

Title:

Gracious Living, by Brenda Watkinson

Word Count:

548

Summary:

Be it a ruined cliff-top castle, a royal palace or an inhabited stately home, a visit to one of Britains numerous historic buildings can offer a fascinating insight into her national heritage and social history. There are literally thousands of historic buildings open to the public in Britain, with many more opening their gates to visitors each year. While rates and facilities vary between properties, most are happy to accommodate the special needs of groups, offering discounted rates.

Keywords:

Group Travel Tours ,Singles Group Travel, Travel Tour Groups, Corporate Travel Planning, Tourism Destination Marketing, Travel Planning Business, Small Group Adventure Travel, Tourism Marketing Plan,

Article Body:

Be it a ruined cliff-top castle, a royal palace or an inhabited stately home, a visit to one of Britains numerous historic buildings can offer a fascinating insight into her national heritage and social history. There are literally thousands of historic buildings open to the public in Britain, with many more opening their gates to visitors each year. While rates and facilities vary between properties, most are happy to accommodate the special needs of groups, offering discounted rates, specialist tours, out-of-hours visits and special events ranging from flower shows and classic car rallies to historical re-enactments and open air theatre.

The Royal Residences

One of the capitals most famous royal residences is Buckingham Palace, which has served as the official London residence of Britains sovereigns since 1837. Daytime and evening guided tours are available to groups during August and September, focusing on the State Rooms and extensive art collection.

Another official residence of the Queen, Windsor Castle, is the largest occupied castle in the world and has been a royal palace and fortress for over 900 years. Private evening tours of the castle give exclusive access to the State

Apartments with their treasures from the Royal Collection. A new tour, available to pre-booked groups only, provides a chance to see the medieval Great Kitchen, normally closed to the public.

In the private Home Park of Windsor Castle, Frogmore House & Garden has been a country residence of various monarchs since the 17th century and was one of Queen Victorias favorite retreats. Guided tours are available from early August to late September.

In Scotland, Holyroodhouse is the Queens official residence. Situated at the end of the Royal Mile, a visit to the Palace can be combined with the Queens Gallery and the Royal Yacht Britannia on A royal day out in Edinburgh group package, which can be booked through any of the attractions.

A program of themed special interest tours can be arranged at Hampton Court Palace in Surrey. Led by an expert guide, topics include 'Renaissance Paintings, Life at the Tudor Court, Feeding the Court, Tudor Music and The Historic Gardens.

Kensington Palace in London was the birthplace and childhood home of Queen Victoria, and still accommodates the offices and private apartments of a number of members of the Royal Family. The rooms are furnished with items from the Royal Collection and groups can make their way around the palace with the help of an audio guide.

Also in central London, the Tower of London, founded a millennium ago and expanded upon over the centuries, is perhaps best known as the repository of the crown jewels. Visiting groups can choose between an audio guide and a private tour.

Groups may also book a private guided tour of the Banqueting House at Whitehall, where the magnificent Rubens ceiling is of particular note.

Apsley House, the London palace of the 1st Duke of Wellington, houses the Dukes collection of paintings, porcelain, silver, sculpture, furniture, medals and memorabilia. Exclusive group tours can be arranged for evenings and Mondays.

Another English Heritage property, Marble Hill House, was built for Henrietta Howard, mistress of King George I. The beautiful 18th century Palladian villa boasts extravagantly gilded rooms, reflecting her lavish lifestyle.

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