

Tour Times

Tour Times is a publication from Mary Valentine Tours.

March 2025



Dear Reader,

Our first tour of the year, May 13-22, is less than two months away, so I'm taking a little time this month to share previews of some coming attractions

This issue also features a new column: *Pub-crawling*. In each issue I'll provide a review of a neighborhood pub or two in a Southern California location. This month, I review The Fox and Hounds in Studio City. Other topics covered this month:

- Updates on our upcoming tours
- Divided by a common language: terms that mean very different things in the UK vs the US.
- What's so special about England's Lake District?
- What is an Electronic Travel Authorization and why you need one.

We still have space in our May and September tours, so see page 2 for information about how to sign up. Cheers, Mary

DAILY TOUR SCHEDULE

Our visits will include a castle; a Victorian courtroom and trial; Abbey ruins; pretty Cotswold villages; the veterinary practice and home from the *All Creatures Great and Small* series; the world's largest animal sculptures; a most unusual canal ride; a whisky tasting; a bit of Beatles nostalgia; an afternoon tea; and more. And don't forget: 4 and 5-star hotels; Michelin recommended restaurants; and an air-conditioned coach.

Day 1 Tour begins. Heathrow London Sofitel Hotel at Terminal 5

Day 2 Nottingham - Fountains Abbey – the Cotswolds – Harome (N. Yorkshire Dales)

Day 3 Thirsk - Newcastle on Tyne – Edinburgh

Day 4 Edinburgh

Day 5 Falkirk – Stirling

Day 6 Glasgow

Day 7 Glasgow

Day 8 The Lake District

Day 9 Liverpool

Day 10: Birmingham - London Heathrow. Tour ends.

Travelers will receive a more detailed agenda in early May.



Q AND A

Q: How much does the tour cost and how do I sign up?

A: The cost of the 10-day tour is \$6650 per person. To reserve a space on our May 13-22 tour, send a payment **now** of \$2500, which includes a non-refundable deposit of \$500 to Mary Valentine at the address below. The balance, \$4150, is due no later than April 15, 2025.

To reserve a space on our September 2-11 tour, send a payment of \$2500, which includes a \$500 non-refundable deposit, to Mary Valentine at the address below by May 15. The balance, \$4150, is due no later than July 1, 2025.

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

Q: Are there any recent changes in the tour itinerary?

A: My travel philosophy: Sometimes tour glitches turn out to be something to celebrate. Case in point: a scheduling conflict in Oban, Scotland led me to re-route our itinerary when we leave Glasgow. Thankfully, I immediately found an even better whiskey distillery tour than the original. The changed route also meant that I was able to book us into a 5-star country manor house in the Lake District. (Think PBS series!) Did I mention that the hotel's restaurant has a Michelin rating?

Other times, world events make our travel stops more significant than originally thought. For example, our stop at the Scottish Parliament should be particularly enlightening, given the current heated controversies here about structure and power of the federal government. Learning about the ongoing power struggles between England and Scotland should give us alternative perspectives on these complicated issues.

I've added a new item for us to check out. While we're in Edinburgh, the National Museum of Scotland is presenting an exhibition on how the US-USSR Cold War dramatically impacted Scotland. What I've learned about it so far is fascinating.

Meanwhile, I'll keep investigating other leads. No doubt, between now and May there will be more minor changes and adjustments. Stay tuned.

Q: What's an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA), and why do I need one?

A: You must have an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) to enter England. You can apply now online. There will be a charge of \$13. Check GOV.UK for details and instructions. You can also download the application at the App Store or Google Play. Beware of companies charging more than \$100 to apply for you. Use the GOV.UK site instead. **NOTE: You will not be allowed on the plane without your ETA.**

Q: Who or what are the Kelpies, and why are we stopping to look at them?

A: The Kelpies are a pair of monumental steel horseheads 98 feet high. Visitors will be impressed at the size of these creatures, but the Kelpies are historically significant as well. In Scottish lore, Kelpies were supernatural spirits, the size of ten regular horses, that inhabited the lochs (lakes) in Scotland and Yorkshire, England. Most large lochs have their own mythological Kelpie stories. We've all heard of the most famous Kelpie: the Loch Ness monster. The statues are also a tribute to the mammoth work horses that labored on farms, canals, and Scottish industry throughout history.

Q: Why are England's North Yorkshire Dales worth visiting?

A: If you're a fan of the television series "All Creatures Great and Small," then you will be aware of the amazing unspoiled landscape of the Dales, which, for the most part, still looks as it did in a hundred years or more ago.

Q: Why is the Lake District worth seeing?

A: Whether you're a nature lover, or someone who likes to take photos, or someone who appreciates serenity, the Lakes will impress you. The Lake District became a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of its natural beauty, farming and inspiration provided to artists and writers, such as Wordsworth.

Q: What's a coo?

A: While we're in Scotland on our May and September tours, we'll undoubtedly spot some Highland Coos, a breed of cattle native to Scotland. Coos are recognized by their long horns and shaggy coats. The term "coo" probably comes from the Gaelic word "coo," meaning cow. Coos are an important part of Scotland's culture and heritage. Known for their calm temperaments, sweet faces, bangs, and foraging abilities, they do well in the rugged Scottish climate.

While they're far too huge to bring home (average weight 1750 pounds) and treat as pets, you will find coos on calendars, key chains, and stuffed toys, all suitable souvenirs of your time in Scotland.

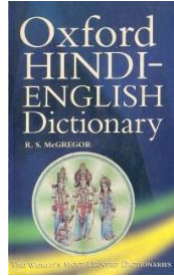
So, be on the lookout for the cutest cows ever.



Q: Should I purchase travel insurance?

A: Yes!!!

LOST IN TRANSLATION: IDENTICAL WORDS WITH DIFFERENT MEANINGS IN THE US AND THE UK



As George Bernard Shaw once noted, the US and the UK appear to be “two countries separated by a common language.” Below you’ll find a few examples of the dramatically different meanings of the same words in the UK and the US.

PANTS: Americans use the term “pants” to describe outerwear, but in Britain, “pants” is used to describe underwear. Pants are called “trousers” in the UK. Be careful complimenting Brits on their pants, but a bit of praise about their trousers shouldn’t be a problem.



Trousers or pants?

CHIPS: American “chips” are British “crisps,” while American “fries” are British “chips.”



Chips, crisps, or fries?

BOG: Americans use the word “bog” to describe a kind of wetland or ditch. In Britain, the word is slang for toilet.



Bog or toilet?

JUMPER: As an American, I'm likely to use "jumper" to describe a sleeveless dress that goes over a shirt or blouse, but in the UK, I'd use the word to describe what Americans call a "sweater." For example, it's safe to say, "I wore this jumper today because it's the same color as my trousers," but avoid saying to a new British acquaintance, "I'm wearing a sweater that's the same color as my pants."



Sweater or jumper?

BISCUITS: To an American, the word "biscuit" describes a soft, spongy bread product covered with gravy or slathered with lots of butter, but to a Brit, the word conjures up images of sweet treats that Americans call cookies.

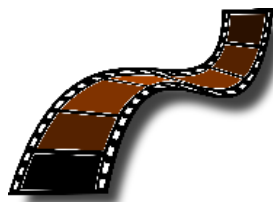


Biscuits or cookies?

QUITE: In the US, the adverb "quite" is usually a complement, for example, "The book I'm reading is quite good." In the UK, "quite" is usually interpreted as meaning fairly or only somewhat good. Hence, if I were a Brit, and I read a review of a book described as "quite good," I might be inclined to find something else to read.

Source: Thanks to Jonathan Thomas from Anglotopia.net for these examples.

MEDIA CORNER



This month recommendations focus on British political and spy dramas you can stream.

- MI 5 stories: *Slow Horses*, *Killing Eve*, *Spooks*
- *The Diplomat*. The American ambassador to Britain becomes entangled in international crises.
- *Alex Rider*: A reluctant teenage spy takes on deadly missions.

New! PUB-CRAWLING: A Monthly review of Local Pubs in Southern California

A Review of The Fox and Hounds in Studio City, California

I think British food often gets an unfair bad rap. It's not uncommon to hear someone say, "You'll find food in England is awful." In my experience, the speaker often turns out to be someone who hasn't had a meal in England since the 1960s.

The days of horrible English food are over. Of course, in London and other cities, you'll find McDonalds, Burger Kings, and the likes, but non-fast-food establishments, including pubs, often serve a variety of choices that look nothing like post-World War II offerings.

My Anglophile antenna was vibrating recently when I had a craving for British pub food and began investigating where I would find some near my home. Nothing fancy, I thought. How about lunch in a nearby pub?

An Internet search revealed an impressive number of British-style pubs in the Los Angeles area, so I picked the one nearest to me and set off for lunch.

Describing itself as "A Proper British Pub," The Fox and Hounds, 11100 Ventura Boulevard, Studio City, proved itself a good choice. With a "neighborhood friendly" vibe, the Fox and Hounds isn't just about food. Depending on the day of the week, and time of day, patrons can choose to watch live Premier League sports on huge screens, join a pub quiz two nights a week, test their vocal cords on Karaoke night, or listen to live music on Saturday nights.

If food is on your mind, the Fox and Hounds menu is extensive: appetizers, starters, gourmet burgers, and British specialties: fish and chips, shepherd's pie, chicken and mushroom pie, bangers and mash, and, my favorite, Cornish pasties. I ordered fish and chips and was pleased to find a generous piece of fish as well as perfectly cooked British-style chips.

The Fox and Hounds offers a fully stocked bar featuring 16 beers on tap as well as another dozen in the bottle. For us non-alcohol drinkers, there were soft drinks. Note that there is a Happy Hour daily from 3pm to 7pm.

So, if you're nearby and in the mood for British food in a lively environment, check out the Fox and Hounds.

Note: I enjoyed my pub lunch so much that I've decided to check out other British pubs in the greater L.A. area, so watch for more Pub-crawling reviews in future issues of *Tour Times*.

Our next newsletter will feature: Packing Tips; How Glasgow Is Changing; New Reading Recommendations; and more!