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23 days
Duration

England, Scotland
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

Canals and Railways in the Industrial Revolution Tour | Tours for Seniors in Britain

Apr 08 2024 to Apr 30 2024

An Industrial Revolution Tour for Seniors | Exploring Britain’s history through its canals and railways

This small group tour uncovers British history through the canals and railways of the Industrial Revolution. Learn how the Industrial Revolution after the Industrious revolution brought significant and lasting change to



Britain. Discover how engineers overcame geographical obstacles using viaducts, bridges, aqueducts, tunnels, and locks. Witness first hand the groundbreaking technology and the many impressive structures that transformed Britain's economy, some now restored for recreational purposes. However, our tour program is not only a study of the physical impact such a fundamental change made to world history. Led by local guides selected for their expertise, we also provide the opportunity to examine and discuss the resulting social upheaval.



Packed to the brim with history, culture, and striking scenery, Great Britain and Ireland have a lot to offer the traveller. Our small group tour of the British isles are perfect for the mature or senior traveller who wants to explore the history of Britain and Ireland as part of an intimate guided tour with an expert local guide. The Industrial revolution tour, you can explore the must-see sights, while nonetheless offering experiences that venture off the beaten path on Odyssey Travellers collection of small group British tours.



The Industrial Revolution in Britain

The Industrial Revolution was the result of a number of developments that laid the foundation for economies of scale in manufacturing by lowering unit cost and maximising labour. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, British manufacturers developed a number of new technologies, including the 'spinning jenny' and the power loom, which permitted increased production with a smaller amount of labour. From modest beginnings in the textile factory, these innovations would transform British industry, and eventually, the world.



Vital to this process was an improvement in communications. Canals linked major river to major river, while new technologies – the introduction of rolling mills and the high pressure steam engine – allowed for the creation of railway networks across the country.

The Industrial Revolution also transformed British society. Urbanisation was rapid, as millions left the country for new employment in the city. While some became wealthy out of all this innovation, for many it meant

grim employment in atrocious working conditions.

While today's post-industrial economy seems like a far distant memory from the workshops and factories of 18th century England, the spirit of innovation established during the Industrial Revolution still shapes the way we think about our world. Today, information technology is called the 'fourth industrial revolution', while business students continue to learn economic principles established by observers of the Industrial Revolution such as Adam Smith.







Industrial Revolution Tour Highlights & Itinerary

Britain's industrial history is tangible today in its built heritage. Our tour focuses on one aspect of this heritage: railways and canals. To trace these, we travel by road from England's midlands through to Wales, followed by the west coast to Scotland, and then return down the east coast to London.

Beyond canals and railways, we also take the time to visit other fascinating historic sites. These additional locations include the Menai Suspension Bridge, a walking tour of York, and the National Waterways Museum, where visitors enjoy hands-on activities to learn about the operation of canals. Other activities include field trips to Shrewsbury, Chester, the beautiful Lake District, and London itself.

Our tour takes in several UNESCO world heritage and national historic sites, including a factory tour of the Derwent Valley Mills, Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal in Wales, and the Ironbridge Gorge bridge in Shropshire, with the nearby Jackfield Tile Museum and Blists Hill historic site.

For those interested in gaining a better understanding of how the Industrial Revolution transformed Britain, and continues to shape the country today, this is a travel experience like no other. Be prepared for a dazzling, memorable trip as you take in the quaint villages and diverse scenery that Britain has to offer. To send you best prepared, we have a recommended reading list about the Industrial Revolution

.

You can learn more about Britain, England, Scotland and Wales with our profiles where all other tour departures are listed as well.

For further details about this tour, 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.







Tour Notes

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

Highlights

1. Take in magnificent landscapes and historic sites in the west midlands of England, in Wales, and western mainland Scotland.
2. Visit Shrewsbury, Chester, Durham, the Lake District, and London.
3. See the architectural wonders of 18th and 19th century bridges, viaducts, and aqueducts.
4. Enjoy several short scenic rail journeys in Wales, England, and Scotland.
5. Enjoy scenic canal cruises in the Llangollen Canal in Wales, the Lancaster Canal

Itinerary







Day 1

Locations: Manchester

Overview:

Upon arrival in Manchester, we will come to our hotel individually. Our tour will commence with a tour briefing and welcome dinner.

Accommodation:

1 night at Novotel Manchester or similar.

Day 2

Locations: Shrewsbury

Overview:

We start the day with a visit to Salford Quays, the major dock of the Manchester Ship Canal. The Manchester Ship Canal runs parallel to the Mersey River and made Manchester a most significant port, inland from seaside Liverpool. Salford was a major junction for canals, particularly those associated with cotton and silk spinning and weaving in local mills during the 18th and 19th centuries. We will also visit the Museum of Science and Industry.

We then make our way to Marples, which is a town on the edge of Greater Manchester. The Manchester region was the centre of great developments during the Industrial Revolution. The region was abundant in energy from coal for the spinning, weaving, and dying processes of the cotton fabric producing mills in the area. The expanding network of canals, and later railways, allowed for the movement of materials, products, and manpower to and from the factories. We will see the Grand Aqueduct, which carries the Peak Forest Canal over the River Goyt, and the impressive flight of 16 Marple Locks.

Later in the day we will visit Northwich as we cross the Cheshire Plains. Nearby at Winsfield, underground salt has been recovered since Roman times. An expansion of the industry in the mid 19th century relied on canal transport. To accommodate this, the recently restored Anderton Boat Lift was devised and built at Northwich in 1875, so enabling barges from the River Weaver Navigation to transfer their loads of salt to the Trent Mersey Canal. After visiting this boat lift, we will travel to

Shrewsbury.

Dinner tonight will be at our hotel.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Prince Rupert Hotel or similar







Day 3

Locations: Shrewsbury

Overview:

The Shrewsbury region is located on a loop of the Severn River just a few kilometres from the Welsh border in Salop (Shropshire). It is a beautiful, historic market town with many black and white, half-timbered houses and is the birthplace of Charles Darwin. Just to the east of Shrewsbury is a new town, Telford, named after Thomas Telford (1757-1834), who took a leading role as an architect and engineer with the development of British canals and in the building of many significant roads and fine bridges throughout the country. We will see several of Telford's engineering masterpieces during the tour.

We will see a number of structures associated with the Severn River, including a beautiful, graded, seven arch bridge at Atcham village just south of Shrewbury. This bridge, which spans the Severn River, was constructed circa 1770 by OJohn Gwynne. We will also see the first cast iron bridge, which was constructed at Iron Bridge township across a gorge of the River Severn. The bridge was planned by Robert Pritchard and opened in 1781. Such a project, made possible through the development of the blast furnace, was just the start of a plethora of constructions to take advantage of the new advances in iron foundry.

Accommodation:

Prince Rupert Hotel or similar.





Day 4

Locations: Llangollen

Overview:

Today we will travel through Ellesmere, which is a pretty market town close to the Welsh border, adjacent to the Mere (one of several shallow lakes that formed in depressions after the last ice age) and on a spur of the Llagollen Canal. Telford lived here during the building of the Llangollen (Ellesmere) Canal between 1793 and 1805.

We will also explore Chirk Castle in the Wrexham District of North Wales. Built in 1295, Chirk Castle was built in 1295 as one of many similar structures along the Welsh Marches (Border) to defend England. The castle, which is now owned by the National Trust, features superb views to the east, an award winning garden with lots of topiary, and an interesting interior.

As we make our way to our hotel we'll view the Chirk aqueduct. We arrive in time for dinner at the hotel.

Accommodation:

3 nights at Gales of Llangollen or similar

Day 5

Locations: Llangollen

Overview:

Our journey today will take us across Wales via Snowdonia onto the Island of Anglesey. This will allow us to see the Menai Bridge, which is another Telford construction, that enables crossing the Menai Straits between the mainland and Anglesey and makes travel to and from the Irish ferry at Holyhead possible. The monumental wrought iron and stone suspension bridge was an engineering triumph completed just before Telford's 70th birthday.

We will ride on the railway from Blaenau Ffestiniog to Porthmadog. Blaenau Ffestiniog was the industrial centre for the largest slate mine in the world, boasting 80 kilometres of underground railway on 26 levels. The journey to Porthmadog is described by an avid British train-travel writer as "terrific" and "glorious." Another writer describes it as "a



spectacular railway with stunning views.” Before our return trip to Llangollen, we will stop to enjoy the view around Mount Snowdon (1,085 metres), the highest mountain in Wales.

Dinner tonight is at our accommodation.

Accommodation:

Gales of Llangollen or similar.

Day 6

Locations: Llangollen

Overview:

Today we will see the Llangollen Canal, which is another engineering feat of Telford’s, who worked with William Jessop to construct the canal. In 2009 an upper section of the Llangollen Canal was inscribed on the World Heritage list.

We will see Shropshire Union Canal Horseshoe Falls, which is a weir built in 1806 used to divert water from the upper reaches of the Dee River into the canal stream. This creates a flow in the canal and water is carried from here via Ellesmere to the canal terminus just north of Nantwich, where it joins the south-north Birmingham Liverpool Junction Canal.

We will see the impressive “canal in the air” at Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. Here Telford bridged the Dee valley with huge stone arches upon which he assembled an iron aqueduct trough and a towpath. We will travel along the canal in a longboat.

Accommodation:

Gales of Llangollen or similar.

Day 7

Locations: Liverpool

Overview:

During our travel north to Liverpool across the Cheshire Plains, we will stop at the ancient city of Chester, located on the north side of the River Dee and the Shropshire Union Canal. The city was once a major Roman

Fort, and the amphitheatre and much of the city wall stem from this time. Chester's galleried streets, the Rows, date from the Middle Ages and we will have some time to explore these.

We will spend much of the afternoon at the Ellesmere Port, which is located at the junction of the Shropshire Union Canal and the Manchester Ship Canal on the south bank of the Mersey River. We will also visit the National Waterways Museum. If available during our visit, we will take a short cruise on the Centaur on the Shropshire Union Canal. The Shropshire Union Canal was Telford's last major work and ran from Wolverhampton (Birmingham) to Port Ellesmere, with many spur canals along its way, completing a major south-north link for the canal system.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Holiday Inn Centre or similar







Day 8

Locations: Liverpool

Overview:

In the morning we enjoy a panoramic tour of Liverpool and visit the main sights of the city and historic spots related to railways. We visit Liverpool Lime Street station and take a cruise on the Mersey River.

The afternoon and evening are free for you to enjoy the city at your own pace.

Accommodation:

Holiday Inn Centre or similar.

Day 9

Locations: Windermere

Overview:

Today we will travel from Birkenhead to Windermere in the Lake District for a 2 night stop. We make a brief stop in Blackpool.

We enjoy a cruise on the Lancaster Canal across the Lune Aqueduct. Lancaster Canal was built along the contour, essentially eliminating the

need for locks. The canal was engineered by John Rennie to carry coal, lime, slate and timber, and passengers between Kendall and Preston. A more recent spur canal, the Ribble Link, was constructed in 2002 near Preston connecting Lancaster Canal to the greater part of the canal system.

We will go inland to see the impressive 24 arched Ribblehead viaduct, which was built in the North Yorkshire Dales across the Ribble valley to carry the Settle to the Carlisle railway line. We will learn about its sad history as well as the story behind its threatened destruction and its rescue in 1960. The viaduct site in the Yorkshire Dales happens to be close to Askrigg, or “Darrowby” as it was portrayed in the television series “All Creatures Great and Small.” If time permits we may visit this small town.

We arrive late afternoon in Windermere and dinner this evening is at our hotel.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Merewood Country House hotel or similar

Day 10

Locations: Windermere

Overview:

Windermere became a holiday destination once the railway arrived in 1847. The West Coast Main line links the Lancaster and Carlisle Railways. Many of the local landforms that make this northwestern part of England naturally attractive were fashioned through past glacial activity which gouged out and blocked valleys, so forming lakes.

We will see several lakes and Keswick, then go up to Castlerigg Stone Circle, an impressive 4,000 year old monument. We will travel through Borrowdale and over Honister Pass, past Buttermere and return via Grasmere, Rydal, and Ambleside.

Accommodation:

Merewood Country House hotel or similar.

Day 11

Locations: Fort William

Overview:

We will travel via Lanark, through the outskirts of Glasgow, Loch Lomond, and Glencoe to Fort William. We stop and visit New Lanark Visitor Centre before we cotninue via Luss to our final destination. We'll pause for comfort stops, a lunch break, and photograph opportunities along the way.

Dinner this evening is at our hotel.

Accommodation:

1 night at Muthu Alexandra Hotel or similar

Day 12

Locations: Stirling

Overview:

In the morning we will take a bus to Banavie near Fort William, where the road and railway cross the Caledonian Canal. This is another Telford canal construction that began in 1804 and was completed in 1822. A change in water level at this point required Telford to build a great flight of 8 locks (Neptunes Staircase) as the water dropped from Loch Lochy down to Loch Linnhe at sea level.

We will take the Jacobite, a train that travels through a spectacular highlands landscape. Along the West Highland Railway Line between Fort William and Mallaig, we will see several interesting bridges, tunnels, and the Glenfinnan Viaduct. The line was opened in 1901 to provide easier access from the remote Atlantic coast to Glasgow and further afield.

We'll then visit the Flenfinnan monument and vistor centre before we continue on to Stirling via the Trossachs.

In the evening we enjoy dinner at our hotel.

Accommodation:

1 night at Golden Lion or similar

Day 13

Locations: Durham

Overview:

Before crossing the border and driving into England we will spend time visiting Stirling Castle, which is one of the largest and most important castles in Scotland with roots going back to the 12th century. Most of what we see today was built between 1490 and 1600.

We will also visit Falkirk, which is about halfway between Glasgow and Edinburgh. It is located on the upper reaches of the Firth of Forth, the estuary of the Forth River. The Forth and Clyde Canal passes to the north of the city, and as the name suggests it connects the Clyde River (and the Atlantic Ocean) in the west with the Forth (and the North Sea) in the east. The Union Canal runs, at a higher level, between south Falkirk and Edinburgh. Both canals are connected today by the Falkirk Wheel, an attractive piece of machinery built in 2002 to transfer boats between the two.

We will complete our journey south in Durham where we will stay for 2 nights.

Dinner tonight is at a local restaurant near our hotel.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Radisson Blu Durham or similar

Day 14

Locations: Durham

Overview:

In the morning we will have a walking town tour of Durham and we will visit Durham Castle, which predates the Cathedral. It is now part of the university complex. Both the Cathedral and Castle were listed as a World Heritage Site in 1986.

We will visit Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which was first settled by the Romans. It was a staple wool-manufacturing town in the mid 14th century, but made its name through a monopoly on the export of coal to London in the 16th century. In the 18th century, it was a major centre for printing and industrial development through ship building and heavy

engineering, making it a hub during the Industrial Revolution.

In more recent times, the city has seen a major revival tour, featuring the revival Quayside and the Millennium Bridge. After a short city orientation and walk there will be free time to visit the local museums and galleries. We will travel back to Durham on a coastal road through South Shields, Sunderland, and Ryhope.

Accommodation:

Radisson Blu Durham or similar.

Day 15

Locations: York

Overview:

We will begin the day by driving south to Darlington to visit the site of the first steam-worked public transport. The Stockton Darlington Railway was established in 1825 to carry coal and passengers to the coastal Tee River. (Note: the site is currently closed due to extensive renovation works in progress)

To the south of Darlington and Stockton is the North York Moors National Park, which is a large expanse of heather moorland next to the coastal towns of Whitby and Scarborough. In mid morning, we will take the railway crossing the north Yorkshire Moors from Pickering to Goathland (used as “Aidensfield” in the Heartbeat television series). This line was established in the 19th century from Whitby and has been preserved by private funds.

In Pickering we enjoy some free time to visit St Peter’s and St Paul’s church and view the frescoes. We then continue on to York and remainder of the day is at leisure.

Dinner this evening is at our hotel. We stay in York for 3 nights.

Accommodation:

3 nights at Holiday Inn City Centre or similar

Day 16

Locations: York

Overview:

Today we enjoy a guided walking tour of the city and take in the main sights of the city. The afternoon is at leisure for you to explore further on your own or rest.

York, or as the Roman founders called it, Eboracum, is on the River Ouse. This walled city has a very rich cultural background. It was a road hub which had navigable river connections to the sea at Hull and inland. York became a major railway centre beginning in 1839.

Accommodation:

Holiday Inn City Centre or similar

Day 17

Locations: York

Overview:

In the morning we will travel to the southern end of the Yorkshire dales to visit Fountains Abbey, a wonderful remnant from 1593, and Harrogate, a spa town with lovely public parklands and gardens. On our return backto York we stop to visit the National Railway Museum and later return to our hotel.

Accommodation:

Holiday Inn City Centre or similar

Day 18

Locations: Birmingham

Overview:

Today we travel south to Birmingham where we stay 1 night.

We stop along the way at Derwent Valley for a tour and visit Cromford Village, Cromford Mills Building and Canal. We'll also visit Masson Mill

and the later the township of Belper, the bridges and Mills.

On arrival in Birmingham we visit the Thinktank museum and then make our way to the hotel in time for dinner.

Accommodation:

1 night at Holiday Inn Express or similar

Day 19

Locations: Bristol

Overview:

Today we explore Birmingham by walking along its canals and learn about the city and its rich industrial past including a visit to Black Country Living Museum. After a break for lunch we depart for Bristol.

On arrival there will be some free time before we meet again for dinner at the hotel.

Accommodation:

2 nights at Holiday Inn Express Bristol Filton or similar

Day 20

Locations: Bristol

Overview:

In the morning we enjoy a guided tour of the city to view the main sights. We stop to view Clifton Suspension Bridge, one of Bristo's most recognisable structures. The bridge was designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, it marks a turning point in the history of engineering and has come to symbolise a city of original thinkers and independent spirit.

We'll also visit Brunel's SS Great Britain, the world's first great ocean liner, and one of the most important historic ships in the world that was

launched in 1843.

The remainder of the day is free for you to continue to explore this great city at your own pace.

Accommodation:

Holiday Inn Express Bristol Filton or similar

Day 21

Locations: London

Overview:

Today make our way to London, via Swindon where we visit the STEAM museum.

In London we explore the Brunel Museum and learn more about the engineering family that changed the world. As well as building the world's first tunnel through soft ground under a navigable river, the Brunels hosted the first underwater concert party here (museum site) in 1827.

We return to our hotel in the afternoon and the remainder of the day is at leisure.

Accommodation:

2 nights at the London House Hotel or similar.

Day 22

Locations: London

Overview:

After breakfast at the hotel, we will spend a whole day sightseeing in London. First we visit the Royal Observatory and the Maritime Museum and London Canal Museum. We will return to our hotel and enjoy some free time before getting together again for our farewell dinner.

Accommodation:

The London House Hotel or similar.

Day 23

Locations: London

Overview:

After breakfast, we say our farewells and the tour draws to a close.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 22 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 22 breakfasts and 12 dinners.
- Transport in comfortable and modern coaches.
- Cruise and rail services as indicated.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.
- Services of a tour leader for the duration of tour.

What's not included in our Tour

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

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.