



VIRGINIA WOOLF, THE BLOOMSBURY GROUP AND THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE TOUR

You will explore the world of Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), the iconic writer at the centre of the Bloomsbury Group and visit the key sites connected with Virginia and members of the Bloomsbury Group, in addition to discovering the beautiful English countryside.

Day One

Arrive into London and take the **Heathrow Express into central London**, then an independent taxi to your hotel, which will be your base for the **next 2 nights**. The remainder of the day is at leisure in London for independent sightseeing or to relax after your long journey.

Day Two

Meet your **tour guide for a walking tour of the main London locations associated with the Bloomsbury Group** to include Bloomsbury Square, Gordon Square, Fitzroy Square, Lytton Street and other locations associated with the Stephen sisters, Vanessa and Virginia, the Omega Workshops and the homes of Virginia Woolf. On then for a visit to the **British Museum's** Reading Room, where Virginia and so many other famous writers and thinkers once worked. The evening is at leisure to perhaps attend a theatre performance.

Day Three

Collect your hire car and depart London for the journey into Kent for a visit to **Sissinghurst Castle and Garden**, Vita Sackville West's house and garden, is home to the first hand press used by Virginia Woolf in the early days of the Hogarth Press. Vita Sackville West created the Castle and Garden with her husband, Harold Nicolson, between 1930 and 1938. It is now a museum and one of the most beautiful gardens in Europe. There will be an opportunity to visit Vita's library and writing room and the garden, which has ten separate and different gardens. This will be followed by a visit to **Berwick Church**, decorated by Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, Quentin and Angelica Bell. The decoration of the church was the idea of Bishop Bell of Chichester. He was keen to encourage a closer association between the Church and the arts, and also wanted to continue the tradition of wall paintings in Sussex churches. The scheme to decorate Berwick church was promoted by Sir Charles Reilly, professor of Architecture at Liverpool University from 1904 - 1933. He knew Duncan Grant's aunt and recommended Grant as a suitable artist, experienced in creating murals. Grant teamed up with Vanessa and her children, Quentin and Angelica, to work on the church which was only a few miles from their home at Charleston. You will then visit **Charleston**, the home of Vanessa Bell, who lived here with her fellow artist and lover Duncan Grant, the writer David Garnett, her sons and an assortment of animals from 1916. The walls are still decorated with their murals and much of the original furniture remains. There are paintings and lithographs by Grant, Vanessa, Fry, Picasso, Derain, Walter Sickert, Nina Hamnett and others in the gallery. **Overnight in the area.**

Day Four

Morning visit to **Firle Village**, to view **Little Talland House**, which was rented by Virginia Stephen from January 1911 to January 1912 and now a private residence, before stopping at **Firle Churchyard**, to view the graves of Vanessa and Quentin Bell and Duncan Grant. On then for a visit to **Monk's House**, the home of Leonard and Virginia Woolf who moved to the house in 1919, and this is where Virginia Woolf worked on *To The Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928) and *The Waves* (1931). Virginia's ashes are buried in the garden, which remains much as the Woolf's left it. Leonard lived here until his death in 1969. Take the drive to the **New Forest**, which has changed little since William the Conqueror gave it his special protection over 900 years ago. The unique landscape has been moulded by centuries of grazing by commoner's animals, and you can still see their ponies eating by the roadside, pigs foraging for beechnuts, and donkeys ambling along the streets. Most of the forest is made up of endless open heathland. Check-in at your **accommodation in the New Forest for overnight.**

Day Five

After breakfast, take the **New Forest Open Top Bus Tour**, for an opportunity to sit back and relax, to experience rich open countryside, beautiful coastline, historic villages and all that England's smallest National Park has to offer. You will then take the ferry to the **Isle of Wight** and then drive to Freshwater Bay. In 1923 Virginia Woolf wrote her only play, *Freshwater*, a comedy in three acts, concerning her great aunt, the pioneering photographer, Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-79). The play is set amidst the Victorian bohemia of Dimbola Lodge, where Virginia Woolf's parents first met. Amongst the local poets, novelists and artists at that time were Alfred, Lord Tennyson, G.F. Watts, Ellen Terry, Lady Annie (Thackeray) Ritchie, and William Allingham. In January 1935, Virginia rewrote the play and it was performed in Vanessa's studio at 8 Fitzroy Street by and for members of the Bloomsbury Group. You will also have the opportunity of visiting **Dimbola Lodge**, now a museum with photographic exhibitions and nearby **Farringford House**, Tennyson's former home, which is now a hotel. Check-in at your **accommodation on the Isle of Wight for overnight.**

Day Six

Enjoy the day at leisure to explore the Island and this could include a bus tour of the Island, or perhaps a visit the preserved Victorian town of Bonchurch, where Charles Dickens spent his holiday and wrote parts of *David Copperfield* (1849-50). Late afternoon take the **ferry back to the mainland** and then take the drive to **Winchester for overnight.**

Day Seven

Depart Winchester for the journey to Windsor, stopping along the way for a visit to **Jane Austen's House in Chawton**, a 17th century house where Jane Austen lived from 1809 to 1817 and it was here that she wrote and revised her six novels, including *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*. On arrival in Windsor enjoy a visit **Windsor Castle**, the largest and oldest occupied castle in the world and is one of the official residences of Her Majesty, The Queen and the castle's dramatic site encapsulates 900 years of British history. Take the drive to Heathrow Airport, to drop off your hire car and then take the airport bus to your **airport hotel for overnight.**

Day Eight

To the airport for your return flight home.