



Blenheim Palace

Christmastime in the Charming Cotswolds & Chilterns

December 6 to 13, 2025 ♦ From \$5,000 per person

With sleepy villages dotted throughout rolling hills, honey-hued buildings embellished with fairy lights, roaring fires in cozy pubs and sparkling trees adorning picture-perfect towns, the Cotswolds is a magical place to spend the run-up to the holidays. Our memorable tour meanders through a stunning cluster of Cotswolds favorites to the southern tip of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the UNESCO World Heritage city of Bath, where the delightful Christmas Market and twinkling Georgian streets await. We also weave our way across the lovely landscapes of another AONB, the Chilterns, to explore the stunning Tudor mansion of Grey’s Court and château inspired Waddesdon Manor, both sumptuously dressed for a classic country house Christmas. We enjoy plenty more seasonal delights, from the enchanting illuminations trail at Kew Gardens to a Victorian-style carol singing performance in celebration of enduring yuletide traditions.

What’s Included

- ♦ Arrival/departure airport transfers from London Heathrow*
- ♦ 2 nights at the Macdonald Windsor Hotel
- ♦ 1 night at the Queens Hotel Cheltenham – MGallery
- ♦ 3 nights at Hartwell House & Spa
- ♦ Welcome drink and canapés
- ♦ Full English/Continental breakfast each day
- ♦ 3-course *table d’hôte* dinner on 4 nights at the hotels (with after-dinner tea and coffee)
- ♦ 1 dinner at a local restaurant
- ♦ Services of a tour director throughout your stay
- ♦ Travel to and from all excursions
- ♦ All excursion costs
- ♦ Porterage where available

*Supplement applies for transfers from all other airports and all other locations, including central London.

Itinerary

December 6:

Depart your home city and arrive the next day in London

December 7: Arrival

Upon arrival at Heathrow Airport, a private transfer will take you to the Macdonald Windsor Hotel, where we stay for the next two nights. In the evening, join the group for a welcome drink, followed by dinner.

Meals: Dinner

December 8: Windsor Castle & Kew Gardens

We start our day with a visit to Windsor Castle, the oldest and largest inhabited castle in the world and the final resting place of Elizabeth II. Established in the 11th century by William the Conqueror, it has been remodeled by successive kings and queens and is regularly used for ceremonial and state occasions. The magnificent State Apartments are furnished with some of the finest works of art for you to admire, beautifully

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decorated at this time of year. We find out more of the castle’s history on our audio-guided tour. Later, a festive treat awaits us at the world-famous Kew Gardens, where the iconic architecture and tree canopies are brought to life, enriched with Christmas color and sparkling with seasonal decorations. Discover an enchanting festive trail of lights that winds its way through the botanic gardens, before enjoying some tasty treats from one of the many enticing stalls.

This evening we enjoy dinner at Annie’s Restaurant in Richmond, a charming eatery known for its cozy atmosphere and delicious cuisine. Nestled along the banks of the River Thames, the interior is elegantly decorated with vintage touches and soft lighting, creating a homely ambiance. The menu features a delightful selection of British classics and seasonal dishes, all made with fresh, locally sourced ingredients.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

December 9: Bath Assembly Rooms & Bath Christmas Market

After checking out of the hotel we head to Bath, an elegant Regency city graced with wonderfully well-preserved Georgian architecture. The Roman Baths are a must-see attraction in Bath, offering a fascinating glimpse into the city’s ancient past. This historic site consists of the remains of one of the greatest religious spas of the ancient world, where natural hot springs still flow with steaming water. We enjoy a guided tour of the magnificent Great Bath, the Sacred Spring, and the Roman Temple, all while learning about the daily life and rituals of the Romans through interactive exhibits and artifacts.



Bath Christmas Market



Stow-on-the-Wold

We then explore the enchanting Bath Christmas Market, bursting with traditional chalet-style stalls selling a variety of handmade items. Whether you’d like to start your Christmas shopping early, treat yourself to a tempting seasonal offering or simply browse the high-quality Christmas gifts, homewares, jewelry and more, there’s plenty to get you into the festive spirit.

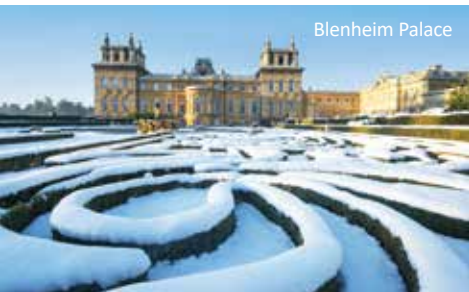
Later we check into the Queens Hotel Cheltenham – MGallery, where we stay overnight.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

December 10: Cotswolds Villages

Leaving Regency Cheltenham, we take a scenic drive through the Cotswolds, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty where quintessentially English villages are peppered throughout rolling hills. We first stop in picturesque Lechlade to visit the unique Cotswold Christmas Shop, established in 1985 but open all year round for lovers of charming ornaments and decorations.

Our other stops include famous Bibury and Bourton-on-the-Water, where you can expect a lovely mix of honey-hued buildings, cozy traditional pubs, independent boutiques, tempting cafés and some of the area’s most iconic landscapes.



Blenheim Palace

Next, we visit Stow-on-the-Wold, a quintessential Cotswold market town known for its vibrant history and charming atmosphere. The town square, a bustling hub of activity, is surrounded by beautiful historic buildings, each with its unique character. Don’t miss the chance to visit St. Edward’s Church, famous for its enchanting north door flanked by ancient yew trees, often said to be the inspiration for J.R.R. Tolkien’s Doors of Durin in *The Lord of the Rings*.

We end the day with a festive afternoon tea at Hartwell House, one of the National Trust’s Historic House Hotels, where we also stay for the next three nights.

Meals: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea

December 11: Henley-on-Thames, Grey’s Court & Blenheim Palace

This morning we make a brief stop in Henley-on-Thames, one of the most picturesque towns in the country and set on the River Thames against the idyllic backdrop of the Chiltern Hills. It’s a lovely spot for a riverside stroll, and there are also plenty of historic buildings to admire.

We continue to Greys Court, a filming location of the hugely popular *Downton Abbey* TV series and movies. Set in the rolling hills of the Chilterns, this picturesque Tudor mansion has a rich patchwork of styles, including 18th-century additions and 20th-century interiors. The house is still furnished as an intimate family home, having been occupied until 2003, and is beautifully decorated during the countdown to Christmas.

Our last visit today is Blenheim Palace, set in over 2,000 acres of beautiful parkland landscaped by ‘Capability’ Brown. As the seat of the Dukes of Marlborough, the palace is synonymous with the Churchill family and is the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill. A permanent exhibition commemorates the life of this famous wartime Prime Minister, whilst the magnificent State Rooms are sumptuously dressed for Christmas and reveal a superb collection of tapestries, paintings, porcelain and furniture. In the courtyard outside, there are plenty of tempting goodies on offer at the enchanting Christmas Market.

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

December 12: Waddesdon Manor & Festive Farewell

We travel to Waddesdon to enjoy a festive lunch at the Five Arrows.



©Stuart Bebb

Waddesdon Manor

The Five Arrows Hotel, a Grade II listed building, offers an elegant and intimate setting for a festive lunch. This charming Victorian hotel boasts a rich history and is renowned for its exceptional hospitality and gourmet cuisine. The dining room, adorned with beautiful period features and festive decorations, provides a warm and inviting atmosphere. We enjoy a sumptuous lunch featuring seasonal dishes prepared with the finest local ingredients, complemented by a selection of fine wines.

Afterward, we visit Waddesdon Manor. Built in the Neo-Renaissance style of a French château between 1874 and 1889 for Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, Waddesdon Manor is an architectural masterpiece. Inside, the manor houses an impressive collection of art, including works by Gainsborough and Reynolds, as well as exquisite 18th-century French furniture and decorative arts. During the festive season, Waddesdon Manor is beautifully decorated with lights and ornaments, creating a magical atmosphere that captivates visitors. Special exhibitions and events are often held, adding to the enchanting experience.

In the evening we enjoy a festive farewell dinner with a drink to the backdrop of Christmas carol singers. This Victorian-style carol singing performance highlights some of the traditions and customs during this special time of year.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

December 13: Departure

A private transfer will take you back to Heathrow Airport for your return flight home.

Meals: Breakfast

Please note: the order of excursions is subject to change and guided tours are subject to restrictions.

- ♦ Admission to Christmas at Kew
- ♦ Guided tour of the Roman Baths
- ♦ Scenic drive through the Cotswolds (Bibury, Bourton-on-the-Water and Stow-on-the-Wold)
- ♦ Afternoon tea at Hartwell House
- ♦ Admission to Christmas at Blenheim
- ♦ Festive lunch at the Five Arrows, Waddesdon Estate
- ♦ Private carol singing performance at the Macdonald Windsor Hotel

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I make a booking?

Call National Trust Tours at **888-484-8785** to register by phone (preferred method) **Monday - Friday from 9am to 5pm (EST)** or register online at **www.nationaltrusttours.com**.

Please note: featured prices are inclusive of the National Trust membership discount. If you are not a National Trust Member, there is a \$150 increase on the prices shown.

When are payments due?

When you confirm your booking with us, a non-refundable deposit of \$1,000 per person is required to secure your place. The final balance payment must be paid to us no later than 90 days prior to the tour departure date. Of course, full payment can be made at the time of booking if you prefer and for bookings made less than 8 weeks before the tour departs this will be a requirement.

How can I pay?

We accept debit and credit cards for deposits and full payment.

What paperwork will I receive?

When your booking is confirmed, we will email you a booking confirmation document along with a copy of our full Terms and Conditions and the reading list. Approximately 28 days prior to the tour, we will prepare and send you our Travel Pack with your finalized information and tour itinerary details.

Do I need travel insurance?

Yes, this is essential; we can only accept a booking on the basis that you have taken out a full and comprehensive travel insurance policy to cover the full duration of your trip. We will ask you to confirm this to us. If you choose not to take out travel insurance, this is done so against our advice and at your own risk; we will ask you to sign a declination form indemnifying us from any responsibility or cost in the event of medical emergency or repatriation. Information on travel insurance will be sent to you upon tour confirmation. USI Travel Insurance Services offers a plan designed specifically for National Trust Tours travelers. For details, please contact National Trust Tours at 888-484-8785.

Do I need a passport and visa?

It is your responsibility to ensure you have a full passport and we recommend that it is valid for 6 months after the return date of your trip. At the time of printing, tourist visas are not required for US or Canadian citizens visiting the UK for under 90 days solely for the purpose of tourism. If you are not a US or Canadian citizen or you are combining your visit with business, it is your responsibility to check the requirements for visiting the UK, you can do this by visiting the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) website to determine whether you need a visa to enter the United Kingdom.

Are there single traveler room supplements?

Yes, you can contact us to enquire about single supplement prices. Please book early as single rooms sell fast.

Are room upgrades available?

All of the hotels on these tours have been hand-picked for their high quality of accommodation and service. However, in some instances room upgrades are available and we would be happy to assist you to arrange these should you be interested. For more information on the hotels please visit our website.

Can you arrange extra hotel nights?

Yes, if you decide to arrive a few days before the start of the tour or leave a few days after the end of the tour, we are happy to arrange extra nights’ accommodation. However, this service is only available at hotels that feature in the tour on which you are traveling and a \$35 administration fee is charged for this service.

Are meals included?

All breakfasts are included on all tours. Certain lunches and dinners are also included and you should study the tour itinerary in this brochure to determine what meals are included on your chosen tour. Meals not mentioned are not included and all beverages are at your own expense throughout the tour.

What do I do about any dietary requirements?

Please inform us at the time of booking, we will pass your information on to the hotel, property or restaurant who will do their best to accommodate your requirements.

How many passengers will be in the Albion Journeys tour group?

Typically, between 10 and 30.

What is the role of the Tour Director?

Our friendly Tour Director will meet you for a welcome dinner at the beginning of each tour. Their role is to facilitate the smooth organization of all operational aspects of the tour. If you have any queries or experience any issues during the tour, they are there to assist you.

Will the excursions change?

Please note that we plan our tours far in advance and the order and availability of excursions may be subject to change. In the event of a property not being available to visit, we will substitute with a similar visit, and you will be informed of the full details.

How much walking will there be on these tours?

As much or as little as you like. Any included guided tours will operate at a fairly relaxed pace, as with many historic houses and gardens, you may experience some uneven flooring and steps along the way. Of course, you will always have the option to explore any venue by yourself at your own pace. If you have any specific concerns, please contact us.

What are the arrangements for luggage?

The standard luggage allowance is one item of hand luggage and one suitcase per person restricted to a maximum weight of 20kgs (44 pounds). We do provide portage at each of the hotels used on our tours where available, however, as with all things of a personal nature, it is your responsibility to ensure your suitcase is loaded onto the vehicles we use throughout the tour.

What clothing should I bring?

Comfortable leisurewear is recommended for the daytime. In the evening many participants prefer to wear smarter dress for dining. While gentlemen may choose to wear a jacket in the restaurant in the evening, at most hotels this is not obligatory, we will of course inform you if any hotel does have a dress code. It is advisable to bring layered clothing and a light waterproof jacket. We recommend sturdy footwear when visiting gardens as the ground may be soft underfoot. Many historic properties request ladies do not wear high heels which may damage flooring.

Can you arrange my flights to the UK?

Albion Journeys do not arrange your air travel for our tours; this is your responsibility and gives you the flexibility to decide on your own routing.

What should I budget for tipping?

While it is not compulsory, it is customary to tip the coach driver and Tour Director as well as offering a small gratuity to the transfer drivers to acknowledge the services they have provided. As a guideline we suggest a rate of £5 (about \$6.50 as of this printing) per day for your coach and transfer drivers and £10 (about \$13 as of this printing) per day for your Tour Director. Gratuities for hotel staff and the tour guides you may meet at properties are at your discretion.

All tours offered subject to availability. Terms and conditions apply. Errors and omissions excepted.



Terms & Conditions Extract

It is important that you read the following booking conditions extract and the full booking conditions shown on our website at albionjourneys.com/terms-and-conditions. These online booking conditions form the basis of your contract with us. Please read them and the extract below carefully as they apply to all bookings you make with us unless otherwise specified.

1. VACATION PAYMENT: When you make a booking you must pay a deposit for every person named on the booking. Deposits per person and the balance due date (the period before the departure date on which your full balance normally becomes due) are:

Deposit	Balance due date
\$1,000 (USD)	90 days before departure

If you cannot make a payment by card at the time of booking, please speak to one of our Reservations staff to discuss other options. You can make payments against your balance anytime between making the booking and the balance due date. If the balance is not paid on time we reserve the right to treat your booking as canceled by you and apply cancellation charges as set out in clause 3 below. For bookings made after the balance due date, the full amount is due at the time of booking.

2. OUR AGREEMENT: A contract is formed when we issue to you the booking confirmation document and terms and conditions. It is important you read through these and any other documents you receive and advise us of any inaccuracy within 14 days of the document date. By accepting the booking is correct you agree to our terms and conditions.

We regret we cannot accept any liability if we are not notified of any inaccuracy in any document within 14 days of our sending it out. This contract and all matters arising out of it will be governed by English law and will be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of England and Wales.

3. VACATION CANCELLATION BY YOU: If you want to cancel your booking after we have confirmed it with you either verbally, over the telephone or by email, you can do so over the phone or in writing. The following cancellation charges will apply:

91 days or more prior to departure	\$1,000 (USD)
90 days or less before departure	100% of the program cost is non-refundable

If any member of your party is prevented from traveling, that person may transfer their place to someone else (introduced by you) providing we are notified no less than two weeks before departure.

Full terms and conditions will be provided with your booking confirmation. They are also available on request or via our website: albionjourneys.com/terms-and-conditions.

Bookings are accepted on the basis that you have read and understood them.

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Journeys Inspired By Heritage