# Tour Times

A publication from Mary Valentine Tours

October 2026

Dear Reader,

2027 marks our 20th anniversary! Since 2007, we've toured extensively throughout regions of England, Scotland, and Wales. Many of you have joined us more than once. Some of you have joined us as many as five times.

That's 20 years of adventures, many of them off the beaten path. We've had our portraits taken by a world-famous photographer, learned to make Cornish pasties, watched a demonstration on the art of carving love spoons, had a private tour of Parliament, looked at clothing designs with Dame Zandra Rhodes in her London workshop, made a quick visit to ancient jail cells, scarfed down endless cups of tea, survived vehicle breakdowns, and laughed frequently, all the while making friends as we traveled.

These are difficult times for many of us. Our tours aim to ease some of the stress of modern day living while educating and entertaining us.

Keep reading. There's news about our 2027 tours. Cheers.

*Mary*





*WHAT'S INSIDE*

We're excited to celebrate our 20th anniversary with new tours!

Mary's take on the alternative Bayeux Tapestry.

Photos from our most recent excursion.

MVT Book Club's December selection.

How to join our tours.



# 2027 Travel Dates Announced
# May 14-21 and September 15-22

### British Villages and Small Towns

Our 2027 tours will emphasize life in British villages and small towns. Not just sites for gorgeous photos, UK villages and towns are wonderful examples of how rural areas in the UK maintain their identity and way of life as the world around them modernizes. Here are some of our current picks, subject to updating as we get closer to tour dates.

Bibury, said by some to be the most beautiful village in the UK Castle Combe, also a contender for most beautiful
Upper and Lower Slaughter, village with a working mill Clovelly, a village where cars are outlawed
Robin Hoods Bay, an old smuggling village
Lacock, used in many films and tv shows portraying “how it used to be” And many more

We’ll concentrate on daily life – what people do, what craft skills they still maintain, what events are still celebrated. We also aim to attend village fetes, open garden days, and learn about the role of village institutions such as the Women’s Institute. We may witness village controversies, for example, as locals oppose wealthy London weekenders who buy village homes, sending housing prices soaring.



And good news! We’ve taken more than $800.00 off our previous tour prices. This year's 8-day tours are priced at $5995. This fee covers: 8 nights in hotels, 7 dinners, an afternoon tea, transportation in air-conditioned coaches during the tour, tickets and entry fees. Not included: airfare, airport transfers, meals other than dinners and afternoon tea, and tips for our driver.

**How to Join Us**

To reserve a spot, send a non-refundable deposit of $500* to
Mary Valentine Tours
15030 Ventura Blvd. #456
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403.

Indicate which tour you prefer (May or September).
*Balance is due 45 prior to departure date.

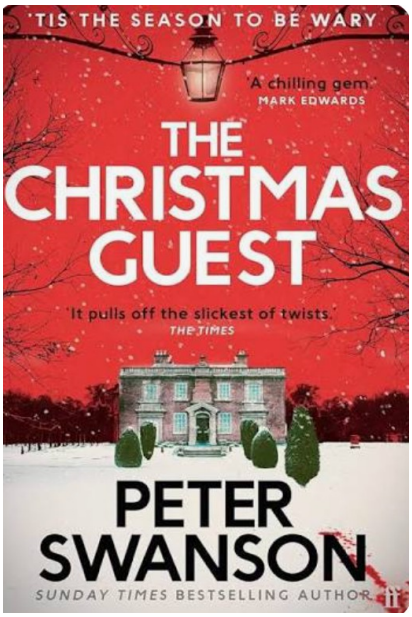
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## BOOK CLUB NEWS




Our book for December

Welcome newcomers! Send us your email address so we can send you the Zoom link.

Our book club continues to analyze works set in the areas we visit on our tours. Our most recent meeting found us discussing *Maisie Dobbs by* Jacqueline Winspear.
The first in a long series, Winspear's book introduced readers to a feisty woman in her 30s whose career was unusual for her time. She had been a nurse at the front lines in World War I and later became a detective who, like a grownup Nancy Drew, drove a sports car. While on the surface a detective story, *Maisie Dobbs* spent considerable time describing the horrors of the frontline in WWI and provided an in-depth description of the changing social class hierarchy in the UK of the early 1900s.
Our discussion focused on plot and characters as we analyzed why many readers like this book while others don't.

Our next book club meeting is scheduled for Saturday, December 12 at 2:00 PST. We will be reading *The Christmas Guest* by Peter Swanson.

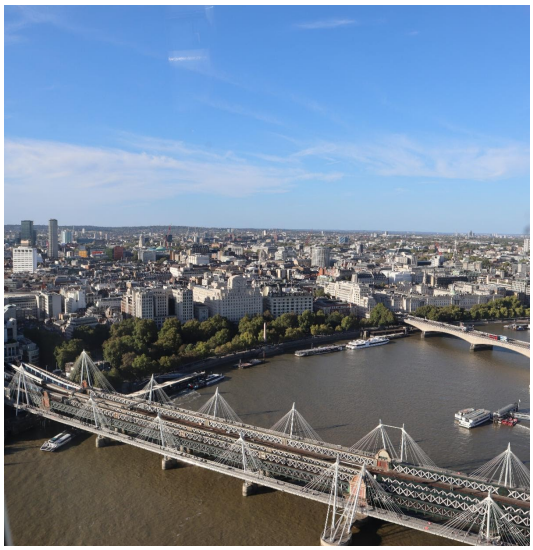
Our story is set in England's Cotswold's region. An American art student is invited to spend Christmas at Starvewood Hall, a grand Cotswold manor house filled with fireside gatherings, beautiful decorations, and secrets. But the idyllic English Christmas begins to feel darker when a local murder, a mysterious stranger, and the house's unsettling history start to emerge.

# Photos from our September tour - London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and more!

London as seen from the London Eye, Tour of Emma Bridgewater,

Laundry day at Jane Austen's home, Frame knitting,

Persephone Books in Bath, Our private tour of the Bayeux Tapestry (copy) in Reading.














# The Bayeux Tapestry and Me

For more than a year I, like countless others, followed the story of the promised arrival in England of the Bayeux Tapestry from France. The Tapestry, 120 meters long and more than 1000 years old, tells the story of the events leading up to the Norman Conquest and the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

I listened to people pontificate that France's President Macron had lied, and that France had no intention of letting it leave the country after 1000 years in France. Others in the know told me it would not happen because England could not guarantee the safety of the tapestry. Another faction of doubters argued that the tapestry was too frail to travel to England and back.

In the face of it all, and without evidence, I held out in the belief that the Tapestry would arrive. When it appeared that indeed plans were underway to create a suitable space at the British Museum, I began to plan my campaign to get tickets so I could take a tour group to see it.

Be assured that I was on alert to order tickets online the very second the sales windows opened. So, at 4:00 a.m. Los Angele time I sat in front of my computer with my credit card at hand. My sister Joanna who lives in San Antonio was standing by in case my efforts failed.

When I finally got through the clogged system, I was informed there were 18,000 people in the queue ahead of me. Joanna had a similar experience. We were very disappointed.

Meanwhile, my daughter had discovered that in a museum in Reading, England there was a facsimile of the tapestry, completed in the 1880s, and on display in the museum for decades, that matched the original in size and design, the only difference being the omission of the genitalia of some of the male figures.

The Reading tapestry story begins in the 1800s in Paris. Inspired by having seen the Tapestry on display in France, Elizabeth Wardell, a talented British seamstress, decided to replicate the Tapestry with the help of 37 of "best embroiderers in England" who took more than a year to complete the project.

I decided that viewing a faux tapestry was better than seeing no tapestry, so we set off for the Reading Museum on the tube.

The Reading Museum awaited us. Only an hour from London by the tube, there were no crowds, no lengthy lines waiting to get in as was the case in London. Our little group was met by a guide for a private tour as he spent nearly two hours discussing the tapestry. We were free to ask questions and/or explore on our own – all for a 15-pound admission fee. The British Museum is charging 25-33 pounds to view the original.

No long lines for us; no being shuffled along to "keep it moving." No being sent away even though we had tickets and had come a great distance, as was happening in London.

My advice: Skip the British Museum and take the tube to Reading.

By the way, the Reading tapestry will be there long after the original has returned to France.

# TRAVEL SAFETY TIPS

Tianjin Tour




source: theukpost.com

# About Mary Valentine

Tour leader Mary Valentine has been a Sociology professor and a life-long Anglophile. For more than 35 years, she has traveled extensively throughout the UK and led tours there since 2007.




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