

The Great American Revival

A Catalogue of Dreams: The Americans who revived the English country house



BLenheim PALACE

The
CULTURE CONCIERGE
Accessing the Inaccessible

SEPTEMBER, 2 - 10, 2024

From Consuelo Vanderbilt to Gordon Selfridge, those Americans who were devoted Anglophiles or married into aristocracy gave a much-needed boost to Britain in the 19th and early 20th centuries and some continue to this day. At the most obvious level, the wealthy gave a financial infusion which saved many country houses or at the very least kept them going in comfort and much better decorated than would have otherwise been the case. What became known as the 'country house look' was codified by an American. The greatest of early 20thC gardens was created by an American. The first female Member of Parliament was an American. It was an American romance that caused Edward VIII to abdicate. Here we examine a selection of houses and estates which were supported and sometimes transformed by fortunes hailing from the United States, together with a brief look at those who are continuing to forge those ties today.

At the time of curating this programme, a new television series entitled 'The Buccaneers' is about to hit our screens! This will showcase the 1870's London social scene where young Americans were sent to find a partner!

MONDAY, 2ND SEPTEMBER - Departure from your gateway city. **OVERNIGHT: PLANE**

TUESDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER - Upon your arrival, you will be met for your private transfers from the airport to our hotel in the Cotswolds, where a light welcome lunch will be waiting with our host, Alexandra Messervy, who will give a brief introduction on the programme and the Americans who revived the fortunes of so many of our country estates. This afternoon we visit Hidcote Manor, England's foremost 20th-century gardens, and the former home of Lawrence Johnson. Purchased in 1907 by wealthy *New Yorker*, Mrs. Gertrude Winthrop for her then 36-year-old son by her first marriage, Lawrence, who had "shown no aptitude for anything much". Here he found his metier, creating a garden that consisted of a series of horticultural "rooms". Each room differentiating in color, character, and intention. It was this that made him one of our most influential and sought-after garden designers of the 20th Century. We return to our hotel in the Cotswolds where you will have a free evening.

(B, L) OVERNIGHT: COTSWOLDS

WEDNESDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER - Today we visit Kelmarsh Hall and Gardens, former home of Nancy Lancaster, the arbiter of the 'country house style.' Nancy, a *Virginia* native, lost her first wealthy husband to blood poisoning. In 1920 she married her late husband's cousin, Ronald Tree, and moved to Kelmarsh Hall. Ronnie became an MP and Nancy, whilst rich in her own right, was elevated to an English social position where she could use her considerable taste in decorating and design, not only make her own surroundings glorious, but also those of others. Nancy can be credited with introducing multiple bathrooms to

THE COST OF THIS ITINERARY, PER PERSON, DOUBLE OCCUPANCY IS:

LAND ONLY: \$ 5440
SINGLE SUPPLEMENT: \$ 1150

*Airfares are available from most U.S. departure cities.
Please call for details.*

THE FOLLOWING SERVICES ARE INCLUDED:

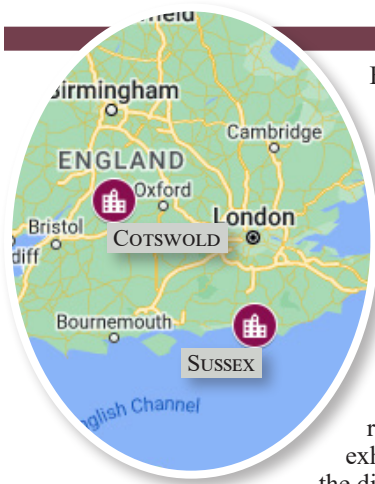
HOTELS: 7 nights' accommodation in first-class hotels, including all hotel taxes and service charges
COACHING: All ground transportation as detailed in the itinerary
MEALS: Breakfast daily, 2 lunch, 1 tea, 4 dinners
GUIDES: Host, Alexandra Messervy, along with a Discover Europe tour guide throughout and Local guides at various sites as per the itinerary.
EVENTS: Private tours and events as detailed in the itinerary
EXPENSES: Portage of one large suitcase per person
ENTRANCES: Entrance fees to all sites included in the itinerary

Please note that travel insurance is not included on this tour. Insurance information will be mailed to each registrant on receipt of deposit.

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English homes and the famous country house yellows and apricot colourways. From Kelmarsh she went on to Ditchley and Ronnie purchased Sybil Colefax's shares for her in Colefax and Fowler which gave her projects such as Badminton House and Boughton. Her death in 1994 left a very great legacy. The remainder of the day is free for exploration and to find a restaurant for dinner.

(B) OVERNIGHT: COTSWOLDS

THURSDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER - Morning visit to Ditchley Park—note this is subject to availability as it is used for high-level Diplomatic events. In the event that we cannot visit today, an alternative visit will be arranged. There will be free time for lunch before we make our way to Sudeley Castle for a private tour. Hailing from *Lexington, Kentucky*, Lady Ashcombe has been an example of how present-day expertise has transformed the fortunes of this historic castle, home, and final resting place of Queen Katherine Parr, widow of King Henry VIII. She holds the longest tenure of the Castle, having lived here for over 50 years, and in 1970 persuaded her late husband to open to the public. Over the years and significant restoration projects, Sudeley has become synonymous with weddings, special occasions, superb historic exhibitions, and opening this part of the Cotswolds to many visitors. After our tour, we will gather for tea in the dining room. This evening, we will dine at Russells of Broadway, a local neighbourhood restaurant, which was home to John Singer Sargent, Henry James, and Edmund Gosse among others. Always a favourite with Americans,

there are many present-day US citizens with primary or secondary homes in the village. Broadway must be one of the most visited of our villages and owes much of its fortune to American tourism. **(B, T, D) OVERNIGHT: COTSWOLDS**

FRIDAY, 6TH SEPTEMBER - This morning a visit to the beautiful Aynhoe Park, which has been transformed this year from a family home of note, to an emporium of gardens, shopping, a winery, and café, demonstrating the diversity an infusion of American taste and glamour can do! There will be free time for lunch on the estate before heading to Blenheim Palace, home to one of the most famous American heiresses to come to these shores, Consuelo Vanderbilt. It is said she was deeply unhappy at Blenheim and yet she did so much to transform its fortunes, following on from Jennie Randolph-Churchill. Just 19 years of age when she came to this Palace, she had to work out how to manage staff, elaborate rituals of house parties and English society, and the decoration of Blenheim using her father's dowry! She did a magnificent job with the latter and, although she divorced her Duke in 1921, her legacy remains today. The evening is free to dine at the local pub.

(B) OVERNIGHT: COTSWOLDS



SUDELEY CASTLE

SATURDAY, 7TH SEPTEMBER - Today we will make our way from the Cotswolds to our historic hotel in Sussex. After time for a late lunch on your own, we will visit what is one of our most celebrated fine arts and crafts colleges, West Dean House. Transformed by William Dodge James, we are lucky to be able to visit the glorious gardens today. Born in *Hartford, Connecticut*, his father Daniel, exceptionally good at his trade, made a fortune with vast mining and railroad interests, allowing his son Willie to conduct a life of some leisure and indulging his passions for sport. Willie married the eldest daughter of a Scottish baronet in 1889 and they chose West Dean, An 8000-acre estate, for its proximity to Goodwood (racing and shooting) and Cowes (sailing). In 1912, Willie died, and the house was let out until 1932 with their son turning the house into a Foundation in their memory. Students of West Dean include The Earl of Snowdon (David Linley) and John Makepeace who founded Parham House, an equally important college of art and design. This evening, we gather for dinner at a local restaurant. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: SUSSEX**

SUNDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER - This morning, we will have a private tour of Firle Place. Although strictly speaking not a house that has directly benefited from American benefactors, it is included here for its historic and artistic merit, but also because of its connections with the Battle of Bunker Hill. The Gage family's 500-year history at Firle Place, nestled on the edge of the South Downs, has been dominated by soldier-courtier careers. Sir John Gage was Lord Chamberlain to King Henry VIII and Mary I, and Sir Thomas Gage fought alongside George Washington. He was commander in chief of the British Forces in North America from 1763-1773, responsible for the supervision of 13 American colonies. Engaged ultimately at Concord and Lexington and then the first battle of the Revolution at Bunker Hill. The greengage plum has long been associated with the Gages, having been introduced to England from France in 1725. In late 2023, a new film will be released starring Kate Winslet as the celebrated American model and noted wartime Vogue journalist and photographer, Lee Miller. Lee married Ronald Penrose and they lived at the delightful Farley Farmhouse on the South Downs until her death. Now a museum dedicated to their work and Gallery, a chance this afternoon to view the house and The Lee Miller Exhibition. We will enjoy a light lunch on the grounds, before returning to Sussex where you will have free time before we gather for dinner. **(B, L, D) OVERNIGHT: SUSSEX**



HEVER CASTLE

MONDAY, 9TH SEPTEMBER - We start the morning with a visit to Leeds Castle which was transformed from its hopelessly dilapidated state to a functioning family home by the Hon. Olive Lady Baillie, and today, remains one of our most iconic film sets, corporate entertainment venues, and a location for many international and political seminars. Born in *New York* in 1899, Olive (Paget) was the daughter of a grandson of the Marquess of Anglesey who had made his fortune as an industrialist in the US. Olive married three British husbands and having divorced the second—Wilson Filmer—she purchased Leeds in 1926. She married Sir Adrian Baillie in 1931, but Leeds was her own property which she used to entertain politicians, David Niven, and Erroll Flynn with lavish house parties. We'll have time for lunch, before our visit to Hever Castle. Leaving the Old World for the New around the time of the American War of Independence, John Jacob Astor entered the fur trade from his native Germany, he traded 1000 % profit with Canada and made his fortune. At the time of his death, he was the richest man in America. His great-grandson, perhaps not so fortunate in business, nor so interested, had the wealth to do as he wished. He was not particularly keen on the USA, so after a brief period in Italy, he purchased Hever Castle in 1903, the birthplace of Queen Anne Boleyn. This evening we gather for our farewell dinner. **(B, D) OVERNIGHT: SUSSEX**

TUESDAY, 10TH SEPTEMBER - Morning transfers to the airport for your return flight. **(B)**

*Key to included meals: **B** - breakfast, **L** - lunch, **T** - tea, **D** - dinner