *The Heart of England*?



Historic Bath

The cost of this itinerary, per person, double occupancy is:

Washington Dulles departure:	\$3790
Land only (no airfare included):	\$2840
Single supplement:	\$680

The following services are included:

Airfare:	Round trip economy class airfare from Washington Dulles to London. All taxes and customs fees included.
Hotels:	8 nights accommodation in superior tourist class hotels. All hotel taxes and service charges included.
Coaching:	All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary.
Meals:	Full breakfast daily, 3 dinners.
Guides:	Discover Europe tour director throughout.
Tickets:	Best seats for a performance at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.
Expenses:	Porterage of one large suitcase per person.
Entrances:	Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary.
Insurance:	Complete travel insurance including cancellation coverage.





Monday, June 10th. Evening departure from Washington, Dulles aboard British Airways' overnight service to London. **Overnight: Plane**

Tuesday, June 11th. Upon arrival, you will be met at the airport and escorted to your London hotel. After time to unpack and relax, you will have an arrival briefing, where your Discover Europe tour guide will introduce you to the British way of life – from where to change money, and what it looks like, to how to use the Underground (known as the 'Tube'). This afternoon you can relax or begin exploring the city. This evening we'll gather for a welcome dinner at the hotel. **(D)** **Overnight: London**

Wednesday, June 12th. The day begins with a sightseeing tour of London designed to give newcomers an overview of this great city and acquaint returning travelers with its many charms. We'll start in the City of Westminster where our guide introduces us to 1,000 years of English history. Continuing on, we'll view many of London's major monuments, from the Albert Memorial to St. Paul's Cathedral to Trafalgar Square, touring the city from Chelsea to Bloomsbury. We'll end the tour with a visit to the Tower of London to see the Crown Jewels. The rest of the afternoon and evening will be free for individual exploration. **(B)** **Overnight: London**

Thursday, June 13th. A free day to explore London—the galleries and museums, shopping along Oxford Street, or the crowds at Covent Garden. Alternatively, you could take a day trip, by train, to one of the fabulous destinations just outside the city: Canterbury, Brighton, Cambridge - all are within easy reach by train. In the evening, you're free to sample one of the city's many world-class restaurants or attend a performance at a West End theatre. **(B)** **Overnight: London**



Christchurch, Oxford

Friday, June 14th. Leaving London, we head for the beautiful city of Oxford, astride the River Thames, its historic buildings clustered within easy walking distance around the medieval core. The real treasure is the architectural beauty of Oxford University and its diverse buildings, many of which date back to the 13th and 14th centuries. After our walking tour, you'll have free time to explore— investigate the spire at St. Mary the Virgin with its superb view; admire the circular dome of the Radcliffe Camera; check out the Ashmolean Museum; visit Carfax Tower; or stroll Oxford Botanic Gardens, the oldest botanic garden in Britain. And don't miss Blackwell's, with the largest single room devoted to book sales in Europe—the cavernous Norrington Room (10,000 sq. ft.). This afternoon we'll continue on to our hotel in Shakespeare's town of Stratford-upon-Avon and settle in before we have an early pub supper. This evening we'll attend a performance at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Stratford-upon-Avon**



A Cotswold panorama

Saturday, June 15th. Our first visit this morning is to Warwick Castle. More than a thousand years old, Warwick is perhaps the best-preserved Norman castle in England, with magnificent towers and ramparts, splendid grounds, an appropriately dismal dungeon, and well-laid-out exhibitions. This afternoon we'll return to Stratford, where we'll visit Anne Hathaway's cottage, and have free time to explore the town, where you can visit the Shakespeare Birthplace Museum and see the church where he was baptized. **(B)** **Overnight: Stratford-upon-Avon**

Sunday, June 16th. A panoramic drive takes us south today, through the Cotswold Hills, where villages of thatched-roof cottages nestle in valleys of rolling green. We'll wander through several of the prettiest villages: Upper and Lower Slaughter (the name refers to a stream or "Slough"), whose cottages, little bridges, and peacefully flowing water all support the idyll of a traditional Cotswold village; and quaint Broadway, with its corn-colored stone. We'll stop in Burton-on-the-War for lunch, before continuing on to Sudeley Castle, steeped in history, and its beautiful gardens. We'll end the day at our hotel in the Georgian city of Bath with dinner included at our hotel. **(B, D)** **Overnight: Bath**

Monday, June 17th. This morning a walking tour introduces the historic city of Bath. Our first stop will be Bath Abbey, the last of the great English pre-Reformation churches, built in a pleasantly consistent late-perpendicular style. From the Abbey we walk across the piazza to the Roman Baths. These are some of the most extensive and best-preserved Roman remains in the country and the whole underground complex makes a fascinating visit. This afternoon there will be an excursion to the World Heritage Site of Stonehenge, located on Salisbury Plain. We return to Bath for a free evening. **(B)** **Overnight: Bath**

Tuesday, June 18th. A full day excursion today takes us across the Severn Bridge and into Wales. Our first stop will be the capital, Cardiff, where we'll visit Cardiff Castle and then stop for lunch and to explore the recently renovated waterfront district with the fabulous new parliament building. This afternoon we explore the Wye Valley, rich in ancient woodlands, wildlife, and towns. The lower Wye Valley was the first "tourist attraction" in Britain, inspiring the Picturesque movement, which attracted such luminaries as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Turner. We'll visit Tintern Abbey and Chepstow Castle. We return to Bath for a free evening. **(B)** **Overnight: Bath**



Warwick Castle

Wednesday, June 19th. It's an easy drive this morning straight along the motorway to Heathrow Airport for the returning British Airways flight to the U.S. **(B)** **Overnight: Home**

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