



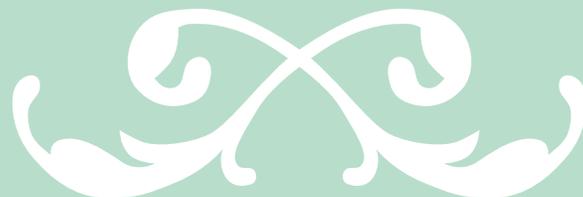
SECRET GARDEN TEA TOURS

A TEA TOUR OF
ENGLAND



FAQ

Frequently Asked
Questions



FAQ

Most of the questions you have regarding your tour can be answered by reading through this material; however, the terms and conditions of your travel arrangements are controlled by the 'Tour Contract'. Knowing as much as you can beforehand will enable you to enjoy your tour experience to the fullest. For these reasons, it is necessary that you read the FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS and the TOUR CONTRACT sections prior to making reservations.

When should I make my reservation?

Our tours are limited to 12 participants, so we suggest making reservations as soon as you have decided to join us.

Are Visas or inoculations required for U.S. citizens?

No visas or inoculations (shots) are required for passengers carrying a U.S. passport.

Are Visas or inoculations required for Non - U.S. citizens?

If you do not carry a U.S. passport, you will need to check with your embassy or consulate before making a deposit, to find out if a visa is required for any of the countries you will visit.

Do the hotel rooms have private bathrooms?

Yes. The rooms in the hotels and inns that we select all include a private bathroom with sink, toilet, and shower and/or bathtub.

What is the difference between a double and a twin room?

A 'double' room consists of one double bed. Often the European 'twin' accommodations consist of two twin size beds made up separately, placed side by side sharing the same headboard. In some hotels it may not be possible to separate these twin beds. We request 'twin' or 'double' accommodations, but at some hotels there may be a limited supply. Twin rooms will be given to single travelers sharing a room first and then to tour participants who are traveling together.

Can I join the tour if I do Not have a Roommate?

Yes. We will have other single travelers on the trip, so we will pair all singles with a roommate of the same sex. In some locations, single rooms are available at a premium price. If you would prefer a single room when available, indicate this on your tour reservation application and we will email you the price and availability for the trip you have requested.

How are Rooms assigned?

The location, view, and size of the rooms may vary. In some cases the establishment will make the assignments. In other cases, we will assign the rooms randomly, based on room types requested.

Do Hotels have Air Conditioning?

Due to a milder climate, air conditioning is not as widely used in Europe as it is in the U.S.A. Therefore, a number of our accommodations do not feature air conditioning.

What can I expect for breakfast?

While some accommodations may serve a continental breakfast, in most cases breakfasts will be buffet style with a selection of rolls, butter, jam, cheese, cold cuts, coffee, tea, milk and juice. In some locations, a "full English breakfast" will be served which typically includes: orange juice, cereals, stewed or fresh fruits, eggs, bacon or sausages, grilled tomato, mushrooms, beans, tea, and toast. Once we're in London, our house will have a kitchen that we will stock with breakfast basics, and you can help yourself to whatever you'd like.

What can I expect for lunch?

Lunches will typically be "on the go", with each person purchasing or packing their own. We recommend keeping a snack bars and bottled water in your day pack, but generally, there will be places to grab a quick bite. After a hearty breakfast, most folks don't need more than a light snack to keep them going until our afternoon tea time.

What can I expect at afternoon tea?

Our afternoon tea times will be varied; some days we'll partake of a homey meal in a cozy tea room, and other days we'll enjoy an elegant meal in a fancy department store or hotel dining room. In some establishments, champagne or other beverages will be offered, and billed to you separately.

What about dinner?

The only dinner that is included in the tour price is our welcome dinner the first night of our trip. All other evening meals are on your own. You may wish to have a snack in your room to rest and relax, or go out alone or in the company of others in our group. Most accommodations have restaurants either attached or very near by, or you can use local transportation to go wherever you'd like. In London, you may wish to buy things at the market and prepare dinner in the kitchen, or grab a snack at a bar or pub after attending a show.

May I request Vegetarian, Gluten-free, or Diabetic Meals?

Any dietary requirements remain entirely your own responsibility. Do let us know on your tour reservation application, so that we're aware of your needs and can let the restaurant know in advance. Vegetarian and gluten-free options are commonly available and other requests can sometimes be accommodated. Leave items you cannot eat on your plate and order additional items 'à la carte', at your own expense. The Secret Garden expressly disclaims any responsibility or liability in connection with dietary requirements.

Is this a Non-Smoking tour?

Yes. There will be no smoking during all group activities. Although many restaurants in Europe still do not feature non-smoking sections, tour participants are also expected to refrain from smoking during all group meals. We request non-smoking rooms for all tour participants where possible. In fact, many hotels have converted to only non-smoking rooms and charge a substantial penalty to guests who smoke in a non-smoking room. The Secret Garden expressly disclaims any responsibility or liability in connection with smoking or non-smoking requirements.

What about transporting luggage?

Each participant will tow their own luggage throughout the tour. We will be available to assist with lifting into taxi cabs and other transportation. At the airport, you may wish to use luggage carts to transport your luggage.

What is the pace of the tour and how much walking is involved?

The pace of the tour is considered "ACTIVE". In order to have a more "European" experience we will travel like locals, using public transportation (or taxi cabs for longer distances), but a fair amount of walking is required to take in the old world charm and sights. Tour participants will commonly walk several miles a day. If you are concerned about your physical condition, please consult your family physician as to whether the tour is suitable for you and consider the following guidelines:

Physical Condition Guidelines

- 1) These tours are a good fit for travelers who are able to comfortably walk a ½ mile in 15 minutes (without shortness of breath or physical discomfort).
- 2) If you are not keeping up with the rest of the group, the tour manager will suggest you take a cab to the next venue at your own expense and forfeit any sightseeing that requires walking as a group. In case you are separated from the group during sightseeing time, it will be your own responsibility to position yourself at the designated meeting point at the agreed time. If you have to take a taxi to do so, it will be at your own expense.
- 3) Tour and hotel personnel will not be available to lift or otherwise physically assist tour participants at any time. If you require any type of assistance, you must bring a capable travel companion who can comfortably help you keep up with the pace of the tour.

May I bring a wheelchair or other walking assistance device?

Participants who use a cane, walker, wheelchair or any other walking assistance device, or are considering the use of a walking assistance device while they travel, should not take this tour. If this applies to you and you still decide to make a reservation request, please note the following:

- 1) A cane, walker or similar walking assistance device, are simply not practical or safe on the tour due to vehicle entrances, uneven sidewalks, and cobblestone streets. You will need to leave it home and bring a wheelchair.
- 2) You must bring your own manual, folding wheelchair. Motorized wheelchairs are too large for us to maneuver through tight spaces and using public transportation.
- 3) You must bring a capable travel companion who can push the wheelchair and assist you in any other way necessary to comfortably help you keep up with the pace of the tour.
- 4) At time of reservation you must request to bring a wheelchair. This request must be in writing and must be signed by both you and your traveling companion. Such requests will be subject to our approval.
- 5) You must be able to manage the steps of the motor coach independent of any assistance. In Europe, the laws do not require motor coaches to be equipped with ramps/lifts, or hotels to offer provisions for the physically challenged. Please do not expect these facilities on our tour. Many of our accommodations have no ground floor rooms available, so expect to climb stairs on your own power.
- 6) The Secret Garden does not recommend this tour for passengers who require the use of a cane, walker, wheelchair or other walking assistance device.

No credits or refunds will apply for missed sightseeing and any additional costs incurred to keep up with the tour or to return home early will be the tour participant's sole responsibility. Please also refer to the 'Physical Condition Guidelines'.

May I bring oxygen or other medical devices?

Due to the active pace of the tour, clients dependent on oxygen assistance devices should not take these tours. CPAP and other medical devices must fit within the 'Baggage Allowances'. Under no circumstance does The Secret Garden, the airlines, the motor coach company, the tour managers, the hotels, or any other service provider accept any responsibility or liability in connection with medical conditions, medical supportive devices, or any electronic devices.

Will any credit be available for unused tour participation?

Tour prices are based on full group utilization of the hotel rooms and services. Therefore, no credit or refund will apply for unused tour nights or services. You may leave the tour at any place on the itinerary after communicating your plans to the tour manager. You may rejoin the tour at one of the overnight hotels.

What if I need to leave the tour and return home early?

Air tickets are subject to change fees and you may need to purchase a non-restrictive, one-way air ticket for a different flight itinerary. If you must return early for any physical/medical reason, make sure you obtain a statement from the attending physician/hospital. If you have purchased travel insurance, this documentation will be required to make a claim and it may help reduce airline change fees. The Secret Garden recommends purchasing travel insurance with trip interruption coverage.

What happens if I arrive late at a meeting place?

At each stop, write down the meeting time and landmark near your meeting point so that you do not forget and can ask for assistance if you get lost. (Or use your camera or phone to take a picture). In the event that you cannot arrive at a meeting point on time, call us, and then proceed to the next location or the hotel using a taxi, train, or bus, at your own expense. Always carry your passport and a copy of our schedule with you! Be sure to call or text us, so that we know what is going on.

Are tips included?

Tipping is included for all meals that are pre-arranged by The Secret Garden. During independent meals, the general rule at restaurants in Europe and the British Isles is 5% to 10% depending on level of service. In hotels, guest houses and B&B's, please leave a dollar or two on the dresser when we check out, so that your own service provider will get the money. Taxi drivers, porters, etc who help out our whole group will be tipped by the tour guides. On your independent travels, please feel free however, to tip any service personnel who are extra helpful or friendly, or who provide a special or unexpected service.

How will I pay for things in England?

Before departing the US, stop at your bank and get a hundred dollars or so in GBP (Great Britain Pounds). This will get you through the first day or two. After that, you'll use your debit card at ATM's to withdraw pounds and a credit card to pay for larger items.

Before your trip, notify your credit-card company and your bank (for debit cards) that you'll be traveling in Europe. This will ensure that they don't decline your foreign transactions.

While you have them on the phone, ask these questions:

- Will my card work in the countries I'm traveling to?
- What fees do you charge for withdrawals or purchases made in Europe? Is it a percentage, a flat fee, or both? Are there other currency conversion or foreign transaction fees tacked on?
- If my credit/debit card is lost or stolen, what is my liability?
- What phone number should I call if there's an emergency?

Specific to Debit Cards:

- What is my daily limit for ATM withdrawals in Europe? (Change your limit, if necessary.)
- Do you have partner banks in Europe whose ATMs I can use without a fee?

Specific to Credit Cards:

- Request a PIN if you don't have one (sometimes required for purchases in Europe).

How much money should I plan to spend after I get there?

That is entirely up to you; by eating simply and not attending any evening shows, you could spend as little as \$15 a day for dinner, postcards and small souvenirs. We suggest however, that you plan to see at least one production in London, and enjoy at least a bit of the nightlife. If you budget \$50 per day, you'll have more than enough for several nice meals out and a couple of optional evening events. In some locations, you'll spend very little and others, (like London) you'll want to splurge.

Of course, the shopping is a whole different matter! We'll be going to some awfully tempting places for tea lovers, so you might wish to set up a separate shopping budget to avoid overspending at the china outlets, antique shops and flea markets!

What else should I know about shopping?

Each person is allowed to bring \$800 worth of goods into the US every 30 days. Anything you mail/ship back to the US is exempt, but the cost of shipping is very high.

Retail prices in England include a 20% VAT (value added tax). You end up paying this tax automatically, even though you are not obligated to pay it for goods that you will use outside the UK.

A system has been set up to refund these taxes to you, however the refund system doesn't kick in unless you spend £30 all at once in one store. To get the VAT refunded, you tell the store clerk you're going to be asking for the VAT back. They'll give you receipts and forms to carry with you—these days, the "forms" are often just a plastic card that the first place you shop provides. You can then present this card to any other store to add on to it the value of any new purchases (assuming you buy at least the minimum expenditure in each shop). When you arrive at the airport to depart, before you even check in for your flight, you must visit the Customs Office at the airport with the receipts and the items you purchased—in case the officer wishes to inspect your purchases. The agent will stamp your receipts and give you further directions—usually, after going through check in and security, you visit a VAT refund desk inside the airport and deal with more paperwork, or, if you have a card, they just swipe it. In some cases, they give you a refund on the spot (a credit to the credit card you used, or cash in the local currency), taking a fee of anywhere from 4% to 13% for the service. More often, the stamped receipt is sent back to the store and your reimbursement is credited against your credit card or sent to you by check. This can take a period of months.

How can I get my purchases home?

We highly recommend traveling with nesting suitcases. You place a medium-sized suitcase inside a large suitcase. Pack your clothes inside the medium case and keep the suitcases nested throughout the trip until your purchases no longer fit. Then separate the cases and use your clothing as "packing material". The baggage fee for a second suitcase is typically \$50, which is less than shipping a carton to the US, plus you won't have to wait for it to arrive. You must keep both bags under 50 lbs. or the extra fee is substantial. If you end up not buying much, you can leave your suitcases nested and avoid the extra bag fee. Our preferred airline, Icelandair, allows two suitcases per passenger, plus a carry-on.

How much luggage can I bring?

Due to space constraints on busses, each participant on the tour may bring up to two suitcases plus a carry-on sized bag, with a maximum weight per bag of 50 lbs. One piece of luggage will be delivered to and picked up from your hotel room. You will be responsible for your carry-on and second suitcase; therefore, if you plan to shop, we highly recommend packing light and nesting your luggage as described above to avoid having to handle it yourself.

What is the weather like in England?

The weather in England, is remarkably similar to Seattle's weather, in that it is unpredictable. Bring along a warm sweater and a raincoat and plan to dress in layers. Expect both warm and cool days.

What should I pack?

We suggest traveling as light as possible. You can always wash out a few things in your hotel sink and hang it to dry overnight. We also recommend selecting a color scheme so that all of your clothes mix and match. This way, if you spill on your shirt, you don't need to change slacks also. Remember that it is respectful to cover your knees and shoulders when touring churches, so always have a lightweight sweater or jacket or pashmina available in your day pack. Also, some of the tea rooms we'll visit have a dress code, which means no jeans or tennis shoes allowed. In fact, jeans are heavy and dry slowly, so we suggest leaving them home and opting for casual slacks instead. Of course, sturdy, comfortable shoes are a must- leave the heels at home!

Here's our recommended list of apparel:

- 4 bottoms: 1 pair pants, 2 pair capris, 1 knee length or longer skirt
- 5 shirts, various sleeve lengths and weights
- 1 cardigan sweater or lightweight jacket
- 5 pairs of underwear
- 5 pairs of socks
- 2 pair of shoes
- 1 rainproof jacket with a hood
- 1 scarf (to dress up a more casual outfit and for extra warmth on trains, etc)
- 1 pair pajama's or nightshirt

What else should I bring?

- A money belt (wear under your clothes with your passport, cash for the day, credit and debit cards, and our tour schedule)
- Documents, and photo copies of each:
 - Passport
 - Airline tickets
 - Drivers license
 - Railpass
- Insurance details (health and travel)
- Address list for sending postcards
- Day pack (or small tote bag for daytime essentials)
- Toiletries (airline size only- you can buy more there if you need it)
- Medicines
- Glasses/contacts (and the prescription, just in case!)
- A small notebook and attached pen (for noting meet-up times and locations)
- Electronics
 - Camera
 - Cel phone (talk to your carrier about their international plan)
 - Ear phones (for movies on the plane)
 - Chargers and/or batteries
 - Plug adaptor for using chargers, hairdryers, curling irons, etc
 - Travel alarm clock if not taking a cel phone with alarm

Will my cel phone work in England?

Call your carrier and tell them where you're going and how often you'll be using your phone. Also confirm with them that your phone will actually work in Europe. See <http://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/phones-tech/data-roaming> for more information.

