



Dear Reader,

*This month, **Tour Times** is packed with recommendations.*

Get ready for my advice on why you will enjoy joining our May tour of England and Wales. You'll also learn of my favorite British seasonal book, films, and tv shows, all promising to ease you into the holiday mood.

You can even discover my new passion for Welsh cakes, a craving I acquired during a scouting trip to Wales.

Cheers.

Mary

Join us for our May 21-28 2024 tour of England and Wales

Experience our all-new tour starting in London, spreading out through Wales, and returning via Bath, one of England's most beautiful cities.

Visit "Chelsea in Bloom," a celebration of flowers in the streets of London, a Welsh coal mine, and a reconstructed rural community from the 1800s. Watch carvers creating Welsh love spoons. Drive through stunning landscapes and views. Visit poet Dylan Thomas' home. Explore Wales' largest and smallest cities. Watch a Welsh choir performance . . . all while staying in 4 and 5-star hotels and dining at some of England's and Wales' best restaurants, including a visit to the UK's "best fish and chips." See page 2 for more information on joining us.



HOW TO RESERVE A SPACE



Cost per person: \$6450. 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 \$3000.00 is due no later than February 1, 2024. The balance (\$2950) is due no later than April 1, 2024.

Send payments to:
Mary Valentine Tours
15030 Ventura Blvd. #456
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
323.868.6394 or 747.998.5630

We also accept payment via Zelle at
maryvalentinetours@gmail.com.



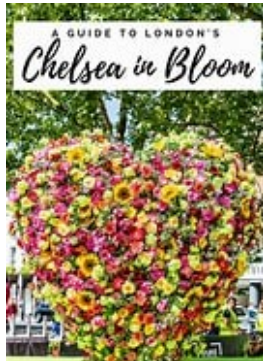
Cardiff Bay, Wales

DAILY SCHEDULE (Subject to updates)

May 21: In the morning, we sail from London's Westminster Bridge to Greenwich where we tour the Old Naval College and view its spectacular Painted Ceiling. Then we stop at the Prime Meridian. In the afternoon, we visit the Garden Museum and take a walking tour of Chelsea in Bloom where shops compete for the most beautiful floral decorations.



Garden Museum, London

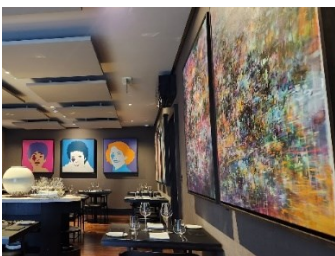


Chelsea in Bloom, London

May 22: Our schedule includes a visit to the Staterooms at Kensington Palace, as well as the special exhibit at the recently reopened National Portrait Gallery. An early dinner at the Portrait Restaurant will be followed by a candlelight concert at St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

May 23: Our coach picks us up and soon we're in Wales. Stops include St. Fagans National History Museum and the Big Pit Coal Mine.

May 24 finds us in Cardiff, the capital of Wales, where we'll view the docks, the Welsh Assembly headquarters, and the performing Arts Concert Hall. Then we're on to St. Davids, the smallest city in Wales, where we'll spend two nights at a 5-star hotel, which is noted for its fabulous modern art collection.



May 25: Stops include the Chapel of St. Non, poet Dylan Thomas' home, the Baked Bean Museum (!), and a scenic coastal drive.

May 26: We spend the morning exploring St. Davids, including stops for a tour at the Cathedral and St. Davids Castle. St. Davids is filled with opportunities for walks as well as shopping. An evening of music brought by the men's chorus of St Davids will close out the day.

May 27: We leave St. Davids and stop at the Royal Mint which is producing the UK's new money featuring King Charles. We'll then check into the five-star Pig Near Bath for one night.

May 28: Following a Bridgerton/Queen Charlotte walking tour of Bath, we'll stop at Persephone for tea, scones and lively conversation before heading for our last hotel and final meal together. We spend the night at a hotel near Heathrow for easy access to our flights home.

Mary's Holiday Viewing and Reading Recommendations



England and Wales are popular settings for holiday stories.. Here are some productions that will support your holiday mood. All of them feature the UK, specifically England and Wales. Most are free if you've subscribed to the service screening them. Happy holiday viewing.

Amazon Prime currently offers the following to viewers in search of holiday films set in the UK :



- *Christmas Survival*
- *Last Christmas*, written and starring Emma Thompson
- *Your Christmas or Mine*
- *This is Christmas*
- *Home for Christmas* (\$1.99 rental)



If you're a **Netflix** subscriber you have access to

Father Christmas Is Back with Kelsey Grammer and John Cleese.



britbox subscribers may enjoy the comedy, *A Child's Christmases in Wales*.



HULU is screening *The Holiday*, featuring Jude Law, Cameron Diaz, Jack Black, and Kate Winslet.

If you'd rather be **reading** than viewing, try Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. This is the original, different from the britbox spoof. At Amazon, you can also order the audio version with Dylan Thomas .



If you're not in a holiday mood but would like to view programs set in Wales, try the following series:

On **Acorn**, you can watch *Hinterland*, *Keeping Faith*, *Hidden*, and *Pitching In*.

On **britbox**, you can still catch multiple seasons of *Gavin and Stacy*.as well as the series *Crime*. Seasons 1 and 2.

HULU is screening *The Accident*.

Amazon Prime offers *The Indian Doctor*.

Mary's Notes from the Road: *Meet The Welsh Baker*



Welsh Baker

On a recent scouting trip in Wales I sampled Welsh Cakes for the first time and immediately became a fan. Think of them as a cross between a scone and a shortbread cookie.

When I got home I tried to find them in local bakeries — to no avail — And then tried making them myself — not a great plan. But help was on the way:



A search of the Internet introduced me to the Welsh Baker, a Southern California bakery only a half-hour away, selling Welsh cakes online only. Run by Joe and Denise (she's from Wales) Carbone, the business is rarely open to walk-in customers, so I ordered a supply, which arrived within two or three days and proved to be every bit as delicious as those I'd enjoyed in Wales.

As luck would have it, within a couple weeks, The Welsh Baker held an open house where I was able to meet the owners and watch the cakes (griddled, not baked) being made.



In addition to witnessing production, I learned about the history of the cakes. As our guide Joe told us, Wales has a long history as a mining country and was for many years the largest coal producing nation on earth. Wales Cakes were a favorite treat for miners. They were easily transportable in coat pockets and provided a sweet break for the men working long hours underground. Above ground, Wales Cakes served regularly with afternoon tea and became standard fare in children's lunches.

But, as The Welsh Baker's website tells us, "Welsh hats and coal shovels were traded in long ago for business suits and computer keyboards. Such traditions as Welsh Cakes have almost all but faded away these days, but thanks to the Welsh Baker, hand-made Welsh Cakes are still available in a variety of flavors."

While our May tour is in Wales we'll be served Welsh cakes in our hotels. In the meanwhile, if you want to try some, you can order a supply from The Welsh Baker at www.welshbaker.com. You'll have a wide choice of flavors. (My favorite is cinnamon. with lemon poppyseed a close second.) Your order will arrive within a few days.



BRITISH HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

How many of them have you experienced closer to home?

- ♦ Carols sung in the nearest cathedral or church or by neighbors at your front door



- ♦ Mince pies (available in the US at World Market and online and well worth the investment)

- ♦ Mulled wine (warmed wine with added spices) Recipes available online



- ♦ Christmas crackers, a tradition dating back to Victorian times, filled with funny paper hats and silly jokes, as well as other small treats (available at World Market and some high-end department stores locally)

- ♦ Advent calendars (available for as little as \$1.29 at Trader Joe's and lots more in high end department stores.) All Advent Calendars have treats or messages hidden behind doors daily from December 1—24. Open a door each day as you experience the countdown to Christmas.



- ♦ Viewing *The Snowman* and not being embarrassed to seen shedding a tear or two by the end (Available on You Tube)



If any or all of this sounds appealing, plan to join us in early December 2024 for our Holidays in the UK tour.

Details will be available soon.