Festive England: Austen, Dickens, Churchill, and Holiday Traditions

with Dr. Mark Canada

December 4–11, 2027

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Step into the pages of England's most beloved writing on an enchanting journey through literature, history, and festive holiday traditions. Celebrate the magic of the season with The Great Courses Journeys as it unfolds across charming villages, historic cities, and grand country estates. Walk in the footsteps of Jane Austen in Hampshire, where her timeless novels were brought to life, and immerse yourself in the atmospheric world of Charles Dickens at a lively Victorian Christmas festival.

Explore the scholarly streets of Oxford, marvel at the festive splendor of Blenheim Palace, and discover the enduring legacy of Winston Churchill at his beloved countryside home. In London, trace the settings that inspired *A Christmas Carol* and experience the city aglow with seasonal cheer. From twinkling Christmas markets to cozy literary landmarks, this journey blends cultural insight with seasonal traditions and the timeless charm of England dressed in its holiday best.

Your Journey Expert

Dr. Mark Canada

Dr. Mark Canada is Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Professor of English at Indiana University Kokomo. An award-winning professor and nationally recognized university leader, he is also a prolific author of articles and books, including the Audible Originals *Edgar Allan Poe: Master of Horror* and *Ben Franklin's Lessons in Life*. His lectures on a variety of subjects—from authors such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe to the Lewis & Clark expedition—have made him a favorite among lifelong learners on land and sea. An avid traveler, he also has led immersive experiences such as "Welcome to *The Jungle*: A Tour of Upton Sinclair's Back of the Yards, Chicago" and "Founders in Philadelphia: Franklin, Jefferson, and a New Nation." In 2024, he founded Mind Inclined, a learning platform featuring his *Mind Travel* newsletter, virtual and in-person tours, and live lectures. Blending fascinating insights, humor, and reflections from a lifetime of reading, writing, and living, his talks and tours have informed, entertained, and inspired countless readers and listeners.

Highlights

- Experience a festive welcome at Chartwell, the beloved home of Winston Churchill, where live Christmas carols set the tone for your holiday journey.
- Step into a living Dickens novel at the Rochester Dickensian Christmas Festival, filled with costumed characters, seasonal treats, and Victorian cheer.
- Follow in the footsteps of Jane Austen with an immersive visit to Chawton House, where her beloved novels were written and Regency holiday traditions come to life.
- Discover the literary heritage of Oxford, including a guided tour of its storied colleges and a visit to Christ Church College, beautifully decorated for the season.
- Celebrate the season in London with a Dickens-inspired walking tour, iconic sightseeing, and time to explore the cheerful bustle of a popular holiday market.

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Itinerary

Day 1: Welcome to a Winter Wonderland

Arrive in London on individual flights and transfer as a group to Kent. Begin your journey with a tour of Chartwell, the beloved family home of Winston Churchill. Here, the festive spirit comes alive with Christmas carols performed on the grounds. Continue to your hotel and settle in before gathering with your expert and fellow travelers for a welcome dinner.

Included Meal: Dinner
Accommodations: Chilston Park Hotel

Day 2: Dickensian England

Immerse yourself in the wintry world of Charles Dickens during a visit to the Rochester Dickensian Christmas Festival, where the streets fill with musicians, Victorian performers, and stalls brimming with handcrafted goods, seasonal treats, and holiday décor. Continue to Canterbury, famed for Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, and visit the magnificent Canterbury Cathedral, a masterpiece of Gothic architecture. Enjoy time to wander the charming Christmas market before returning to Kent for dinner at a local restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodations: Chilston Park Hotel

Day 3: All About Austen

Today is devoted to the world of Jane Austen. Begin in the picturesque village of Alton and explore places closely tied to her life, including the historic Crown Hotel, once owned by her brother, and The Swan Inn, where the Alton Book Society met. Stroll along the High Street and imagine Austen's daily life and the places that inspired her. Continue to Chawton House, where she lived and wrote her beloved novels. Here, your expert will offer insight into how the Austen and Knight families celebrated Christmas with Regency-era traditions. Check in to your hotel and continue the conversation on Austen's enduring legacy over dinner.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodations: Audleys Wood Hotel

"Festive England" is an opportunity to do what I love doing: bringing literature to life with an immersive experience in something beautiful, rich, and meaningful: British holiday traditions."

–Dr. Mark Canada

Day 4: Oxford: City of Authors and Scholars

Enjoy an excursion to Oxford, a city synonymous with literary history and scholarly tradition. On a guided walking tour, trace the footsteps of celebrated writers such as Oscar Wilde, Jonathan Swift, J. R. R. Tolkien, and John le Carré. Admire architectural icons like the Radcliffe Camera and visit Christ Church College, beautifully adorned for the holidays. In the afternoon, enjoy time along Broad Street, transformed into a festive Christmas market filled with seasonal delights, handcrafted gifts, and a warm holiday ambiance unique to this historic university city. Return to Basingstoke for dinner.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodations: Audleys Wood Hotel

Day 5: Christmas in the Cotswolds

Journey through the rolling hills of the Cotswolds to Blenheim Palace, a grand Baroque estate and birthplace of Winston Churchill. During a guided tour, discover how each State Room transforms into an enchanting display inspired by beloved children's stories during the holiday season. Then, explore the charming market town of Moreton-in-Marsh at your own pace. You may choose to enjoy a pint at the Bell Inn, considered by many to be J. R. R. Tolkien's inspiration for the Prancing Pony, Middle-earth's most famous pub. Dinner this evening will be at your hotel.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodations: Audleys Wood Hotel

Day 6: Bah, humbug!

Depart for London this morning and begin with a visit to the magnificent St. Paul's Cathedral, an architectural masterpiece and enduring symbol of the city. Then, delve into the world of Charles Dickens on a guided walking tour through Victorian London. Explore neighborhoods and landmarks that inspired scenes in *A Christmas Carol* and discuss with your expert the social and cultural landscape that shaped his work before gathering for dinner.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodations: Hotel Riu Plaza Westminster

Day 7: Tidings of Comfort and Joy

Discover the highlights of London on a panoramic morning tour, taking in iconic sites such as Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square, Big Ben, and the ceremonial Changing of the Guards at Buckingham Palace. Later, soak up the festive atmosphere at the Leicester Square Christmas Market, where twinkling lights, seasonal treats, and handcrafted gifts create a joyful holiday scene. In the evening, raise a toast to your travels during a festive farewell dinner.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
Accommodations: Hotel Riu Plaza Westminster

Day 8: Departures

Bid farewell to London as you depart the hotel for individual flights home.

Included Meal: Breakfast

Accommodations

Chilston Park Hotel | Kent, UK

Located in rural Kent, the Chilston Park Hotel has welcomed notable politicians, authors, and gentry since the 17th century. The historic property showcases lovely gardens and a lake, with rooms that feature charming period pieces alongside modern amenities. The Marble Lounge is at your disposal for relaxation or stroll the grounds to take in the views of the surrounding countryside. **(2 nights)**

Audleys Wood Hotel | Basingstoke, UK

Audleys Wood Hotel is a charming Victorian country-house retreat set just outside Basingstoke, offering warm hospitality and elegant, classically styled interiors. Originally built in the 1880s, the hotel blends historic character with modern comfort, including spacious rooms and refined dining in the light-filled Conservatory Restaurant. Surrounded by seven acres of beautifully maintained private grounds and woodland, it provides a tranquil setting perfect for leisurely strolls and relaxing escapes. **(3 nights)**

Hotel Riu Plaza Westminster | London, UK

Perfectly positioned in the heart of London, Hotel Riu Plaza Westminster offers contemporary comfort just steps from the city's most iconic landmarks such as Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, and the River Thames. Stylish rooms feature modern amenities and sleek design, while expansive windows showcase vibrant city views. Guests also enjoy a well-equipped fitness center and the Lobby Bar, which offers local brews on tap. **(2 nights)**

Pricing:

Departure	Double Occupancy	Single Occupancy	Deposit	
December 4–11, 2027	$8,495	$9,820	$650	BOOK NOW

What's Included:

- All accommodations for the duration of the tour
- Meals, as noted in the itinerary
- All sightseeing and visits as noted in each itinerary
- Expertise of The Great Courses expert, travel director, and local guides throughout the tour
- All gratuities for on-tour guides, drivers, hotel and restaurant staff as part of the group program
- All on-tour transportation, unless otherwise noted
- Quietvox listening devices to facilitate audibility and social distancing on tour
- The assistance of an ATA professional travel team to assist with pre-trip questions, travel arrangements, including flights, extra hotel nights, and other services
- Comprehensive pre-departure mailings and materials, with information about the destination and what to expect on tour, including a suggested reading list
- Emergency evacuation insurance