



Big Ben at Sunset, London
(photo by Uzakbek)

WASHINGTON AND LEE
UNIVERSITY

Treasures of Albion: London and the Cotswolds

Featuring the Chelsea Flower Show and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre

May 20-28, 2027



Village of Castle Comb



Join James Lambert as he meanders between literary and natural splendors through London, the Kent countryside, and the Cotswolds.

Four nights at the five-star St. Martin's Lane Hotel will give us ample time to taste and savor London's unmatched heritage, with museums, monuments, and literary haunts filling our days. A special focus will be the remarkable Chelsea Flower Show, with a day dedicated to its spectacular displays and then a sky-high reception to talk over our favorites. A day out takes us to gardens both legendary and local – Sissinghurst, Great Dixter, Pashley Manor – which will be at their peak in the fragrant late springtime air. We then move into the manicured countryside of the Cotswolds, where a series of private estates will be opened just for us, and where we plan to visit King Charles' own splendid gardens at Highgrove. Staying in the impossibly charming tiny village of Bibury, we'll explore market towns, more gardens, and travel to nearby Stratford-upon-Avon to celebrate the Bard, even attending an evening performance at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Along the way, you'll learn from James and knowledgeable guides, and enjoy meals at great restaurants, country inns, historic pubs, and more.

Travel with James Lambert



James Lambert began serving as Director of Lifelong Learning in July 2025. Previously he served as Provost and professor of English at Southern Virginia University, and prior to that worked as Chair of the English Department at the American University of Kuwait. He received an MA in American Literature at University of Arizona and a doctorate in Early Modern British Literature at the University of Iowa. He has published on Shakespeare, Milton, and a smattering of Renaissance poets and religious thinkers, and he continues to think about teaching, learning, and everything in between. For the last 15 years, James has been professionally and personally invested in the way a liberal arts college functions for good in communities, nation, and world, and he believes W&L's Lifelong Learning is crucial to a student's experience of the good life. In addition to his work as the Director of Lifelong Learning, James is also the host and executive producer of the W&L After Class Podcast and has a courtesy appointment as professor in the English Department.

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Note: Some visits may be shifted to other dates, and the order of touring could change.

Thursday, May 20

A Warm Welcome to London

Travelers will arrive into London Heathrow this morning, with one group transfer provided in the late morning. To celebrate our arrival in London, we will sit down together for a delicious welcome lunch at Balthazar, a chic eatery an easy walk from our hotel. After a gentle guided stroll through Covent Garden and Trafalgar Square, we check into the 5-star St. Martin's Lane Hotel, perfectly located for our upcoming touring and for time on your own. In the late afternoon, a guided "introductory" tour will feature stops at the monumental St. Paul's Cathedral and the National Portrait Gallery, where we will "meet" favorite writers and historic figures. Dinner and the evening are on your own.

St. Martin's Lane Hotel, London (Included Meals: Lunch)

Friday, May 21

Magical Gardens of the Kent Countryside

After our landing in London, we immediately strike out into the Kent countryside south of the city to get our first taste of England's magical springtime air that breathes incredible, vibrant life to many an exquisite garden! We will experience three superb gardens on our day out. First, the enchanting Pashley Manor, a lesser-known family-owned garden that is a perfect English garden introduction. Next, we head to nearby Sissinghurst, the passion project of author Vita Sackwell-West—a place of legendary status in the garden world. We'll enjoy lunch while on the grounds. Finally, we discover Christopher Lloyd's Great Dixter, an astonishing "show garden" recently reopened after a major renovation project. Returning to London, we will sit down together for a great dinner at a restaurant close to our hotel.

St. Martin's Lane Hotel, London (Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Saturday, May 22

The Chelsea Flower Show

Pending final date confirmation, today is dedicated to the magical Chelsea Flower Show, hosted annually by the Royal Horticultural Society. All guests will have a full day pass, and after a couple of hours of "guided" introduction to the layout, plenty of free time will be given to explore on your own, take photos, make some purchases, and have an independent lunch. Private return transfers will be arranged for guests as they like, allowing all to spend as much or as little time as desired at the show. In the late afternoon, we will gather and head out for a reception at a special private venue, before sitting down together for a gourmet dinner at a fine city restaurant.

St. Martin's Lane Hotel, London (Included Meals: Breakfast, Reception, Dinner)



London Facades



Chelsea Flower Show

Sunday, May 23

The Majesty of London

Today is a celebration of classic London grandeur, as we spend the day enjoying insightful looks at many of the city's most iconic historical monuments. The morning will be spent in Westminster, making special visits to the interior of Parliament, the exterior of Big Ben, the amazing Churchill War Rooms for a look at World War II history, and finally Westminster Abbey. Including the new Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries, opened in 2018. We then cross the Thames via the Millennium Bridge to enjoy a relaxing lunch in a private space and then a guided afternoon tour at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. Our day comes to an exciting conclusion with an in-depth guided visit at the famed Tower of London, with its endless stories, myths, and legends. Dinner is on your own this evening.

St. Martin's Lane Hotel, London (Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch)

Monday, May 24

Into the Countryside

Today we transition from the energy and buzz of the city to the serenity and springtime charm of the English countryside, eventually arriving in the Cotswolds. A morning drive carries us to the beautiful Iford Manor, where the owners of the home will host us for a garden lunch and a private tour of the gorgeous Italianate gardens. A quick drive brings us to the fairytale village of Castle Combe, where we'll enjoy a gentle stroll through the old town, with its stone houses and bridge, old churches and charming small gardens. Late in the afternoon, we check into the 4-star Swan Hotel in the sweet little village of Bibury, where after a welcome walk in town, we'll sit down for a gourmet country dinner together.

The Swan, Bibury (Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Tuesday, May 25

Gems of the Cotswolds

Our first full day in the Cotswolds celebrates our arrival in the countryside in full style. Pending official confirmation, we plan to spend the morning at King Charles' own Highgrove Gardens, learning about the development of the gardens and relaxing over a light lunch on site. This afternoon, we will be special guests for an exclusive tour of Rodmarton Manor, a beautiful private Arts & Crafts estate, hosted by the owner. Our last stop will be a small, but magical private garden in a little hamlet near our hotel, with refreshments hosted by the owner. A pub-style dinner will be provided at The Swan tonight.

The Swan, Bibury (Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Reception, Dinner)



Westminster Abbey



Castle Combe

Wednesday, May 26

Hidcote & Stratford-Upon-Avon

Today is a perfect combination of garden beauty and literary heritage. In the morning, we encounter Major Lawrence Johnston's remarkable Hidcote Manor Garden, a true masterpiece with its famous garden rooms and carefully planned spaces, all overflowing with color—a perfect country escape. Arriving in Stratford-upon-Avon, the rest of our day focuses on local boy William Shakespeare. After a charming lunch, we tour the village, seeing places relevant to the Bard's life and literature. After some free time to explore and have dinner on your own, we will have tickets for an evening performance at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, one of the great performance venues in England. (It's too early to know what show will be on.) Afterwards, a 1-hour drive takes us back to our hotel in Bibury.

The Swan, Bibury (Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch)

Thursday, May 27

Historic Family Homes in the Cotswolds

Our final countryside day sees two exceptional private homes opened for us. In the morning, learn the remarkable family stories, and architectural lives, of Chavenage House. Still a private family home, the house is famous as a film location for *Poldark* and *Wolf Hall*, and a member of the family will guide us on a special tour. Not far away is Owlpen Manor, nestled in a hidden glen amidst total silence, where a delicious lunch will be offered before exploring the gardens and historic house with our hosts. We return to *The Swan* in Bibury with down time to relax or, for the more adventurous, join your tour director on a hearty country walk in the surrounding open spaces. A grand farewell dinner at *The Swan* will provide a festive final celebration.

The Swan, Bibury (Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Friday, May 28

Cheerio! A Fond Farewell to England

One early-morning group transfer will be provided from Bibury to London Heathrow airport, arriving in time to meet early afternoon flights back to the U.S.

(Included Meals: Breakfast)



Hidcote Garden



Falstaff and Shakespeare, Stratford-upon-Avon (photo by Steve Oprey)



Owlpen Manor

Hotel Accommodations



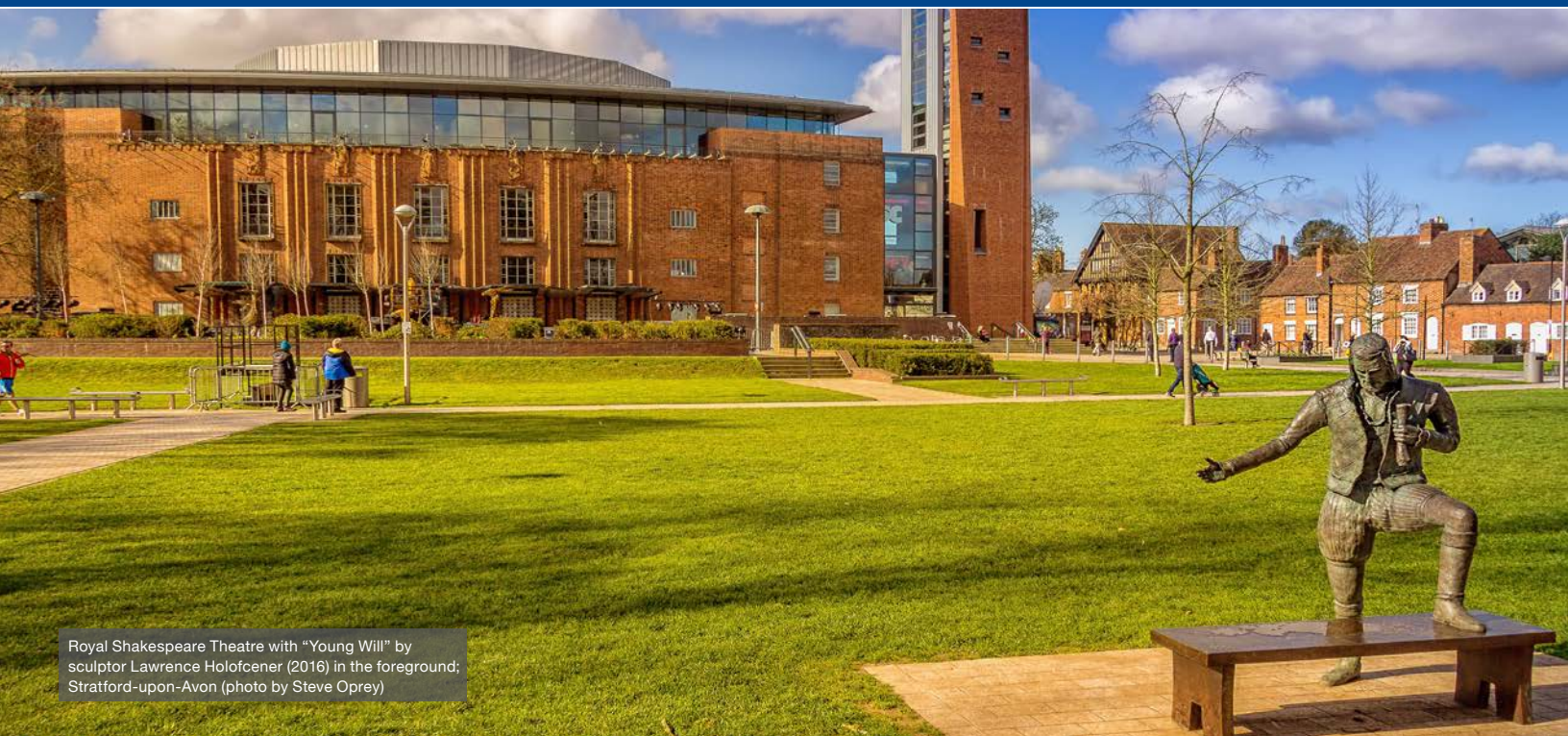
St. Martin's Lane, London

Located in the Theatre district in London's Covent Garden, St. Martins Lane London is a boutique hotel with a modern take on English luxury. The hotel features renowned architect Phillipe Starck's high-concept design, blending casual, colorful flair with top-end materials. At night, guests will find a hidden entrance to Blind Spot London, an innovative cocktail bar, behind the tea counter's posh facade. St. Martins Lane London is located at the very heart of the art-loving, energetic West End and is within easy walking distance to the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, quaint British pubs, boutiques, and dining establishments.



The Swan Hotel, Bibury

Nestled along the banks of the River Coln in a particularly lovely stretch of Cotswolds countryside, the Swan Hotel is at the heart of the picturesque village of Bibury. With only 25 rooms, the property is intimate and personal—our group will likely fill half of the property! The Swan's bar and acclaimed restaurant feature seasonal food and drink, and the inn's guest rooms feature antique furniture and individualized country style. Plenty of great walks are available in Bibury village or the country just outside, and the surrounding gardens provide a wonderfully tranquil setting, making The Swan a quintessential upscale English countryside escape.



Royal Shakespeare Theatre with "Young Will" by sculptor Lawrence Holofcener (2016) in the foreground; Stratford-upon-Avon (photo by Steve Oprey)

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REGISTER ONLINE AT:
go.wlu.edu/london2027

or

CONTACT THE W&L OFFICE OF LIFELONG LEARNING AT:
540.458.8723 or lifelong@wlu.edu

TOUR COST:

Land Package.....\$10,395
Single Supplement\$1,895

Tour price is per person, based on double occupancy, with a minimum of 15 paying participants and a maximum of 25 paying participants.

ACTIVITY LEVEL: Moderate; good walking ability is advised. Some museum and historic site visits require use of staircases, and there will be good amount of walking on uneven ground during garden and countryside touring.

DEPOSIT & FINAL PAYMENT: A deposit of \$2,000 per person is required to reserve a spot on the tour. Deposits are payable by check, Zelle, or credit card (MasterCard, Visa, or American Express). Final balance will be invoiced and is due on February 1, 2027, and must be paid by check, ACH/wire transfer, or Zelle. Credit cards are not accepted for final balance. Registrations will be accepted beyond this date on a space-available basis.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Upon receipt of registration, ISDI will send registrant a Participant Tour Agreement detailing the full terms and conditions for this tour. This document must be signed and returned to ISDI before participant's registration is considered complete and any arrangements can be confirmed. ISDI will send all documents pertaining to the tour by email unless specifically requested otherwise.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: Cancellation by participant must be made in writing to ISDI and is effective only upon acknowledged receipt by ISDI. Written cancellation received by ISDI on or before May 22, 2026: full refund of the \$2,000 deposit. Written cancellation received by ISDI between May 23, 2026 and February 1, 2027: refund of payments made minus a \$1,000 per person cancellation fee. Written cancellation received by ISDI between February 2 and April 9, 2027: refund of payments made minus \$5,000 per person cancellation fee. Written cancellations received by ISDI on or after April 9, 2027: no refund. Tour registration is non-transferable. In the case of cancellation, substitutions are not allowed. After the tour has commenced, no refunds will be issued for any reason including, but not limited to, unused portions of tour. If the tour is cancelled by W&L or ISDI due to low enrollment, active registrants will receive a full refund of all tour payments.

FLIGHTS: Airfare is not included in the tour price.

Participants are responsible for all aspects of their round-trip air arrangements, into and out of London Heathrow (LHR) airport. Please do not purchase airline tickets until the operation of the tour is confirmed. Note that you may choose to use a different London airport, but in that case you will need to provide your own connecting transportation, as group transfers will only service London Heathrow.

TOUR PRICE INCLUSIONS: 4 nights' accommodation, double occupancy, at the St. Martin's Lane Hotel, London; 4 nights' accommodation, double occupancy, at The Swan, Bibury; 8 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 5 dinners, two receptions; wine or beer at included lunches and dinners; land transportation by private motor coach or sprinter van; 1 group transfer upon arrival at London Heathrow (LHR) on 5/20/27, and one group transfer to LHR for departure on 5/28/27; transportation by private motor coach; entrance fees to all sites and activities listed in the itinerary; local guides; services of an ISDI Tour Manager; gratuities for guides, drivers, and restaurant staff at included group meals; portage of two pieces of luggage per person at hotels; bottled water on motor coach; service charges and taxes.

TOUR PRICE EXCLUSIONS: Airline tickets, airline taxes and surcharges, and baggage fees; gratuities for hotel housekeeping; airport portage; passport or visa fees; airport transfers from any other airport besides London Heathrow (LHR) or any other dates besides May 20, 2027 and May 28, 2027; meals other than those specified in the itinerary; personal items such as telephone calls, room service, valet service, à-la-carte orders, specialty wines and liquors, laundry charges, travel extensions, or tour deviations; entry or departure fees levied by local governments, such as the U.K. ETA; travel insurance; any other items not specifically included in the itinerary.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel Insurance is not included in the tour cost, but participants are strongly encouraged to purchase a travel protection plan in conjunction with this tour, including coverage of trip cancellation, trip interruption, emergency evacuation/repatriation, medical expenses, lost or damaged baggage, and other expenses and/or losses incurred due to unexpected situations. Should a participant cancel at any time after registering for the tour, Washington & Lee University and ISDI must strictly abide by the cancellation policy outlined herein. Travel insurance information will be sent upon tour registration.