



On Location

WTTW and Transcendent Travel Tour British Television's Most Unforgettable and Scenic Destinations

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY LISA STAMOS

There is much to enjoy about British television. The characters are delightful. The scripts and attention to period details and costumes are second-to-none. Yet no matter how good the characters or writing in your favorite British show, it's those historic, iconic locations around England's countryside and coasts that keep us coming back.

WTTW Chicago was one of several public television stations in the United States that coordinated tours with Transcendent Travel and its partner, Acorn TV, to present "The Best of Acorn TV; A 7-Day Tour of England" last year. Thirty of us from around Chicagoland joined the tour, meeting up in Windsor on July 30, 2018 at the Castle Hotel. There, we joined Geoffrey Baer, WTTW/WFMT Host, and Julie Dillon and Keira Dubowsky of WTTW/WFMT, as well as Transcendent Tour Director Andrew Lannerd and Tour Assistant Elaine Klemesrud.

The tour is the brainchild of Andrew Lannerd, who is a passionate Anglophile and leading expert of the inner workings and history of the British Monarchy. His primary area of focus ranges from the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) to present day. After numerous requests from individuals over

several years, Andrew began to develop and lead country house and castle tours of the United Kingdom for Transcendent Travel Services, LLC, a New York-based boutique tour company specializing in experience-based travel.

When in England and not leading tours, Andrew is an avid "royal watcher." He has met all the members of the Royal Family at various times over the years. His meetings have involved attending private events at Buckingham Palace and other notable events, as well as other opportunities to present Queen Elizabeth II with flowers on special occasions.

In addition, Andrew was an invited guest to the May 19, 2018 wedding of HRH Prince Henry of Wales to Meghan Markle at Windsor Castle, which was a few months before our tour arrived there.

Our tour group traveled in a top-notch motor coach to our locations with Andrew leading the way, sharing his knowledge and insights. We visited Bath, stayed at Boringdon Hall and the Tortworth Court Hotel, stopped at Sidmouth, and spent an afternoon at Hampton Court Palace. Featured here are my favorite locations and memories from the tour. [U](#)

👑 WINDSOR CASTLE 👑



Windsor is a charming village that is also home to Windsor Castle and St. George's Chapel. Windsor Castle has been home to the Royal Family for nearly 1,000 years. We arrived a couple of months after HRH Prince Henry of Wales wed Meghan Markle, and the signage to welcome guests to the wedding was still up! The highlight was a chance to tour the Royal Family's State Apartments, which are lavishly decorated formal rooms filled with priceless paintings and artifacts. Queen Victoria's statue has guarded the castle since 1887. The Prince Harry Pub is across from the Castle Hotel where we stayed. This view of one of the gardens at Windsor Castle gives a sense of proportion to the massive size of the property.

👑 HIGHCLERE CASTLE 👑





There was an audible gasp of excitement heard on our bus as we drove up the long driveway and first glimpsed Highclere Castle. There, we saw the familiar gravel pathway leading to Highclere Castle as often seen in “Downton Abbey”. We toured inside, seeing the familiar majestic rooms, and roamed the grounds and gardens. Behind Highclere Castle are outbuildings for castle maintenance and guest amenities. The castle’s main entrance opens onto a large pebble driveway. Jackdaw’s Castle folly, built of recovered Corinthian columns, is to be admired from Highclere Castle. It was built in 1743 by Robert Herbert, who had inherited Highclere Estate from his mother, 8th Countess of Pembroke. A few weeks after our visit, filming began for “Downton Abbey” the movie, due September 2019. Enjoy Lady Carnarvon’s blog for behind-the-scenes of everyday life at Highclere Castle at www.ladycarnarvon.com.

👑 PORT ISAAC 👑





“Doc Martin” was filmed in seaside Port Isaac, called “Portwenn” in the series. Here is our first glimpse of Port Isaac as we walked downhill toward the village. Doc Martin’s Surgery can be seen in the background. Bert Large’s Restaurant, the large, white private home, sits near the cove. Mrs. Tishell’s pharmacy, Louisa Glasson’s schoolhouse, and the lifeboat station are familiar sights. Our group had tea and cake inside the schoolhouse.



The Golden Lion restaurant is the location of the Crab & Lobster in “Doc Martin”. The excellent fish and chips were served with mushy peas, the traditional accompaniment to the authentic British meal.





Agatha Christie is one of the most-published authors in history, with more than 100 million books sold in more than 100 languages.

She is known for her fictional detectives and mysteries. Greenway was her summer home, purchased in 1938, set atop a hill that overlooks the River Dart in Devon, also known as the English Riviera. I walked down the long, steep, and winding paths to see the boat house and river. Her property is described in “The A.B.C. Murders”, “Five Little Pigs”, “Towards Zero”, and “Dead Man’s Folly” (which was filmed at Greenway). Agatha Christie’s Greenway drawing room was where the family gathered for music, games, and the first reading of manuscripts.

👑 CRICKET HOUSE 👑



Cricket St. Thomas in Somerset and its Cricket House were the backdrop of “To the Manor Born”. Scenes were filmed inside and around the manor home from 1979 to 1981. There, we enjoyed a Cream Tea and toured the gardens.

👑 THE TOUR 👑



As the British Airways A380 made its descent to Heathrow, I saw through my window a massive line of high storm clouds that had moved beyond London. We missed a major weather event and were saved from potential travel chaos according to the morning news. Expecting cool and damp weather typical of England, our tour group was in for a big surprise: 2018 was the hottest summer on record for the United Kingdom as a whole, and the hottest ever for England. Pictured here are Elaine Klemesrud and Andrew Lannerd at Highclere Castle; Geoffrey Baer, who found a secret entryway at Boringdon Hall hotel; and our entire tour group at Highclere Castle. To learn about Transcendent Travel and the many tours available, visit www.transcendent-travel.com.

