

Chawton Cottage: Jane Austen's House Museum [C1]

Sei fan di Jane Austen? Ecco la meta del tuo prossimo viaggio in Inghilterra: Chawton Cottage, la casa dove Jane Austen trascorse i suoi ultimi anni di vita e che oggi è un prezioso museo.

Built over five hundred years ago, the house now known as Jane Austen's House began as a **farmhouse** and later served as a **coaching inn** (a place where horses are changed on long journeys by **horse-drawn carriage**.) In 1809, Jane Austen's brother, Edward Austen Knight, offered the house to his mother and sisters, providing them with a permanent residence on his Chawton **estate**. It was here that Austen revised her earlier novels and wrote new ones, including Mansfield Park, Emma and Persuasion, the latter published posthumously in December 1817, five months after her death. Since opening to the public as Jane Austen's House Museum in 1949, the site, informally called Chawton **Cottage**, has been dedicated to preserving the legacy of the author. The museum holds a collection of personal artefacts, including Austen's writing table, jewellery, letters and even a **lock of her hair**. It is a **cherished** literary heritage site, and visitors from all over the world come here to view first editions of her novels and admire **furnishings** that reflect the domestic life of the early 19th century, as museum officer Rebecca Wood told Speak Up. **Rebecca Wood (English accent):** The house is where she lived for the last eight years of her life, but also, most excitingly, where she either wrote or revised all six of the books. And one of our absolute treasures is that we have her writing table. It's a tiny little wooden table; you'd probably only fit sort of one **sheet** of paper on it, it's really small. And that sits in the corner of the dining room and that's really special, for visitors to see the actual little tiny table where she sat and wrote all these novels. We've also got other things like pieces of her jewellery. So we've got two topaz **cross necklaces** that were owned by Jane and her sister, and it's lovely because they were **gifted** by their younger brother, Charles, during his time in the Navy, they were **gifted** to the sisters. And then later on, in the novel Mansfield Park, there's a **plot line** where a sister is given a cross necklace by her younger brother, who's just joined the Navy as well. So there are nice

objects where we can see the real one, the original one, and also trace how it inspired something in a novel. We've got a beautiful patchwork that was sewn by Jane, and her mother and sister, and it's so lovely 'cause you can see the individual stitches on it and sort of wonder "Were those ones Jane's, or were they Cassandra's?"

HOME LAYOUT

The house comprises eight main rooms across two floors, including Jane's bedroom, the kitchen, the dining room, and the drawing room, where Jane read aloud to her family and their guests. Surrounding the house is a traditional English garden with flower beds, a herb garden and a small orchard carefully maintained to reflect the Georgian period. **Rebecca Wood:** Jane Austen wrote loads of letters during her lifetime but only about 161 survive. But in those letters, when they're living in Chawton, she is constantly mentioning going and visiting people or having people come round. The family were very social, the neighbours were coming and visiting, family members are coming and visiting. She was very fond of walking, like some of her heroines. So she would often walk around the sort of woods and the area around Chawton. Her brother Edward owned Chawton House, which is a big manor house at the other end of the village, so when they were there for the summer she would go and visit them. The Austen ladies were quite self-sufficient. They had a big garden with orchards and fruit and vegetables growing, herb gardens, medicinal things growing as well. The village is really beautiful all the way through the year as well, in summer and all the way through to winter. So yeah, lots of outdoors and walking when she could.

YOUNGER GENERATIONS

And, as Wood explains, a trip to the museum can make younger generations feel connected to Jane Austen, whose wit and intelligence remain appreciated today. **Rebecca Wood:** Visiting the house is obviously a good way to walk through the room she's been in. It makes Jane Austen feel a bit more approachable. I think often the name Jane Austen can be quite

intimidating, and you sort of forget that she's a real woman that was alive two **hundred-odd** years ago, and this is the house she lived in, and here are objects that she's handled or made and things like that. If you want to know more about this topic, read the article Jane Austen's 250th Anniversary.

Glossary

- **cherished** = adorare
- **sheet** = foglio
- **cross necklaces** = crocifissi
- **gifted** = regalare
- **sewn** = cucire
- **stitches** = punti
- **coaching inn** = locanda per diligenze
- **lock of her hair** = ciocca di capelli
- **fond of** = essere appassionato di, essere amante di
- **hundred-odd** = cento e passa
- **drawing room** = salotto, soggiorno
- **flower beds** = aiuole
- **farmhouse** = cascina, fattoria
- **approachable** = accessibile, alla mano
- **come round** = fare visita
- **manor house** = casa padronale
- **outdoors** = attività all'aperto
- **wit** = arguzia
- **estate** = tenuta, proprietà
- **Cottage** = casa di campagna
- **plot line** = trama
- **trace** = risalire
- **orchard** = frutteto
- **horse-drawn carriage** = carrozze trainate da cavalli
- **furnishings** = arredamento