

Tour Times

FEBRUARY 2025



Tour Times is a publication of Mary Valentine Tours.

Dear Reader,

What a month it has been since our last newsletter. We've faced all the traditional recovery from the holidays, not to mention massive and ongoing changes in Washington, or fires and floods in Los Angeles. Regardless of our personal experiences and perspectives on these events, these are stressful times for all of us.

You deserve a break. Sit back with a cup of tea (or coffee if you must) and read up on what Mary Valentine Tours plans for the rest of 2025.

If you've seen any of our prior announcements, you'll know we're heading off to Northern England and Scotland this year. Two identical tours, one May 13-22 and the other September 2-11, will take us to both urban areas and small villages, to a Michelin starred restaurant, to a castle and a cathedral, to gorgeous countryside, to a loch or two, and to some of the best afternoon teas in the world.

For a detailed itinerary and instructions on how to reserve a spot, see page 3.

Mary

Travel News Reminders and Updates

- Travel.com reminds us of the importance of travel insurance. They recommend buying your insurance as soon as you confirm your booking. Let the insurer know of any medical conditions to ensure you have the cover you need. Shop around for the best policy for your needs, for example, do you want the policy to cover being evacuated home? Buy enough coverage to ensure you can cover the cost of your trip.
- **England has instituted a new requirement.** As of this month, you must have an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) to enter the country. You can apply now online. There will be a charge of \$13.00. Check GOV.UK for details and instructions. You can also download the application at the App Store or Google Play.



A morning walk in the North Yorkshire Dales, England

Travel News Reminders and Updates (cont.)

- Before packing your bags, double-check your airline’s carry-on standards. Allowable dimensions may now differ from in the past. American Airlines, for example, has announced that in 2025 they’re tightening their requirements to bring them into line with stricter international standards. Tighter restrictions could steer more passengers toward checking bags, creating significant revenue for airlines and longer lines for checking bags. Bottom line: Check with your airline ahead of time and measure your carry-on.



Spaces Are Available on Our May and September Tours

The cost of the 10-day tour is \$6650 per person.

To reserve a space on our May tour (May 13-22), send a payment of \$2500.00, which includes a non-refundable deposit of \$500.00, to Mary Valentine at the address below. The balance (\$4150.00) is due no later than March 1, 2025. We can arrange an alternative installment plan if that's easier for you.

To reserve a space on our September tour (Sept. 2-11), send a payment of \$2500.00, which includes a \$500 non-refundable deposit, to Mary Valentine at the address below. The balance (\$4150) is due no later than July 1, 2025. We can arrange an alternative installment plan if that's easier for you.

Make your check payable to Mary Valentine
15030 Ventura Blvd. #456
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

You can also send payments via Zelle at 323.868.6394.

What's Included:

Hotels for ten nights, ten breakfasts, nine dinners; an afternoon tea, a luxury coach; and tickets and entry fees to all venues.

Not included: airfare, airport transfers, lunches, incidentals, and tips for our driver.



Daily Schedule

We specialize in taking you to locations you won't find on most itineraries.

Our visits will include a castle visit; a Victorian courtroom and trial re-enactment; an Abbey ruins; the prettiest Cotswold villages; a veterinary surgery from All Creatures Great and Small; the world's largest animal sculptures; a most unusual canal experience; a whisky tasting; a bit of Beatles nostalgia; an afternoon tea; and more. And don't forget: 4 and 5-star hotels; a Michelin Star restaurant; and an air-conditioned coach.

Day 1 Tour begins. Heathrow London Sofitel (May13 or September 2)

Day 2 Nottingham - Fountains Abbey – the Cotswolds - Harome

Day 3 Thirsk - Newcastle on Tyne - Edinburgh

Day 4 Edinburgh

Day 5 Falkirk – Stirling - Oban

Day 6 Oban - Glasgow

Day 7 Glasgow

Day 8 The Lake District

Day 9 Liverpool

Day 10: Birmingham - London Heathrow

Note: There may be minor schedule modifications before the tours begin.

For more detailed itinerary, send a request to maryvalentinetours@gmail.com. Or see our December newsletter.



St. Giles in Edinburgh



Fountains Abbey

Be on the Lookout for Greyfriars Bobby in Edinburgh

An older Edinburgh man named John Gray became a police nightwatchman in the mid-1850s and chose a watchdog to accompany him on his long, duty-filled nights at work. This watchdog was a pint-size Skye Terrier Gray named Bobby.

Gray and Bobby established a pattern as they patrolled the streets of Edinburgh, stopping at the same place for coffee every shift.

When Gray died, the town buried him in Greyfriars Kirkyard (churchyard). Bobby became despondent and refused to leave the graveside other than once a day to eat.

Bobby reportedly stood guard by Gray's grave for fourteen years until he died. The town gave Bobby a burial plot near his master's. A plaque erected at the site reads "Greyfriars Bobby – died 14 January 1872 – aged 16 years. Let his loyalty and devotion be a lesson to us all."

To this day a statue stands in Greyfriars Bobby's honor. We'll undoubtedly see it as we walk around Edinburgh.

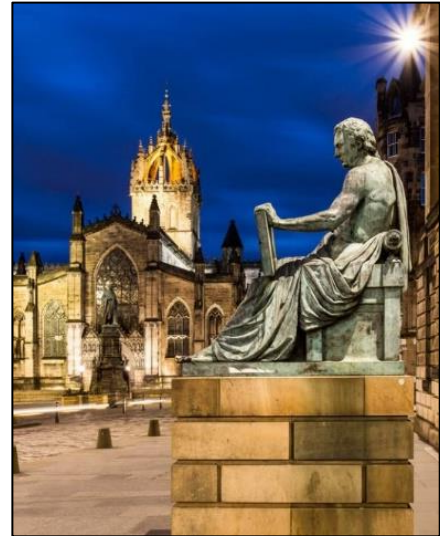


Source: Erin Kelly, allthatinteresting.com

Weather Report – Northern England and Scotland in May

Rain is common in both areas we'll be visiting, so come prepared. On average, it rains approximately two inches per month in May.

Temperature predictions: Average high 57 degrees Fahrenheit; average lows 43 degrees.



On the Run to Gretna Green, Scotland

What is Gretna Green and why have couples headed there since the 1700s?

Scotland's Gretna Green, a haven for eloping couples since the 1700s, has featured in books and film, including *Pride and Prejudice*, when Jane Austen's characters Lydia Bennett and George Wickham elope with plans to be married in Gretna Green. Much later, in *Downton Abbey*, Lady Sybil Crawley and Tom Brannon, the chauffeur, plan a similar escape. In the first season of *Poldark*, Geoffrey and Cecily also *try* to flee to Gretna Green, not to mention *Bridgerton*, where Colin and Marina try but fail to arrive before parents who stop the marriage.

Why were so many desperate *in real life* to "arrive in time" at this small Scottish town? These escapes to Gretna Green, in fiction and in real life, were a response to England's restrictive marriage law of 1784 that raised the marriage age without parental consent to 21. In Scotland, the ages were 14 for boys and 12 for girls. (Today it's 16.) Couples who couldn't wait until they turned 21 took off for to Gretna Green, the first town over the border from England. On arrival, they rushed to the Blacksmith Shop to be married "over the anvil" before their parents arrived.

Weddings in Gretna Green still take place. These days, an average of 1500 couples each year hold their weddings here. It's still big business. For example, one venue charges 4,000 pounds (that's \$5,200.00) for the wedding package for bride, groom and 18 guests. And a visible anvil.



Travel Quiz: Scotland

1. Scotland's official animal is the
 - a. Lion
 - b. Tiger
 - c. Unicorn
 - d. Shetland pony
2. Scots invented all but which of these?
 - a. The umbrella
 - b. The telephone
 - c. The world's first color television picture
 - d. The raincoat
 - e. The *Encyclopedia Britannica*
3. How many islands does Scotland have?
 - a. 50
 - b. 100
 - c. 250
 - d. 800
4. Edinburgh was the first city in the world to:
 - a. Set up an immigration control center
 - b. Open the world's first library
 - c. Establish a professional fire brigade
 - d. Open a public golf course
5. The largest city in Scotland is:
 - a. Glasgow
 - b. Edinburgh
 - c. Aberdeen

Answers below.

NEW! Introducing my new blog: Confessions of Anglophile.

I've launched a new blog, Confessions of an Anglophile. I'll discuss whatever strikes my fancy.

Check it out at confessionsofananglophile.com or on our website: Maryvalentinetours.com.

The first entry: "How I Became an Anglophile."

Featured in Our Next Issue:

- What's Happening in Glasgow?
- Why Travelers Love the Lake District
- The Appeal of the Cotswolds
- The Whiskey Industry in Scotland

Tour Times is a publication of Mary Valentine Tours. We specialize in small group tours throughout the United Kingdom. For more information, contact us at:

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Quiz answers: 1C;2A;3D;4C;5A