

CHAUCER'S CANTERBURY TALES & THE CASTLES OF HENRY VIII

September 26 to October 5, 2010



Chaucer

*Whan that Aprille,
with hise shoures soote,
The droghte of March
hath perced to the roote*
-*Canterbury Tales*, Prologue, 1-2.

With the murder of Thomas Becket on the altar of Canterbury Cathedral in 1170, Canterbury immediately became the most important shrine in England and much of Europe, as pilgrims from far and wide traveled there to worship. Geoffrey Chaucer memorialized these journeys in his unfinished classic, *The Canterbury Tales*. This program explores the turbulent times of 14th-century English history during the Great Schism in the Catholic Church, and including the Peasant's Revolt and the deposition of Richard II.

In London, visit places related to the Canterbury pilgrimage with a walking tour of Southwark and Borough High Street, an area rich in medieval character. Dine at the half timbered George Inn, where many pilgrims started their journey. Travel to Rochester, Faversham and Harbledown, all towns along the pilgrims' route. Follow the footsteps of the faithful, walking along the well-preserved Pilgrims' Way through the beautiful countryside of Kent. Three nights in Canterbury allow time to visit the cathedral and learn the story of Thomas Becket. See Dover, the gateway for pilgrims from the continent and explore the famous coastline of the English Channel.

From this location in Kent explore some of England's most beautiful and charming countryside, a region favored by Henry VIII. Moving forward in time, learn about 15th-century England and Henry's life with visits and tours of some of his many castles and stately country homes. See Dover Castle, Knole House and Penshurst Place, all locations used in filming *The Other Boleyn Girl*. Spend the final two nights in Royal Turnbridge Wells, a Georgian spa town set in the midst of the Weald, a natural landscape nestled between the North and South Downs. The program culminates with an elaborate banquet in the historic Great Hall of Hever Castle, childhood home of Anne Boleyn.



THE ITINERARY

- Day 1**
Sunday **USA**
Depart the USA on overnight flights for London.
- Day 2**
Monday **LONDON**
After time to relax at the hotel, embark upon a leisurely panoramic coach tour of the city. This evening gather for a reception and orientation meeting, followed by a welcome dinner. HARRINGTON HALL HOTEL (D)
- Day 3**
Tuesday **LONDON**
Begin with a (*suggested*) lecture on Chaucer's London, that prepares the travelers for today's visit to the Museum of London. Have **lunch at the George Inn**, a half timbered hostelry where many pilgrims started their journey to Canterbury. Continue the theme with a walking tour of Southwark and Borough High Street, an area rich in medieval character with connections to Chaucer. If time permits visit Westminster Abbey to view Chaucer's tomb. Enjoy free time for the remainder of the day. HARRINGTON HALL HOTEL (B)
- Day 4**
Wednesday **LONDON / OXFORD / LONDON**
Join a full day's excursion into the English countryside. Begin with a tour of Ewelme, where the Parish Church is an unspoiled architectural gem and the site of the **grave of Chaucer's niece, Alice**. Pause for lunch in Woodstock and see the magnificent Blenheim Palace. Then continue to Oxford for a special lecture by an Emeritus Fellow of one of the Colleges, and join students or faculty for **afternoon tea** before returning to London in the early evening. HARRINGTON HALL HOTEL (B,L)
- Day 5**
Thursday **LONDON / CANTERBURY**
After a (*suggested*) lecture to pave the path to Canterbury, depart London for the market town of **Rochester**. This important stopping point on the pilgrims' route coincidentally is the home town of Charles Dickens. On a walking tour learn about its role in the pilgrimage and see the imposing fortress. Lunch is served in the old port and brewing town of **Faversham**, which preserves its historic charm. On arrival in Canterbury enjoy a light hearted introduction to the city with a visit to the *Canterbury Tales Experience*, before continuing to our centrally located hotel. Dine together in the hotel's famous restaurant. ABODE HOTEL (B,L,D)
- Day 6**
Friday **CANTERBURY**
Pilgrims made their way to Canterbury to worship at the site of the martyrdom of Thomas Becket and today we literally follow in their footsteps. After a (*suggested*) lecture on Thomas Becket and

Canterbury, take a short drive to Harbledown's church of St. Nicholas, the starting point for the **walk along the Pilgrims' Way**. This countryside walk has been a program highlight in the past and offers the choice of a short or longer walk. Upon arrival in Canterbury, take a guided tour of the Cathedral. The remainder of the day is free for individual exploration. ABODE HOTEL (B)

Day 7
Saturday

CANTERBURY / DOVER / CANTERBURY

Canterbury, where Christianity was first introduced to England in AD 597, attracted worshippers from all over Europe. Most pilgrims from the continent crossed the English Channel at Dover. Travel to this strategic locale that has been a heavily fortified site since the Roman times. Make an extensive tour of fascinating **Dover Castle**, one of the largest in the country. Dover Castle was used in the filming of *The Other Boleyn Girl*. There is free time to explore and have lunch on your own. Then, travel along the coast to experience the rich royal history dating to the Tudor Period. See the coastal fortresses at **Deal and Walmer Castles** built by Henry VIII to defend Kent. They are symmetrical in design and set close together, forming the Tudor rose shape. Walmer Castle, a charming country house surrounded by delightful gardens, is the official residence of the Lord Wardens of the Cinque Ports who have included the Duke of Wellington, Sir Winston Churchill and the Queen Mother. Have dinner in a local pub this evening. ABODE HOTEL (B,D)

Day 8
Sunday

CANTERBURY / ROYAL TURNBRIDGE WELLS

Depart Canterbury to explore more of Kent and the era of Henry VIII. When Henry became king, he inherited a wealth of castles and royal residences, among them was the magnificent fairy tale **Leeds Castle**, near Maidstone. Tour the castle this morning and see the renovations he made 500 years ago, including exquisite windows, fireplaces and banquet halls. Henry often stayed here, including a period of time escaping the plague raging in London.

After a light lunch at Fairfax Hall, Leeds, we travel to the outskirts of Sevenoaks to visit **Knole**, a stately home set in a magnificent deer park, another of the Boleyn movie locations. Then travel through some of the most scenic stretches of English countryside, the **unspoiled Weald**, a wild region of forests and open land between the North and South Downs. Royal Turnbridge Wells sits in the middle of the Weald. In Georgian times this popular spa town was the place to see and be seen for the British aristocracy. It retains that Georgian charm to this day. SPA HOTEL (B,L,D)

Day 9
Monday

ROYAL TURNBRIDGE WELLS

This morning take a short drive to **Penshurst Place**, set amid picturesque countryside and ancient parkland. Henry VIII lived here while he secretly courted Anne Boleyn at Hever Castle. Henry acquired Penshurst from the Duke of Buckingham after accusing

him of high treason and executing him. See the Great Hall where nothing has changed since Henry's time. Enjoy refreshments at Penshurst, and then return to Royal Turnbridge Wells for free time at the spa. Later, depart for a very special event at Hever Castle. After a guided tour of the State Apartments, enjoy a champagne reception and **farewell dinner in the historic Great Hall.** SPA HOTEL (B,D)

Day 10
Tuesday **ROYAL TURNBRIDGE WELLS / USA**
After breakfast transfer to London's Heathrow Airport for the flight home, or return to London to join the optional Theatre Program. (B)

OPTIONAL LONDON THEATRE PROGRAM

Day 10
Tuesday **ROYAL TURNBRIDGE WELLS / LONDON**
After breakfast transfer to London's Harrington Hall Hotel. Your stay is independent and a theatre ticket is included this evening. HARRINGTON HALL HOTEL (B)

Day 11 & 12 LONDON
Wed & Thur Breakfast is included each day. The days are free for independent exploration, and theatre tickets are included each evening. HARRINGTON HALL HOTEL (2B)

Day 13
Friday **LONDON / USA**
Following breakfast, a guide assists you to the airport for the flight home. (B)

Trip Details

- **Duration:** 13 days
- **Activity level:** Moderately active
- **Cost:** \$4,995 per person, based on double occupancy
- **Single supplement:** \$795 per person
- **Deposit:** \$500 per person, payable to Siemer & Hand Travel
- **Optional London Theatre Program Cost:** \$995 per person, based on double occupancy
- **Optional London Theatre Single Supplement:** \$655 per person

Smith Faculty Speaker: Nancy Mason Bradbury '74, professor of English language and literature

A full brochure and registration form for this trip will be coming out shortly. If you would like a copy, please request one through our website, and we'll be sure to send it to you.