

Norfolk Explorer



Monday 24 - Friday 28 April 2023

The wide open spaces of present day East Anglia give little indication of the region's rich past, a time when Norfolk was one of England's most densely populated and wealthiest areas. During the Middle Ages, a vibrant economy based on trade and farming resulted in the creation of beautiful churches and fine buildings in the towns. Wealth and power went hand in hand as the centuries passed, and politics also loomed large in East Anglia. For those at the top of the political tree, in many cases men from merchant backgrounds, the system of patronage enabled the building of some of the country's most magnificent country houses, each with its own glorious architectural embellishments and splendid art collections.

MONDAY 24 APRIL 2023

We will depart from our local pick up point in Beckenham and travel by coach to **Norwich**. On arrival there will be some free time to take lunch before we meet our local guide for a **walking tour** of **Norwich**. Located on the River Wensum, Norwich is one of the best preserved cities in Britain. The arrival of Flemish settlers in the 12th century led to the establishment of a thriving textile industry and Norwich soon became a very prosperous market town and the second city of England. Remnants of the city's prosperity remain and it boasts one of the finest medieval streets in England. Our tour will include a **guided visit** to the parish church of **St Peter Mancroft**, which is the largest church in Norwich built in the mid 1400s.

Following our tour we will check into the 3 star **George Hotel** for 4 nights' **dinner, bed and breakfast accommodation**. There will be some time to freshen up before **dinner** is served in the hotel restaurant.

TUESDAY 25 APRIL 2023

After an early breakfast at the hotel we will join our coach and travel to Wells-next-the-Sea for a visit to **Holkham Hall**. One of England's finest Palladian country houses, Holkham Hall has been the seat of the Earls of Leicester and home of the Coke family for almost 250 years. Built by William Kent in 1734-61 for the first Earl, it is a fine example of the 18th century Palladian style. The central block of State Rooms is linked by corridors to the four symmetrical blocks of rooms for ordinary use. The most striking room is the Marble Hall where Kent used fine English alabaster to magnificent and sumptuous effect. Holkham is renowned for its fabulous collection of art-classical Greek and Roman statuary; paintings by Van Dyck, Rubens, Claude, Poussin and Gainsborough; a copy of Michelangelo's lost Bathers cartoon; and original furniture. The 3,000-acre park, with its mile-long lake, was landscaped by 'Capability' Brown in 1762. On arrival we will have a **private guided tour** of the hall with an expert Hall Steward, followed by some free time to take lunch. **Tea/coffee and biscuits** will be served prior to departure.

This afternoon we will travel by coach to Blakeney for a **boat trip to Blakeney Point**. This coastal area features uninterrupted views of the beautiful North Norfolk coastline. It is home to both the Blakeney National Nature Reserve and a colony of around 500 Grey and Common seals. *Please note that the April 2023 tide times have not yet been published. These will determine what time we are able to include this excursion within the itinerary.*

Late afternoon we will return to the hotel by coach.

Dinner this evening will be served in the hotel restaurant.

WEDNESDAY 26 APRIL 2023

After breakfast at the hotel we will travel by coach to **Blickling Hall** (National Trust), a great Jacobean house dating from the early 17th century. Built in red brick with a gabled façade and elegant corner turrets, the house was greatly altered in the 1760s. The State Rooms include the Peter the Great Room with fine Russian tapestry, a 123 ft Long Gallery with exceptional Jacobean plaster ceiling, and the State Bedroom. The formal garden dates from 1729 with a temple, an orangery, a park and a lake. This will be a free-flow visit with time to take independent lunch.

We will continue by coach to **Alysham Station** where we will board the **Bure Valley Railway**, a heritage railway line built on the trackbed of the former Great Eastern Railway between Wroxham and Aylsham. We will travel by **steam train** to **Wroxham Station**.

From Wroxham we will re-join our coach for onward travel. This afternoon we will visit **East Ruston Old Vicarage Gardens**. Alan Gray and Graham Robeson incorporated innovative design and clever planting when they laid out their gardens around the Arts and Crafts Vicarage more than fifteen years ago, and today the site covers an area of 32 acres. Following an **introductory talk** from Alan Gray there will be free time for individual exploration of the gardens. At the end of the afternoon we will return to the hotel and **dinner** will be served in the hotel restaurant.

THURSDAY 27 APRIL 2023

After breakfast at the hotel we will travel by coach to Sandringham for a visit to **Sandringham House**.

Hidden in the heart of 60 acres of beautiful wooded grounds, this royal country retreat is still maintained in the style of Edward and Alexandra. The main ground floor rooms are full of treasured family ornaments, portraits and furniture, while the old stable-block now houses a Museum. In the gardens there are informal glades, dells, lawns and lakes, bordered by colourful shrubs, flowers and magnificent specimen trees. This will be a free-flow visit of the house and gardens, and room stewards will be available throughout. There will be some free time to take lunch prior to our departure.

This afternoon we will visit **Bircham Windmill**. The original structure was built in 1846 and worked for nearly 100 years before it fell into a dilapidated state in the mid 19th century. Extensive renovations began in 1979, and the windmill that stands today is now fully restored and in working order. Visitors are invited to explore the history and character of an authentic Norfolk Corn Mill. This will be a free-flow visit with time to explore the windmill, gardens and museum. There is also an on-site Tea Rooms where refreshments can be taken.

Following our visit we will return to Norwich and **dinner** will be served in the hotel restaurant.

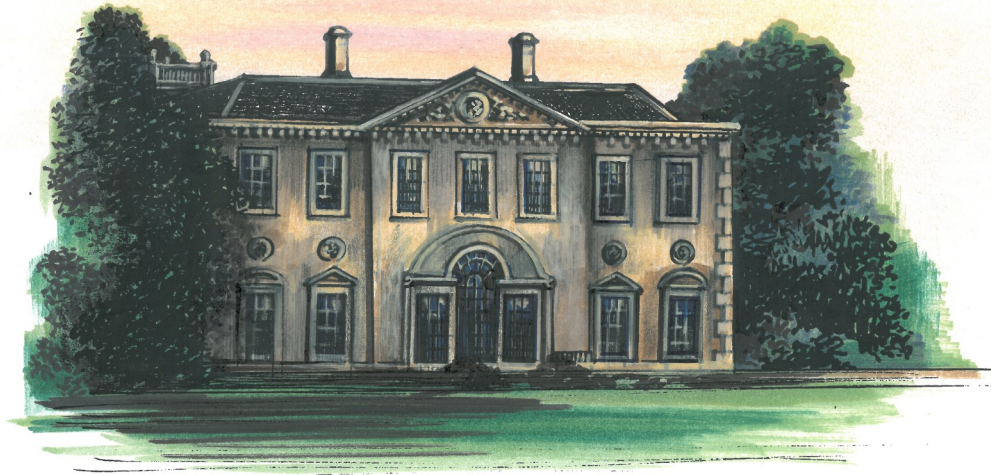
FRIDAY 28 APRIL 2023

We will check out of our hotel after breakfast and begin our journey home. We will travel by coach to Ely for **guided tours of Ely Cathedral** and the **Stained Glass Museum**. Once known as 'Eel Island', this beautiful city with its magnificent Romanesque Cathedral overlooks the vast expanse of the fens. Originally founded by St Etheldrada, a Saxon Princess, the towering cathedral dates from 1083 and is surrounded by superb ecclesiastical and domestic buildings. The Norman Transitional style of the late 11th century is clearly visible in the striking West front with its Early English Galilee Porch at its base. Among the cathedral's later embellishments are the delightful 14th century Lady Chapel, and the 16th century Chantry of Bishop West where medieval and classical motifs are combined. There will be free time to take lunch in The Almonry Restaurant prior to departure. We will re-join our coach and continue our journey homeward, arriving in Beckenham in the evening.

As this tour has been arranged many months in advance the final itinerary may vary from the above.

Please note that this tour involves a reasonable amount of walking and participants must be able to walk at a pace to keep up with the group. It is therefore unsuitable for those with mobility problems.

Please note that the George Hotel does not have a lift.



The Arts Society Beckenham

Practical Details

TOUR PRICE

£915 per person sharing a twin/double room

£50 single room supplement for the first 15 single rooms

(thereafter a single room supplement of £80 will apply)

PRICE INCLUDES

Executive coach travel throughout
4 nights' dinner, bed and breakfast accommodation
Tea, coffee and biscuits at Holkham Hall
Guided walking tour of Norwich with a local
Blue Badge Guide
Guided visit of The Church of St Peter Mancroft
Private guided tour of Holkham Hall
Boat trip to Blakeney Point
Travel on the Bure Valley Railway
(Wroxham to Aylsham)
Introductory talk at East Ruston Old Vicarage Gardens
Guided tour of Ely Cathedral
Guided tour of the Stained Glass Museum
All entrance charges and fees (excluding
National Trust properties)
Porterage

*Please note charges to National Trust properties are not included
as these are free of charge to National Trust members upon
production of a valid membership card.*

HOTEL DETAILS

4 nights' dinner, bed and breakfast accommodation at:

The George Hotel (3 star)

10 Arlington Lane

Newmarket Road

Norwich, NR2 2DA

www.georgehotel.co.uk

MINIMUM NUMBERS

The price of the tour is based on a minimum of 25
paying participants.

FINANCIAL PROTECTION

ABTOT provides protection for your booking as set out
in the Financial Protection clause of our
Booking Conditions.

OPTIONAL TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is not mandatory for the UK, but we
strongly recommend that you have adequate insurance in
place to cover any COVID-related issues. We have
arranged a scheme with specialists Brokersure Limited
who are fully authorised and regulated by the FCA (firm
reference number 501719) full details of which can be
found on the FCA website www.fca.org.uk. Please call
Brokersure on 0330 880 3625 for a quote.

*Please ensure that any policy has adequate cover for COVID-19
related issues.*

PAYMENT DETAILS

A deposit of **£275** is due **as soon as possible** and no later
than **Friday 09 December 2022**. Please note that as
places on the tour are limited, bookings will be accepted
on a 'first come, first served' basis. The final balance will
be due by **Friday 27 January 2023**.

BOOKING & FINAL TRAVEL DETAILS

To reserve your place on the tour, please send your
completed booking form and payment to Heritage Group
Travel. You will receive a confirmation of your booking.
The final travel details (itinerary, hotel details and luggage
label) will be available approximately 10-14 days
prior to travel.



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www.grouptravel.co.uk

