

THE LONDON SEASON

Tuesday, May 14th to Friday, May 24th, 2002

There is one event in England that captivates the imagination on a worldwide scale. It is the opening of the London Season with the **Chelsea Flower Show**. Here fragrant displays of old roses and meadows with lush waterside plantings depict nature perfected, and you cannot help but succumb to its magic spell. Landscaped gardens in miniature invite scenes of the pastoral English countryside with its stately aristocratic homes. On such estates, less than a century ago, at country-house party weekends, hourglass shaped ladies strolled with parasols whispering the latest society gossip, while gentlemen lounged in long low chairs on the lawn or played croquet as they filled the lazy hours between lunch and dinner. It is into this golden afternoon of the British aristocratic life that we journey on this program. Led by scholars, hosted by members of the aristocracy, taking the waters at the spa town of **Bath**, we recreate the period before the First World War.



And now the rest of the day must be got through somehow, but the members of the house party, though surely spoilt by the surfeits of entertainment that life had always offered them, showed no disposition to be bored by each other's familiar company, and no inclination to vary the programme which they must have followed on innumerable Sunday afternoons since they first emerged from the narrowness of school or schoolroom, to take their place in a world where pleasure fell like a ripened peach for the outstretching of a hand.

The Edwardians, Vita Sackville-West

We begin the season by retreating into the countryside to relax at the beautiful Georgian town of **Bath**, which has rescued society from its excesses since the eighteenth century. In Bath, just as the aristocracy enjoyed a spa experience, we too enjoy the healing powers of a modern spa set in the ambience of an eighteenth century luxury hotel complete with four poster beds. In **Devon**, we are the private guests of **The Earl and Countess of Arran**, whose Palladian style stately home, **Castle Hill**, epitomise grandeur and elegance. We will recreate, through special activities for men and women, as well as period entertainment, the world Vita Sackville-West describes in her novels.

In **London**, gentlemen and ladies have individually scheduled programs, which take them to private homes, clubs, livery companies, gardens, museums, and collections. A scholarly cast that includes *Gaye Blake-Roberts*, Curator at the Wedgwood Museum; *John Hardy*, Christie's; *Rachel Elwes*, former Curator, The Gilbert Collection; *Dan Cruickshank*, Author and Architectural Historian; *David Watkin*, Professor of Architecture, Cambridge University; *Helene Alexander*, Director, The Fan Museum; *Ian Green*, Worshipful Clerk to The Livery Companies of The City of London; and *Leslie Geddes Brown*, Author and former Deputy Editor of *Country Life* and *World of Interiors*. *The Covent Garden Minuet Company* mixes pleasure with culture as they bring art to life. We enjoy a private viewing of the **Crown Jewels** at the **Tower of London**. The climax of our program is a private dinner at **Spencer House** where we dine in regal splendor together with our faculty, hosts, and invited painters and sculptors, all of whom are asked to don eighteenth century costume complete with powdered wigs and flamboyant dress.

Tuesday, May 14th

Arrive at Heathrow and travel by super luxury coach to Royal Bath. "*Bath is the most elegant of cities... and one of the 'most beautiful cities in Europe,'*" wrote Joseph Heyden in 1784. As a fashionable spa since the beginning of the eighteenth century, it evokes more perfectly than any other city the life and

culture of eighteenth century society. Bath was a world of its own, the centre of eighteenth century fashion with its own customs and codes of behaviour. It was to this spa town that London society retired to rejuvenate after the London season. We see the eighteenth century at its most elegant with historian Dan Cruikshank, an expert on the Georgian city. We stay at The Bath Spa Hotel, recognised as one of the finest hotels in England. A private dinner and function in the evening in Bath's Assembly Rooms takes us to the hub of eighteenth century Bath society, where the dandy and gambler, Beau Nash, had already set a pace for gaming and gambling, which gathered momentum in the 1700's. It was here that Jane Austen's models for the Bennett and Bingley girls came to flaunt their finery and hunt for husbands. We bring this world to life through a performance of the minuet in full costume by The Covent Garden Minuet Company.

Wednesday, May 15th

In the morning ladies and gentlemen each have an individualized exercise program in 'The Laurels' health spa, complete with a gymnasium and indoor pool. Dan Cruickshank then takes us on a walking tour of Georgian Bath, visiting the Abbey and Roman Baths, the Pump Rooms and the Kings Bath, and the Royal Crescent. Bath, as we shall learn, besides catering to the sensuous needs of men and women, also benefited from pre-scientific medicine. While ladies tour the Costume Museum with the curator and enjoy a study on '*The Art of Applying Makeup in the Eighteenth Century*', men will study the work of Dr. Oliver, inventor of the Bath Oliver biscuit. In the evening we attend a performance at the Bath Theatre.

Thursday, May 16th

Leaving Bath for the countryside, we proceed to Bowood House and Gardens, home to The Marquis and Marchioness of Lansdowne. The house is set in one of the most beautiful landscaped parks in the country, whose grounds include formal gardens and gold courses. We will have lunch on the estate and continue to Devon. In the afternoon we continue to Devon. "North Devon is still a name for the nearest thing we have in the West Country, and maybe in England, to wilderness," wrote Ted Hughes, England's late Poet Laureate. For the next three nights we stay at Castle Hill, built in 1730 as the family home of The Earls of Fortescue. Buried deep in wooded hills and thick forests, Castle Hill presents an idyllic world removed from the reality of modern life, where we enjoy the comfortable lifestyle of the country gentry. We will be the invited guests of The Countess of Arran, who is the granddaughter of the fifth Earl Fortescue.

Friday, May 17th

We spend the morning relaxing on the estate and enjoying study of the collection at Castle Hill with Gaye Blake-Roberts. In the afternoon men enjoy the lure of fly-fishing while ladies are accompanied by a gardening expert to visit one of the foremost gardens of England. In the evening, dinner at Castle Hill will feature magical table settings created by a renowned English craftsman.

Saturday, May 18th

Participants travel to Powderham, the nearby estate of Lord and Lady Devon, who greet the group and guide us through the house and gardens. The house contains elegant drawing rooms, grand halls and a magnificent staircase luxuriously ornamented with plaster reliefs. We then continue to Chudleigh in South Devon to attend a luncheon hosted by Lord and Lady Clifford at Ugbrooke House.

Sunday, May 19th

Depart for London, arriving in the early evening, we proceed directly to the exclusive London neighbourhood of South Kensington where we check into Blake's Hotel. Owned and decorated by British designer, Anouska Hempel, the hotel occupies a terrace of former Georgian townhouses that retains the feel of a private residence.

Monday, May 20th

Ladies will experience the sensorial delights of the Chelsea Flower Show, as they tour the exhibits with famous gardener and journalist Leslie Geddes Brown. The visit will take place before the show opens to the public, and participants will meet prize-winning gardeners, authors and top landscape designers. Meanwhile, gentlemen will follow in the footsteps of the wealthy landowners that deposited vast incomes from their estates into the Bank of England, with a guided tour of its private rooms. An afternoon in the City of London with Ian Green, who through his role as the worshipful clerk to the livery companies, grants entrée to some of the remarkable companies whose histories date back to medieval times. Included is a visit to The Apothecary Club where modern medicine has its roots. At the Guildhall Museum, records dating back to before the great fire of 1666 allow gentlemen to trace the early history of London

and view documents signed by William Chaucer and Shakespeare. Evening performance at The Royal Opera with dinner in a private room.

Tuesday, May 21st

Ladies visit the fan museum, which contains the world finest collection of fans spanning three generations of collecting. The owner and founder Helene Alexander takes the ladies through collections dating from the seventeenth century through to the Belle Époque period. Issues of science were of tremendous interest in the nineteenth century, and gentlemen receive a guided study at the Royal Greenwich Observatory addressing the concepts of longitude and latitude with a noted scholar. Ladies and gentlemen then lunch on board a boat as they paddle upstream to London. In the evening, David Watkin will be 'At Home' to us in his apartment at Albany, a majestic Georgian mansion on Piccadilly, built especially to provide London apartments for the country set. We will dine at The Ivy.

Wednesday, May 22nd

Women enjoy a day of private interiors, meeting interior designer Nicolas Haslam to see an interior he recently completed, followed by a visit to private gardens in London. Together with David Watkin, men will visit The Sir John Soane Museum and examine the brilliance of the architect's contribution to his age. They will also visit The Inns of Court where they dine in one of the chambers. In the afternoon men are treated to the secrets of watch movements as the world's leading expert takes them on a round of visits to dealers specializing in wristwatches. In the evening men and women will gather at The Tower of London for a private viewing of The Crown Jewels and a cocktail reception.

Thursday, May 23rd

The day begins with a private tour for both groups of the Gilbert Collection, where Rachel Elwes shows us the gold miniature treasure boxes accumulated by this collector, as well as his magnificent silver collection. Ladies spend the afternoon near Oxford lunching on the former estate of Nancy Lancaster with the present owner and visiting the gardens. Men study the life and times of Sir Winston Churchill through a visit to his home. Private dinner at Spencer House, the eighteenth century house restored by David Mlinaric, with invited guest speakers and noted members of society, including The Earl of Portland.

Friday, May 24th

Transfer to Heathrow for return flights to New York. *Evening dress is required at formal dinners: Participants will visit private clubs as the guests of a member, who is under obligation to know their guests. We ask any participant not known to Art to Life to kindly enclose a brief letter describing themselves, which we will forward to our hosts in England.*

Registration

The fee for the program including round trip business class airfare to and from New York is to be announced. There is no single occupancy on this program. The program fee includes eleven nights luxurious accommodation, most meals, wine with meals, entrée to private collections and to places not generally open to the public, private entrée to museums, private sessions with curators, expert scholars, entrée to the palaces, almost all meals and elegant dinners at the homes of hosts, visits to designers; ground transportation provided by England's top luxury coach company, and extensive scholarly reading material prepared by Arts to Life. Registration must be accompanied by a deposit of \$3,000. Half the balance of payment is due on November 1st, 2001 with the full fee due February 5th, 2002. No cancellations will be accepted and no refunds will be made after this date unless the space can be filled. The program is strictly limited to 14 persons. Any cancellation before the cancellation date will be subject to a processing fee of \$250 per person. We advise all persons to take out travel insurance and can provide information upon request. Arts to Life reserves the right to make any changes to the schedule whatsoever, should the need arise. Should any speaker or host withdraw we will endeavour to make a suitable replacement. Arts to Life does not act as a travel agent and any additional reservations at hotels, changes to scheduled airline, or extensions of vacation, are to be made by the participants individually. For more information, please contact Arts to Life on 646-792-2340.