

A Secret to be Discovered :

the Lure of English Houses and Gardens in the Lee of the South Downs

June 14 to 22, 2024

The idea for this immersion in a selection of houses and gardens nestled in the bucolic countryside focused on Sussex and Kent germinated and took root over a pub lunch enjoyed with Deborah (Debo) Gage in the little village beside her family's estate, Firle Place. Day and I were on a whirlwind trip in the region to engage our passion for the landscape, gardens, architecture and fine collections. When Debo suggested, why not bring a group here in the future to sample some of the splendid houses, gardens and landscapes, we responded, where do we sign! When she added the suggestion of a special evening at Glyndebourne for our group, that was *la cerise sur le gateau*--the cherry on the cake! We announced the trip a year ago in late summer of 2022, and it was immediately full with a waiting list! The trip, last June was so much fun, and our guests (as well as our English hosts) got on so well, that we have decided to offer the same experience again this year! But, never being satisfied with a good thing, we have tweaked a few of the details to make it even better!



Above: Horsted Place, from 1850, our home for six nights; below, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea, 1935. Just two of the contrasts we will encounter!

The itinerary is, we believe, very special and will offer an exclusive and privileged look at the English country house in its many manifestations, of period, scale, and present-day management. We shall visit country estates large and small, from among Britain's greatest and grandest families, to the more modest but no less special, from an insider's perspective. We will sample some of the greatest interiors and collections as well as a trove of some of the most remarkable treasures to be found anywhere in the world, complemented by landscapes and gardens ranging from vast extent and splendor to the most intimate and delicate of scales. We will also visit famed Chichester Cathedral and home to one of Britain's rarest national heirlooms, the set of Tudor panel paintings by Lambert Barnard (1514-1567). We have selected two of the finest accommodations in the region, each selected for its comfort and character and location close to the places we will be visiting. The first four nights will be spent at Horsted Place, designed by Augustus Pugin (1850), and in the past, the weekend getaway for Queen Elizabeth and Prince

Phillip. Our final four nights, while we are on the Goodwood Estate, will be spent at their private Hounds Lodge, to which we have been invited by the Duke and Duchess of Richmond, (schedules permitting, they will join us for one of our dinners there).

The subject of the English country house and garden is vast, has filled many volumes of scholarship, and seeing the important exemplars could--and has--filled many lifetimes. By focusing our scope on a small region, and within that, selecting our personal favorites as well as places about which we can



SOUTHERN ENGLAND

0 15 30 MILES

- ★ START/END JOURNEY
- OVERNIGHT
- ◆ SITE



offer unique insights, we feel the variety and special access to be enjoyed will make possible an understanding of the subject gleaned from our intensive week together! We will experience six of Britain's most important estate holdings (Petworth, Parham, Arundel, Goodwood, and Firle) in both private and public ownership as well as experiencing how life can continue for these enterprises into the twenty-first century. We will visit places of significant artistic and decorative endeavor from Philip Webb's Arts and Crafts *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Standen, John Nash's Regency Royal Pavilion at Brighton, the Prince Regent's extravagant seaside party palace, Charleston Farmhouse, home of the British Post Impressionist artists Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant as well as nearby All Angels Church in Berwick housing their decoration scheme of large paintings of religious subjects. We will tour one of the greatest castles in England (Arundel), whose history spans a millennium and whose architecture spans the original gothic to its nineteenth century revival. Our visit to Arundel will be particularly relevant in that the Duke of Norfolk is the hereditary Earl Marshall, most of you will have seen him on television a year ago movingly breaking his rod of office over the Queen's coffin before her internment at Windsor, marking the end of the Earl Marshalls' service to her during her long reign. Now he serves the United Kingdom's new monarch, Charles III whose coronation he had the responsibility of arranging on 6 May 2023. Landmarks of garden design start with the great landscapes of nature: the majestic setting of the sweeps of the South Downs that literally take your breath away with an almost spiritual quality linked to their ancient history, immortalized by Hilaire Belloc and

Rudyard Kipling. Or the brilliant white chalk cliffs of The Seven Sisters, is one of the most iconic vistas in England. There are the vast estates, then brought into relief by the intimacy of the gardens of Christopher Lloyd, Vita Sackville West, and William Robinson (Great Dixter, Sissinghurst, and Gravetye Manor). Great Dixter was also the design of Edwin Lutyens (1910-12). In many of the places we will be received by the owners, invited to meals, and meet key experts connected with the collections or the operations. All the while we will be under the spell of our remarkable *cicerone*, Debo Gage!

Our Leader...

Deborah Gage is an art historian, curator, and dealer in fine art and decorative objects. She grew up in Kenya and maintains an important ongoing connection with the country and with wildlife conservation projects there. She has provided expert advice and assistance in acquisitions to a many of the world's leading museums (Tate, National Gallery UK, Chicago, Dallas, Getty, Minneapolis, the Met). When not traveling the world dealing in treasures, she divides her time between London and in East Sussex, where she is the curator at Firle Place, her cousin, the 8th Viscount Gage, is the owner. Debo, who has crafted this rich program, will be with us throughout, providing background on the places we will visit. She will be supported by the many curators, owners, and other experts connected with the places we will visit.

Outline Itinerary

Day 1, Friday, June 14, 2024
Arrival London

Private or group transfers from London or airports to Horsted Place, Uckfield.
Wine Estate tasting and picnic lunch (for early arrivals).
Coastal walk along Seven Sisters;
Welcome dinner at hotel.

Note that circumstances may necessitate changes in this itinerary, and certain visits and locations may require substitution.

About the Places... (see [this link](#) for photos from the 2023 trip)



Horsted Place (August Pugin, 1850), just outside the East Sussex county town of Lewes, will be our home for the first half of the trip.



Rathfinney Wine Estate: For early arrivals, there will be the chance to enjoy a picnic lunch at Rathfinney Wine Estate just outside Alfriston. Since this family-owned vineyard was established a decade ago, it has been sweeping the boards with their prize-winning wines red and white wines, and as the result of the recent awarding of a PDO for Sussex, their ambition is to become one of the largest sparkling wine producers in the world. So that in future when you go to a bar in London, New York, Beijing or Tokyo ... you will be able to order a glass of champagne... or a delicious glass of sussex!



The Seven Sisters: We will leave the vineyards for a restorative brisk walk along the coastal downland path, where the River Cuckmere meanders before reaching the English Channel.

Day 2, Saturday, June 15

Today will be spent close to home, visiting Charleston Farmhouse, and by way of contrast a modernist house, Cattlegate, (where we will have lunch). Following that, our afternoon will be spent at the Royal Pavilion in Brighton. In the late afternoon we will have a stroll in the charming village of Alfriston, before dinner in the Star, a typical pub that has been turned into a temple of gastronomy.

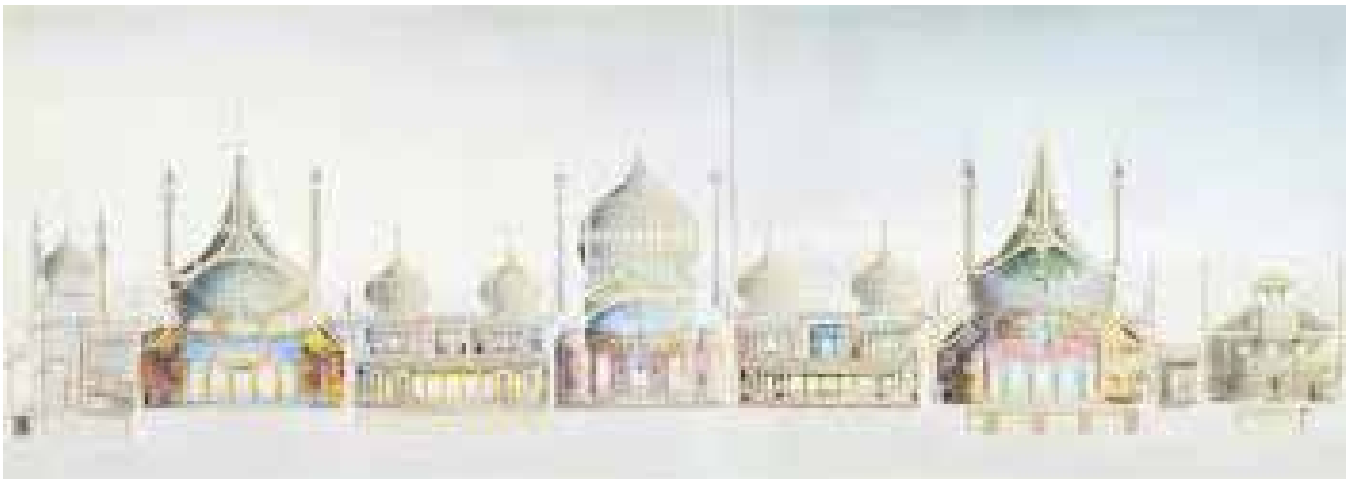


Charleston Farmhouse: It was the country home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant who moved there in 1916, in time their paint-brushes escaped their easels so that in effect the whole house became a work of art, it is the only remaining intact their decorative style. Charleston was also the gathering place of artists, writers, poets, composers, musicians and so thus encompasses an artistic, cultural and intellectual focus for over half a century of English 20th century life.



Cattlegate: Rare example of a Walter Gropius designed house in England.

Royal Pavilion: Exotic and eclectic seaside palace of the Prince Regent (George IV) transformed by John Nash between 1815 and 1823 into one of the most dazzling and spectacular buildings in the British Isles. It has often been described as 'one of the most fantastic palaces in Europe'. The Mogul exterior can barely pique a visitor's excitement to discover the



Prince Regent's dazzling and extraordinary Chinoiserie interior, many of the original furnishings have been loaned back to the Pavilion by the Royal Family.



Alfriston is a beautifully preserved picturesque village, whose name is first traced to the 1086 Domesday Book. There is an expansive green, parish church and half timbered clergy house. The Star Inn, a pub and hotel dating to the 15th century originally belonged to the monks of Battle Abbey and was offered to provide shelter for the friars and pilgrims on their way to the Shrine of St. Richard in Chichester and later was once a lair of smugglers, and has now been renovated as an exceptional restaurant by the Polizzi Group.



Day 3, Sunday, June 16

Today's explorations will take us to the neighbouring county, Kent, and will feature two extraordinary gardens, Sissinghurst and Great Dixter (not to mention the house at the latter by Edwin Lutyens): both gardens are seen and enjoyed at their very best in the month of June! En route, for something different we will stop to visit the modernist De la Warr Pavilion in Bexhill on Sea.



Sissinghurst Castle and Garden: This gem in the Weald of Kent was created by Vita Sackville-West, poet and writer, and her husband Harold Nicolson, author and diplomat. It is among the most famous gardens in England and is designated Grade I on Historic England's register of historic parks and gardens.



Great Dixter Gardens: Great Dixter was built in 1910–12 by architect Edwin Lutyens, who combined an existing mid-15th century house on the site with a similar structure brought from Benenden, Kent, together with his own additions. Subsequently Great Dixter was the family home of gardener and gardening writer Christopher Lloyd – it was the focus of his energy and enthusiasm and fueled over 40 years of books and articles. Now under the stewardship of Fergus Garrett and the Great Dixter Charitable Trust



The De La Warr Pavilion: Is a grade I listed building, located on the seafront at Bexhill on Sea. The Modernist and International Style building was designed by the architects Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff and constructed in 1935. In 2005, after staving off the earlier threat of becoming a pub and following an extensive restoration, the De La Warr Pavilion reopened as a contemporary arts centre, encompassing one of the largest galleries on the south coast of England. Aside from being notable as the first public modernist building in Great Britain, it was also the first to use a steel structure.

Day 4, Monday, June 17

Today we will remain nearby, starting our day with Firle Place, where we will spend the morning. We will visit Berwick Church, (which showcases the work of Charleston residents, Duncan Grant, Vanessa and her son, Quentin, Bell), before returning to Horsted Place for a light sandwich lunch, to rest and put on our finery (black tie and evening wear). For, tonight is our visit to Glyndebourne, where we have tickets to Georges Bizet's *Carmen*! At Glyndebourne, we will arrive early in to follow the tradition of a walk around the gardens and estate, and a chance to enjoy the collection of Old Master Paintings hanging in the Organ Room, purchased by John Christie, the co-founder of Glyndebourne opera, together with his wife the celebrated soprano, Audrey Mildmay.



Above: Firle: Home of the Gage family for 500 years, Firle Place is a country house that dates from the time of Henry VIII, but which was substantially remodelled during the Georgian period. Firle Place is very much a family home, which provides the perfect setting to house an exemplary collection of works of art, fine furniture and porcelain of national significance.

Left: One of a pair, The Melbourne Cabinets by Thomas Chippendale, with the Sevres Melbourne Service displayed inside.

Right: The Palladian Drawing room, showing a portrait of Thomas, 1st Viscount Gage (c. 1695-1754), and below one of the rare George II gilded console tables, each supported by a fox, attributed to John Boson.





Nestled in the lee of the South Downs, St Michael and All Angels in Berwick reflects a ribbon of life in that this church has been the centre for local worship for thousands of years or more. The tumulus upon which this Grade 1 building rests is probably a site of pre-historic origins. Berwick houses one of the most complete series of painted panels by twentieth century artists in a rural church in England. The series were commissioned in 1941 from Duncan Grant, Vanessa and her son, Quentin, Bell.



Glyndebourne Festival Opera: An English country house, the site of an opera house that, since 1934, has been the venue for the annual Glyndebourne Festival Opera, producing some of the best opera in the world.



Day 5 Tuesday, June 18

Today, we will depart Horsted Place and East Sussex, for West Sussex, as the remainder of the sites to see are in that region.

Lady Emma Bernard has invited us to lunch and a private visit at Parham in before.

Later, in the afternoon, we will visit Goodwood House, home of the Duke and Duchess of Richmond. For the balance of the trip, we will be their guests at a private accommodation, the Hound Lodge.



Parham House: Idyllically set in the heart of an ancient deer park, below the South Downs, the Elizabethan house contains a very important collection paintings and furniture and decorative arts. The spectacular Long Gallery is the third longest in England, and is all the more extraordinary for its span of centuries, beginning with its Jacobean wainscot paneling, culminating with its 20th century decorated ceiling designed by Oliver Messel, intended to reflect the family's connection with Sir Joseph Banks. The gardens include a four-acre Walled Garden with stunning herbaceous borders, plus Pleasure Grounds. Parham has always been a well-loved family home, and only three families have lived here since its foundation stone was laid in 1577. Its tranquility and timeless beauty have changed little over the years. Parham was purchased by the Pearson family in 1922, and has since been lovingly restored and enhanced with its remarkable collection, notably it houses of best collections of 17th century needlework in the country. Now owned by a charitable trust, the house is lived in by Lady Emma Barnard, her husband James and their family.



Goodwood, the seat of the Duke of Richmond, is perhaps the epitome of of a grand country houe past and present. The house, built in 1600 and added to several times and by architects including Matthew Brettingham and James Wyatt, may have originally been intended to form an octagon in plan, but never realized. There is also a nearby stable building, designed by William Chambers, and the evolution of the estate into a prospering economic enterpise is due to the construction of a small airport, post WWII, a racecourse, and golf links, thanks to the vision of recent generations of the family. The interior of the house presents another treasure trove of important paintings, sculpture and decorative arts.



There is a charming private lodge on the estate, where we will be the exclusive guests of the Duke and Duchess, where for four nights, we will be looked after and cossetted by our own butler, who will fulfill our every whim!



Day 6, Wednesday, June 19

We will start this morning with a private visit to Arundel Castle. We will have lunch at the Parson's Table, in the town of Arundel. The afternoon will be spent in Chichester focusing upon the Cathedral, to include behind the scenes visits to the Cathedral library, Song School and the Bishop's chapel. Also significant works of art including two Romanesque panels known as the 'Chichester Reliefs' as well as a series of paintings by Lambert Barnard (1514-1567), these medieval propaganda pieces comprise the largest surviving secular/clerical Tudor paintings on wood in the United Kingdom. The paintings, dating from ca. 1529-36 represent the past, present and future, and it is that which makes them unique – and a truly amazing survivor given the destruction of so much ecclesiastical art following the destruction of the monasteries during the reign of Henry VIII. Tonight a symphony concert by the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields is planned for the Cathedral, and we will later return, after an early dinner in town at the Pallant House Museum, housing an important collection of twentieth century British art (which we will briefly see).



Arundel: One of the largest inhabited and complete castles in England, Arundel Castle is situated in magnificent grounds overlooking the River Arun in West Sussex, and home of the Dukes of Norfolk. Our story begins in 1067 and continues to the present day. Many of the original features such as the Norman Keep, medieval Gatehouse and Barbican survive. Between the 1870s and 1890s the house was almost completely rebuilt and the magnificent architecture in Gothic style is considered to be one of the great works of Victorian England and houses a superb collection of furniture, tapestries and paintings by renowned artists including Van Dyck, Gainsborough and Canaletto.



Chichester Cathedral: Founded in 1075, architectural historian Ian Nairn termed it "the most typical English Cathedral", but uniquely it has double aisles. It also boasts some of the rarest and most important Tudor ecclesiastical paintings in the country, they were recently conserved so are looking fantastic.



Pallant House Museum: The original 18th century townhouse (1712) is considered one of the finest in England. In the late 1980s the Dean of Chichester Cathedral, Walter Hussey, bequeathed his considerable collection of 20th century art to the house, and it became a museum. Later, architects Colin St. John Wilson and his wife, M.J. Long (one of Stephen's professors at Yale and the designers of the new British Library) gave their collection to the museum. This required a modern addition, which was designed by Long and Kentish, the firm M.J. founded after her husband's death.

Day 7, Thursday, June 20

Today, we will see the extraordinary treasure trove in the great estate house of Petworth. The current Lord Egremont has graciously extended an invitation us to tour his private rooms and collection, as well at the public rooms maintained by the National Trust.

We have been invited to have lunch in the garden of Emily Caroe, whose parents and grandparents created the remarkable Arts and Crafts Vann Garden in Surrey.

Dinner tonight will be at a nearby country inn overlooking the South Downs.



Petworth House: Inspired by Baroque palaces of Europe, set amidst a fine landscaped deer park and garden nestled in the South Downs, Petworth House displays one of the finest art collections privately and in the care of the National Trust. Petworth House is an extraordinary and surprising place created by just one family over 900 years. The 17th-century building you see today comprises grand state rooms which form the centrepiece of your visit. Designed to display the taste, lifestyle and artistic patronage of generations of Percys, Seymours and Wyndhams, the state rooms offer an expanse of paintings and sculpture, including major works by artists such as Van Dyck, Turner, Reynolds and Gainsborough. Lord Egremont first commissioned Turner to paint views of the house and park in 1809, which developed into a lasting friendship, 20 years later that he was received as a member of the family and given his own painting room with a specially constructed window.

The enchantment of the place and the genial exhilaration of Lord Egremont's patronage combined to give an almost miraculous quality to the many paintings and watercolours he made there.

ann: Nestled in the Surrey countryside near Godalming, this internationally renowned five-acre garden is formed by a series of "rooms" which surround and complement a family home dating from the 16th century. From the old Cottage Garden with delightfully informal planting in a formal setting, to the robust Pergola of Bargate stone by W.D. Caröe, the Arts and Crafts architect and great grandfather of the present owners, to the Water Garden, laid out and planted by Gertrude Jekyll in 1911, and the newly designed and planted Centenary Garden, Vann offers inspiration to expert and amateur gardeners alike.



Day 8, Friday, June 21

This, our final morning will begin with a chance to enjoy our surroundings at Goodwood, with perhaps a walk or a visit to the nearby stables, designed by William Chambers in 1757, as well as the Kennels designed by James Wyatt in 1787.

After a simple lunch in a nearby local pub, we will visit the Arts and Crafts treasure trove of Standen House, designed by Philip Webb and built from 1891 to 1994.

In the late afternoon, we will visit Gravetye Manor, one of the first “wild” gardens laid out by William Robinson in 1885 and the Arts and Crafts Vann Garden. At Gravetye, now a small country house hotel (too small for us to stay) we will have our final dinner in the restaurant, which has a Michelin star.

Day 9, Saturday, June 22

After a leisurely breakfast, guests may head on their way, either to nearby Heathrow for homeward or onward flights, or to continue their travels independently.



The Stables at Goodwood are designed by William Chambers.



Standen, a Victorian House of 1894 and hillside garden with fine views across the Medway valley, designed by Philip Webb, friend of William Morris, for solicitor Jeames Beale, his wife and seven children. Standen is the only major Philip Webb house to remain unchanged, and is an interesting ‘anti-Victorian’ house of the 1890s, full of light, air and colour, with original William Morris textiles and wallpaper. It is one of the primary exemplars of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England. Today, the house is owned by the National Trust.



Gravetye Manor: Its most notable owner, William Robinson one of the greatest gardeners of all time, bought the Manor and the one thousand acres in which it stands in 1885, and it was his home until he died well into his nineties in 1935. It was at Gravetye that he realized many of his ideas for the creation of the English natural garden, the style of which is now admired and copied all over the world, but of which Robinson in the nineteenth century was a pioneer. He had worked in many formal gardens in England and France but in his planning, planting and landscaping he sought always to enhance the natural beauty of the gardens and woods.

For Pricing and Registration Information

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