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From

Prices valid until
30th December 2025

days
Duration

England, Wales
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

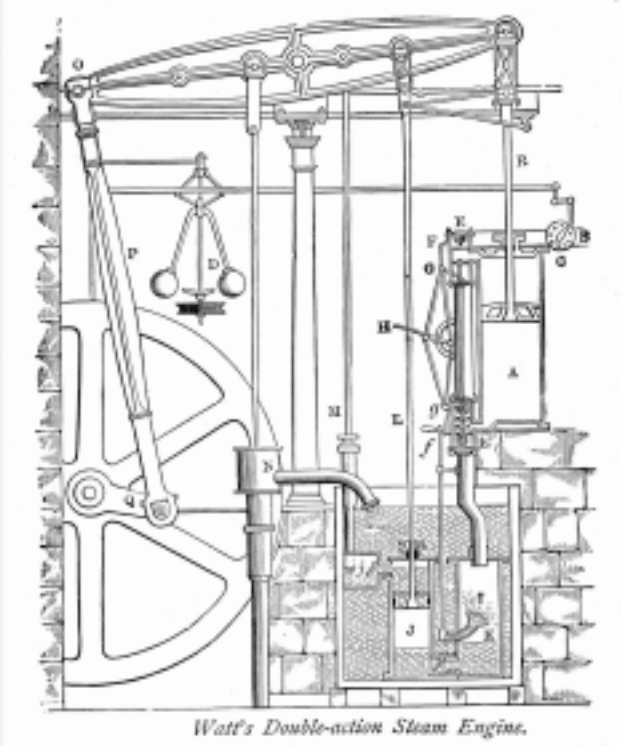
Agrarian and Industrial Britain | Small Group Tour for Mature Travellers

Tour of Agrarian and Industrial Britain

Odyssey offers easy, convenient, and relaxed escorted small group tours across Britain and beyond. We explore Britain's manicured beauty its ancient Roman, and Industrial heritage, its World Heritage Sites, and world famous cities, all with some truly spectacular scenery along the way. This and more is all waiting to be explored on one of Odyssey's small group tours of Britain, designed for the senior traveller, and led by

experienced, and enthusiastic like minded people.

This is an escorted small group tour for 23 days that focuses on two major elements of British history: the Agrarian Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. This small group tour explores critical elements of these revolutions and the impact that they had on the Great Britain we know today. This is a tour designed for the mature couple or solo traveller who is looking for an adventure that combines a fascinating history with beautiful scenery and unique landmarks.



Tour Background: Britain and the Revolutions

The Agrarian or Agricultural Revolution completely reshaped British society and changed the way that people lived. Although it was a gradual transformation that took place over centuries, an unorganised organic agricultural was slowly replaced by an innovative farming system that required intensive labour and resulted in people see land and food in a new way. Some people cite the beginning of the Agrarian Revolution in the 1500s but the changes did not accelerate until mid-17th century. A significant change brought about in this time was the idea of enclosure, where large tracts of previously open land were fenced in. One of the developments associated with this time is the Norfolk four-course rotation, a method of agriculture that involves growing different types of crops in the same area over sequential seasons to help prevent the likelihood of pathogens and pests that can occur when one plant species is continuously cropped. This practice restored the fertility of arable land. Later in the mid-18th century, selective breeding was introduced in order to produce high quality beef. These are just a few of the changes that saw an unprecedented increase in agricultural production in Britain. Agriculture came to dominate the British economy over these centuries in a society where the aristocracy and landed-gentry owned much of the countryside and tenants farmed the land and reared livestock. However, while the Agrarian Revolution had wide-reaching impacts on British life, more

dramatic change came with the Industrial Revolution.

In the late 18th and 19th centuries, population growth combined with an increase in foreign trade saw a move away from agriculture and a growing demand for manufacturing. Many people moved away from the countryside due to a surplus of agricultural labour and headed to the cities to find work. With technological advancements, animal power was replaced by steam power, the spinning of cotton into threads was revolutionised and the weaving process was streamlined. This saw the establishment of large factories and an increased flow of capital into the British economy which meant that the country's infrastructure changed immensely. Important transport networks were established, including the creation of the canal and railway systems across the country. It this time period that saw Britain cement its place as a world leader.

The Itinerary

During your tour of Britain as part of this small group you get to visit the remnants of many of these industrial-related structures preserved in the landscape and cities of today. On this tour, designed for mature couples and solo travellers with a passion for learning, you will visit some of the wonders of the revolutions and key locations recognised as iconic landmarks of British history. Our journey begins in the nation's capital in London on a tour of quaint villages seeped in history. Not only will you witness beautiful scenery, from Roman ruins to medieval architecture and breathtaking cathedrals but you will also learn about different local histories and how these revolutions shaped individual towns and cities across Britain.

Highlights of the Agrarian and Industrial Britain small group tour include time learning about the influence of the Romans, Vikings and Normans in Britain. This is realised by guided visits to places such as the Viking centre, and the National Canal Museum. We also enjoy walking tours of Bristol, Liverpool, and Manchester and the estuary forts of the Thames, to learn about their role in defining modern Britain, and discover more about the influence of the Romans

and Normans in Britain.

If you want to get more out of your vacation and uncover a new side of British history, then this is the holiday for you. The Agrarian and Industrial Britain tour will give you an amazing insight into the development of what was one of the world's greatest powers.

The Agrarian and Industrial Britain small group tour also has a sister tour: Britain's history through its canals and railways. Odyssey offer travellers two departures each year of this tour.

Invaders, Revolutions & Icons of Britain

If you'd like to learn more about touring Great Britain, read our blog post about travel tips for seniors here!

If you're looking to read up, check out this great list of fifteen books about Britain's industrial revolution!

For an overview of some of the incredible personalities that contributed to the revolution, check out this blog post!

For more details, click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, please call or send an email. Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right hand side of this page.

About Odyssey Traveller

We specialise in educational small group tours for seniors, typically groups between six to 12 people from Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and Britain. Our maximum number of people on a tour is 18 mature aged travellers.We have some 150 tours and offer 300 scheduled departures on offer each year. Odyssey has been offering

this style of adventure and educational programs since 1983.

Odyssey Traveller is committed to charitable activities that support the environment and cultural development of Australian and New Zealand communities.

Odyssey Traveller scholarship for Australia & New Zealand University students.

We are also pleased to announce that since 2012, Odyssey has been awarding $10,000 Equity & Merit Cash Scholarships each year. We award scholarships on the basis of academic performance and demonstrated financial need. We award at least one scholarship per year. We're supported through our educational travel programs, and your participation helps Odyssey achieve its goals. Students can apply for the scholarship by clicking on this link to find out more details.

Join our loyalty program when you join an international small group tour.

Every International small group tour taken typically contributes to your membership level in our Loyalty Program for regular travellers. Membership of the alumni starts when you choose to take your first international small group tour with Odyssey Traveller, discounts in tour pricing for direct bookings accrue from your third tour with Odyssey Traveller. To see the discounts and benefits of being a Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Diamond alumni member with us, please see this page.

For more information on Odyssey Traveller and our educational small group tours, visit and explore our website., remember to visit these pages in particular

- Terms and conditions applicable for booking an Odyssey Traveller tour.
- FAQ's about Odyssey Traveller

Alternatively, please call or send an email.

Tour Notes

- Itineraries may change if flight schedules, site availability, and other inclusions have to be amended prior to departure.

Highlights

1. Visit Bristol, Liverpool, and Manchester to learn about their role in defining modern Britain.
2. Study the estuary forts of the Thames, the Viking centre, and the National Canal Museum to learn about their history.
3. Tour many of the heritage-listed historic buildings and structures that shaped Britain.
4. Visit Seaside sites in Kent and Sussex to learn about the Martello Towers as a means of defense.
5. Understand the influence of the Romans and Normans in Britain.

Itinerary

Day 2

Locations: London

Overview:

During our 2 days in London, the group will travel via public transport vouchers to view London icons including Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, Trafalgar Square, and Buckingham Palace with a local guide.

Accommodation:

2 nights at London Lodge hotel or similar.

Day 3

Locations: London

Overview:

For our second full day in London, the tour visits the Science Museum to see galleries associated with advances in medicine. This will be followed by a visit to the Victoria and Albert Museum of decorative art and design. Saint Paul's Cathedral and the Tower of London will be included in the itinerary along with a 30 minute rotation on the London Eye.

Accommodation:

London Lodge hotel or similar.

Day 4

Locations: Whistable

Overview:

In the morning we leave London for Whistable to take a cruise in the Thames estuary on a sailing barge to visit WWII defensive forts. As added WWII protection for London, the Maunsell Forts were constructed in the Thames estuary in 1942. These steel towers have since deteriorated, and while some have been destroyed, others were used by pirate radio operators. At the end of the day we transfer to our accommodation in Canterbury.

Accommodation:

1 night at Falstaff Hotel Canterbury.

Day 5

Locations: Canterbury to Rye

Overview:

During the tour we will travel down the coast with the opportunity to visit 2 Roman sites and one of the cinque port castles built at the most vulnerable points on the coast. We pass through and visit some interesting regions and towns like Romney Marsh, and we will stop at Rye, which is located near the southeast British coastline, facing the

English Channel. It is located next to a sea route convenient for shipping coming out of the Mediterranean and from the North Sea. This strip of land in Kent and Sussex, which runs northeast from Hastings, became a gateway for invaders and consequently this land needed to be defended by rulers with forts, castles, armored watch towers (Martello Towers), and fortified cliffs. Many of these defenses were required before Britain had a navy to defend itself from threats of sea invasion.

The Romans landed on this coastline at Richborough in AD 43, and the Saxons and the Jutes used it in the mid AD 400s. Many invasions by the Danes and Norwegians occurred here in AD 800 and 900s and the Normans landed just south of Hastings in 1066. Again this coastline was used for defense during the events of WW II but today it serves a more welcoming role for visitors from the Continent.

Later we will visit Pevensey and the battle site where William, Duke of Normandy began the Norman Conquest with 7,000 to 8,000 men.

Accommodation:

2 nights at George Inn or similar.

Day 6

Locations: Rye & Surrounds

Overview:

Our guide for the day will teach us about Prevensey and Battle (abbey and battle site), before returning to Rye for a free evening.

Accommodation:

George Inn or similar.

Day 7

Locations: Portsmouth

Overview:

From Rye we will follow the coast around to Sompting to visit the Anglo-Saxon Norman church of St. Mary and see its most fascinating tower. At Chichester we will have a special tour as we visit the Fishbourne Roman villa, and on reaching Portsmouth we will visit the historic dockyard with

a local guide to see the Mary Rose, HMS Warrior, and HMS Victory.

Portsmouth is on the coast of Hampshire, separated from the Isle of Wight by the Solent, and with its very large harbour and dockyards it has been extremely well connected with Britain's days of naval greatness. As a naval base it has many specialised facilities such as a very large dry dock and a submarine base. It is the headquarters for the Royal Navy and the Royal Marine Commandos.

There are Roman, Saxon, and Norman links to Portsmouth, and at the end of the 1300s the first permanent fortifications were built here. It was a base for the Parliamentary forces during the English Civil War and the 11 ships of the First Fleet sailed to Australia from here in 1787. The harbour was the launching site for Admiral Nelson's flagship and today is the resting place for this vessel and several other famous ships. During the Industrial Revolution, Portsmouth figured significantly. It is the birthplace of the famous engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel and where his father Marc had made several contributions to naval technology.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Best Western Royal Beach.

Day 8

Locations: Tour to Winchester

Overview:

We will travel out of Portsmouth to Winchester to see the Great Hall and Cathedral. We then go on to Chawton to visit the abode of Jane Austen, and complete the day back in Portsmouth visiting Porchester Castle.

Accommodation:

Best Western Royal Beach.

Day 9

Locations: Chepstow

Overview:

Travel from Portsmouth will take us northeast to Chepstow via Bristol. On the way we stop at Edington to view the site of battle between King Alfred and the Danes in 878. In Bristol we have a city tour including the harbour area and a visit to SS Great Britain. Bristol is in southwest England on the Avon River and close to the Severn Estuary, a location that allowed this city to develop as a major shipping centre. Unlike Portsmouth, Bristol has strong connections as a commercial port beginning about the 10th Century, and a rich maritime history, including connections with Cabot and Columbus, who sailed from here on their voyages of discovery in the Atlantic Ocean. A sad part of local history is the part Bristol played in the slave trade, and it is estimated that some 2,000 slaving ships were fitted out here in the early 1700s.

During the Industrial Revolution, Isambard Brunel made many local contributions. He connected London to Bristol with the first fast, long distance train service, and he also designed and launched several large pioneer steam ships here and added to his fame by designing the magnificent Clifton Bridge that spans the Avon Gorge. Later our tour will include the Clifton Bridge visitor centre and the eastern side of the Severn Estuary in Wales. In 1966 the Severn Suspension Bridge was completed, allowing convenient road access to Wales via the M4.

Accommodation:

2 nights at The Beaufort Hotel or similar.

Day 10

Locations: Chepstow

Overview:

We will drive to Pumpsaint to visit the Dolaucothi Roman Gold mines. We then visit the Big Pit mining museum in Blaenavon and make our way back to visit the Roman baths and fort at Caerleon. We will finish

the day with a visit to Chepstow castle.

Accommodation:

The Beaufort Hotel or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Oxford

Overview:

From Chepstow we will drive east to observe the Uffington White Horse, a white hillside image originally created in the Iron Age. We will then drive south to visit the Rural Life Museum in Reading to hear about aspects of the Agricultural Revolution from an archivist. We will learn about changes in farm machinery during this period.

Just north of Oxford is the town of Woodstock, where we will visit Blenheim Palace. The palace was built for John Churchill, the 1st Duke of Malborough, and Sir Winston Churchill, as the grandson of the 7th Duke also resided here. The magnificent grounds of the palace were initially designed by Capability Brown one of the outstanding landscape gardeners of the 1700s who became known as the “Landscape Architect of England.”

Accommodation:

2 nights at Mercure Eastgate Hotel.

Day 12

Locations: Oxford

Overview:

Today on our Oxford walking tour, we will visit sites in Oxford with a local guide. Oxford is located in Oxfordshire, northwest of Greater London within a region known as the Home Counties. The Rivers Cherwell and Thames run through Oxford, and the Oxford Canal crosses the northern part of Oxfordshire, following the River Chirwell for much of its way and connecting with London via the River Thames. Oxford is often known as the city of dreaming spires, after the stunning architecture of the University’s historic buildings. This ‘dreaming spires‘ term was coined by the the 19th century British Poet Matthew Arnold,

and remains a popular epithet to Oxford today. Nearby Oxfordshire too, is renown for its beauty, with its picturesque cotswolds villages, and medieval architecture characterising the Cotswold region.

We will visit some of Oxford's colleges at this stage of our small group tours University of Oxford is the site of the first university in England. Today the university includes 38 colleges, several halls that house students as well as tutorials, academic lecture rooms, laboratories, and research centres. On this walking tour, we will also visit the Bodleian Library, which is the second largest library in Britain and serves mainly as a reference library with book storage in many buildings in Oxford University. It also serves as a Legal Deposit library so it receives and holds copies of many newly published books in Great Britain and Ireland. A walking tour is one of the best ways to explore Oxford, with the historic campus spanning multiple locations across the city. This organic sprawl and of cobbled streets makes a walking tour one of the best ways to appreciate Central Oxford, as well as the city's historic Oxford University.

We will visit the Ashmolean Library and take a short cruise on the Iffley Lock. Iffley is a small village/suburb of Oxford on the River Thames where the river (also locally known as the Isis) has been dammed by a weir and lock to improve river navigation. The commercial function of the weir and lock has now given way to recreational canal boats with the upstream section of the Isis suitable for rowing.

Accommodation:

Mercure Eastgate Hotel.

Day 13

Locations: Buxton

Overview:

Upon leaving Oxford, we will travel northwest to Stoke on Trent for a tour at the Wedgewood visitor centre to hear about the pottery industry. We then travel north to Macclesfield to the Paradise Silk Mill, one of many mills that carried a cottage industry through the Industrial Revolution to the 1900s and modern times. We finish the day with a

short drive to our accommodation in Buxton.

Buxton is a town located within the Peak District National Park and from here the tour will concentrate on sites including those from the Stone Age, the Great Plague, and the Agricultural and Industrial revolutions. We will also visit 2 magnificent historic residences.

The Derwent River Valley between Matlock and Belper served as an early source of power for manufacturing and was connected to major canals for the import of raw materials and the distribution of finished product. This valley is home to many cotton and silk mills that were established early in the Industrial Revolution. The substantial remnants of the mills and associated townships that were developed here are preserved as another British World Heritage Site.

Accommodation:

3 nights at Old Hall or similar.

Day 14

Locations: Buxton

Overview:

On the first day out of Buxton, a local guide will join us to visit parts of the Peak District. We will visit Eyam, which is a small village in the Peak District National Park with connections to a Roman mining area and to the Anglo-Saxons. In 1665 the township played an interesting but devastating part during the bubonic plague and it is often referred to as a Plague Town. Eyam is surrounded by pasture lands with the heather covered Eyam Moor to its north. The local pub, The Miners Arms, was established in 1630, its name relating back to local lead mining industry. Haddon Hall is described as one of the best-restored English medieval manors and is charming both inside and outside in its terraced garden. Most of the buildings surrounding the 2 courtyards date from the mid 1200s through to 1600s. Haddon Hall was originally owned by the Duke of Chatsworth but was granted to the National Trust that now manages the property. We will also visit a late Neolithic Stone Age, Arbor Low stone circle. During the day we also visit Tissington to see evidence of

the old style of agricultural cultivation.

Accommodation:

Old Hall or similar.

Day 15

Locations: Buxton

Overview:

On the second day from Buxton, we visit sites associated with mills and townships in the Derwent Valley, including Cromford and Belper with some free time later to explore in Buxton.

Accommodation:

Old Hall or similar.

Day 16

Locations: Buxton to Lincoln

Overview:

We will make several stops during our travel east from Buxton to Lincoln. The first stop is to visit the famous Chatsworth House, a grand, stately manor house built in the 1560s, rated as one of England's iconic country houses with about 25 of its 126 rooms open to the public. In its earlier days it was home to several generations of the Duke of Chatsworth. The house has been the subject of a BBC documentary and the filming site for several movies and TV series. It is located on the Derwent River and its gardens and grounds have been fashioned by several famous landscape gardeners including Capability Brown.

We will have some free time in the nearby village of Bakewell, then visit Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet in Sheffield. Sheffield grew mainly out of the steel industry during the Industrial Revolution, but the traditional local industry declined in the 1970s and 80s. The Abbeyfield Industrial Hamlet is a working museum that reflects the period from 1714 to 1876.

Accommodation:

2 nights at The Old Palace Hotel or similar.

Day 17

Locations: Lincoln

Overview:

The many visits in Lincoln include time to see the Fossdyke at Torksey, the Castle (and hopefully a copy of the Magna Carta) and Joseph Banks Conservatory, the Cathedral, and the Usher Gallery and Collection.

Lincoln is located in County Lincolnshire, in the north midlands of England. The city is built about a gap in a long high ridge, the Lincoln Edge, through which the River Witham flows. The Romans built a colony here in AD 46 before they moved on to establish York. A fortress was built on the hill with other buildings situated downhill near the river. The Romans also dug a canal, the Fossdyke, that joined the River Witham to the River Trent at the Brayford in Lincoln. This allowed inland boat access to the sea via the Witham.

In 1068 William the Conqueror chose the former Roman fort site for a castle fortress and the first cathedral was built close-by some 30 years later. Fire damage, an earthquake, and expansion has led to the development of the current magnificent three towered Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lincoln. In 1215 the rights of the king were to be limited by the Feudal Barons with the writing of the Magna Carta, a document that was to later form the basis of British constitutional law. The Bishop of Lincoln was one of the witnesses to this document so Lincoln Castle now holds one of the remaining 4 copies of the of the original Magna Carta.

Accommodation:

The Old Palace Hotel or similar.

Day 18

Locations: York

Overview:

Our journey to York from Lincoln will take us via the Humber River Bridge to Stamford Bridge, where Harold was victorious over the Vikings. We then travel on to York where we visit the York Castle Museum with its eclectic collection of exhibits and displays, before

checking into our accommodation. The remainder of the day is free.

York is a major city in northeast England and has played a major role in British history since the Romans invaded Yorkshire in AD 71, defeated the local Brigantes tribe, and established their northern capital, Eboracum. After the Romans, the Angles settled here in the 5th Century. The first minster church was established in the 7th Century and the Vikings raided here then settled in the mid 800s, when it became known as Jorvik. The centre felt the effects of the Norman conquest in 1068, just 2 years after William's landing. Although there were some periods of decline, York was to prosper during the 12th Century as a trading centre. During the early and mid 1600s, there were many changes resulting from the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the Civil War, but York was to prosper as a wealthy city and a major cultural and social centre.

This part of Britain saw a resurgence and rebirth after union of Crowns of Scotland and England in 1707 and the innovations of the Agricultural Revolution were adopted. Since the Industrial Revolution, York has become a focal point for railways and roads, and the River Ouse remains as a navigable route to the sea. It was a here that Rowntrees and Terry's manufactured their confectionary, and in more recent times York and its surrounding countryside attractions have become a tourist focal point.

In York we will see Roman/Medieval wall and gates, the spectacular Minster, the Merchants Adventurers hall, the underground Yorvik Viking Centre, the castle, streets like the Shambles, and of course in many museum displays. So rich is York historically the entire city centre has been designated as a World Heritage Site.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Hotel 53 or similar.

Day 19

Locations: York

Overview:

Our second day in York begins with a half day guided tour of the main city highlights and entrance to the Jorvik Centre. The afternoon is free with the option of visiting the York Museum with display material mostly

from the time of Roman occupation.

Accommodation:

Hotel 53 or similar.

Day 20

Locations: To Manchester via Ripon

Overview:

On the day we leave York for Manchester, we travel out to Ripon to visit Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal gardens. We will spend a short time in Harrogate before travelling to Harewood House for a visit, then complete our journey west to Manchester.

Accommodation:

3 nights at Novotel Center or similar.

Day 21

Locations: Manchester

Overview:

In Manchester we have a guide for the day. We will take a short journey to see Miles Platting and Victoria Mill next to the Rochdale canal. The second half of the day involves a visit to Salford Quays to the refurbished Manchester dock area, which serviced international ships that reached here from the Irish Sea via the Manchester Ship Canal. The canal system however had a short history and was overtaken through the establishment of the railway system.

We will walk in the Castlefield area to see Roman fort ruins. In AD 40s the Romans set up a community and a fort here to protect their interests from the local Celtic tribe, the Brigates. We end the day at the Museum of Science and Industry, which traces the important role Manchester played in the manufacture of yarn and cloth from imported raw cotton.

Accommodation:

Novotel Center or similar.

Day 22

Locations: Manchester

Overview:

The last day of programmed activities takes us down the Mersey to Ellesmere Port, which handled goods transported via the canal system, and is located on the south bank of the Mersey River. We will have a guided tour of the National Waterways Museum, which is a living museum that presents a comprehensive insight into the age when canal boats were important for the distribution of coal, salt, pottery ware, and many other goods.

We then move to the Liverpool side of the river for a local city tour, followed by a walk around the Albert Dock Complex, which was built to receive and store valuable imported goods such as brandy, cotton, tea, silk, tobacco, ivory, and sugar. Albert Dock along with 3 magnificent Pier Head buildings have been designated as a part of a World Heritage Site. We will take a visit to the Mersey Maritime History Museum, and have time for participants to visit the “Beatles Story.”

Accommodation:

Novotel Center or similar.

Day 23

Locations: Manchester

Overview:

The tour will conclude after breakfast today.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What’s included in our Tour

- 22 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 22 breakfasts and 12 dinners.
- Transport and field trips as indicated.

- Transport in comfortable and modern coach.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- Services of a Tour Leader for the duration of tour.

What's not included in our Tour

- Items of a personal nature such as telephone calls and laundry.
- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- International airfares and departure taxes.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.