

Tour Times

A publication from Mary Valentine Tours April 2026



Dear Reader,

Spaces are still available for our May (5/15-24) and September (9/22-10/1) tours *experiencing England through its museums and libraries*.

Museums and libraries are more than just places featuring items or books. Over time, they've become cultural centers that teach us about the world.

Deciding which places to include has been challenging. The United Kingdom is home to more than 1,800 museums and twice as many libraries, so we've had a myriad of choices. Our selections are varied. In May and September, we'll find ourselves encountering traditional and modern places, the well-known and the relatively obscure -- all of them fascinating.

Read on to find out what's in store, the cost and how you can join our next tours.

Cheers.

Mary



WHAT'S INSIDE

We're excited to announce that we just added two additional spots to our May and September tours!

Coventry Cathedral/Museum of the Blitz and London's newest museum, V&A East.

Read more about both of these locations on pages two, three, & four.

On our wish list: the Bayeux Tapestry. (It's going to be popular, so tickets will be hard to come by).

Museum Spotlight of the Month: V&A East Storehouse.

Book and movie recommendations and the **MVT Book Club's** May selection.

How to join our tours – see page eleven.

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF SAINT MICHAEL IN COVENTRY



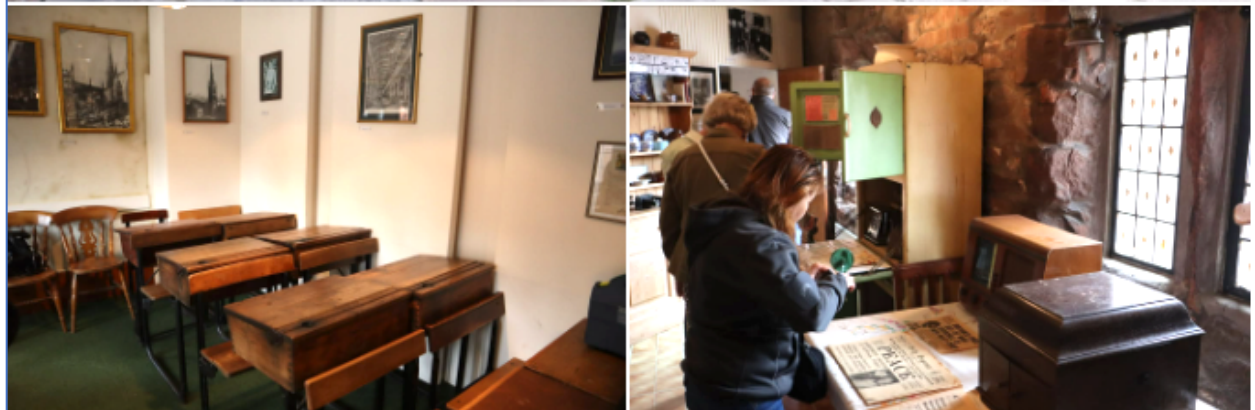
We continue to update our itinerary as we get closer to starting dates. For example, we've just added a stop at the Cathedral Church of Saint Michael in Coventry (more commonly known as Coventry Cathedral), a scene of ruin and reconciliation.

On November 14, 1940, Coventry Cathedral was heavily bombed, leaving it and much of the center of the city in ruins. The confirmed number of deaths was over 500, but the total was presumed to be much higher. Reconciliation began the day after the bombing when the cathedral's provost made a commitment not to seek revenge, but to strive for forgiveness and, ultimately, reconciliation with those responsible, which at the time was seen to be radical thinking because England was still at war with Germany.

Photo at right shows interior of the Cathedral before the bombing. (Coventry Cathedral Facebook page.)



We've planned to visit the remains of the bombed cathedral, as well as the new cathedral which has replaced it. Located in a corner of the Cathedral Ruins, the Blitz Museum is "a treasure trove of 1940s memorabilia and artifacts" where visitors will learn about the Coventry Blitz. The museum has a period school room and typical house of the time.



Blitz Museum (Coventry Cathedral Facebook page)

More tour news...

We've just added another additional stop on our May and September tours: London's newest museum, the Victoria and Albert East. Opening this month, the V&A East's exhibits will be designed to appeal to 18-35-year-olds.

Our next challenge: Will we be able to see the Bayeux Tapestry at the British Museum? The embroidered tapestry, which is more than 1000 years-old, and more than 200 feet long, tells the story of the Norman Conquest in 1066. Believed to have been made in Britain, the tapestry has had its home in France for more than 1000 years. It's long been a bone of contention whether England or France owns it, so its return to England in September, even if only on loan, will be a huge event.

Described by the director of the British Museum as "one of the most important and unique cultural artefacts in the world," the tapestry will be in the UK while France completes renovation of its Bayeux Tapestry Museum. Hundreds of thousands are expected to view the tapestry over the next two years, so tickets are going to be hard to get. Keep your fingers crossed that we succeed in purchasing tickets the moment they are on sale. Trust us, our team will be on England time to try to obtain these tickets for our group!



Bayeux Tapestry

Why have we made these changes to our tours? We are always on the lookout for interesting or new venues that traditional tours often miss. When a new, exciting, or unusual opportunity arises, we adjust our schedule to accommodate. Because we are a small group tour group, we have the ability to adapt -- one more reason to travel with Mary Valentine Tours.

Check out our website (maryvalentinetours.com) for more updates as we get closer to departure dates.

***WHAT MAKES MARY VALENTINE
TOURS SPECIAL?***

- Small groups (6-10 people)
- Luxury Coach
- 4- and 5-star hotels
- Fabulous meals
- No single supplement
- Off-the-beaten path stops
- Tour photo album



At the Foundling Museum



Treasures at the British Library

Book & Movie Corner



Join the MVT Book Club!

Join us as we read and discuss books related to places we will visit on our tours. Our April book was *The Coronation Year* by Jennifer Robson.

The May 2026 book selection is *The Last Garden in England* by Julie Kelly.

Taking place during three time periods, 1907, 1944, and current day, this novel tells the story of five women whose lives are connected by an English estate garden in Warwickshire. We will be traveling through this part of the country on our 2026 tours, and we will be visiting the Garden Museum in London. This book is the perfect complement to our adventures.

Our next meeting will be on **Saturday, May 30 via Zoom at 2PM PST**. If you or anyone you know is interested in joining this book club, sign up on the book club page of Maryvalentinetours.com or email us at MaryValentineTours@gmail.com. The Zoom link will be sent out one day prior to the meeting.

Our friends at Anglotopia have made a few movie recommendations for films set in Britain:

Pride and Prejudice

Billy Elliott

Howard's End

Sense and Sensibility

Love Actually

Young Victoria

Notting Hill

Remains of the Day

Hope and Glory

A Christmas Carol

We would add: *Our Finest*, *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, *Calendar Girls*, and *The Holiday*.

How many have you seen, and what would you add to the list?

GREAT BRITAIN MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

As part of our continuing series showcasing museums or libraries that we will be visiting in 2026, this month's museum spotlight is about Mary's adventures at the V&A East Storehouse.



V&A East Storehouse



Earthenware decorated tiles, designed by Godfrey Sykes. English, 19th century, move to V&A East Storehouse. Image by Niall Hodson. From <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/about-va-east-storehouse>

I've long been a fan of the original Victoria and Albert, located in London's "Museum Row." It has never failed to deliver impressive collections, beautifully curated special exhibits, and, of course, a tempting gift shop,

At opposite ends of London from the original Victoria and Albert Museum, both the location and the concept of the Storehouse are new. I walked in knowing only a bit about the Storehouse: It's home to more than 250,000 objects and 350,000 books from the V&A's archives.

What I didn't know about the Storehouse when I arrived:

- It offers a peek behind the scenes to show how a working museum goes about cataloguing and caring for artefacts. It's the first public venue of its kind.
- Unlike a regular museum, there are no permanent displays. Archivists can move the objects around at any time. There are no lengthy gallery texts, instead just library-like barcodes and the odd QR code. Essentially, it's a working museum storage facility that invites the public in.
- One of the venue's standout features is its David Bowie Centre. In 2023, more than 90,000 items from the star's personal archive were donated to the V&A, from iconic costumes to "post-it notes" scribbled with his thoughts.
- Had there been any specific items I wanted to see in front of me, I could have put in a request in advance.

Above all, I was impressed with the openness of the Storehouse. Visual access to the holdings is astounding. Without taking more than a few steps, I could see a child's fire engine from the 1950s, an entire kitchen from past decades, a set of mannequins, and an entire ceiling from an ancient temple.

The café surpasses most museum cafés, and the gift shop has plenty to tempt you. I wasn't in Kansas anymore. The V&A East Storehouse is unlike any other museum I've ever visited. Before I left, I was already plotting when I might return.

Guess what! We'll be going there on our tours this year.

P.S. The Storehouse is also getting an exciting new neighbor this year. The new V&A East Museum will have two permanent "Why We Make" galleries featuring 500 objects from the V&A's collection, arranged into ten key themes addressing the most pressing issues in contemporary society, from representation, identity and wellbeing to social justice and environmental action.

Guess what! We're going here on our tour too.

Here's an overview of our 10-day 2026 tours (subject to minor adjustments)

Day 1 London

- The 1000-year-old Bayeux Tapestry at the British Museum (tentative; September tour only)
- Opening night group dinner
- Tour orientation

Day 2 London

- Churchill's War Rooms
- MOCO Interactive art museum and gallery
- British Library
- The Postal Museum
- Group dinner

Day 3 London

- Foundling Museum
- Young Victoria and Albert Museum (awarded "Europe's Best Museum, 2026")
- V&A East and V&A East Storehouse
- Group dinner

Day 4 London and Bath

- Garden Museum (London)
- Revolution 250 (London): Exploring the birth of the USA from a British perspective
- Apartment 1 Royal Crescent (Bath)
- Group dinner

Day 5 Coventry, Cirencester, and Birmingham

- Cerney House Gardens (Cirencester)
- Saint Michael's Cathedral (Coventry)
- Blitz Museum (Coventry)
- Group dinner

Day 6 Birmingham

- Coffin Works
- Black Country Museum
- Group dinner

Day 7 Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent

- Tours of Wedgwood Pottery Factory
- Emma Bridgewater Pottery
- Afternoon Tea
- Sarehole Mill
- Dinner on your own



Coffin Works

Day 8 Liverpool and Manchester

- Museum of Liverpool
- The Beatles Story tour
- Liverpool Central Library
- Group dinner

Day 9 Manchester and Nottingham

- People's Museum/National Museum of Democracy (Manchester)
- John Rylands Library (Manchester)
- National Justice Museum (Nottingham)
- Group dinner

Day 10 Leicester, Oxford, and London Heathrow

- Richard III Center and the Roman civic buildings (Leicester)
- Bodleian Library (Oxford)
- Check in at London Heathrow hotel
- Final group dinner. Tour ends. (Breakfast days 2-10 and day 11, if your flight time permits, are all included.)

We hope you can join us!

HOW TO JOIN US:

Cost: \$6650; deposit: \$500. This covers 4- and 5-star hotels for ten nights, ten breakfasts, nine dinners, an afternoon tea, transportation, tickets and entry fees plus a photo album of our adventures from the tour.

Not included: airfare, airport transport, lunches, incidentals, and tips for the driver.

To reserve a spot, send us a \$500 deposit (non-refundable) now to hold your space. The balance is due no later than 20 days before the tour begins.

Send deposit to:

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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.

