

MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY CHORAL SOCIETY

2023 UK TOUR PROSPECTUS

ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, WALES

Prepared by Andrew Wailes (Melbourne) and Claudia Arh (Salzburg) September 2021



January 2023



“Travel is the only thing you buy that makes you richer” – *Anonymous*

THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR ANOTHER TOUR

Dear MUCS members,

As we all know, the last two years have been very restrictive in terms of performance opportunities or travel. I think I speak for many when I say that one of the things that we are all looking forward to in the future is the ability to travel again. Whilst the first part of 2022 may still present challenges in terms of performance planning and long-distance travel, it is great to see the rest of the world opening now, and life already returning to a new "Covid normal". With every week, more people here are being vaccinated, and best estimates are that there will be a return to international travel by December this year, or at least early 2022. There have been many calls for another MUCS tour from our members, and a number of us have informally chatted about the prospect over the last few months as things gradually open up overseas. As I said I would, I have now begun detailed planning for another international MUCS tour, and this tour has been planned with a post Covid world in mind.

It is hard to believe that it is now already almost 2 years since MUCS was last in Europe... those who were lucky enough to attend are still raving about that trip and how wonderful it was. In my opinion it is in part the success of these regular tours which have really moved MUCS forward as a group, and led to strong social bonds, and loyalty of so many of its members. Those attributes have served us well during the trying last two years here in Melbourne, and I hope that planning a new international MUCS tour now will give us all something positive to look forward to in 2023, and something to focus on throughout next year as we prepare!

This will be the fifth international tour by MUCS, and by now the choir has firmly established the success of these events, and constantly demonstrated the quality of the touring experiences encountered by those lucky enough to attend. A tour in January 2023 will give a new generation of MUCS members (both recently joined and yet to join) the chance to participate, and after three years when few have been able to travel, will hopefully enable many of our returning members the chance to enjoy the experience of exploring amazing venues and places with a group of MUCS friends. When I plan these tours, I do so with the focus on amazing performance venues, the opportunity to sing good repertoire and quality music-making both before and during the tour, lots of fun for our younger musicians and our slightly older young-at-heart members, amazing educational and sight-seeing experiences for everybody to enjoy, and some unique cultural exchange opportunities, which will provide all participants with a once-in-a-lifetime musical, cultural and social experience they could never experience on their own.

The preferred dates for this next tour are for about three weeks, commencing around 5 January 2023. The reasons for the timing are mainly due to proximity of school and university holidays both in Australia and the UK, and cost (as air fares and accommodation in UK drop considerably in January). This will enable as many students and choir members to attend as possible. It is also low season in the UK and the main winter festivals have finished which means cheaper hotels and tourist services, better choice of concert venues, and less crowded sight-seeing destinations. Whilst the weather can be a little average at times, the roads are generally much less busy which also reduces travel time considerably.

WHY THE UK?

I have chosen the United Kingdom for this tour for a number of reasons, both practical/ logistical, and musical/touristic! Firstly, MUCS have never travelled to the UK before. From a practical point of view, the UK is already amongst the best vaccinated countries in the world, and I believe it will be one of the first countries Australia will open up to (and vice-versa). The UK National Health System is one of the world's best, and all Australians receive reciprocal Health Cover in the UK, as they would here in Australia with Medicare. There are also no language barriers, which I hope will give some nervous travellers a bit more confidence, and by the end of this year it is expected that international travel between Australia and the UK will have resumed. As the Australia / London route is a key route for QANTAS, it is expected that by 2023 there will be direct Melbourne/Darwin/London flights available for around \$2000.00 which is a pretty good price. This will also prevent any need to transfer through Asia, the Middle East or other European countries - thus preventing risk of border closures or unexpected quarantine. With the new trade deal between Australia and the UK being expanded in the next 12 months, it is also expected that flight deals will be pretty competitive. As a key member of the Commonwealth, Australians are also assured good Diplomatic support in the UK should there be any need, and there are a lot of educational ties between Melbourne University and a number of the UK's major tertiary institutions.

From a tourism point of view, the UK is an amazing and compact option. With distinct historical and cultural histories in England, Scotland and Wales and many world-famous sights of great beauty and interest, the UK gives us many options for both sightseeing and performance. We will visit ancient places which date back thousands of years, some of the world's most famous buildings that have stood for many centuries and witness many attractions that have had such a huge impact on Australia's own history and development. From the most famous sights to some lesser known corners of the UK, I have tried to include a mixture of places that people would want to visit again if they have been to the UK before (and places that would be 'must sees' to first time travellers), as well as some exciting and romantic destinations which are both interesting and within reasonable striking distance, which I hope will also will make the tour attractive to MUCS members who may have already been to the UK, or who have participated in previous tours of Europe.

TOUR AGENTS CONFIRMED

I am very pleased to report that my dear friends at CC&A Travel in Salzburg (the same company that I have used to manage ground travel arrangements in Europe for the last four MUCS tours I have planned), have agreed to take on this MUCS tour to the United Kingdom. As I will be doing a lot of the planning myself (as in previous tours), the cost of the planning services charged to MUCS are minimal, and the company provide outstanding on-ground support for our tours at an extraordinarily good price. I have no hesitation in dealing with them again and have asked Claudia and her team to proceed with some initial costings and recommendations based on this proposed itinerary. Once we get a better idea of potential numbers, we will be able to refine costings even further. Based on this draft itinerary, I have asked Claudia and her team in Salzburg to begin a detailed costing for accommodation etc based on well-positioned 3-star, budget hotels and good quality hostels as per previous European MUCS tours. As touring coaches are much smaller in the UK and limited to just 50 passengers, we may need more than one coach if our numbers are over 50, so this will also affect costs, so the sooner we can get a good idea of our potential numbers the easier it will be to get things more accurate. This will also be clearer as soon as the aftereffects of Covid on tourism in the UK become clearer, but at this stage there are some great deals going!



WHAT WILL WE BE SINGING?

I am planning for the choir to prepare a mixed repertoire of mainly sacred music, so that we can perform suitable items on their own or join with other local ensembles to present other items suitable for the magnificent cathedrals and churches that I plan to visit. By including music suitable for Morning services (mainly Church of England / Church of Scotland) and Evensong performances, we will gain access to some incredible performance venues and be able to tap into the vast number of excellent choirs in the UK. I am also planning a number of benefit / exchange concerts with local ensembles in other venues. As UK universities will have returned by the time we are looking at travelling, I am hoping we may be able to meet up with some UK university orchestras and/ or large choirs similar to MUCS, which may be able to host us and provide a bit of an audience or participate in concerts, workshops, shared rehearsals or social events. There will be a mixture of a *cappella* motets and anthems, works accompanied by organ and or piano and possibly even some repertoire designed for orchestral accompaniment. This will be finalised in coming months, once I have a rough idea of the potential size of choir etc. It is my plan to take some of the repertoire we had hoped to perform in 2021 but had to postpone because of Covid. Works like Chilcott's *Five Days That Changed The World*, Leavitt's *Missa Festiva*, and Dan Forrest's *Song of the Earth* would complement works by UK composers such as Henry Purcell, Sir Edward Elgar, Charles Villiers Stanford, Howard Goodall, John Rutter, Will Todd and Welsh composers Sir Karl Jenkins, Paul Mealer, and William Matthias, along with Folk song settings from England, Scotland and Wales and some Australian pieces.

HOW MUCH WILL THE TOUR COST AND WHAT WILL IT INCLUDE?

In financial terms, it is a little difficult to provide really accurate details just yet. However, the initial indications are fairly promising, that by 2023 there will be some really good deals available for both flights and accommodation. With 15 months to plan, we have enough time to take advantage of things as they return to normal, but enough time to monitor the situation and make changes to the itinerary if required.

The tour is based on the notion of individuals getting themselves to London and paying for their own flights separately to the actual tour charges. That allows us for more flexibility, and is much cheaper than travelling in one large group. It also allows people to come or go from various places at different times if they want to go early or stay late in UK, and also means far less risk to MUCS financially. It also enables people who wish to use frequent flyer points to do so etc.

The tour cost would include all ground and internal air transport, all accommodation, all concerts, all sight-seeing activities (a few more expensive extras may be optional), all dinners (most lunches will be kept free to allow people to have some free independent time in small groups each day), and there will be a small administration fee built in so that there would be some funds available for staff costs, emergencies and administration. Apart from an accompanist, I also like to take a photographer and a Doctor or paramedic as I have always done on previous tours. Professional drivers, tour guides in each major city and a full-time UK tour manager will also be provided.

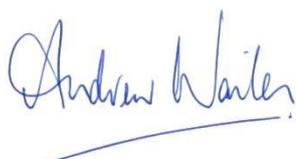
There will be a combination of budget, multi-bedded room accommodation (usually 3-5 per room) and also a limited number of twin, double or single rooms (which will all cost extra TBA for those who request them).

At this stage we are hoping to provide the tour for around AU \$5000.00, and flights (currently estimated at around AU\$2000.00 return MEL-LONDON-MEL on QANTAS). This plan is currently based on a minimum of around 45 participants, but can be adjusted down to 30 or up to 100 participants.

I would be pleased to hear from anyone regarding any specific ideas re this tour, but want to stress that at this stage the proposal is only a draft, and will almost certainly change slightly as I negotiate performance opportunities with particular venues etc. Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate specific requests or suggestions, such a tour obviously has to be planned around what is best for the group, possible given our timings, and affordable.

I have already included many of the tourist activities in this tour to give people an idea of the kinds of adventures they can look forward to on this trip. Whilst things are obviously at the relatively early stages right now, I would like to get things going so that I can present a more detailed financial proposal to our members as soon as possible. I would envisage the entire tour would be planned and costed by early next year to allow a full year of personal planning, fundraising etc. In the meantime there is a link to a Trybooking survey at the end of this document which asks you to register your interest. There is no cost or obligation at this stage, so I encourage everyone who is interested to visit the link and add yourself to the data base to help us plan!

I am really excited at the potential of this tour, which I think has the potential to be an unforgettable musical and social experience for everyone. I would love to hear your thoughts...



Andrew Wailes,
MUCS Music Director



“There’s an accent shift, on average, every 25 miles in England.”



“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page”
– St. Augustine of Hippo

MUCS UK Tour January 2023

PROPOSED TOUR SCHEDULE AND ITINERARY

Prepared by Andrew Wailes (Melbourne), and Claudia Arh (Salzburg) August 2021

Proposed tour dates:

Friday 6 January – Friday 27 January, 2023 * 22 nights / 23 days

Proposed route*:

ARR London (3) – Cambridge - York (2) – Harrogate - Ely- – Alnwick -**Edinburgh** (3) – Leith – Culloden Moor – Loch Ness - **Inverness** – Scottish Highlands- (2) – **Glasgow** (3) – Stirling - **Lake District** – Grasmere (1) – Llandudno - **Caernarfon** - Snowdonia (2) – **Cardiff** (2) – Caerphilly – Bath – Stonehenge – **Windsor** – Greenwich – Canterbury - **London** (4) DEP

**exact dates and route subject to final confirmation*

Tour starting point:

Individual arrivals in London (Capital of England), Thursday 5 January independently

Provisional Daily Itinerary:

Day 1 Tour Start / Meeting Point in London
Friday January 6th



Mid morning meeting point at Trafalgar Square at Nelson's Column. Suggested arrival from London or direct from Heathrow by Underground Train to Charing Cross tube station (Trafalgar Square exit). **Trafalgar Square** is famous for being the home of the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery, the iconic Nelson's Column and great bronze lions. **Brief walking tour of Central London sights** and informal arrival photos, followed by morning tea and briefing on the best way to travel in London, how to use the tube, local money etc. **Afternoon meeting point at accommodation in Central London** (TBA) for formal check-in. Meet our CC&A tour manager, who will assist with the check-in, and our tour drivers (deluxe motor coaches) **Evening: Relaxed Welcome dinner at the hotel.** Optional Evening activity: London by Night Sightseeing Walking Tour Overnight/buffet-breakfast at accommodation in London.

Day 2 / (London, Westminster)
Saturday Jan. 7th

Breakfast at accommodation. Morning: **West End sightseeing tour** including **Buckingham Palace to see the changing of the guard, Palace of Westminster, Houses of Parliament, Elizabeth Tower / Big Ben, Downing Street, Piccadilly Circus, Covent Garden and Trafalgar Square.** We will visit **Westminster Abbey**, one of the world's most notable religious buildings and the traditional place of Coronations of British Monarch's since the year 1066. There will also be time for a walk to **St James Palace, Clarence House, Horse Guards Parade,** see the squirrels! Lunch in small groups.



St James Palace, Clarence House, Horse Guards Parade, and we will visit **St James Park / Green Park** to

Afternoon / Evening: Recital or Evensong in Historic Southwark Cathedral or Church of St Martin-in-the-Fields (TBC).

Day 3 / (London/ Greenwich)

Sunday Jan 8th

Breakfast at accommodation. **Morning: Perform the High Mass in one of London's historic churches such as St Clement Danes Church, or The Church of Holy Trinity Sloane Street (TBC).** After morning tea we will continue our **London sightseeing tour in the city of London.** During our tour we will pass through the **Financial District**, past the **Bank of England**, **Tower Bridge** and included will be a **guided tour of the Tower of London and Crown Jewels.**

We will also visit **St Paul's Cathedral** today, Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece. Lunch in small groups and time at leisure. We plan to enjoy a **River Cruise on the Thames / Walk across the Millennium Bridge**, with a formal photo with the famous Dome of St Paul's in the background. Possible afternoon visit to the **Royal Borough of Greenwich** to visit **The Old Royal Naval College, Cutty Sark, Old Royal Observatory.** Evening: Dinner at accommodation/local restaurant in London.



Day 4 / (London/ Cambridge/ York)

Monday Jan 9th

Breakfast at accommodation; check-out and load coach. Morning: We depart London today heading north stopping first in the ancient **City of Cambridge** (approx. 100km / 2drive). Our **walking tour of Cambridge** will introduce the group to The Backs, a picturesque area of Cambridge where several of the **Colleges of the University of Cambridge** back onto the River Cam. There will be time for lunch in small groups as you wander the charming streets of Cambridge, and in the afternoon we will enjoy a **tour of Kings College Chapel** which is a splendid example of gothic architecture dating from 1446, famous for its choir. **Depending on service times and availability we may be able to attend Evensong in the Chapel to hear the Choir of Kings.** Late Afternoon/ early Evening: Depart Cambridge and continue to the ancient **City of York**, the walled city founded by the Romans (approx. 250km / 3.5h drive). Evening: Dinner at accommodation / local restaurant. Optional: If time permits, perhaps take in one of York's famous Ghost Walks.



Day 5 / (York/ Harrogate/ Ely)

Tuesday Jan 10th

Breakfast at accommodation. **Morning walking tour of York** this morning which will introduce the group to the **Medieval City Walls** that encircle the city, the ancient **Shambles** with its shops and original buildings dating back as far as the fourteenth century. Included will be a tour of **York Minster**, the largest Gothic Church north of the Alps and one of the world's greatest Cathedrals. There will be time for Lunch in small groups, followed by some free time to explore the old City of York. The center of the city is a car free zone with cobblestone streets brimming with charm and quaint shops to explore. **Evening: Concert in York area, possibly nearby Harrogate, a fashionable Victorian Spa Town with a great local Arts Program, or Evensong in Ely Cathedral (TBC).** Dinner at a local restaurant.



Day 6 / (York/ Alnwick/ Edinburgh)
Wednesday Jan 11th

Breakfast at accommodation; check-out and load coach. Morning: Visit the famous **Yorvik Viking Centre**, containing lifelike mannequins and life-size dioramas depicting Viking life in the city set on the site of Viking ruins. Visitors are taken through the dioramas in small carriages equipped with speakers for an unforgettable experience. Depart York and continue towards Scotland (approx. 350km / 4.5h drive), where we take in some of the **Northumberland Coastline** enroute to **Alnwick Castle**. One of Britain's most iconic castles which has remained in the same family for over 700 years. The Castle has been seen the world over as has been used as a setting for TV shows including Downton Abbey and movies such as Harry Potter. Lunch in small groups.

In the late afternoon we will continue into **Scotland** and onto the Scottish Capital of **Edinburgh**, enjoying a brief orientation coach tour enroute to our accommodation. Evening: Dinner at accommodation.

Day 7 / (Edinburgh)
Thursday Jan 12th

After Breakfast we will commence our **sightseeing tour of Edinburgh** by exploring the Royal Mile. **The Royal Mile** in Edinburgh's charming Old Town is the perfect place to get acquainted with the Scottish capital. Incorporating four separate streets (Castle Hill, Lawnmarket, High Street and Canongate) it is brimming with charm. We also see the medieval and Georgian districts overlooked by the extinct volcanic rock of **Arthur's Seat**. Lunch in small groups with time for shopping.

Afternoon: **MUCS will give a lunchtime performance, in ancient St Giles Cathedral (14th century)** located in the city along the Royal Mile (TBC). Some free time this afternoon for optional sightseeing. Perhaps you'd like to visit The **Palace of Holyroodhouse** (the official residence of the Queen in Scotland), where you can visit the 17th-century State Apartments, the Great Gallery, and the 16th-century apartments in James V's Tower. Or perhaps you'd like to enjoy a pint in a local pub. Evening Dinner at local restaurant. Up for Haggis?

Day 8 / (Edinburgh, Leith)
Friday Jan 13th

After Breakfast, MUCS will continue sightseeing in Edinburgh, widely regarded as one of Europe's most handsome capitals. We will visit the mighty **Edinburgh Castle**, which has a history dating back to the 12th century and is famous for hosting the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo and housing the **Scottish Crown Jewels**. **After touring the Castle**, we will transfer to the port town of Leith to visit the Royal Yacht Britannia.

The Royal Yacht Britannia is one of the world's most famous ships, and proudly served the Queen for 44 years as a majestic symbol of the Commonwealth. This fascinating tour gives you an insight of how the Queen and members of the Royal Family dined and entertained many heads of state during its various voyages. Why not visit the Royal Deck Tea Room? You can enjoy freshly prepared, homemade food, stunning views and a warm welcome. The menu includes speciality coffees and cocktails, tasty soups and sandwiches and mouth-watering cakes and scones, all made on board in the Royal Galley. Perhaps treat yourself to a Champagne Cream Tea in the very same spot where the Royal Family would have played deck games and entertained? **In the evening, MUCS to perform Evensong, possibly in historic St Mary's Cathedral, the mother church of the Diocese of Edinburgh in the Scottish Episcopal Church (TBC).**



Day 9 / (Edinburgh, Scottish Highlands, Inverness)
Saturday Jan 14th

Early Breakfast at accommodation. Check-out and load coach.
Morning: We travel north to toward **Inverness** (approx. 250km / 3.5h drive), the Capital of the **Scottish Highlands**, stopping enroute at a working farm to see the famous **Border Collie Sheepdogs** at work. With some fantastic Scottish scenery as the background during this fun demonstration, we will learn how the Shepherd uses his amazing dogs to manoeuvre the sheep through various obstacles. Lunch in small groups in a **Highland Village** before continuing through the Highlands. There will be several places to stop and admire the wild, rugged Highland scenery. Depending on the weather conditions we may need to adapt this part of the program if there is a lot of snow, as it can get quite cold here in winter!
In the afternoon: Continue on to Inverness and enjoy a brief orientation coach tour of the beautiful city enroute to our accommodation.
Evening: Highland Dinner at our hotel or a local restaurant.



Day 10 / (Inverness, Highlands, Culloden Moor)
Sunday Jan 15th

After Breakfast at our accommodation we will transfer to **Culloden Moor** (the site of the famous bloody last battle of the Jacobite Rising), and the visitor centre and interactive exhibition. Walk around the battlefield where on 16th April 1746, British Government forces defeated the army of Prince Charles Edward Stuart in just one hour and ended hopes of restoring the Jacobite Stuarts to the British throne.

We will then continue to Cawdor to visit the iconic **Cawdor Castle** which was the scene of the murder of King Duncan in Shakespeare's Macbeth. With its turreted central tower, moat and draw-bridge Cawdor is one of the most romantic stately homes in all the highlands. Lunch in small groups and some time to wander and shop. In the late afternoon we will return to **Inverness** in time for an evening concert performance, a **planned exchange concert with a local Scottish Choir** (TBC).
Evening: Dinner at a local restaurant.



Day 11 / (Inverness, Loch Ness, Glasgow)
Monday Jan 16th

Breakfast at accommodation.; check-out and load coach:
Departing **Inverness** we will travel south towards the **City of Glasgow** (approx. 300km / 4 hr drive), winding along the shores of **Loch Ness**, passing **Fort William** which stands in the shadow of the majestic **Ben Nevis**, the highest mountain in the British Isles. We continue through the **Trossachs**, an area of outstanding natural beauty and continue to **Loch Lomond** so you can experience the magic of Loch Lomond's magnificent scenery.

After Lunch in small groups and some time to explore, we will enjoy a **boat cruise along one of the great Scottish lochs**. Whether or not we see Nessie, the views will be spectacular! In the afternoon we will warm up, and continue onto the great **City of Glasgow** in time to check-in to our accommodation. Evening: Dinner at accommodation.



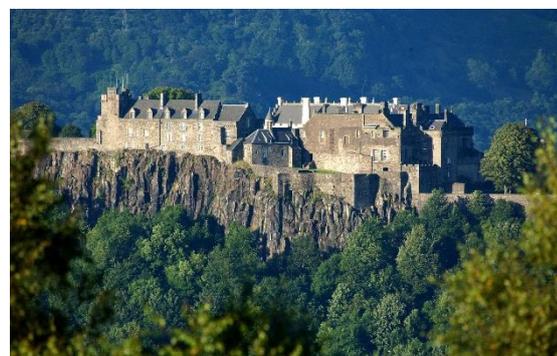
Day 12 / (Glasgow)
Tuesday Jan 17th

Breakfast at accommodation. Morning **sightseeing tour of Glasgow** which is a city of contrasts, modern sits alongside Victorian architecture and in the affluent **West End** is where we find the main galleries and museums. We stop at **Glasgow Cathedral (also known as the High Kirk of Glasgow, or St Mungo's Cathedral)**, which is a rare example of an almost complete 13th century Gothic church. It is the oldest building in Glasgow. In the afternoon we include a visit to the **National Piping Centre of Scotland** which exists to promote the study of the music and history of the Highland Bagpipe. After a tour and demonstration we will even get a chance to play the bagpipes ourselves and master the Glaswegian accent with a local piper! Later in the day there will be some free time in Glasgow for a wee dram in a local pub, or a bit of shopping. Evening: Dinner at accommodation/local restaurant.



Day 13 / (Glasgow, Stirling)
Wednesday Jan 18th

Breakfast at accommodation. In the morning we will travel 42 km north-east of Glasgow, (60 km north-west of Edinburgh) to the **City of Stirling**. The market town, surrounded by rich farmland, grew up connecting the royal citadel, the medieval old town with its merchants and tradesmen, the Old Bridge and the port. Located on the River Forth, Stirling is traditionally known as the strategically important "Gateway to the Highlands". We will visit famous **Stirling Castle**. This magnificent Castle has dominated Scottish History for centuries and now remains one of the finest examples of Renaissance architecture in the country. Stirling became the strategic military key to the kingdom during the 13th and 14th century war of Independence (Braveheart) and was the favourite Royal residence of many of the Stuart Monarchs. In the afternoon we will return to Glasgow in time to prepare for **an evening concert performance, possibly in Glasgow Cathedral with a local Scottish choir also participating (TBC)**. **After the concert we will enjoy a late dinner at a local restaurant.**



Day 14 / (Glasgow, English Lake District, Grasmere)
Thursday Jan 19th

After Breakfast at our accommodation, we will check-out and load the coach. We will bid farewell to Scotland, and return to England where we will continue to **the English Lake District** (approx. 200km / 2.5h drive), famous for its lakes, forests and mountains as well as its literary association with the likes of William Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter. We will visit **Dove Cottage** (a house on the edge of **Grasmere**, where Wordsworth lived from 1799-1808). Dove Cottage has been brought back to life and the sights, sounds and smell evoke memories of over 200 years ago. **Grasmere** is a village in Cumbria, in the centre of the Lake District, named after its adjacent lake. We will enjoy the chance to make several stops in this famously picturesque part of the UK, and enjoy some time to wander the little village streets and bridges and take tea, before retreating to our warm and comfortable Lake District hotel for Dinner.



Day 15 / (Lake District – Llandudno, North Wales)
Friday Jan 20th

Breakfast at accommodation.; check-out and load coach. Depart in the morning and continue our journey South. We will cross into **North Wales** and head along some of the coastal route to **Llandudno**, the largest seaside resort in Wales. There we will take a stroll along the sweeping promenade lined with beautiful Victorian buildings (approx. 250km / 3h drive). There will be time for an independent lunch in small groups, in the afternoon we plan to take a trip on the Great Orme Tramway. **The Great Orme Tramway** is Britain's only funicular, or cable-hauled tramway, that travels on public roads. Delighting visitors since it opened in 1902, the Tramway climbs a mile (1500m) through the Great Orme Country Park and Nature Reserve to the Great Orme's spectacular summit from which there are amazing views of the Welsh coastline and Llandudno below. **In the evening we plan to perform a concert in Llandudno, possibly at historic Holy Trinity Church (TBC).** Evening: Dinner at accommodation/local restaurant.



Day 16 (Caernarfon / Snowdonia / Ffestiniog Railway / Llandudno)
Saturday Jan 21st

After Breakfast we transfer to the **Royal Town of Caernarfon** to visit one of the most famous Castle in Wales. Overlooking the town and Harbor, the mighty **Caernarfon Castle** has a rich history dating back to the 1200's and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The castle was built in the 13th century by Edward I as a royal palace and military fortress, and was at the core of a medieval walled town. The Romans left their mark too – 1000 years earlier they constructed their fort of Segontium on the hill above (its foundations still exist). In the shadow of the castle the town's narrow streets and stylishly redeveloped waterfront make it a very picturesque destination. We will then transfer to the harbor town of **Porthmadog** for some free time and lunch. In the afternoon we board the famous **Ffestiniog Railway**, the world's oldest narrow-gauge railway. Relax and enjoy the stunning scenery of **Snowdonia** as the train meanders its way through the countryside to the slate-quarrying town of **Blaenau Ffestiniog**. Re-board our coach and continue to the town of **Betws-y-Coed** located in a valley in the Snowdonia National Park, surrounded by woodlands and magnificent mountain countryside before returning to **Llandudno** for dinner in a local restaurant.



Day 17/ (Cardiff, Wales)
Sunday Jan 22nd

After Breakfast we will check-out and load coach. We will travel from North to South Wales and continue to **Cardiff**, the Capital of Wales (approx. 300km / 4.5h drive). En route we will stop to explore a small Welsh village, and enjoy lunch in small groups prior to arriving in Cardiff. Upon arrival in the afternoon we will enjoy an orientation tour taking in the main sights including **Cardiff Bay** and a visit to **St Fagan's National Museum of History**, Wales's most popular heritage attraction. In the evening we will enjoy dinner at a local restaurant in Cardiff.



Day 18 / (Glasgow)
Monday Jan 23rd

After breakfast we continue our South Wales sightseeing with a morning visit to **Rhondda Heritage Park, and the Museum of Welsh Mining** in the picturesque **Rhondda Valley**. We will enjoy the “Black Gold Experience” in the company of knowledgeable Welsh tour guides who are ex-miners. Collect your helmet from the lamp room before your journey underground as life in the coalmines is brought to life. Lunch in small groups. Afternoon: Transfer to **Caerphilly** to visit the fabulous medieval moated Castle which dates back to the 13th century. Some free time before early dinner at our hotel /local restaurant. **In the evening we have planned an exchange concert with a local Welsh Choir in Cardiff, possibly in Llandaff Cathedral (TBC).**



Day 19 / (Cardiff – Bath – Stonehenge – London)
Tuesday Jan 24th

After an early breakfast at our hotel, we will check-out and load coach. We will cross the border again and return to England with a morning visit to the **Roman City of Bath**, enjoy the magnificent Georgian architecture before we include a guided tour of the **Roman Baths of Bath** (approx. 100km / 1,5h drive). Lunch on your own to explore the beautiful City, and its famous **Bath Abbey** which was founded in the 7th century, reorganised in the 10th century, and rebuilt in the 12th and 16th centuries. In the late afternoon we will continue East towards London (approx. 200km / 3h drive), stopping first at ancient **Stonehenge**, one of the UK’s most famous landmarks. The gloomy twilight atmosphere of this mystical site will be memorable for us all. Eventually we will make our way back to **London** in time for check in and dinner.



Day 20 (London – Canterbury - Dover)
Wednesday Jan 25th

After an early breakfast we will travel south into the county of Kent, known as “The Garden of England” as we continue to the iconic and World Heritage listed **City of Canterbury**. Originally built by the Romans, the ancient walls encircle the medieval centre, with its cobbled stone streets and timber framed houses. We also visit the magnificent **Canterbury Cathedral**, motherchurch of the Church of England and Worldwide Anglican Church and home of England’s most senior Archbishop, founded in the year 597. A pivotal moment in the history of the cathedral was the murder of the archbishop, Thomas Becket, in the north-west transept in 1170, by knights of King Henry II. **We plan to perform a Lunchtime recital at Canterbury Cathedral (TBC), which is famous for its vast 12th century Quire with superb acoustics.** Afterwards there will be some time to wander in the charming and historic streets for an independent lunch in small groups, after which we will return to London in time for dinner. Depending on timings and availabilities, we may also be able to fit in a visit to the famous **White Cliffs of Dover**, or **perform an Evening Concert with a London Boy Choir in a historic parish church (TBC).**



Day 20 / (London, Windsor)

Thursday Jan 26th (Australia Day)

After an early breakfast we will travel to **Windsor**, in Royal Berkshire. The quintessential town is dominated by the imposing **Windsor Castle**. A Royal home and fortress for over 900 years, Windsor Castle is the largest occupied castle in the world, and remains a working palace today. The Queen uses the Castle both as a private home, and has recently made it her official Royal residence at which she now undertakes certain formal duties. We will enjoy a tour of the Castle, **St Georges Chapel Windsor** and witness the pomp and pageantry of the **Changing of the Guard at Windsor Castle** at 11am (Tuesdays Thursdays and Saturdays) The Changing the Guard ceremony takes place in the Lower Ward of the Castle, outside the Guardroom. There will be some time to explore the High Street of Windsor and enjoy a quick lunch in small groups, before the adventurous head towards the **River Thames** for a short optional **pleasure Boat Cruise upstream from the Windsor Promenade to Boveney Lock**, & returns with fantastic views of **Windsor Castle, Eton College, Mill House, Windsor Racecourse and the Brocas Meadows**. The view of the Castle from the river is undoubtedly the finest there is, so this will be a memorable sight for all first time visitors!

Depending on the schedule, we may be able to **attend Evensong at St George's Chapel Windsor to hear the famous Choir of St George's Chapel**. If that is not possible, we may be able **to perform Evensong in either Windsor Parish Church of St John the Baptist, or a joint concert the Concert Hall of the Reading Town Hall (TBC)**. We will then return to London in time to attend an optional musical in the West End, or even the ABBA Voyage concert at purpose built **ABBA Arena in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park** in London.

Day 21 (London – Canterbury)

Friday January 27th

After breakfast at our accommodation, we will travel south into the county of Kent, known as "The Garden of England" as we continue to the historic **City of Canterbury**. Originally built by the Romans the ancient walls encircle the medieval center with its cobbled stone streets and timber framed houses. We will also visit the magnificent **Canterbury Cathedral** founded in 597. Described as 'England in stone', the Cathedral is the Mother Church of the Church of England and the worldwide Anglican Communion, seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Canterbury Cathedral's thrilling history spans over 1,400 years, telling the stories that have shaped England. **MUCS will perform a Lunchtime recital in Canterbury Cathedral's famous epic Quire**. It is over 800 years old, having been rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1174 and is the first Gothic building in the UK. In the afternoon there will be some time to explore the charming streets and alleys of Canterbury in small groups before we return to London in time for dinner.



Day 22 (London)

Saturday January 28th

After breakfast, there will be a free day at your leisure for optional sightseeing and shopping in the Great **City of London**. This will give you a chance to do something you really want to do, depending on your mood, budget or energy levels!

Perhaps you can visit one of London's many famous museums or art galleries such **the National Portrait Gallery, Natural History Museum** or the **Tate Modern**. If you can't get enough of Royal Palaces, perhaps you could tour **Buckingham Palace, or Kensington Palace, or wander around St James Palace, Clarence House** or visit **Hampton Court Palace**.

If you wanted to go a bit further afield, you could take a day tour to the **Harry Potter Warner Bros. Studio Tour – The Making of Harry Potter** in Leavesden. Or maybe a visit to the **Churchill War Cabinet Rooms**, the secret underground headquarters where Prime Minister Winston Churchill lived and worked during WWII.

Perhaps a quiet stroll around the shopping districts of **Oxford Street, Bond Street and Regent Street**, or a visit to a London market such as **Covent Garden, Camden or Borough Markets** might take your fancy!

And for the nature lovers, you can chase squirrels in **Hyde Park** or **Green Park**, visit **Regent's Park** or **London Zoo**, or visit **Victoria Park** where the wildlife includes a deer enclosure, moorhens, geese and squirrels and a lovely scenic lake where you'll find **The Pavilion Café**.

In the evening we hope to visit **Australia House** on the Strand, for a **Farewell Reception hosted by the Australian High Commissioner His Excellency the Honourable George Brandis QC (TBC)**. Apart from being a magnificent venue and London's biggest Embassy Building, The Exhibition Hall of Australia House, with its chandeliers and marble columns, was used as the interior of Gringott's Wizarding Bank in the Harry Potter movies!

We will end our time in London with **farewell drinks in a fashionable bar in Soho**. Of course!

Day 23 London Departure

After breakfast at our accommodation, there will be one departure transfer in the morning from our accommodation to London's Heathrow airport to meet flights back to Australia for those departing today.

End of Tour

If you wish to stay longer in London, or explore the UK for a bit longer, there will probably be other MUCS members interested in joining you for some further adventures.

I will be available all day to assist with forward travel planning, transport advice, hangover cures, and general information for anyone who needs it.



PAYMENT:

Payment outline: NB this is TBC but given here as a rough guide for advance planning purposes.

- An initial registration of interest will be sought, with a non-refundable registration of interest fee of \$50.00 in October.
- A tour deposit of around \$700.00 will be payable from October onwards to secure a place on the tour. The amount of \$500.00 included in that deposit will be non-refundable in the case of withdrawal from tour.
- There will be a second tour payment of approximately \$1600.00 in about March 2022
- There will be a third tour payment of around \$1550.00 in about July 2022
- There will be a final tour payment of around \$1200.00 due by October 2022
- Balance of tour will be refundable until around Wednesday 30 November, 2022 if you wish to cancel
- Tour Deposit of \$500.00 is non-refundable for any individual tour withdrawals or cancellations.

Last cancellation date for individuals without charge (other than deposit) will be Wednesday 30 November, 2022). Cancellation / withdrawal after this will be subject to all charges and no further refund will be possible.

AIRFARES:

Note that tour cost does not include Airfare. There will be no group flights arranged for this tour. **People will be encouraged to purchase a QANTAS ticket themselves** and make their own arrangements to get to London, use Frequent Flyer points etc, and either arrive early, at the end of tour or leave late via any other city of their choice.

EXTRA ACCOMMODATION AND NON-SINGING PARTICIPANTS:

NB. Any accommodation prior to or after the official tour itinerary will be subject to your own cost. It is strongly advised that people plan to arrive the day before the tour starts rather than on the day, to ensure that you make the start of the tour if there are flight delays caused by snow or fog etc. It also gives you a chance to sleep off your flight and make any last-minute purchases you've forgotten etc. Recommendations for cheap central accommodation will be provided, along with detailed instructions for meeting up and using public transport upon arrival in London. As one of the best-connected cities in the world, public transport is easy to use. The fastest and most stress-free transfer from Heathrow Airport to London is the dedicated airport train, the Heathrow Express. This takes just 15 minutes from Heathrow to Paddington Station running every 15 minutes. The standard single Tube ticket from Heathrow (zone 6) to central London (zone 1) is £7.50 for adults (AUD \$14) or, when paying with a contactless credit card, the single fare to central London is only around £5 (AUD \$9).

It will be totally possible for non-singing friends, parents, partners, siblings or housemates to join the tour, as long as they pay. We do however hope that the majority of participants will be performers, so it would be great to encourage them to come along to MUCS next year! They do not have to be Melbourne University students to participate.

PASSPORT REMINDER

Passports need to be valid for 6 MONTHS AFTER THE END OF THE TOUR (OR THE TIME YOU PLAN TO LEAVE THE UK / EUROPE). Please ensure your passport is up to date. Good to get on to this as early as possible as it will be required to confirm accommodation etc. You will however be able to register for the tour without having a valid passport, but will need to provide these details later.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

All tour participants will be required to have comprehensive travel /medical insurance for the duration of the tour.

There will be an option to participate in group travel insurance prior to the tour. If you wish to use your own travel insurance you will be able to do so but please note that you will be required to provide proof of it to the organisers prior to departure.

COVID VACCINATIONS

To fly, or to enter the UK, you will need to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19. It will also be necessary to participate in MUCS rehearsals in 2022, so if you have not done so already, I strongly encourage you to get your vaccinations ASAP. By 2023 it is expected there will be a formal international vaccine passport system in place, so we will all need to comply as required at the time of travel.

Register your interest ASAP:

<https://www.trybooking.com/BULXR>

NB. There is no cost to register for tour information at this stage. This itinerary is intended to inform you of the proposed tour and get you excited about coming. To register your interest, please fill out this survey via the Trybooking link above to help us plan and get a more accurate indication of potential numbers etc.

At a later date, we will send out a further link to enable people to formally register their interest to join the tour, and pay a deposit etc.

Comments / Notes:

I am still trying to include Manchester in the itinerary. If the budget will allow it, I will attempt to extend the itinerary by another 2 days to make it possible to include Manchester without omitting other highlights.