The Gardens and Castles of Scotland

May 16 – 28, 2016

In 2013 we had a delightful tour which visited some of the most beautiful gardens and castles that Scotland has to offer. This trip was a smashing success, according to our group, and we’ve been asked to consider another journey there, this time in the springtime, to take advantage of the spectacular beauty of the azaleas and rhododendrons in the spring. As a result, we’ve put together an itinerary that encompasses some of the gardens and castles that we toured in 2013, but we’ve added some new wrinkles to the tour, some new sites and gardens.

We begin by touring gardens on the Isle of Bute, off the west coast of Scotland, visiting three great gardens – Mount Stewart, Ascog Hall and Ardencraig. Continuing on along the rugged western shore, we’ll visit Benmore Garden, Crarae Garden and Arduaine. Our journey continues to the beautifully picturesque Isle of Skye, so often noted for its stark beauty and rugged landscape. We’ll spend the day leisurely touring the Isle with many photo stops including a visit to Dunvegan Castle, the home of the MacDonald clan.

We’ll visit one of Scotland’s most treasured and talked about gardens – Inverewe Gardens, clinging to a rugged outcropping of rock on the northwest coast of Scotland. This garden is a testament to the tenacity and perseverance of the builders of the garden, who literally had to hand carry buckets of soil in from some distance away in order to provide the basis for the premier garden that was established here. This garden will have you shaking your head in amazement at the landscape architecture required for its construction.

In Inverness, we’ll cruise on Loch Ness, allegedly the home of the mysterious monster so often sighted in the 20th century (but never really seen)! We’ll also explore Urquhart Castle along the shore of Loch Ness, and in addition, we’ll have free time to explore the lovely town of Inverness with our hotel located in the heart of the city.

En route to the garden city of Aberdeen, outside of Inverness, we visit the historic battlefield of Culloden, site of the defeat of the Jacobite army by the British forces in the mid-18th century which ended Scotland’s quest for its independence (save for last year’s referendum).

Pitmedden Garden, with its beautiful topiary and stunning parterre gardens, along with David Welch’s Winter Garden and Crathes Castle, are on our itinerary in and around Aberdeen. In Pitlochery, we’ll visit the Explorer’s Garden. In the eighteenth century plant hunting became a profession that sent individuals on voyages round the world to discover and collect new plants. This garden dramatizes these explorations and the explorers involved. The next morning we’ll tour Drummond Castle, a gem of a garden which received rave reviews on our last tour.

Our last stop is Edinburgh, with its famed castle and Royal Botanic Garden. All in all, this is a delightful tour featuring something old from the last tour, along with some new places to explore. And if you make your reservation and deposit before October 31, you can take advantage of our early booking discount offer. We have every reason to believe that we are going to have a full house on this tour, so make plans to join us early and take advantage of the booking discount offer.

Tour Price: $3,795 land only
EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT--$3,695 if you book by October 31.
Tour cost is exclusive of airfare, airline taxes and fuel surcharges.
Prices are per person, based on double occupancy. Single supplement $950 extra.
TOUR ITINERARY

Monday, May 16
Depart on your overnight flight from U.S. to Glasgow

Tuesday, May 17
Upon arrival in Glasgow, our tour starts with a visit to the Glasgow Botanic Garden, followed by a visit to Greenbank Garden, a lovely introduction to the gardens of Scotland. After our visit, we’ll have lunch and afterwards check into beautiful Glednock House Hotel for dinner and overnight. L D

Wednesday, May 18
Today we cross to the Isle of Bute by ferry. After our short ride, we visit the gardens at Ascog Hall and Ardencreag, and enjoy lunch at Mount Stuart before exploring the gardens there. Return to our hotel this evening for overnight. B L D

Thursday, May 19
We depart our hotel and drive to Benmore Garden for a visit, and afterwards we’ll continue on to the town of Inverary, where you have time to explore the town and enjoy lunch (on own). Afterwards we tour Crarae Garden, then continue on in the afternoon to Loch Melfort Hotel, adjacent to Arduaine Garden, where we have time either before or after for dinner. Visit to Crathes Castle and its gardens are indescribable, and you have to experience it to comprehend its beauty. We continue our journey, touring through scenic Royal Deeside with lunch enroute, and stopping afterwards for a distillery tour at Royal Lochnagar Distillery en-route to Pitlochry. In Pitlochry we’ll visit the Explorer’s Garden. Dinner is on our own in Pitlochry tonight, with time at leisure to explore this attractive town. Overnight at the Acarsaid Hotel. B L

Friday, May 20
The historic Ardochattan Garden and chapel ruins are first stop today, followed by time for lunch at leisure in Fort William. Visit Neptune’s Staircase on the Caledonian Canal, then follow the road to the Isles west to the harbour village of Mallaig. We’ll cross over to the Isle of Skye via ferry and continue on to Portree, where we’ll spend the next two nights. Dinner is on own tonight in Portree. B D

Saturday, May 21
Today we spend the day touring Skye and its picturesque landscapes. This is a beautiful Isle, much visited and photographed. During our tour today we’ll make a stop to visit Dunvegan Castle. We return to our hotels in Portree afterwards for overnight. Dinner is on own tonight in Portree. B

Sunday, May 22
We depart from Skye this morning and make a photo stop at one of the most famous castles in Scotland, Eileen Donan Castle, near the Kyle of Lochalsh. Continue northward towards Poolewe, site of Inverewe Garden. Helped by the ameliorating effect of the Gulf Stream this world famous garden, on a promontory of Loch Ewe, was first started in 1862. We’ll have lunch at the garden, and afterwards we’ll have time in the afternoon to visit. From Inverewe, we travel to Inverness, where we spend our next two nights. Dinner in Inverness is on own tonight. B L

Monday, May 23
The morning is at leisure in Inverness. After lunch (on own) we’ll meet at the Inverness Bus Station to board the Jacobite bus trip to Loch Ness and Urquhart Castle. As today is a rest day for our driver, we will use the services of a public tour in order to visit these two sites in the afternoon. We’ll return to the Bus Station at the conclusion of our tour, and we will be free to enjoy Inverness at leisure this evening on our own. B

Tuesday, May 24
We’ll leave Inverness and make a stop at the battlefield at Culloden, where the last battle for Scottish independence against the British was fought in 1745. From here we journey to Pitmedden Garden and Museum of Farming Life just outside of Aberdeen. Pitmedden is an extravagant property. The heart of the garden is the formal walled garden originally laid out in 1673 by Sir Alexander Seton. We’ll have lunch here and then go into Aberdeen to visit David Welch’s Winter Garden. After our visit here we’ll continue to our hotel just outside of Aberdeen, in Banchory, for dinner and overnight. B L D

Wednesday, May 25
This morning we visit Crathes Castle, a stunning structure set on grounds comprising nearly 600 acres, with walled gardens, and a large variety of plants, shrubs and trees, including yews dating back to the 1700s. The beautiful pink exterior and fairy-tale turrets are common features of castles in Aberdeenshire, but at Crathes they are combined with a remarkably well-preserved original interior and wonderful garden. In a word, Crathes Castle and its gardens are indescribable, and you have to experience it to comprehend its beauty. We continue our journey, touring through scenic Royal Deeside with lunch enroute, and stopping afterwards for a distillery tour at Royal Lochnagar Distillery en-route to Pitlochry. In Pitlochry we’ll visit the Explorer’s Garden. Dinner is on our own in Pitlochry tonight, with time at leisure to explore this attractive town. Overnight at the Acarsaid Hotel. B L

Thursday, May 26
Traveling from Pitlochry, we visit beautiful Queen’s View then continue south, stopping near Dunkeld at the 18th century picturesque designed landscape of The Hermitage beside Black Linn Waterfall. Lunch is en-route followed by a visit to Drummond Castle Garden, near Crieff, a highlight of our 2013 tour. We continue then to Edinburgh. Our Edinburgh hotel is in the Grassmarket in the shadow of Edinburgh Castle. B L

Friday, May 27
This morning we have a walking tour of the Royal Mile with a visit to Edinburgh Castle. Lunch is at leisure, and in the afternoon we visit the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh. Tonight we enjoy a Scottish-themed dinner with dancers and entertainment, a delightful way to bid farewell to Scotland. B D

Saturday, May 28
After breakfast today we depart Edinburgh for transfer to the airport for our return flights home. B

B – Breakfast    L – Lunch    D - Dinner
 TERMS AND CONDITIONS
Deposit due with booking: $500 per person
Final payment due: January 31, 2016

Tour Cost: (land only)
$3,795 per person, double occupancy
$3,695 if booked and on deposit by October 31, 2015
$975 additional, single supplement

Travel insurance is recommended for all tours. Please contact Glad To Travel for rates and information.

AIR ARRANGEMENTS FOR THIS TOUR
With enough travelers from one destination we can offer group air space for this tour. However you are free to arrange your own air flights, but please contact Glad To Travel to discuss your arrival and departure times in Glasgow to ensure your transfer between the airport and the hotel as a group. If you would like assistance in making your air arrangements, please contact Glad To Travel and we will help you with this detail.

To sign up for this tour, contact Peter Olin olinx002@umn.edu or 612-301-1275.

This outstanding value includes
- 11 nights hotel accommodation
- Buffet breakfast daily
- 5 dinners and 6 lunches
- Scottish night entertainment in Edinburgh
- Sightseeing as indicated in itinerary
- Escorted by Peter Olin
- Tax deductible donation of $200 per person to the Arboretum

OUR HOTELS
Gleddoch House Hotel - Langbank, Renfrewshire
Gleddoch is one of the most prestigious hotel, golf and spa resorts in the Glasgow area. Once the home of the shipping baron, Sir William Lithgow, Gleddoch sits in over 360 acres of countryside, with spectacular views of the River Clyde, Ben Lomond and the rolling hills of Renfrewshire. Gleddoch features 75 en-suite bedrooms and suites, an 18 hole, 6,350 yard championship golf course and spa. Gleddoch also features a contemporary bar and restaurant on site.

Loch Melfort Hotel - Arduaine
A unique retreat, set in 17 acres of gardens and beach on the romantic coast of Argyll in the Scottish Highlands, Loch Melfort Hotel offers affordable luxury and comfortable tranquility, with uninterrupted sea views from every bedroom, roaring log fires and deep sofas in our lounges and spectacular coastal scenery to explore and admire. The magnificent National Trust for Scotland Arduaine Garden is right on our doorstep.

Royal Hotel – Portree, Isle of Skye
The Royal Hotel boasts a history of several hundred years and has been serving several generations of the local community in that time. The hotel overlooks Portree Harbor. It features two restaurants and MacNab’s bar, for local ales and whiskies.

Viewfield House Hotel, Portree, Isle of Skye
Uniquely situated within the Islands capital Portree, yet set in 20 acres of woodland garden, this country hotel was built over 200 years ago. Viewfield House retains all its original charm and the splendid Victorian interior is wonderfully intact.

Note: Due to limited hotel availability on the Isle of Skye, we need to utilize two hotels in Portree for our group. We will begin using the rooms in the Royal Hotel for the earliest registrants with later signups being housed in the Viewfield House. Both hotels are delightful properties and if we can manage it we would hope to have all housed in a single hotel.

Palace Hotel & Spa – Inverness
Nestled on the banks of the River Ness, opposite Inverness Castle, the Inverness Palace Hotel & Spa is just a few short steps from Inverness city center. Dating back to the 1890’s, the Palace Hotel combines the best of the past with the contemporary style of the present with elegant interiors, lovely bedrooms and the only Inverness river side hotel with a pool.

Burnett Arms Hotel – Banchory
The Burnett Arms Hotel is right in Banchory town center, just a few minutes’ drive away from Aberdeen. It is an 18th Century coaching inn-turned hotel that has been family run for over 40 years

Acarsaid Hotel – Pitlochery
Built in 1880 for Lady Helen Stuart, The Countess of Kilbride, this extended Victorian house is one of Pitlochry oldest hotels and with that distinction comes a long tradition of highland hospitality. The hotel is situated in an enviable position only a short, level walk from the center of Pitlochry. With cozy lounges and a well-stocked bar and free wi-fi, the hotel has much to offer, including dinner at the Steakhouse Restaurant.

Apex City of Edinburgh Hotel-Edinburgh
Apex City of Edinburgh Hotel, a contemporary 4 star hotel in the Grassmarket, close to the city’s main attractions. The hotel is in the shadow of Edinburgh castle, with the hustle and bustle of the Grassmarket at your doorstep. The backdrop of the magnificent Castle and the cobbled streets of the Royal Mile are just a short stroll from the hotel. Free Wi-fi is available at the hotel.