

# Magnificent and Magical: Blenheim Palace [C1]

Situato nel cuore di Woodstock, nell'Oxfordshire, Blenheim Palace è una testimonianza vivente dello splendore dell'architettura barocca inglese. Emily Spencer, responsabile delle attività, svela i segreti ben custoditi del palazzo, invitando il pubblico a partecipare alla sua storia.



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Located in Woodstock, Oxfordshire, the 18th-century country house Blenheim Palace is a masterpiece of English Baroque architecture. The birthplace of Winston Churchill, it is one of the largest of its kind in England and, [despite](#) its name, is the only palace in England not directly associated with the Royal Family. Today, palace, park and gardens are all open to the public. The two-thousand-acre park includes formal gardens and pleasure grounds with their delightful [winding pathways](#), temples and cascades. To find out more, Speak Up took a tour with Emily Spencer, Head of Operations at Blenheim Palace. As she explained, the formal gardens were created by Henry Wise, and simultaneously Lancelot “Capability” Brown landscaped the park in a natural English style innovative for the time. **Emily Spencer** (English accent): So the main area of of the palace is about two thousand acres. So there's a lot of wider parkland, and the finest view in England, that is what

was created. Which is incredible and and that is something that all our guests enjoy — we've actually got three temples [dotted](#) around the formal gardens... We've got a secret garden that was set up by one of the former Dukes as a private garden and now it's available for our guests to come and explore. And actually that garden, we've recently done quite a lot of work in to really restore it back to its absolute glory. It's absolutely beautiful... It's sort of [a] [secluded](#) garden that you come across and then you're sort of lost amongst [ponds](#) and pathways and it's... it's really quite magical. And of course at the bottom of our formal gardens we've also got our cascades, so where the lakes feed down to the [watercourse](#) at the very bottom and there's a beautiful gushing cascade.

## CHURCHILL'S LEGACY

In 1908, Winston Churchill took his future wife Clementine Hozier on a walk through the Rose Garden at Blenheim. Caught in a [rain shower](#), they [sheltered](#) in the Temple of Diana, where Churchill proposed to her. Theirs was an affectionate if intense marriage, as Churchill was British prime minister during World War Two. The temple and the Rose Garden can still be visited today, along with a small memorial area dedicated to Churchill. **Emily Spencer:** In 1874, and it was really during a [gathering](#) and a bit of a party, Winston Churchill was born, as a bit of a surprise almost. It wasn't exactly planned, but they were regular guests to the palace. Born here in one of our rooms that you can visit today. So he visited regularly as a child. Of course he then came and proposed to his wife Clementine Churchill. That proposal happened here at Blenheim in our temple of Diana. And of course he's [buried](#) today in Blaydon, the village that is next to our land. So he had that connection all the way through, from birth, right through to his death in 1965.

## ON SCREEN

Blenheim has worn many different hats. During World War Two, the British government [commissioned](#) many country estates for the war effort, and Blenheim was the site of one of the sections of the British Intelligence

Service, MI5. Spencer explains that the palace has also provided a [backdrop](#) for movies and series in a wide range of genres. **Emily Spencer:** During the Second World War, we had MI5 based here for a period of time. In more recent years we were one of the sites for James Bond's Spectre. So we've had James Bond here, we have had Mission Impossible film with us. We have had the BFG... All manner of different things. Quite recently, and people might be seeing us currently on Netflix, in Queen Charlotte.

## RE-ESTABLISHING LINKS

For years, English country estates were the [lifeblood](#) of the surrounding towns, economically speaking. It was very common for estates to provide local employment, land for agriculture and general financial support. Throughout the 20th century, social orders were [overturned](#) and many such estates [fell into disrepair](#) or were even destroyed. In the 1980s, cultural associations began to try to preserve some of these estates, among them Blenheim Palace, and re-establish their relevance to wider society. Spencer talks about how this mission [plays out](#) today. **Emily Spencer:** We recognise [that], as an estate, we have to work and we want to work with all the communities around us. It's really important... that's always been the case and we want to ensure we do that in the most modern way possible. So if you live in Woodstock or Bladen, which both connect to the wider boundaries of Blenheim, you get a complementary walking pass. So you can walk the grounds. You can go from one village to the other. You can use the grounds for your exercise. We want to make sure that we make that all available. We have schools within the local area who we give free workshops to. So we give free entry to the schools.

## A LIVING LANDMARK

Blenheim's staff is committed to the palace being a pillar in the community that is welcoming and accessible, as well as grand and historic. **Emily Spencer:** It's been designed to have an impact and to make you feel, I suppose, the magnificence of it. But we recognise that, and to balance that we want to make it very friendly. So it shouldn't be a scary experience, it has

to be [awe-inspiring](#) yes, but actually you want it to be a welcoming experience. And we want it to be memorable for all the right reasons.

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# Glossary

- **watercourse** = corso d'acqua
- **gathering** = festa, riunione
- **fell into disrepair** = cadere in disuso
- **overturned** = capovolgere
- **despite** = nonostante
- **commissioned** = commissionare
- **backdrop** = sfondo
- **lifeblood** = fonte di vita
- **sheltered** = ripararsi
- **buried** = seppellire
- **winding pathways** = sentieri serpeggianti
- **secluded** = appartato
- **ponds** = laghetti
- **rain shower** = acquazzone
- **dotted** = sparsi
- **plays out** = svolgere
- **awe-inspiring** = impressionante