England’s villages small group history tours for mature travellers
24 Aug 19 to 11 Sep 19

England’s villages small group history tour.

Our 18-night England’s villages small group history tours for mature travellers explores the many facets of country life in England. This 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. England’s villages small group cultural and history tours for mature travellers includes a number of England’s prettiest and oldest villages. The villages visited reflect a range of economic activities, architectural styles and historic influences. This historic small group tour also provides a look at life in castles, a country estate and manor house. Short guided walking tours and village museums provide interesting insights into village history and life.

England’s villages small group history tours for mature travellers 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 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.

Villages of England small group tour; other highlights

The Villages of England small group tour 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.

England's villages small group history tours for mature travellers is one of more than 30 tours Odyssey offers each year to Britain to mature couples and solo travellers who enjoy learning while travelling.

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

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.

**Tour Notes**

- Group size limited to 18
- Itineraries may change if availability, and other inclusions have to be amended prior to departure.

**Top 5**

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 we will meet the Tour Leader later in the day for a briefing followed by a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.

Accommodation: 1 night at London House hotel or similar.

Day 2

Locations: London - Chichester - Trowbridge - Chippenham

Overview: The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in Sussex provides an opportunity not only to explore country life, but also to serve as an excellent introduction to our tour. From across Sussex the ‘museum’ houses fifty traditional village buildings with historic domestic interiors, an array of interesting farm buildings and even a medieval shop, thus vividly portraying the lives of the people who lived and worked here over a 600- year period. Working buildings include a water mill and sawpit shed. As well we can view domestic and craft demonstrations. We will drive to Chippenham in Wiltshire, our base for the next two days.

Accommodation: 2 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 unique in that it is surrounded by England’s...
largest henge monument. Built in 2600 BCE, the Neolithic World Heritage site 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.

**Accommodation:** Best Western Plus Angel Hotel or similar

**Day 4**

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

**Overview:** A day of travel through the beautiful landscapes of Dorset, known as ‘Thomas Hardy’ country, including a crossing of Cranbourne Chase, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We explore a number of the county’s prettiest villages. Often referred to as the ‘model’ village, Milton Abbas is a superb example of white-washed, thatch-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. Beautiful views of the village are to be had from the castle. Heading west we make a special stop at the Church of St. Nicholas in tiny Moreton village. Here we view the exquisite etched glass windows by the artist Sir
Laurence Whistler, famous for his glass engravings. The churchyard houses the grave of T. E. Lawrence – the famous Lawrence of Arabia.

**Accommodation:** Best Western Plus Angel Hotel, Chippenham or similar

**Day 5**

**Locations:** Chippenham - Lacock - Fowey

**Overview:** Near Avebury, famous Lacock is a planned mediaeval 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.

**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 streets, 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.

**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 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. 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.

**Accommodation:** 2 nights at Northfield 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 has 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.

**Accommodation:** Northfield Hotel or similar

**Day 9**

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

**Overview:** Our drive to the Cotswolds takes us through mediaeval 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 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.

**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.

**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’.

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
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 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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Accommodation:** 2 nights at Royal Wells Hotel or similar

**Day 18**

**Locations:** Royal Tunbridge Wells - Chiddingstone - Edenbridge - Royal Tunbridge 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 4000 plants. The remainder of the afternoon is free.

**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.

**Accommodation:**

---

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