Small Group escorted tour to the world famous Chelsea Flower Show and culminating in a visit to 10 exceptional historic and contemporary gardens in Kent, Surrey & Sussex.
Day 1 - 20 May 2020

Arrival & Check-In - Doubletree by Hilton West End

This is the first of three nights that we will stay at the very comfortable Doubletree by Hilton West End during this tour. With direct access from London Heathrow Airport, guests can check into the hotel from 14:00. We've chosen this hotel not only for its comfort but also its location. From here you can explore some of the iconic London landmarks and area on foot: including the British Museum, St. Paul's Cathedral, Covent Garden, Regent Street, Soho, Hyde Park and Oxford Street. Meet your tour guide and fellow garden visitors over complimentary drinks between 1800-1900. Make your own arrangements for Dinner.

Day 2 - 21 May 2020

RHS Chelsea Flower Show

The premier event of the horticultural calendar anywhere in the world! How better to describe the Chelsea Flower Show, our final destination of this tour? The Chelsea Flower show runs over 5 days and because there is so much to see here, we devote one whole day of this tour to let you explore the show on your own. Today, we'll leave early and aim to arrive at the show just as it opens. As you'll probably know, what makes this horticultural event very special is that no matter where you go, you will only see the best of the best. Designers, garden nurseries and horticultural experts from all over the world are pre-selected to compete here to receive a much-coveted Chelsea Gold, Silver or Bronze award. It is extremely competitive: careers can be both made and broken here. If this is your first trip to Chelsea Flower Show, your tour guide will provide you with some tips on what to see to match your interests and what has caught our attention at the show. Chelsea Flower Show is sure to please even the most exacting of visitors! After your day at the show you will be picked up in your luxury coach and driven back to the hotel. Those wishing to stay and explore this area of London are free to do so making their own way back to the hotel for the first night of their stay. Make your own arrangements for dinner, either at the hotel with its award winning restaurant or nearby at one of the restaurants recommended by the Hotel's concierge.

Day 3 - 22 May 2020

Gardens Visited: Sissinghurst, Great Dixter

After breakfast, we'll leave our hotel by luxury coach and travel from central London to Kent and visit Sissinghurst, the first of two gardens that we will visit today. In 1930 Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson created Sissinghurst Castle garden around a moated Elizabethan mansion. Their garden has become extremely influential, helped partly by Sackville-West's writing in which she documents the gardens development. The garden is designed around a series of axial walks each terminating with a statue or some other garden element. Enclosed garden compartments open out from each walkway and many have a sesisonal theme. During our Spring visit we'll experience the spectacular Lime Walk: drifts of bulbs provide a stunning tapestry of colors all as per Nicolson's original meticulous planning. Other parts of the garden have specific color schemes. For example, you'll find the White garden next to the Priest's House and the Cottage Garden which is planted mainly in orange and yellow. Sissinghurst Castle Garden was given to the UK National Trust on the understanding that, as per Nicolson's wishes, it should be kept up to date with new plants. Although the original design (thankfully) remains unaltered new plants are introduced.
very much in line with principles set out by Gertrude Jekyll. After our visit to Sissinghurst, we'll take the coach and drive to Rye only two miles from the coast. Rye is an extremely charming small town of historical importance. We'll stop here for lunch at the 15th Century Mermaid Inn, from before we head off to Great Dixter, one of two of the great historic gardens in East Sussex. Built in 1450, the large timber framed house was bought by Christopher Lloyd's father in 1910 was restored by the famous architect Sir Edwin Lutyens. The gardens, once a farmyard, were designed by Lutyens. Part of the reason why Great Dixter has become so famous and influential is because of the planting style introduced there by Christopher Lloyd and taught by him over many years at the local horticultural college. His planting style is characterized by the way in which he manages to combine plants in harmonious groupings and where plants of different heights, colors and leaf texture weave together into a unified whole. This style of gardening is often referred to as tapestry gardening and has been copied throughout the world. Experimentation has always been central to Lloyd's gardening approach and nowhere more can this be seen in his 65m long/4.5-meter-wide Long Border, which as you will see is a spectacular mixture of shrubs, climbers, perennials and annuals. After Lloyd's death the garden has been looked after by Fergus Garrett and is better than ever thanks to his heroic efforts. We leave Great Dixter and head for Nutfield Priory Hotel & Spa, a 4* country house hotel and spa set in 12 acres of Surrey countryside. It's a small hotel with only 60 bedrooms, all lovingly furnished and comfortable. We'll spend the next three nights at this hotel. Make your own arrangements for dinner, either at the hotel with its award winning Cloisters Restaurant serving traditional favorites with a contemporary twist or nearby at one of the restaurants recommended by the Hotel's concierge. After a leisurely breakfast we'll drive by luxury coach to visit RHS Wisley gardens, one of two gardens that we'll visit today. Gifted to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) by Sir Thomas Hanbury in 1904 (creator of the famous La Mortola garden in Ischia, Italy), Wisley Gardens, situated on 200 acres (81 ha) is an important center of learning and research and boasts the most important demonstration garden in Europe. As RHS's flagship garden there is something special to see in this garden at every time of the year even during the darkest of winter days. Because of its horticultural importance and because there is simply so much to see, we'll stay here for the whole day. As we'll be visiting the garden in Spring you'll certainly see a spectacular display from the very many rhododendrons, camellias, magnolias and deciduous azaleas that have been planted here in an area of woodland called Battleston Hill. There are glasshouses with 4 temperate zones housing cacti, succulents, orchids, epiphytes as well as many other plants not native to the UK, as well as areas devoted to specific plants such as the pinetum – an area of stately conifers many of which are record breakers in terms of their height and which are interesting to visit in any season. Loseley Park House is an Elizabethan mansion and home to the More-Molyneux family for more than 500 years. It's 2.5 acre walled garden holds more than 1000 old fashioned roses in different shades of pink, red and white. Yew hedges are used to create 5 garden rooms each planted with a different theme many of which being in the Gertrude Jekyll style. There is also an exceptional herb garden which has been divided into 6 sections each being planted with herbs according to their intended use. We'll find time during our visit to have afternoon tea, a quintessential English experience ! At the end of a full day we return to our hotel. Make your own arrangements for dinner, either at the hotel with its award winning restaurant or nearby at one of the restaurants recommended by the Hotel's concierge.
**Day 5 - 24 May 2020**

**Gardens Visited: Wakehurst Place, Clinton Lodge**

Although Wakehurst Place house was built in 1590, its garden was not created until 1902. The owner, Gerald Loder sponsored many plant collecting expeditions and some of the many plants brought back to the UK from these adventures can be found in the garden today. There is a glade planted only with species found at over 3000 meters in the Himalayas, water gardens containing a large collection of Japanese Irises as well as a famous collection of rhododendrons, conifers and plants found normally in the southern hemisphere. There are also two walled gardens each with their own character. Part of the Wakehurst Place estate is given over to a Seedbank, which has now become an international effort to collect the seeds from 75,000 species of plants by 2020, representing 25% of all known flora. We'll have lunch at Wakehurst Place, before we take our coach and travel to Nymans Garden.

Day 6 - 25 May 2020

**Gardens Visited: Sheffield Park, Gravetye Manor**

In 1775 ‘Capability’ Brown landscaped 120 acres of gardens and woodland for Lord Sheffield, the owner of Sheffield Park. Later sold and bought by Arthur G Soames and enlarged to 265 acres, much of what remains today was made between 1909 and 1934 by him. Sheffield Park is a fine example of a Landscape Movement garden. Noted for their scale, Sheffield Park has 5 lakes each linked by cascades and boasts one of the finest collections of trees in the British Isles. During our Spring visit, we expect to see a fine display of flowering trees and rare shrubs including Amelanchier spp., Cornus florida, dendrons, azaleas as well as mass plantings of daffodils and sheets of bluebells. William Robinson was the lead exponent of the natural style of gardening. He used Gravetye Manor’s 35 acres of gardens to showcase his ideas. Today more than 150 years later we are able to visit these historically important gardens and learn from the techniques that he pioneered. As we will see, Robinson's concept of the wild garden is one in which the gardener embraces nature rather than seeks to control it. Robinson also introduced the idea of the modern mixed border an example of which we will see in the garden when we visit. There is a kitchen garden which produces vegetables and fruits for the hotel’s kitchen. In the woodland we find many of the original trees that he planted. There is a magnolia walk that leads to a lake and a path that passes through wildflower meadows, a tapestry of blooms which last until end of September. Before we start exploring the gardens we’ll have an exclusive lunch here in its excellent restaurant.
Day 7 - 26 May 2020

Gardens Visited: Kew Gardens

Checkout of the hotel will be 12 noon. For those staying in London or who want to extend their tour just a little longer we include an optional complimentary short trip this morning between 0900-1200 to visit the recently reopened Temperate House at the world-famous Kew Gardens (minimum of 10 people). The Temperate House is said to be the largest remaining Victorian glasshouse in the world and is home to a collection of rare and threatened temperate zone plants. We return to the hotel mid-afternoon to say farewell to you in time for your onward journey.

(included). At the end of the day we'll travel back to the Doubletree by Hilton West End Hotel in central London for the last night of this tour. Make your own arrangements for dinner either in the hotel or at one of the restaurants recommended by the Hotel's concierge.
WHAT’S INCLUDED
✓ Accommodations in Luxury 4* Hotels
✓ 6 Breakfasts
✓ 1 Lunches
✓ Transport by luxury coach driven by an experienced driver
✓ Services of an experienced English speaking tour guide with botanical knowledge
✓ Entrance Fees for the Gardens.
✓ 24-hour emergency service

NOT INCLUDED
❌ Flights to and from the UK.
❌ 6 evening meals
❌ 5 Lunches

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