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From
$10,919 USD

Single Room
$12,577 USD

Twin Room
$10,919 USD

Prices valid until
30th December 2024

19 days
Duration

England
Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
Activity

England’s villages small group history tours for mature travellers

Jun 16 2024 to Jul 04 2024

England’s villages small group history tour

Our 18-night England’s villages small group tours for mature aged and senior travellers explores the many facets of rural life in England. This educational small group escorted tour takes you through different eras and across a variety of beautiful landscapes. Professional guides teach you about the history and culture that over centuries has created the

Villages of England. Over the period of the program your program leader will take you to places such as east Sussex, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Cotswolds, Yorkshire , Dartmoor Devon and Cornwall.

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 England's villages are perfect for the mature or senior traveller who wants to explore Britain and Ireland as part of an intimate guided tour with an expert local guide. From walking tours of England, Scotland and Ireland to tracing the Industrial revolution, you can explore Britain on a tour with Odyssey. We take in the must-see sights, while nonetheless offering experiences that venture off the beaten path on Odyssey Travellers English village history tour.

This tour for mature aged and senior travellers includes days spent a number of quintessentially English prettiest and oldest places to live in the villages. This collection of English villages visited reflects a range of economic activities, architectural styles and historic influences. From chocolate box thatched cottages, the local parish church, the inn, to the country house built of Cotswold stone, or fishing boats tied up in what are today popular tourist towns in England. This program explores and provides delight in visiting and learning about the history of some of these English countryside villages. This historic small group tour also provides a look at life in castles, a country estate and manor house. Short guided walks and village museums provide interesting insights into village life often dating back to medieval times.

England's Villages Tour Itinerary & Highlights

The journey tours begins by visiting the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in Sussex. This provides an opportunity not only to explore country life, but also serves as an excellent introduction to our tour. From across Sussex the 'museum' houses fifty traditional village buildings with historic domestic interiors. It also includes an array of interesting farm buildings and even a mediaeval shop. It vividly portrays the lives of the people in a east English village who lived and worked

here over a 600- year period. Working buildings include a water mill and sawpit shed. We also take the chance to view domestic and craft demonstrations reflective of rural life over time.

The Villages of England small group tour also includes visits to numerous country villages and houses that have been used as TV and film sets, e.g. Lacock, Castle Combe, Port Isaac. Perhaps you'll recognise some of these locations from your favourite British dramas and period pieces! We also explore the haunting stones at Avebury, with its very own Neolithic World Heritage Site, and view the Tudor mansion and glorious gardens of Hever Castle, childhood home of Anne Boleyn. In addition, we enjoy taking in the magnificent and varied scenery of rural England, and learn about the fascinating styles of architecture that make English villages unique.

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

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.

Articles published about England

The following list of articles are either published by Odyssey Traveller or are carefully selected external sources to maximise senior traveller's knowledge and enjoyment of England when visiting:

- Medieval British life
- Great Britain Travel tips
- Understanding British Churches
- English Village History
- Britain's National Trust.
- Roman roads

- Gargoyles and Grotesques; an understanding.
- Victorian Country life
- Jane Austen's England
- How to read the British landscape
- The Lake District for poets & Romantics
- History of England: – PODCASTS
- Tudor England
- Anglo- Saxon migration
- Civil wars that influenced medieval Britain
- Country life magazine articles
- Origin of Cotswold stone

Tour Notes

- Group size limited to 18 travellers
- Group transfer on last day to Heathrow Airport departs at 8am for arrival into Heathrow approx. 10am
- Itineraries may change if availability, and other inclusions have to be amended prior to departure.

Highlights

1. View the Tudor mansion and glorious gardens of Hever Castle, childhood home of Anne Boleyn.
2. Explore Avebury, with its very own Neolithic World Heritage Site.

3. Visit villages used as TV and film sets e.g. Lacock, Castle Combe, Port Isaac.
4. Learn about the fascinating styles of architecture that make English villages unique.
5. Enjoy magnificent and varied scenery of rural England.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: London

Overview:

We will make our own way to the hotel, where you will meet the tour leader for an introduction meeting, before having a welcome dinner with the group at a local restaurant.

(D)

Accommodation:

1 night at London House hotel or similar.

Day 2

Locations: London - Chichester - Trowbridge - Chippenham

Overview:

In the morning we will visit the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in Chichester, which provides the perfect introduction to the history of country living in Britain. We then journey across Sussex to the ‘museum’ village, where we will look around fifty traditional village buildings with historic domestic interiors, an array of interesting farm buildings and even a medieval shop. Alongside the buildings are an array of live craft demonstrations, which together offers a unique insight into the realities

of day-today living across a 600- year period.

We finish the day with a drive to Chippenham, which will be our base for the next two days.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

3 nights at Best Western Plus Angel Hotel or similar

Day 3

Locations: Chippenham - Avebury - Chippenham

Overview:

Located on the northern end of the Salisbury Plain, the old village of Avebury is surrounded by England's largest stone monuments. This collection of Standing stones built in 2600 BCE, is a the Neolithic World Heritage site and includes three stone circles, a long barrow (burial tomb), and a processional avenue. Fascinating finds from the 1930s archaeological excavations are on show at the museum housed in the grounds of Avebury Manor.

The Manor, of Tudor origin, was recently reopened following a major transformation for a new BBC series entitled The Manor Reborn. Featuring different time periods, each room also has reminders of past residents. This is a hands-on experience where we can sit in the master's chair and even recline in his bed! Medieval walls enclose an elegant Edwardian garden.

There will be time to explore the other prehistoric sites associated with the stone circle and nearby villages too.

(B)

Accommodation:

Best Western Plus Angel Hotel or similar

Day 4

Locations: Chippenham - Milton Abbas - Corfe Castle - Moreton - Chippenham

Overview:

Today we will travel across the beautiful landscape of Dorset, known as ‘Thomas Hardy’ country, crossing several spots of particular natural beauty, inducing Cranbourne Chase. We will explore a number of the region’s quintessential villages. Often referred to as the ‘model’ village, Milton Abbas is a superb example of white-washed, thatched- roofed cottages and houses the stunning Abbey Church while the village of Corfe Castle is built from grey Purbeck limestone. As well as exploring the village we will visit the ruins of Corfe Castle itself. Built by William the Conqueror, much of the castle was destroyed by Oliver Cromwell’s forces. The castle’s parapets offer stunning views of the village and surrounding landscape.

Heading west we make a special stop at the Church of St. Nicholas in the tiny Moreton village. Here in the local parish church, we can view the exquisite windows etched by the artist Sir Laurence Whistler. The churchyard houses the grave of T. E. Lawrence, better known as the famous Lawrence of Arabia.

(B)

Accommodation:

Best Western Plus Angel Hotel, Chippenham or similar

Day 5

Locations: Chippenham - Lacock - Fowey

Overview:

Near Avebury, famous Lacock is a planned medieval estate village now owned by the National Trust. As the layout and character of the village has changed little since the C15th it provides a fascinating picture of village life at that time including fine timber-framed houses, a C14th tithe barn and inns with passageways and stables, survivors from the era of wool trade. On arrival, Lacock may seem familiar – that is because it has served as the setting for many films and television series including the BBC’s Pride and Prejudice, Wolf Hall and Cranford; and Harry Potter

and the Half-Blood Prince.

In the afternoon we drive to Cornwall via Dartmoor. In the famous book, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, The Hound of the Baskervilles, a message sent to Sir Henry Baskerville read, ‘as you value your life or your reason, keep away from the moors’. Doyle painted an image of the moors as grim, forbidding and dangerous. It can be like that at times amongst the peat bogs when the famous mists descend but the moors are actually a fascinating landscape of tiny villages, farms, rolling hills, granite tors and wild ponies.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at The Cornwall Hotel or similar

Day 6

Locations: Fowey - Polperro - Mevagissey - Fowey

Overview:

Today we will explore the fishing village of Polperro. Polperro’s Heritage Museum of Fishing and Smuggling will provide us with an insight into these two activities that so strongly shaped life in Cornwall’s coastal villages. In fact, Polperro was the centre of the extensive Cornish smuggling industry. We then continue on to visit the Lost Gardens of Heligan, near the fishing village of Mevagissey, the gardens were unveiled in 1992 after decades of overgrowth. After extensive restoration works the gardens are now one of the most popular botanical gardens in the UK.

Remainder of the day is free to explore the beautiful local surroundings of Fowey. You may wish to walk its narrow high street, view the medieval buildings, walk to St. Catherine’s Castle, visit the museum, take a pleasure boat around the port and harbour or a ferry across the harbour to Polruan

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

The Cornwall Hotel or similar

Day 7

Locations: Fowey - Port Isaac - Clovelly - Minehead

Overview:

Today we drive through the pretty scenery of Cornwall's west coast. The delightful coastal village of Port Isaac complete with fishing boats is the setting for the TV series, Doc Martin. After exploring its nooks and crannies we continue along the picturesque West Cornish coast to Clovelly, an official English Heritage site. Owing particularly to its location in a steep wooded cleft, this is one of Cornwall's prettiest villages, often appearing in lists of England's prettiest villages as well and is a popular tourist destination in the summer.

From Clovelly we drive across North Devon and Exmoor National Park to our accommodation at Dunster, a well-preserved medieval village owned by the National Trust. Exmoor is a high, bare plateau cut with wooded, steep valleys. Its picturesque coastline fronts the Bristol Channel. Though smaller than Dartmoor, Exmoor's tracts of wilderness are equally as forbidding.

(B)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Yarn Market Hotel or similar.

Day 8

Locations: Minehead

Overview:

We will explore a number of villages, some located within Exmoor National Park, that form part of the Holnicote Estate, owned by the National Trust. We will explore Lynmouth and the Lynmouth National Park Centre. The village of Allerford boasts a highly photographed packhorse bridge and a mill with pond and orchard. The cottages of pretty Bossington village are lime washed with traditional tall chimneys and bread ovens while the cottages at Lucombe are mostly built of cream-washed cob with uneven thatched roofs and wide eaves. In Dunster a castle towers over the cobblestoned main street, and the Yarn Market still stands, as does the ancient tithe barn. A gentle stroll

leads to a packhorse bridge and beautiful scenery.

(B)

Accommodation:

Yarn Market Hotel or similar.

Day 9

Locations: Minehead - Castle Combe - Cirencester - Bibury - Rodborough

Overview:

Our drive to the Cotswolds takes us through medieval Castle Combe, often voted as England's most beautiful village that has been the location for many films, the most famous being Doctor Doolittle and more recently, War Horse. The village houses are all of typical Cotswold type, constructed in Cotswold stone with thick walls and roofs made from split natural stone tiles. The properties are many hundreds of years old and are listed as ancient monuments. The village is also a wildlife sanctuary and enjoys nature at its very best. Later in the afternoon there will be time to take a stroll amongst the gorgeous countryside around our accommodation.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at The Bear of Rodborough Hotel or similar

Day 10

Locations: Rodborough

Overview:

Our full-day excursion includes some of the most famous of the Cotswold villages and towns. Elegant C18th bridges cross the River Windrush at Bourton-on-the-Water, known as the 'Venice of the Cotswolds'. Enjoy the many attractions of the village and take a 2 km return walk to the 'perfect' village of Lower Slaughter, visiting the Old Mill Museum and taking in the beautiful views of the colourful cottage

gardens and the River Eye.

Religion played a huge part in the lives of rural people. A short walk in Lower Oddington village takes us to St. Nicholas Church to view the impressive and somewhat macabre mediaeval doom paintings with their depictions of heaven and hell, designed to educate illiterate peasants. Once common, such wall paintings are rare today.

At Stow-on-the-Wold the market square that attests to the size of the sheep flocks once driven here for sale, a C14th market cross, the village green complete with stocks, and the church that is full of Civil War history as it housed 1 000 Royalist prisoners. Returning home via Moreton-in Marsh we view its numerous fine former coaching inns, the Curfew Tower and Market Hall.

(B)

Accommodation:

The Bear of Rodborough Hotel or similar

Day 11

Locations: Rodborough - Ashbourne - Tissington - Youlgreave - Buxton

Overview:

On our journey north we will stop in the market town of Ashbourne before heading into the heart of the Peak District National Park, England's first national park. The beautiful scenery of rolling farmlands, deep dales and ancient woodlands inspired many of Britain's writers including William Wordsworth, Agatha Christie, Charlotte Bronte and Jane Austen, who used the district as the setting for key Pride and Prejudice scenes.

We will explore the picturesque village of Tissington, one of England's few remaining estate villages, complete with its duck pond. The Fitzherbert family has owned Tissington Hall Estate since 1465. The Jacobean hall dating to 1609 is in the village centre.

Youlgreave's main street contains a number of traditional stone-built houses and shops. Its All Saints Church is regarded as one of the most impressive in Derbyshire. In both these villages we will see some of the

wells made famous through the ancient practice of ‘well dressing’.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Old Hall Hotel or similar

Day 12

Locations: Buxton - Ashford-in-the-Water - Eyam - Edensor - Buxton

Overview:

Today’s journey begins with a brief stop at Ashford-in-the-Water, described as a ‘chocolate box’ village, to view what is claimed to be England’s most photographed bridge. Then we head for the tiny village of Eyam, renowned for its heroic efforts to stop the Black Plague spreading from its inhabitants to other villages. Australian author Geraldine Brooks immortalised the villagers in her book, The Wonder Years. The village museum has an excellent exhibition while a short walk leads to places associated with the event.

The afternoon is spent at famous Chatsworth House and gardens by Capability Brown with both a guided tour and free time to absorb the exquisite furnishings and the art collection, one of Europe’s best. There will be time to explore the magnificent garden and grounds. It is believed that Jane Austen based her idea of Pemberley, the home of Pride and Prejudice’s Mr. Darcy, on Chatsworth House. The house was used as Pemberley in the 2005 film version of the book.

(B)

Accommodation:

Old Hall Hotel or similar

Day 13

Locations: Buxton - Settle - Ribblehead - Keswick

Overview:

We drive to the Lake District via Settle, a market town in West Yorkshire whose charter dates to 1249. Situated beside England’s largest outcrop of limestone, the town has a wealth of heritage-listed buildings including

The Folly, the Town Hall and The Shambles. We will stop to view the Ribblehead Viaduct, a famous feat of Victorian engineering built between 1870 and 1874 along the Settle to Carlisle Railway Line. It's 400m long and contains 24 arches. We will also visit the Ribblehead Viaduct Visitor Centre to learn more. We continue west to the Lake District.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at MacDonald Swan Hotel or similar

Day 14

Locations: Keswick - Grasmere - Windermere - Near and Far Sawrey - Keswick

Overview:

Today we take a drive through the spectacular scenery of the Lake District. At Grasmere, described by William Wordsworth as 'the loveliest spot that man hath found', we will undertake a guided tour of his home, Dove Cottage, gaining an intimate portrait of the life of a country gentleman. We explore the small but delightful garden and the Wordsworth Museum that houses manuscripts, paintings and other items, while in the churchyard of St. Oswald's several members of the Wordsworth family are buried.

Our drive then takes us through Ambleside and along the ribbon lake of Windermere to Hawkeshead. We will stop to view the villages of Near and Far Sawrey where Beatrix Potter lived. Several of the village buildings served as settings for her famous books.

(B) (L)

Accommodation:

MacDonald Swan Hotel or similar

Day 15

Locations: Keswick - Hawes - Kettlewell - Helmsley

Overview:

Heading east we drive through the wild scenery of the Yorkshire Dales, stopping at the village of Hawes, in Wensleydale. Here we visit the Dales Countryside Museum with its excellent portrayal of rural and village life and the Wensleydale Creamery, home of the famous Wensleydale cheese. Crossing several dales on our scenic route to the east, we will explore other villages, before reaching the town of Helmsley.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Feathers Hotel or similar

Day 16

Locations: Helmsley - Robin Hoods Bay - Helmsley

Overview:

From Helmsley we will travel to Robins Hood Bay where we explore the labyrinth of narrow lanes and colourful and charming cottages in this delightful seaside village. On our return to Helmsley we take the scenic route via Church Houses, with stops at vantage points to view the villages of Farndale, known for its wild daffodils, and the peaceful rural village of Rosedale.

(B)

Accommodation:

Feathers Hotel or similar

Day 17

Locations: Helmsley - Stamford - Royal Tunbridge Wells

Overview:

The first part of our drive to Royal Tunbridge Wells in Kent will take us through sections of the Yorkshire Wolds, a broad crescent of rolling

chalk hills and valleys and unspoiled scenery. Its landscapes and their changes through the seasons are the subject of many paintings by famous British artist David Hockney. We will stop at the small town of Stamford to view its of timber-framed and stone buildings before continuing south to Royal Tunbridge Wells.

(B)

Accommodation:

2 nights at Royal Wells Hotel or similar

Day 18

Locations: Royal Turnbridge Wells - Chiddingstone - Edenbridge - Royal Turnbridge Wells

Overview:

Chiddingstone takes its name from the large sandstone outcrop in the village known as the ‘Chiding Stone’. One of the prettiest villages in Kent, and perhaps England, Chiddingstone is a beautiful example of a Tudor one-street village. The housing is typical Kent style with half-timbered sides, gables and stone-hung red-tiled roofs. The National Trust bought the entire village in 1939 to ensure its preservation.

Surrounded by a moat, Hever Castle was the childhood home of Ann Boleyn. King Henry VIII courted her here. The beautiful tomb of Ann’s father Thomas lies in St. Peter’s Church nearby. The oldest part of the castle dates to 1270. In the 1400s Geoffrey Boleyn added a Tudor dwelling within the walls. The castle is an outstanding example of a Tudor mansion. William Waldorf Astor bought the castle in the 1920s and now it is owned by a private enterprise.

One of the most magnificent areas of the gardens is the Italian Garden, designed to display Astor’s collection of Italian sculpture. Over 1000 men worked on its creation. Within four years a large area of classical and natural landscapes were constructed and planted. The colourful

walled Rose Garden contains over 400 plants.

The remainder of the afternoon is free.

(B) (D)

Accommodation:

Royal Wells Hotel or similar

Day 19

Locations: Royal Tunbridge Wells

Overview:

After breakfast in the hotel, we say our farewells and depart to Heathrow Airport.

Please note that only one group transfer is included to Heathrow Airport this morning, typically leaving at 8 am. Your arrival at Heathrow will be around 10 am, so please allow your flight to be no earlier than 1 pm.

Private airport transfers can be arranged at your own cost.

(B)

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 18 nights of hotel accommodation.
- 18 breakfasts, 2 lunches, and 8 dinners.
- All excursions, entrance fees and local guides.
- Services of Tour Leader for the duration of tour.
- Transport in comfortable and modern coaches.
- Gratuities and necessary tips.

What's not included in our Tour

- International airfares and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive international travel insurance.

- 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.