

TOUR TIMES

A publication from Mary Valentine Tours

Spaces are still open for our September 3-10 tour. See page 3.

Dear Reader,

This month's newsletter is filled with general travel tips, a quick geography lesson, tributes to the wonders of London, feature stories about several of the stops we'll be making in our September tour, a do-it-yourself invitation to the Coronation, and more.

The Importance of Travel Insurance



Whether you're traveling to somewhere in the US or circling the globe, it's important to consider purchasing travel insurance. Why?

1. Because you don't want to lose all your money if you have to cancel your trip.
2. Because accidents can—and do—happen while traveling.
3. Because your regular health insurance probably won't work overseas. And remember: Medicare doesn't cover medical expenses outside the US.
4. Because medical evacuations can be really expensive.
5. Because travel delays are inevitable.
6. Because a missing bag can ruin your trip.

Source: Allianz Travel Insurance

Shop wisely. Not all insurance policies alike. Find out what each policy does and doesn't cover. For example, not all plans cover hospitalization if you become ill away from home. Only some policies pay to fly you home if you need hospitalization.



The view from our London hotel.



In case your mail delivery isn't all you'd hoped for, here's your DIY invitation to the Coronation (suitable for framing).



Source: Buckingham Palace



Today's Geo-political Lesson asks: What's the difference: United Kingdom and Great Britain? Or England?

Ever been confused by the names UK, England, and Great Britain? Do they all mean the same thing? The short answer: no.

The **United Kingdom** is a sovereign nation that exists as a political union between the countries of **England**, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Great Britain is a large *island* on which most of England, Scotland, and Wales are located. But not Northern Ireland.

September Tour Highlights

You're invited to join us for eight extraordinary days in London, Oxford, Leicester, Birmingham, Liverpool, the English countryside, and the Cotswolds. See England as you haven't seen it before. Here are some things to look forward to:

- 4- and 5-star hotels
- Dinners at outstanding restaurants
- A traditional afternoon tea
- Battersea Power Station cultural center
- Greenwich, home of the Royal Navy College with its extraordinary painted ceiling, as well as the Prime Meridian
- The state rooms at Buckingham Palace
- King Richard III Center, where we'll learn the story of how his remains were found 500 years after his death.
- Kensington Palace's "Crown to Couture" exhibit
- A day in Liverpool
- Punting on the Cherwell river in Oxford and a tour of Oxford University
- A village circus
- A winery tour in Surrey
- And more!

"I look for off-the-beaten-track locations and events. In the last few years, for example, we've spent a day at cooking school making Cornish pasties; spent a day on the moors tracing the steps of the Bronte sisters who wrote some of the greatest novels in English literature; gone underground in one of the tin mines seen in Poldark; visited locations from Bridgerton; and played croquet on the lawn at Thomas Hardy's home."

Mary Valentine



WANT TO JOIN US? It's easy

Cost per person: \$6059. This covers hotels for eight nights; eight breakfasts; seven dinners; one afternoon tea; group taxis in London; a luxury coach in the countryside; tickets and entry fees to all venues. Not covered: airfare, airport transfers, lunches, incidentals, and tips for our driver. Group size: 7-10.

To reserve a spot, send a non-refundable \$500 deposit to Mary Valentine now. An installment of \$2779 is due no later than July 1, 2023. The balance (\$2780) is due no later than August 1, 2023.

Send payments to:

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Recommended British Movies, TV Programs, and Readings



Doc Martin – PBS and Acorn TV

Call the Midwife – PBS

Poldark – PBS

McDonald and Dodds – Britbox

Jonathan Creek - Britbox

Emily – in theaters now

The Lost King – in theaters now

**The Queen Charlotte series (a prequel to Bridgerton) starts on
May 4 — Netflix**



Tip: Enroll in Kanopy.com through your public library and have access to dozens of films from the UK (and elsewhere). It's free!

Recommended Fiction

(an incomplete and biased list)

- ◆ **Remarkable Creatures by Tracy Chevalier**
- ◆ **Major Pettigrew's Last Stand by Helen Simonson**
- ◆ **The Complete Adventures of Sherlock Holmes by A. Conan Doyle**
- ◆ **Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy**
- ◆ **The Dictionary of Lost Words by Pip Williams**



Why People (and Bears) Love London



“A bad day in London is still better than a good day anywhere else.” - Unknown

“I’ve been walking about London for the last 30 years, and I find something fresh in it every day.” – Walter Besant, 19th - century novelist and historian

“London opens to you like a novel itself. . . It is divided into chapters, the chapters into scenes, the scenes into sentences; it opens to you like a series of rooms, doors and passages. Mayfair to Piccadilly to Soho to the Strand.” – Anna Quindlen, American author and journalist.

“There’s nowhere else like London. Nothing at all, anywhere.” – Vivienne Westwood, contemporary British fashion designer

“I like the spirit of this great which I feel around me.” – Charlotte Bronte

“In London, everyone is different, and that means anyone can fit in.” – Paddington Bear



Tour Stop: Visiting an English Winery

Although residents of the United Kingdom are great consumers of wine (in 2021 they were rated #5 in wine consumption by country), as recently as 30 years ago, the country was considered unsuitable for producing its own fine wine because of the cold climate. Global warming has changed all that, and in the past few years three areas of Southeast England have become known for making very good wines: Kent, Surrey, and Sussex. The stand-out product is sparkling-wine, but the winemakers also produce Bacchus, Ortega, and Pinot Gris.

Wine has a long history in the UK, having been brought there by the Romans – as they were wont to do in every new land they conquered. After the fall of the Roman empire,



Christian monks maintained vineyards for sacramental wines, visiting pilgrims, and their own use. In the 16th Century, King Henry VIII disbanded the Catholic monasteries and England's winemaking stalled even as consumption of wine continued to grow.

England's interest in viticulture resumed after the end of WWII, but it was considered an eccentric hobby until the 1990s. The total amount of land in England and Wales given over to vineyards has quadrupled since 2000 and now amounts to 3,800 hectares. (A hectare is about 2.4 acres.)

Kent and Surrey have the same chalky soil as the champagne region of France, and the English winemakers use the "champagne method" to produce their sparkling wines. Well-known champagne makers, Tattinger and Pommery, have invested in this region.

Sussex, which has less rain than other wine growing areas of England, has more wineries than any other county in the country.

"British wine" and "English wine" are not the same thing. "British wine" is typically sweet Port-style or Sherry-style wine made from imported grape concentrate.

Join Mary Valentine Tours in September when we visit a top winery in Surrey for a wine tasting experience and see for yourself why England's reputation for making fine wine has grown.

Further reading: [English Wine: From still to sparkling: The](#)

Tour Stop: Birmingham's Back-to-Back Housing

The Birmingham Back -to- Backs is the last surviving court of houses that once dominated cities in England's Midlands. Back-to-Back houses were literally built back to back, quickly and cheaply, with outer houses facing onto the street and inner houses facing into a shared courtyard.

People who came from around the world came here to be near Birmingham's factories lived side-by-side in these houses.

The Back-to-Backs give us a realistic picture of the lives of the working classes of the 18th and 19th centuries. We'll experience life here and meet characters from the 1840s to the 1960s who crammed into these small houses, including Mr. Levi's bedroom/workshop as well as a kitchen, a tailor shop, and the brewhouse where people did their washing.



Overcrowding and poor sanitation were common; this court of 11 houses was once home to as many as 60 people, with only four privies to service everyone.

It was common for families to take in lodgers to help pay the rent, and these lodgers would often share a bedroom with the family's children, separated from each other by a makeshift curtain.

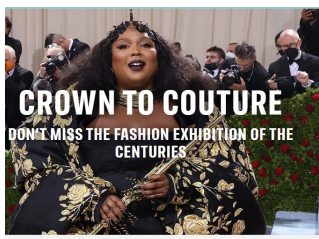
***'Bath time meant putting a tin bath in front of the fire and attempting to bathe without getting one's knee too close to the side of the bath nearest the fire, which would become very hot very quickly, and could give you an unpleasant burn.'* – A former resident.**

Washing was done on one day of the week and bathing wasn't much more frequent. The houses were condemned as unsanitary places to live in the 1930s, but people still lived here up until the 1960s. By this time, the houses were structurally unsafe as well as unsanitary.

Source: National Trust



Tour Stop: Crown to Couture at Kensington Palace



While we're at Kensington Palace, we'll have access to the Crown to Couture Exhibition.

Four years in the making and including more than 200 items (gowns, handbags, jewelry), the exhibit focuses on the similarities between fashion and celebrity in the 18th century court and the red carpet today.

Get ready to gaze at Beyoncé's gold "pregnancy gown", Lady Gaga's 2020 VMA gown and mask, and Lizzo's black and gold ensemble from the 2022 Met Gala. Compare these and hundreds of additional items, including Lady Helen Robertson's gown from 1760 which features a nine-foot-wide skirt.

Carol Swords, Creative Programming and Interpretation Manager at Kensington Palace, has indicated that the goal of the exhibit is to "examine the 18th century court through the lens of contemporary fashion — because there are so many similarities across the centuries." For example, she cites the 18th century practice where upper-class women would invite others to watch them get ready (often taking 5-6 hours) "similar to the way 'get ready with me' videos have grown in popularity on social media."



Beyoncé's gown 2017



A Georgian lady's gown from the 1700s



Kensington Palace

Next month in Tour Times . . .

- ◆ What Liverpool has to offer
- ◆ High tea vs. Afternoon tea: what's the difference?
- ◆ How to take great photos while travelling

