

Shakespeare's England: The Play's The Thing

with Alissa Branch

September 6–11, 2026 | September 19–24, 2027



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September 19–24, 2027
From: \$6,650 per person



Shakespeare's England: The Play's The Thing

with Alissa Branch

Join esteemed actor, director, and Shakespeare scholar Alissa Branch on an insightful tour of London and Stratford-upon-Avon, developed to deepen your understanding of how Shakespeare's words come to life, from page to stage.

This unique experience explores key locations such as London's iconic Globe Theatre, where you'll witness how the historical setting shapes the performances of his plays. In Stratford-upon-Avon, visit Shakespeare's birthplace and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, gaining a firsthand look at how actors and directors interpret his works today. Alissa Branch's expert commentary will guide you through Shakespeare's creative process, from writing to performance, uncovering the techniques that have made his plays resonate for centuries. Whether you're a theater enthusiast or literary scholar, this tour offers a profound exploration of Shakespeare's enduring artistry on the stage.

Your Journey Expert



Alissa Branch is an Associate Professor of Acting in the Helmerich School of Drama at the University of Oklahoma, where she created an advanced Shakespeare performance curriculum. She is also an actor and director whose productions have won multiple Kennedy Center awards. Her directorial credits include Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Twelfth Night*, among other plays. She has studied acting at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts and Shakespeare's Globe, and she earned her MA in Drama from Washington University in St. Louis.

Highlights

- Discover London through Shakespeare's eyes, visiting landmarks such as St. Paul's Cathedral and the Globe Theatre, including a behind-the-scenes tour.
- Witness live performances of Shakespeare's plays (schedule TBC) and acquire the keys to unlocking his language to enable you to hear and understand them differently.
- Explore the medieval Kenilworth Castle and its stunning Elizabethan gardens, originally designed to impress Shakespeare's queen, Elizabeth I.
- Immerse yourself in Shakespeare's birthplace and schoolroom in Stratford-upon-Avon, exploring the early environments that influenced his writing.



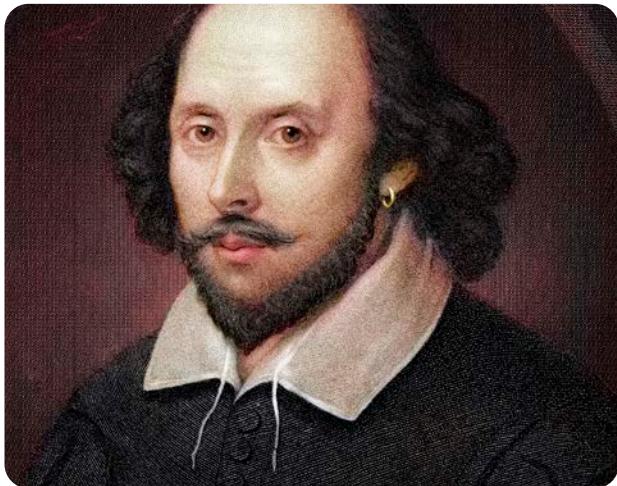
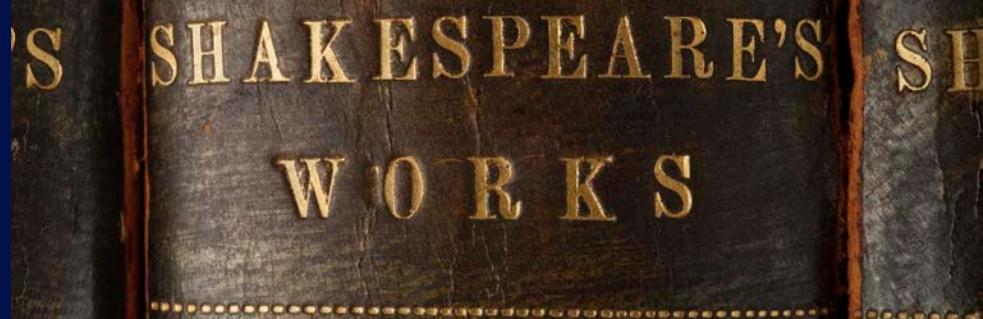
Questions? Call 1-855-476-5080

Discover More 

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with Alissa Branch

Itinerary



Day 1: Act I Welcome to London

Arrive at London's Heathrow Airport on individual flights from your home city. Transfer independently to your hotel. Later, gather with your fellow travelers and meet Professor Alissa Branch, who will be your expert for this journey. Join her for an introductory lecture about surprising ways you can approach Shakespeare. Enjoy a welcome dinner at a local restaurant and discuss your upcoming journey through Shakespeare's England.

Included Meal: Dinner

Accommodation: Royal Leonardo Hotel London City (2026) or Hotel Riu Plaza Victoria (2027)



Day 2: Act II Shakespeare's England

Embark on a guided Shakespearean walking tour through London. Follow in the footsteps of the famous playwright as you visit landmarks like Guildhall, St. Paul's Cathedral, and Leadenhall Market, finishing at the Globe Theatre for a behind-the-scenes tour. In the afternoon, explore the National Portrait Gallery's impressive Tudor and Elizabethan collection, followed by a traditional Afternoon Tea in Covent Garden where you will be joined by a special guest. End your day by joining Professor Branch at a captivating Shakespeare play at a renowned London theater. (Performance schedule TBC)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Afternoon Tea

Accommodation: Royal Leonardo Hotel London City (2026) or Hotel Riu Plaza Victoria (2027)



Day 3: Act III The First Folio and a New Museum

Gather this morning with your fellow travelers and Professor Branch for a lecture as she continues to reveal the secrets to unlocking Shakespeare's language. Visit The British Library for a viewing of Shakespeare's First Folio. As plays in Shakespeare's day were meant to be performed and not read, plays were rarely printed. As such, many were lost. But a small cadre of Shakespeare's friends and actors from the King's Men acting company took on the complicated task of compiling his complete works into a bound



volume. It was published in 1623, seven years after his death. Then, visit the newly opened Museum of Shakespeare, an immersive, interactive experience, built on the foundation of the Elizabethan Theater, The Curtain Playhouse. William Shakespeare's acting troupe, The Lord Chamberlain's Men, used the Curtain Theatre as their base from 1597-1599. In that time, it is believed that *Henry V* debuted at the Curtain and that other famous plays were performed there, including the iconic *Romeo and Juliet*. Enjoy an evening free to explore London.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Royal Leonardo Hotel London City (2026) or Hotel Riu Plaza Victoria (2027)

Day 4: Act IV Kenilworth Castle

Join Professor Branch for a workshop on Shakespeare's verse and the hidden tricks for understanding it. She will give you invaluable insight into how an actor approaches his language, and you will have the opportunity to try speaking some verse yourself. No experience necessary! Then, depart London for the English countryside. Once one of the country's most formidable medieval fortresses, Kenilworth Castle was later transformed into a spectacular Elizabethan palace by Robert Dudley in an effort to impress his queen, whom he had hoped to marry. Explore the mighty medieval keep, climb up Tudor towers, and wander through the unique Elizabethan Garden. Continue to Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon. This evening, join Professor Branch and take in a show at the iconic Royal Shakespeare Theatre.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Picnic Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Swan's Nest Hotel

Day 5: Act V Stratford-upon-Avon

Stroll through Stratford-upon-Avon, where history comes alive at every turn. Begin at Shakespeare's Birthplace, a charming half-timbered Elizabethan house where the playwright was born and spent his early years. It's here that he and his wife, Anne Hathaway, embarked on their married life together. Next, head to





Shakespeare's Schoolroom and Guildhall, where young William's education took shape and laid the foundation for his literary genius. A short walk will bring you to Shakespeare's New Place, the home where he lived for nearly 20 years. At Holy Trinity Church, stand before his final resting place, surrounded by the peaceful serenity of the churchyard. Just a short distance outside of town, find Anne Hathaway's Cottage, a picturesque, thatched home where Shakespeare's bride grew up. Finally, make your way to the village of Wilmcote for a visit to Mary Arden's Farm, the childhood home of Shakespeare's mother. This farm offers a rare look at the rural life that helped shape his early experiences. Celebrate your journey with a farewell dinner with fellow travelers and Professor Branch this evening.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Swan's Nest Hotel

Day 6: Epilogue—Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow

Check out of your hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon and depart as a group for London's Heathrow Airport for individual flights home or onward.

Included Meal: Breakfast

Accommodations



Royal Leonardo Hotel London City (2026)

London

The Leonardo Royal London Hotel offers a stylish and comfortable stay in the heart of the city, blending modern amenities with a welcoming atmosphere. Its prime location is within walking distance to major attractions such as the Tower of London, Tower Bridge, and St. Paul's Cathedral, just across the bridge from Shakespeare's Globe and Borough Market and surrounded by myriad dining choices from casual eateries to upscale options.

(3 nights)

Swan's Nest Hotel

Stratford-upon-Avon

Swan's Nest Hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon offers a charming and relaxing stay just steps from the River Avon and the town's historic attractions. The hotel features comfortable rooms, a cozy bar, and a restaurant serving delicious British cuisine. With its prime location near Shakespeare's Birthplace and other cultural sites, Swan's Nest provides a perfect base for exploring the rich heritage of Stratford-upon-Avon.

(2 nights)

Hotel Riu Plaza Victoria (2027)

London

Newly opened and located in the heart of London, the Hotel Riu Plaza Victoria is the perfect base to discover the vibrant British capital. 435 bright and stylish rooms are designed to guarantee a peaceful rest and offer Wi-Fi, satellite TV, air conditioning, and a tea kettle for your morning brew. Other onsite amenities include a lobby bar, Tastes Restaurant, and a fully equipped 24-hour fitness center. **(3 nights)**



Pricing:

Departure	Double Occupancy	Single Occupancy	Deposit	
September 6–11, 2026	\$6,650	\$7,790	\$500	BOOK NOW
September 19–24, 2027	\$7,495	\$8,870	\$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
- One group airport transfer upon departure
- 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

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