

# Highlights of Dorset

7 – 9 June 2016

from £295.00

## Itinerary

### **Tuesday 7 June 2016**

We depart this morning from your local area and travel by coach towards Weymouth, stopping en-route for refreshments (not included) before arriving at the gardens of **Abbotsbury**. Set over 20 acres, this garden benefits from a mild micro-climate due to its location near the sea, which allows it to grow countless rare and tender plants, many considered too delicate to grow outside. In 1765 the central walled garden, now home to towering Chusan palms (*Trachycarpus fortunei*), was the first Countess of Ilchester's kitchen garden. Gradually the garden grew to its present size, becoming famous for its camellia groves, magnolias and vast collection of rhododendron and azaleas. From the walled garden winding paths lead to the West Lawn, through gentle woodland and thickets of bamboo to the Sino-Himalayan glade. A sunny, open New Zealand garden leads on to formal lily ponds and a Mediterranean bank garden, while the valley garden has some of the most extensive gunnera plantings you will see in England. We will also visit the adjacent **Abbotsbury Swannery**, the only place in the world where it is possible to walk through the heart of a colony of nesting Mute Swans. Lunch is available here (not included).

Following our visit we will continue north into Dorset and on to our hotel, the 3-star **Best Western Royal Chase Hotel**, Shaftesbury. All bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms.

Dinner is served in the hotel this evening.

### **Wednesday 8 June 2016**

Following breakfast this morning, we will visit three private gardens that feature in the National Gardens Scheme. We begin with **Coombe Cottage** in Shillingstone, a small but profusely-planted mixed garden with broad borders edged by walls, hedges, fences and arbours. Cottage favourites jostle with more unusual herbaceous and bulbous perennials, shrubs, trees and climbers, and self-seeders rub shoulders with late-flowering and bold-leaved sub-tropicals. There is a large glasshouse and some non-botanical surprises.

We then continue to the nearby garden of **Lawsbrook**, a six-acre site featuring over 200 mature and unusual trees. There are also formal borders, wildflower and wildlife areas and a vegetable garden. The garden has a relaxed and friendly atmosphere with pleasant walks by the stream and meadow.

Lunch is available locally today with a choice of restaurants, inns and tea-rooms to choose from (not included).

### **Wednesday 8 June 2016 – cont.**

This afternoon concludes with a visit to **The Old Rectory** at Manston. This is a beautifully restored five-acre garden, featuring a south-facing wall with a 120ft herbaceous border edged by an old brick path. There is also an enclosed yew hedge flower garden, a wildflower meadow marked with mown paths and a young plantation of mixed hardwoods and a well-maintained walled Victorian kitchen garden. A knot garden created in 2011 is now well established and a new garden room with box, yew and roses was introduced in 2013.

We return to our hotel where dinner will be served this evening.

### **Thursday 9 June 2016**

After breakfast, we check out of the hotel and continue with our final garden visits today, before we begin our journey home.

Our first stops this morning will be to private gardens in the village of Stourton Caundle. We begin with a visit to **Grange Cottage** - a beautiful thatched cottage where you will discover the peace and tranquillity of a real cottage garden. Follow the meandering paths and discover an array of flower borders, box and yew hedging, two ponds, topiary creatures and much more to delight you.

We then call in to nearby **Manor Farm**, a 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse and barn with an elevated walled garden set in the heart of the village. Once briefly owned by Enid Blyton, the garden has been lovingly created over the last 40yrs by its current owners. Your first steps will guide you to a rustic pergola smothered in climbers with wide herbaceous borders, packed full on either side. The next level leads along a wide old path to the prettiest of arbours at the far end, smothered in golden hop and honeysuckle. Pergolas and fences cleverly link different parts of the garden, leading you seamlessly from one area to the other while you wonder what could possibly be around the next corner. Lunch is available here today (not included).

The last of our garden visits takes us to Sherborne and to **Frankham Farm** – a 3½ acre garden with year-round interest, filled with a wide variety of well grown plants, roses, unusual labelled shrubs, climbers, a productive vegetable garden and trees from around the world.

Following our visit, we return to our original pick-up point, where we expect to arrive late afternoon.

### **Included in the price**

2 nights' dinner, bed and breakfast at the the 3-star Best Western Royal Chase Hotel, Shaftesbury, Dorset. All rooms have private facilities  
Comfortable coaching throughout  
Visits to the gardens of Abbotsbury Sub-Tropical Gardens and Swannery, Coombe Cottage, Lawsbrook, the Old Rectory, Grange Cottage, Manor Farm and Frankham Farm

### **Not included (per person)**

Single room supplement £20.00  
Insurance £11.50 (under 65); £23.00 (65-74); £34.50 (75-90)