

# Tour Times

A publication from Mary Valentine Tours November 2025



Dear Reader,

Over the last several months I've been to England, Scotland, and Ireland scouting locations for our tours.

What do I look for?

I look for experiences that illustrate what makes the UK unique, including places, people, and events one won't often or ever see back home, items that surprise and entertain us, while helping us understand other cultures. Over the years, this goal has led me to such varied locations as pencil museums, pasty cooking classes, re-enactments of famous trials, plays put on by local villages, country circuses, war rooms, and actors doubling as waitstaff.

I'm looking for what will give us a glimpse of historical and contemporary British life. Even more, I'm also looking for the "wow" factor, an experience beyond what one would expect.

In June, for example, I was in Ireland, a country known for breathtaking scenery, a complicated and colorful history, fascinating storytellers, and tasty soda bread. I'd read in advance about a place called the Giant's Causeway, made up of columns that resulted from ancient volcanic eruptions.



*Pathway on Giant's Causeway leads to the ocean where the causeway continues underwater.*



*People climbing on causeway illustrates the varying sizes of the pillars.*

I thought I'd find The Causeway interesting, but nothing prepared me for my response when we got there. I couldn't stop saying "wow" as I saw thousands of hexagonal columns that formed steppingstones leading from the cliff foot and disappearing under the sea. As the British would say, I was "gob-smacked."

Five months later, I find myself still thinking about just how amazing the Causeway is.

Currently, I'm in the process of identifying some "wow factor" moments for our 2026 tours, so be prepared to be gob-smacked when you join us. You'll find information about the tours in the next few pages.

Cheers.

*Mary*



*Where the pillars meet the water.*

## This Month's Travel Advice and News

People often ask me for my best advice on travel. Here are what I think are the two most important ways to minimize travel stress.

**Number 1. Start planning early.** You'll find a myriad of options, including where you want to go, how you want to get there; and how you will get around once you're there. Take the time to look at all your options. These days, more than ever, I wouldn't advise you to "just get there and we'll find places to stay once we've arrived." Few things are worse than arriving in a new location tired, hungry, needing a shower, and not knowing where to start or where you'll be sleeping. Sort all that before you leave home.



We can help. Mary Valentine Tours specializes in tours of Great Britain. Get yourself to London, and we'll handle the itinerary, including your hotels, meals, and tickets.

**Number 2. Buy travel insurance.** Currently, several international airlines experience massive flight cancellations multiple times per day. Hotels are consequently impacted and often sold out. Itineraries must respond accordingly. Passengers become ill or are injured. You need to respond to these changes as quickly and as easily as possible. Travel insurance helps you do just that. Be aware, however, that all policies are not alike, so do your homework ahead of time and pick the policy that best fits your needs and budget.

The bottom line: To avoid disappointment or travel disasters, **plan your 2026 travel now and buy travel insurance.** Keep reading to learn about our 2026 tours.

## Changes are Afoot for Travelers

The US Department of Homeland Security has ended its policy of requiring shoe removal at airport security.



As reported in our last issue, rules for carry-ons are changing with some airlines. For example: American and Delta are now limiting the size of carry-on and personal items. You may incur higher fees for oversize luggage, and some airlines are strictly enforcing weight limits. Rules for return trips are equally strict.

The TSA has introduced new rules for liquids on flights allowing certain items to bypass the traditional 3-1-1 restrictions designed to prevent smuggling of liquid explosives on the airplanes.

With the introduction of advanced CT scanners at major US airports, the TSA has exempted a number of specific items from the rule, allowing them to be carried in large quantities without being confined to small containers these items include:

Prescription Medications:

1. Full-sized medications are allowed, provided they are in their original packaging.
2. Ice and gel packs are allowed if needed to keep medications cool.
3. Duty-free liquids, if purchased within 48 hours of flight, can be brought on board if they are in a secure, tamper-evident bag and accompanied by the original receipt.

Liquids over 3.4 ounces that do not fall under the exemptions should be packed in checked baggage.

*Always check the latest TSA guidelines before your flight for any updates or changes.*

## Our 2026 Tours

**NEW!** Our new 10-day, small group *Museums and More* tour will be offered twice in 2026: May 15-24 and September 22–October 1. Both these tours feature many locations we've never visited before.

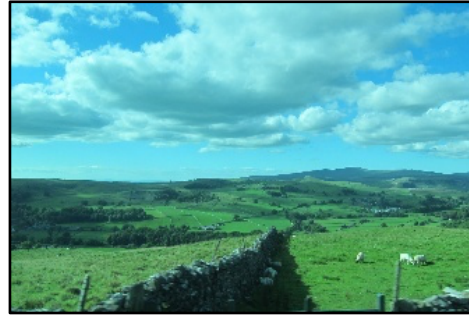
This is a partial itinerary, subject to minor changes closer to travel dates.

- **London's Paradox Museum** features interactive exhibits that will challenge our perceptions.
- The new **Digital Immersive Art Museum** at Marble Arch combines art and technology.
- The just-opened **Shoe Museum** in Somerset emphasizes the role of Clark shoes in abolition and suffrage activism.
- A **coal mining museum** will introduce you to life and work underground.
- London's contemporary **Design Museum** features ever-changing exhibits.
- **The National Justice Museum** in Nottingham includes underground cells, a Victorian courtroom, and the re-enactment of a Victorian trial.
- **Richard III's Visitor's Centre** is in the location where his body was discovered in a car park in Leicester in 2012. The centre offers fascinating information on the archaeological dig and the exhumation of the body. (See article in this month's museum spotlight.) Nearby, we will walk through an actual **Roman Villa** and open-air archaeology museum.
- The **Victoria and Albert East Storehouse** (see photo below) allows access to 250,000 items and more than 150,000 documents, and the just-opened **David Bowie Centre** features an additional 90,000 artifacts from his career.
- We will see hand-written lyrics from the Fab Four at the **Beatles Story** in Liverpool.
- And more!



*Victoria & Albert Storehouse*

In addition to these attractions, we'll still have time to explore London and the British countryside while staying in 4-and 5-star hotels, and dining at some of England's most outstanding restaurants.



### **How to join our *Museums and More* tour:**

Dates: May 15-24, 2026, or September 22-October 1, 2026

Cost: \$6650

Deposit: \$500 (non-refundable). This reserves your spot. The balance will be due later.

Group size: 8-10

### **What's included:**

Four-and five-star accommodation for ten nights

All breakfasts and nine dinners

An afternoon tea

Transportation throughout the countryside in a new air-conditioned coach

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

Send a \$500.00 non-refundable deposit and payments to:

Mary Valentine

15030 Ventura Blvd. Unit 456

Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

323.868.6394 and 747.998.5630

[www.maryvalentinetours.com](http://www.maryvalentinetours.com)

[maryvalentinetours@gmail.com](mailto:maryvalentinetours@gmail.com)



We've also added an optional quick visit to London, May 12-14 and September 19-21. See details below.

**NEW!**

### ***London 101 Mini-tour***



**What:** Designed for those who've never seen London or those who want to spend more time there. This three-day introduction to London will precede the Museums and More tours in May and September. If you bundle *London 101* and *Museums and More* together, we'll take \$150 off your total.

**When:** May 12,13 and 14, 2026 and September 19, 20, 21, 2026

**Itinerary** (Tentative. Minor adjustments may be made closer to the start date.)

Day 1:

- Check into our London hotel after 3:00pm.
- Join the group for dinner and an orientation session.
- Take a “nighttime flight” on the London Eye

Day 2:

- Take hop on/hop off bus tour of the city highlighting more than thirty locations, including Big Ben, Parliament, the Tower of London, and Buckingham Palace.
- See the Elgin Marbles and the Rosetta Stone (and maybe the Bayeux Tapestry) at the British Museum.
- Check out Jane Austen's manuscripts and Paul's handwritten Beatles lyrics on display at the British Library.
- Lunch location TBA
- View some of the most famous paintings in the world at the National Gallery
- See portraits of the rich and famous at the National Portrait Gallery.
- Join the crowds at Trafalgar Square.

- Tour Churchill's War Rooms kept as they were 80 years ago.
- Enjoy a group dinner.
- Spend an evening at the theatre watching *Witness for the Prosecution* performed in a London courtroom.

Day 3:

- Enjoy the street artists at Covent Garden.
- Visit the Transportation Museum.
- Visit the Postal Museum and ride the underground postal train.
- Drop in at Fortnum and Mason for a spot of tea.
- Enjoy some free time to explore the city and go shopping.
- Gather for closing dinner

**Cost:** \$1549.00

What's included:

- Three nights at a 4-star London hotel
- Three breakfasts
- Two dinners at some of London's best restaurants and an afternoon tea
- All entrance fees
- Group taxi rides in London
- Bundle this tour with the *Museums and More* tour for a \$150.00 discount.

What's not included: airfare, airline transfers, lunches, and incidentals.

**How to join our *London 101* tour.**

Send Mary Valentine a non-refundable deposit of \$150.00 to secure your space. The balance will be due later.

Make checks payable to Mary Valentine  
15030 Ventura Blvd. #456  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91430  
747.998.5630 or 323.868.6394  
[www.maryvalentinetours.com](http://www.maryvalentinetours.com)  
[maryvalentinetours@gmail.com](mailto:maryvalentinetours@gmail.com)

## GREAT BRITAIN MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

Mary's notes from the road

This month's spotlight is on the King Richard III Visitor Centre Museum in Leicester, England.

A couple of years ago, I watched *The Lost King*, a film telling the dramatic story of the 2012 discovery of the long-lost remains of King Richard III buried in a local parking lot. Was there more to learn about Richard's story than what I'd picked up during two hours in a movie theater?

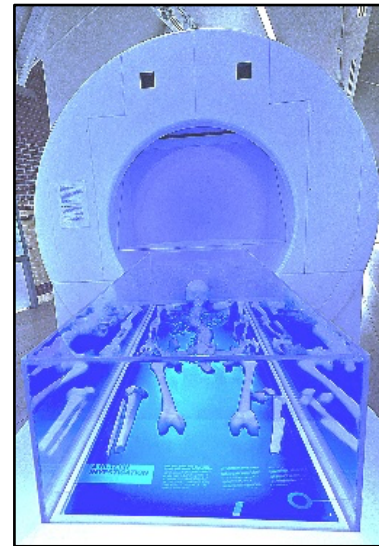
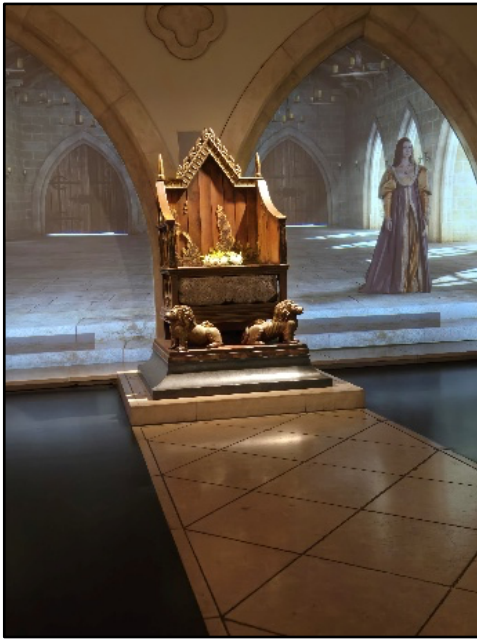
In September, I had the opportunity to go to the actual King Richard III Visitor Centre, located on the grounds where the body was uncovered. I learned far more than I'd anticipated. This isn't just a place where a 500-year-old skeleton was found, although that is a remarkable story.



The Visitors Centre promises a “comprehensive blending historical information with modern technology”. And the museum delivers. Interactive exhibits not only highlight Richard III's significant achievements but also encourage deeper understanding through hands-on engagement.

I found the multimedia presentations well done. Rich with details, they bring to life the dramatic events surrounding King Richard's story, from his controversial monarchy to the discovery of his remains. The content challenges Shakespeare's portrayal of the king and made me rethink Richard and his legacy.





Artifacts provide tangible connections to the past, appealing to history enthusiasts and casual visitors alike. In addition to viewing the exact excavation spot, visitors see x-rays taken of the skeleton while it was still buried, as well as the carbon dating technology and facial reconstruction techniques that were used to authenticate the findings.

I left the centre with an understanding of the complexities surrounding the king's reputation and the historical narratives that shaped public perception of him.

This museum is well worth visiting. Join us on our Museums and More tours in May and September when we return to the Richard III Visitor Centre.

## Mary Valentine Tours featured on Anglotopia podcast



To listen or watch the interview, go to [Anglotopia.net](http://Anglotopia.net) and click on Podcast, then select **Episode 59.**



## Book Corner

This month's recommendations should appeal to readers who enjoy both museums and mysteries!

- The Museum Mysteries Series by Jim Eldridge

The Museum Mysteries series is a collection of mystery novels set in British museums featuring the character Daniel Wilson and his archaeologist partner, Abigail Fenton. The series includes such titles as *Murder at the Fitzwilliam*, *Murder at the British Museum*, and *Murder at the Ashmolean*, among others. These novels are known for their engaging plots, atmospheric settings, and the intriguing mysteries that unfold within the world of British museums.

- *The Deeds of the Disturber* by Elizabeth Peters

Victorian Egyptologist Amelia Peabody swaps the stifling heat and dust of Egypt for the cooler climes of London only to find yourself plunged into an escapade set in the dignified surroundings of the British Museum. As ever, she is aided and abetted by her irascible husband, Emerson, and precocious son, Ramses. A night watchman is found dead in the Mummy Room of the museum, a look of horror frozen on his face. Very soon panic spreads though London while the gutter press asks the question: "Can Fear Kill?"

- *The Cabinets of Barnaby Mayne* by Elsa Hart

In all of London, no one has a cabinet of curiosities as grand as that of Sir Barnaby Mayne, a fact of which he is all-too eager to remind his colleagues and competitors. One day, his hubris catches up with him, and he is stabbed to death in his museum among his treasures.

Enter Cecily Kay. She's detail-oriented, observant, and tenacious – with a blooming expertise in plants and an insatiable curiosity that she's not afraid to follow into dire circumstances. She becomes convinced the humble fellow who confessed to the murder is not guilty. And soon, she's both hunter and hunted in her quest to solve the mystery.

## Why Choose Mary Valentine Tours?

- We keep our numbers small (8-10 participants).



- We welcome solo travelers as well as couples or small groups. Unlike most tours, we do not charge a single supplement fee for people traveling solo.



- We take you to locations you won't visit on most other tours.
- We stay in beautiful hotels and dine at fabulous eateries.
- All our locations have been vetted in advance to minimize any glitches.
- In the past, our participants have included teachers, librarians, museum fans, community activists, people who love travel, avid readers, retirees, attorneys, volunteers, and others.
- Mary Valentine, your tour leader, has been an Anglophile since the age of 12. A retired college instructor, she's traveled extensively throughout the UK, having visited England more than 50 times. She has been interviewed on travel podcasts as well as BBC Radio.



We'll be back next month with a special Christmas in England newsletter, but in the meantime stay up to date with our plans at [maryvalentinetours.com](http://maryvalentinetours.com).