

WELCOME TO WILL WATSON TOURGUIDE

The following three sections provide detailed tour information, including descriptions of the various tours with duration and price guides [2009 to March 2010].

THE TOURS are in three sections:

1] LONDON

2] NEAR LONDON

3] FROM LONDON IN A DAY

1] LONDON

1) DRIVE-BY ALL LONDON: For those in a real hurry, who nevertheless want to see all the major sights, with maybe quick photos, (no time to get out however): 2 - 3 hours Price: £270.

2) ESSENTIAL LONDON: HALF-DAY: All the major sights, (with time to stop for photos), including BIG BEN , BUCKINGHAM PALACE (with Changing of the Guard ceremony, when available) , WESTMINSTER ABBEY, HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT, No.10 DOWNING ST., TRAFALGAR SQUARE with NELSON'S COLUMN, PICCADILLY CIRCUS, KENSINGTON PALACE, HYDE PARK with Speaker's Corner, MARBLE ARCH, the DUKE OF WELLINGTON'S HOUSE, ST. JAMES'S PALACE (with photo of you with the Queen's Guard), THE RIVER THAMES, LONDON BRIDGE, TOWER BRIDGE, THE TOWER OF LONDON, LLOYD'S OF LONDON, THE BANK OF ENGLAND, ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL. 3 - 4 hours Price: £305.

3) ESSENTIAL LONDON (FULL DAY): All the above: plus visit, guided by me, with full commentary, to two out of these three:

- 1) TOWER OF LONDON (INCLUDES CROWN JEWELS)
- 2) WESTMINSTER ABBEY
- 3) ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

8 hours, including a stop for lunch -perhaps at a jolly pub on the River . Price: £445.

4) FURTHER LONDON: There are so many other places of interest in London, it is impossible to list them all. To give you an idea, I have grouped some of them below under the headings of ART, WAR, THE BEATLES, LITERATURE, CHILDREN'S, THE LAW, NEW DOCKLANDS, PARKS AND GARDENS, AND SPECIAL CHURCHES.

*You can make up your tour of London by selecting the places you want, but please check in advance about how much is possible in one day. Prices as for ESSENTIAL LONDON.

5) ART: The British Museum, The Tate Gallery of British Art, The Victoria and Albert Museum (international Art and Design), The National Gallery (European Art 1400 -1900), The Wallace Collection, Tate Modern. Personally guided Highlights tours of the above, lasting one to two hours each.

6) LONDON AT WAR: Churchill's Cabinet War Rooms, The Imperial War Museum, The Guards Regiment Museum, London at War Museum, National Army Museum, H.M.S. Belfast (in the suburbs, Royal Air Force Museum, National Artillery Museum, National Maritime Museum).

7) BEATLES' LONDON: From Abbey Road Crosswalk to the house where Paul McCartney's song 'Yesterday' was born, via the site of their last ever (rooftop) concert and many other memorable spots connected with The Fab Four.

8) THE LONDON OF LITERATURE: The actual houses of some of our great characters of literature still survive, and are open to the public, providing a wonderful insight into the way life was lived in the old days. e.g. Dr. Samuel Johnson's House (author of the first English Dictionary 1755), Charles Dickens House (famous Victorian writer, 1800's), Samuel Pepys' Museum (famous Diarist, 1680), Thomas Carlyle's House ('the sage of Chelsea', 1800's). The leafy suburb of Hampstead (worth a tour in itself, see below), has the poet, John Keats' House. Also THE NEW BRITISH LIBRARY, which has a super display of ancient documents (Magna Carta, the Lindisfarne Gospels) as well as many recordings of the actual voices of our great literary figures.



9) LONDON FOR CHILDREN: Children enjoy my essential London tours, but I can also add in some special attractions like Drake's Golden Hind Replica Ship, The London Dungeon, The London Toy and Model Museum, the horses and Carriages in the Royal Stables, Buckingham Palace, The Natural History Museum and The Science Museum.

10) THE LAW IN LONDON: The beautiful and ancient Inns of Court at Lincoln's Inn, Inner and Middle Temple and Gray's Inn are sights in themselves and are still used by the Barristers as chambers. Middle Temple's medieval Dining Hall is a treat, as is the 12th to 17th Century Temple Church. It is also possible on a weekday to sit in an actual working court, from the Magistrate's Court to the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand, and The Central Criminal Court.

11) LONDON'S NEW DOCKLANDS DEVELOPMENT: Canary Wharf Tower, at 800' the tallest building in England, and this exciting, newest, part of London in the old Docks area in the East End.

12) LONDON BY NIGHT: A guide to floodlit London.

13) LONDON'S SPECIAL CHURCHES: 23 of Sir Christopher Wren's superb 52 churches, built from 1670 to 1710, still survive. They are all beautiful, and many open to the public: I can advise. Other churches are even older, like Great St. Bartholomew's (from 1123 AD) where the church scenes in Shakespeare in Love and Four Weddings and a Funeral were filmed; St Helen's, Bishopsgate, 'The Westminster Abbey of the City', Bevis Marks Synagogue, and many more.

2] NEAR LONDON

Half-day (4 hours):

1) WINDSOR CASTLE: Standing over the River Thames for nearly a thousand years, this Royal Castle is a marvellous sight, and amazing to walk round inside. It seems to be the most popular destination for visitors outside London. We can tour the magnificent State Apartments, with their priceless collection of furniture and paintings (The Queen owns the largest and finest private Art Collection in the world); Queen Mary's Doll's House, perfect in every detail, one twelfth lifesize, down to the beer barrels and wine bottles. St George's Chapel, and its unique Gothic perpendicular architecture, and flags of the Knights of The Order of the Garter (good story here, from 1348 A.D). Price: £335.

ETON Village, with ETON school where Princes William and Harry attended, can be visited on the way, with super view of the Castle. Return, after great view of the south front of the Castle, along the River Thames, past Runnymede with The Magna Carta Memorial.

1a) LEGOLAND: For younger children, aged 4 - 10 or so, this play park is great fun, with safe rides, entertainments and refreshments. Superb models of sights of Europe made from Lego plastic building bricks. Only 10 minutes from Windsor Castle. 4 hours Price: £335, or join with Windsor in 7-8 hours: £440.

1b) SAVILL GARDEN: A lovely country garden in Windsor Great Park, combines well with Windsor. Prices as Legoland.

2) HAMPTON COURT PALACE: Also on the River Thames. Built by Cardinal Wolsey and King Henry VIII in the early 1500's from pretty Tudor red brick, this palace was extended by Sir Christopher Wren for King William and Mary in 1700. Set in formal gardens to South and West, and a Rose garden and Wilderness to the east (with the ancient Maze still operating), this palace boasts a fine Tudor Hall and gorgeous Chapel, with fun Tudor Kitchens below, as well as more of the Queen's unique art collection in the King William State Apartments.

4 hours price: £335. FULL DAY TOUR: Windsor, Eton, Hampton Court, 7-9 hours, with lunch stop: £420.

3) GREENWICH:

A) The Park at the top: The home of time - stand on the meridian line of 0 degrees longitude, one foot in the east and one in the west! See Christopher Wren's lovely Old Royal Observatory, and get one of the best views of London, including the Millennium Dome.

B) The Village below: London's Naval Base in Tudor times, and today we can visit The National Maritime Museum, Wren's magnificent Royal Naval College, and Inigo Jones's beautiful Queen's House (1600's). The great sailing ship, The Cutty Sark and Sir Francis Chichester's tiny yacht Gipsy Moth, the first yacht to be sailed around the world single-handed. Good Pubs, a fun Antiques and bric-a-brac Market, and a Hawksmoor Church. 4 hours: £305: 7-8 hours: £445.

4) KENWOOD HOUSE (WITH HAMPSTEAD): A really lovely 1700's Country House, designed by the elegant Robert Adam, just 30 minutes from Central London: standing on the top of Hampstead Heath, with great views over the city, it has a priceless collection of paintings by Vermeer, Rembrandt, Turner, Reynolds, and Gainsborough. Nearby is the fascinating and desirable village of Hampstead, with its old pubs, houses,

winding streets, good shops, the house of poet John Keats and Fenton House with its old musical instruments. Price: £315 half-day; full day: £445.

5) KEW GARDENS: only forty minutes from Central London, these Royal Botanic Gardens extend over 300 acres, with 50,000 different plants; sweeping lawns, tall trees, enormous hothouses, lovely flowers. 4 hours: £315 or 8 hours combined with Windsor Castle: £420.

6) LONDON AND WINDSOR: Half day in London, half day in Windsor: £440.

3] FROM LONDON IN A DAY

NORTH WEST OF LONDON

1) OXFORD: This photogenic 750 year old University city is a must, with its 'dreaming spires', cloistered Colleges, old Cathedral, Sir Christopher Wren's Sheldonian Theatre, The Bodleian Library, the Radcliffe Camera, Ashmolean Museum, and the home of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, and Harry Potter's Hogwarts Hall (based on my old college dining hall).

5 hours: £380; 8 hours: £420; 9 hours with Blenheim Palace: £445.

2) BLENHEIM PALACE: The grandest House in the South of England, with a knock-out view of the palace and its lake as you drive in. This has been the home of the Dukes of Marlborough for nearly 300 years, and was the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill, about whom there is a permanent exhibition. He is buried in the nearby churchyard. Superb furniture, tapestry, paintings, china; fun memorabilia of the Dukes; plus Model Railway, a Maze, a Tropical Butterfly House, shops, refreshments etc. The gorgeous village of Woodstock, with good pubs, restaurants and antique shops is next to the Palace.

5-6 hours: £400; 9 hours with Oxford: £480.

3) THE COTSWOLD COUNTRYSIDE: Some 200 square miles of countryside of "outstanding natural beauty"- with its rolling hills, pretty honey-coloured limestone houses, often with thatched roofs (see picture), enchanting streams and rivers, hedgerows, fields and flowers, fascinating villages, many lived in for a thousand years, many good food pubs, shops, and teahouses.

8 hours: £550; 9 hours with Blenheim or Oxford £580; or 10 hours with Stratford-on-Avon: £600.

4) STRATFORD-ON-AVON: The birthplace of the great William Shakespeare, recently voted The Man Of The Millennium. The actual house where he was born in 1564 is open to visit, and this busy market town is still full of attractive black and white half-timbered houses of the 1500 and 1600's, most of them associated with Will and his family. Also the church where he was baptised and buried, the school he almost certainly attended and Anne Hathaway's cottage are all worth seeing.

7 hours: £450; 9 hours with Oxford or the Cotswolds: £580; 10 hours with Warwick Castle: £600.

5) WARWICK CASTLE: The best castle in England as it rises dramatically sheer from the river, with its haunted Tower, its deep dungeon, its walls you can climb, its baronial hall and its frequent displays of medieval horse-riding Knights, falconry and archery. In the Earl's 17th to 19th Century apartments is a waxworks display of a 1900 House Party, including young Winston Churchill, and the castle being prepared for battle in 1471.

7 hours £460; join with Oxford or Blenheim or Stratford in 10 hours: £600.

WEST OF LONDON

6) BATH: The naturally hot springs have made this a much-loved Spa town for over two thousand years. The water still gushes out of the rock into the Roman Baths, which have been expertly excavated and restored for all to see. The city was beautifully rebuilt in the 1700's out of honey-coloured Bath stone. Visit the Jane Austen museum and Bath Abbey, in lovely Gothic Perpendicular style from 1500's. Sally Lunn's tea-room is still selling Bath Buns. Very good shops, including antiques.

7 hours £500; 9 hours with Stonehenge: £580 or 10 hours with Stonehenge and Avebury: £625 OR Salisbury OR Longleat House.

LONGLEAT HOUSE: A groundbreaking, lordly house when built in 1580, the home of the Marquesses of Bath. It has many paintings, and architectural wonders, and a Safari Park in the grounds.

7) STONEHENGE: Now a World Heritage Site. This is the oldest inhabited part of England, and still the land of mystery. These Standing Stones continue to fascinate and mystify. How? When? Why were they built? Answers to some questions have been found but the central puzzle remains. Also frequent Crop Circles appear in this area. Forty minutes North of Stonehenge is AVEBURY Stone Circle, quite different to Stonehenge – not so much built as arranged, and visitors are free to wander in and touch. Salisbury and Stonehenge were the setting for Rutherford's epic novel about England and the English, Sarum, highly recommended as background reading. 6 hours: £400.

7A) STRATFORD, COTSWOLDS, BATH AND STONEHENGE: Not for the faint-hearted, this tour is about 300 miles, but it does enable you to see all the above in one day. 12 hours: £850.

SOUTH WEST OF LONDON

8) SALISBURY: The Cathedral, with its soaring spire at 404' the tallest in England, was built in the 1200's, and has many interesting tombs, and one of the oldest working clocks in the world. The spacious 'Close' which surrounds it, has fine lawns, trees and houses dating back to the 1200's. The beautiful Chapter House has one of only four originals left of Magna Carta: good pub: some shops. 7 hours: £400; 9 hours with Stonehenge or Winchester: £500. 10 hours with Stonehenge and Winchester: £600.

9) WINCHESTER: This lovely historic City, set on the River Itchen, has also been inhabited for around two thousand years: it was the capital of England from the 800's AD to around 1100, notably under King Alfred the Great. The Cathedral, built 1079–1486, is one of the most interesting and atmospheric in the country. Nearby is the 600 year-old Winchester School. In the old Castle is the Great Hall with the huge Round Table, allegedly the one King Arthur's Knights sat around. The peaceful Hospital of St. Cross (a sort of religious retirement home just out of town) has a 12th Century Chapel, and still serves the 'Wayfarer's Dole' to hungry travellers. Lots of eateries in town and good shops. 7 hours: £380; or 8 hours with Jane Austen's House at Alton OR Portsmouth: £480; 9 hours with Salisbury: £500; OR 10 hours with Salisbury and Stonehenge: £600.

10) PORTSMOUTH: The home of the British Navy since 1500, the naval base today cares for 'The Historic Ships' including Lord Nelson's famous flagship HMS Victory, the hull of King Henry VIII's flagship the Mary Rose (with exhibition of artefacts), and the iron-hulled HMS Warrior from 1860. As well as the Royal Naval Museum (1500 - today): modern warships are often seen in the Harbour. The Cathedral is modern but incorporating two older churches in an unusual way: continuing the Naval theme the D Day Museum has the Overlord Embroidery.

8 hours: £480; can be joined with Wisley Garden OR Winchester OR Jane Austen's House at Alton, in 10 hours: £560.

11) WISLEY GARDEN: The home of the Royal Horticultural Society, this is a gardeners' paradise with lovely flowers to see at any time of year. Open all year round, (Sundays always members only – you can join, and then entry is free always): in winter the hothouse orchids are superb: in spring azaleas, lilies, rhododendrons, and wonderful bulbs: in summer roses, delphiniums. Excellent garden shop (with good, free advice on growing things) and good souvenir shop: pleasant eatery, sloping lawns, trees, water features – fantastic!

4 hours: £340; or with KEW GARDENS, 7 hours: £440.

11A) KEW GARDENS: The Royal Botanical Gardens, dating from 1760: lawns, trees, hothouses, every kind of flower, and only 30 - 40 minutes from Central London. 4 hours: £315; 7-8 hours with Windsor OR Hampton Court OR Wisley: £420.

SOUTH OF LONDON

12) BRIGHTON: The seaside resort for Londoners, since King George IV made it fashionable, with his incredible Royal Pavilion in 1820. This Royal Palace has been superbly restored - the most exotic building in England-where the Taj Mahal meets the Emperor of China in a Gothic fantasy! Sumptuous inside too. Plus Museum of Art Deco: antique shops (including militaria) and second-hand bookshops abound in the famous narrow streets, The Lanes, where the fishermen used to dry their nets. The fish restaurants are very good. 7 hours: £380: can combine with ARUNDEL CASTLE or PETWORTH HOUSE OR LEONARDSLEE GARDEN 9 -10 hours: £500.

ARUNDEL: A neat little town, dominated by THE CASTLE, part 12th Century, home of the premier Duke of England, The Duke of Norfolk.

PETWORTH: Pretty village dominated by Petworth House and Park, 17th Century "French Grand Style" house with very good art collection – Turner visited frequently.

SOUTH EAST OF LONDON

13) CHARTWELL: Sir Winston Churchill's much loved home from 1924 –1965. The house is kept much as he left it, full of memorabilia, and an exhibition of his paintings in his studio, the walls he built, the lakes he dug.

6 hours: £350; or join with Hever Castle, or Knole, or Ightham Mote or Penshurst Place, 8 hours: £440; or with Leeds Castle, 9 hours: £480.

14) HEVER CASTLE: Incredibly romantic moated castle, or fortified House from the 14th Century: bought by William Waldorf Astor in 1903 and superbly restored and refurnished in impeccable taste. Here Ann Boleyn, 2nd wife of King Henry VIII, grew up: memorabilia of her and waxworks of her family; plus Maze, topiary, lake and walled garden. Fine church in village and pub. 6 hours: £350, or 9 if joined with any sites as under Chartwell.

15) PENSURST PLACE: The unique and extraordinary Medieval Hall, with original chestnut-beamed roof, and dining tables, survives from 1340 AD. The house has been in the Sidney family, now Viscount De L'Isle, since 1552, with many portraits of the famous Elizabethan courtier, Sir Philip. Fine gardens; good village, with church and pub. 6 hours: £370. See Chartwell. for possible combinations.

16) KNOLE: The largest private House in England, set in rolling parkland, with deer: built in the 15th and 16th centuries, and remodelled by Sir Thomas Sackville, Earl of Dorset, in the 17th century. Furniture, many portraits by Van Dyck, Kneller, Gainsborough. Vita Sackville-West was born here (see Sissinghurst). 6 hours: £370. See Chartwell. for possible combinations

17) IGHTHAM MOTE: A secluded medieval Manor House, surrounded by a moat: less often visited, and less famous than many other great houses around these parts, but beautiful and being lovingly restored by The National Trust. 6 hours: £370. See Chartwell. for possible combinations.

18) LEEDS CASTLE: One of the most romantic castles in England, set in the middle of a lake: largely built by medieval Kings of England for their Queens, tastefully restored outside and refurbished inside by Lady Baillie in 1925-1939, it neatly combines ancient castle with modern home. Also landscaped grounds with waterfowl, plus Dog-Collar Museum, a flower garden, a Maze with a grotto and an aviary.

6 hours: £400: see Chartwell for some combinations. Can be joined with Canterbury, or Sissinghurst garden, in 9 hours: £480.

19) SISSINGHURST GARDEN: To many, the most beautiful garden in England: the personal creation of liberated, literary couple Vita Sackville-West and Sir Harold Nicolson who lived there from 1930 - 1960's In an old Elizabethan Manor House, it is famous for the "White Garden", its roses and every kind of flower. Entry by timed ticket, very busy in summer. 7 hours: £420: join with Leeds Castle, or Bodiam Castle, or Canterbury in 9 hours: £480.

20) BODIAM CASTLE: A well-preserved real tough stone castle of 1385 AD, surrounded by watery moat. Audio-visual presentation and small museum give impression of life in an old castle. Staircases and battlements can be explored, making it popular with children of all ages. 8 hours: £440; 9 hours with Great Dixter: £480.

21) GREAT DIXTER: Beautiful half-timbered 15th century Manor House, with a very English garden, fuchsias, clematis, peonies; all informally planted by Christopher Lloyd, gardening correspondent of The Guardian newspaper. 7 hours: £420.

22) There are a host of gardens, pretty villages, museums, and lovely countryside round here, including Rye and Battle (of Hastings - 1066). Ask for suggestions.

23) CANTERBURY: An important Roman, Saxon and medieval city, this old walled city is dominated by the beautiful Cathedral and its Bell Harry Tower. St. Augustine came here in 597 AD to convert the English, and the remains of his original Abbey can still be seen. St. Martin's Church nearby may be the oldest surviving Church in Europe. The small river Stour runs prettily through the City, with many old houses and friaries to be seen. The countryside round about in the County of Kent, 'the garden of England', is pretty, with old villages and good pubs.

7 hours: £460: 9 hours with Leeds Castle or Sissinghurst or Dover: £530.

24) DOVER: The 'Gateway to the Continent', or in olden days "The Key of England", guarded by the castle on the hill above the town. The Castle has a fine 12th century Keep, or central part, like the Tower of London, and the grounds can be explored. On a clear day the coast of France is visible across the Channel, just 17 miles away. A guided tour takes you down into the White Cliffs. The Dover Museum and White Cliffs Experience in the town give the history.

8 hours: £480, or 9 with Canterbury or Leeds Castle: £530.

NORTH OF LONDON

25) CAMBRIDGE: Visit King's College Chapel, one of the top ten sites in England, and see "the backs" (of the colleges), preferably from a boat on the river. See Trinity College where the real Chariots of Fire race round the Court was run, and the Wren Library, and where Prince Charles studied. Admire Queen's, the prettiest college where Erasmus lectured in the 1500's.

6 hours: £400; 8 hours: £460: or join with Audley End House, or Duxford Aerodrome, (Imperial War Museum) or Ely in 9-10 hours: £530.

26) AUDLEY END HOUSE: This is a sensational drive-by even if we don't go in; a grand 1600's house seen across vast lawns and a river. Inside is a lovely Jacobean hall, and Robert Adam designed rooms upstairs, elegant as ever. (Restricted opening).

27) DUXFORD AERODROME: A World War II airfield converted into a lively Air Force Museum as part of the Imperial War Museum. There is usually an old plane taking off or landing. There are special Air Shows every summer in addition to the 5 huge hangars of WW II planes. Recently opened is architect Lord Foster's spectacular American Air Museum in Britain with Liberators, Thunderbolts, B-29, B-52, Super Sabre and more. 6 hours: £380 or join as above with Cambridge.

28) ELY: The Cathedral with its uniquely beautiful Central Octagon. Oliver Cromwell's house of 1640 is pretty, as is the River Ouse. 9 hours with Cambridge: £530.

29) CONSTABLE COUNTRY: A must for fans of John Constable, the most English of painters, (The Haywain in the National Gallery, London, most famously). The River Stour 'made him a painter', and the National Trust now looks after Bridge Cottage on the river. You can stroll past Flatford Mill, Valley Farm and Willy Lot's Cottage and the exact spot where he painted his Haywain, in the Vale of Dedham. Nearby is East Bergholt, where he was born., Stratford St Mary, and Stoke-by-Nayland are other pretty villages he painted.

7 hours: £420; 9 hours with pretty Suffolk county villages, including Sudbury, where the painter Gainsborough was born: £530; 10 hours with Cambridge: £600.

30) ALTHORP: The house is open from July to September only. The country seat of the Earl Spencers for 500 years, this is the burial place of Diana, Princess of Wales. There is a museum about Diana's life and work. We cannot visit her grave, but view it across the lake. Great Brington village nearby is pretty, and the church has Spencer Family tombs, and the beginning of the Washington family connection (see Sulgrave). There's a good pub too.

7 hours: £400; 8 hours if adding Great. Brington: £440; 9 hours if adding Sulgrave: £480.

31) SULGRAVE MANOR: Northeast of the Cotswolds, Southwest of ALTHORP, lies this fascinating old house, the home of the ancestors of George Washington. Made of Cotswold-type stone outside, parts are restored inside to their 16th century appearance: many memorabilia of George Washington are to be seen: (admission only with tour run by the director): pretty gardens, and village with church with Washington tombs.

Complicated opening hours, please check with me. 7 hours: £400; 9 hours with Althorp, or Oxford, or Blenheim Palace: £490.

IMPORTANT NOTE: PRICES ARE PER VEHICLE, WITH MY DRIVER-GUIDING SERVICES, NOT PER PERSON, AND ARE ALL-INCLUSIVE,, WITH THE SINGLE EXCEPTION OF ENTRANCE FEES TO SITES.

Each extra hour: £50. Each extra mile: £1.60.

Transfers to and from airports and seaports available on request. These can be combined with visiting sights on the way. Tours to any site of your choice not mentioned above, quoted on application.

Extended touring: up to 150 miles per day, 8 hours: £500. Guide's overnight expenses at cost to maximum £100 per night.

TO BOOK:

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PAYMENT: Payment can be made by personal cheque in dollars or travellers cheque. Regrettably credit cards cannot be accepted. Please send 25% of Tour price as booking fee when your booking is confirmed. Cancellation charges: more than 28 days notice, 25% booking fee normally returnable: between 28-8 days, booking fee not returnable: 7 days to 48 hours 50% payable: 48 - 24 hours 75%: on the day 100%.