



From
\$1,718 USD

Single Room

\$2,049 USD

Twin Room

\$1,718 USD

Prices valid until
30th December 2025

7 days

Duration

Tasmania

Destination

**Level 1 - Introductory to
Moderate**

Activity

Extraordinary Women from Medieval and Renaissance Europe | Summer School course

Jan 04 2026 to Jan 10 2026

Women from Medieval and Renaissance Europe

This Summer School course explores the lives and contributions of women who lived during the Medieval and Renaissance periods in Europe. Spanning the years 1050 to 1650, this era rarely featured



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<https://www.odysseytraveller.com>

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women in the historical narrative—mainly because structural limitations of the time meant that few women were able to write or have their voices heard. As a result, their achievements were often overlooked—until recent scholarship began to uncover and celebrate their stories.

Throughout the course, we'll examine how women lived during these centuries and focus on some of the most influential figures—women who, despite societal constraints, shaped their fields and, in many cases, altered the course of history.

Summer School classes for mature and senior travellers

Each January, Odyssey offers a selection of enriching, week-long educational programs in Hobart, Tasmania. Courses are updated annually to ensure fresh and engaging content, and class sizes are capped at just 15 participants for an intimate and rewarding learning experience.

For more than 25 years, Odyssey's Summer School Program has provided mature-aged and senior travellers with unforgettable opportunities to combine learning with travel. Each summer, we offer a wide variety of intellectually stimulating courses across topics such as history, religion, the arts, and Australian culture.

These programs are carefully designed for curious, lifelong learners who wish to deepen their understanding of a specific subject or explore new areas of interest. Whether you're revisiting a passion or diving into something new, our Summer School courses offer a welcoming environment to grow, learn, and connect.

Highlights

1. Examine how women were presented by contemporary male writers

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2. Look at the reigns of monarchs such as Isabella of Spain and Eleanor of Aquitaine
3. Explore the life of the mystic and composer Hildegard of Bingen, a woman whose music is popular almost a 1000 years after her death
4. Discover the work of artists such as Artemisia Gentileschi and writers such as Christine de Pizan

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Hobart

Overview:

The Summer School program kicks off with a warm welcome reception followed by a group dinner.

Accommodation:

Ibis Styles Hobart or similar

Day 2

Locations: Hobart

Overview:

Introduction We'll begin the course with a broad overview of the roles women played between 800 and 1660. Our exploration will include their experiences in childhood, their education, the types of work they performed, marriage customs, leisure activities, and their involvement in the political and religious life of their respective societies.

Given the nature of surviving sources, our focus will primarily be on women from the middle and upper classes, as these are the groups about whom the most is known. We will also consider how women were perceived by their male contemporaries, examining the ways in which they were represented in literature, theology, and legal texts.

What did male authors—who dominated the written record—say about women? We'll delve into writings by influential figures such as Thomas

Aquinas and Gratian, as well as literary portrayals by Dante, Boccaccio, and Shakespeare. Throughout the week, we will critically assess these perspectives and consider how accurately they reflected the realities of women's lives during this period.

Accommodation:

Ibis Styles Hobart or similar

Day 3

Locations: Hobart

Overview:

Warriors and Rulers Today we will concentrate on a number of women, some well-known in their day but now largely forgotten, who ruled (or should have ruled) significant territory. Some even led their armies into battle.

- Aethelflaed, Queen of Mercia
- Matilda, daughter of Henry I of England
- Eleanor of Aquitaine
- Isabella of Castile
- Katerina Sforza

Accommodation:

Ibis Styles Hobart or similar

Day 4

Locations: Hobart

Overview:

Artists Women painters of this period faced significant challenges in gaining acceptance and recognition. At the time, painting was largely considered a "manly pursuit," and women were not expected—or encouraged—to pursue it as a profession. They were excluded from most formal training opportunities, particularly from studying the human form through life drawing, which was seen as especially inappropriate

for women. As a result, many women who became artists were taught at home, often by their fathers.

Despite these barriers, a number of talented women emerged during the Renaissance and managed to carve out successful careers. In this course, we'll explore the lives and work of several pioneering female painters, including:

- Sofonisba Anguissola
- Artemisia Gentileschi
- Levina Teerlinc
- Lavinia Fontana

Their stories and art offer powerful insight into the determination and talent of women who defied expectations to make their mark on history.

Accommodation:

Ibis Styles Hobart or similar

Day 5

Locations: Hobart

Overview:

Writers and Composers As in the visual arts, women writers and composers in the Medieval and Renaissance periods were vastly outnumbered by their male contemporaries. Only a small number are widely remembered today, but several were well known in their own time and made lasting contributions to their fields.

Among the most notable musicians and composers:

- **Kassia of Constantinople** (c. 810–865) – one of the earliest known female composers whose works have survived.
- **Hildegard of Bingen** – a visionary composer and mystic who was largely overlooked for centuries but has since been rightfully recognised as a major figure in the history of Western music. (Sadly, the names of many other women composing in abbeys and monasteries have been lost to history.)

- **Francesca Caccini, Vittoria Aleotti, and Barbara Strozzi** – influential and celebrated composers in the late Renaissance, known for both their musical skill and innovative compositions.

On the literary side, we'll consider the works of several important women writers, including:

- **Christine de Pisan**
- **Vittoria Colonna**
- **Margery Kempe**
- **Mary Sidney**, Countess of Pembroke

These women challenged the boundaries of their time, leaving behind a legacy of intellectual and creative work that continues to inspire.

Accommodation:

Ibis Styles Hobart or similar

Day 6

Locations: Hobart

Overview:

And then some of the others...On the final morning, we'll turn our attention to a remarkable group of women who don't neatly fall into the categories we've previously explored, but who nonetheless demonstrated extraordinary talent across a range of fields. We'll examine the accomplishments of figures such as **Bess of Hardwick**, a renowned builder and patron; pioneering Italian academics—including the first female professor of law at the University of Bologna in 1237; as well as art collectors, businesswomen, and skilled craftswomen who made their mark in less conventional ways.

In the afternoon, we'll reflect on the diverse and often complex lives of women throughout this broad historical period. While many were constrained by the male-dominated structures of their societies, others—through a combination of birth, ability, and sheer determination—managed to defy expectations and carve out lasting

legacies.

Accommodation:

Ibis Styles Hobart or similar

Day 7

Locations: Hobart

Overview:

The course finishes today and we say our farewells.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 6 nights in full en suite accommodation
- 6 breakfasts and 2 dinners.
- Lectures and handouts as indicated.
- Services of a study leader and lecturers.
- Complimentary wifi.

What's not included in our Tour

- Comprehensive travel insurance.
- Costs of a personal nature.

Level 1 - Introductory to Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, moderate walking on uneven surfaces for 3 - 5 kilometres per day. Suitable for most fitness levels.

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