



West Midlands

Warwickshire

ROYAL WARWICKSHIRE

England's finest castles, unparalleled connections with Henry's wives, Elizabeth I, The Gun Powder Plot and a Royal town - romance, intrigue and scandal.

Day One

Morning	Depart from London Marylebone to Warwick by train – journey time just 1 hour 20 mins. Warwick is a pocket sized town, with charming streets, half timbered buildings and dominated by England's finest castle – Warwick Castle. Drop into the Lord Leycester Hospital , set up by Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester as a hostel for old soldiers. The complex now represents one of Britain's finest examples of domestic Elizabethan architecture. See wonder beamed buildings, The Great Hall, the Guild Hall, a wonderful galleried courtyard and intimate chantry chapel.
Afternoon	Then spend an electrifying afternoon exploring a thousand years of jaw-dropping history at Warwick Castle . Experience the heat of battle, dank dungeons, the terrifying dragon tower and castle warfare – or you may prefer a 'lighter' visit – become a pampered princess for the day, uncover the secrets and scandals of the Royal Wedding Weekend or stroll through the delightful Victorian Rose Garden. Warwick Castle has been visited by Kings and Queens throughout the centuries including our own Queen Elizabeth II just a few years ago, and today offers a truly, interactive, fun and enlightening experience. Lunch suggestion: The medieval Undercroft at Warwick Castle.
Evening	Stay in the Tudor era, by dining at the Tudor Inn in Warwick. An authentic Tudor building dating back to 1472 with enormous fire-place, leaded windows and armour. Overnight in Warwick. Alternatively enjoy some really fine dining at Tailors Restaurant , Warwick.

Day Two

Morning	<p>(Warwick to Leamington Spa – 2.5miles – car, bus or train)</p> <p>Begin the day in Warwickshire's Royal town, one of only three in England, Royal Leamington Spa. This elegant Georgian spa town was given its 'Royal' title during a visit by Queen Victoria. Spend a little time admiring the splendid Regency architecture and browsing around the delightful shops and drop into The Pump Rooms that now house a museum and art gallery. If you adore fine food then don't miss two of Warwickshire's finest food producers - Aubrey Allen Meats (Warwick Street, Leamington Spa) and Sweet As, award winner confectioner (Warwick Place, Leamington Spa).</p>
Afternoon	<p>Mid-morning continue onto nearby Kenilworth – home to the dramatic red-sandstone Kenilworth Castle. The vast medieval fortress of Kenilworth Castle is one of the most spectacular castle ruins in England. The castle was ruined after the Civil War in 1644 but the huge 12th century keep and Norman walls remain. The ruins are best known as the home of Robert Dudley, the great love of Queen Elizabeth I. Dudley created an ornate palace here to impress his beloved Queen in 1575. The newly re-created, unique Elizabethan Garden, lost for 400 years, is now open to visitors once more. A paradise for garden lovers, wander through this sumptuous landscape as Queen Elizabeth I would have done herself. Lunch suggestion: the Castle tearoom in the Tudor stable.</p> <p>(Leamington Spa to Kenilworth – 5miles – car, bus or train)</p> <p>Travel south from Kenilworth towards Stratford-upon-Avon to the National Trust's Charlecote Park. Was Shakespeare caught poaching deer at Charlecote Park? Come and find out, and uncover strong associations with Queen Elizabeth I, too. Charlecote Park has been home to the Lucy family for over 700 years and its mellow brickwork and tall chimneys are the very essence of Tudor England. Inside you can see how the house was remodelled in Victorian times and get a taste for 'downstairs' life in the kitchen and scullery. Relax in gardens that include a formal parterre, sensory garden and woodland, or step out on a walk across the 'Capability' Brown-inspired parkland, still with fallow deer.</p> <p>(Leamington Spa to Charlecote – 9 miles – car, bus or taxi)</p>

Evening	<p>In the evening treat yourself to a night at the theatre. This isn't just any theatre; this is the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Have dinner in the stunning roof top restaurant giving panoramic views over the town, then enjoy one of the RSC's internationally renowned performances in the newly refurbished theatre.</p> <p>(Charlecote to Stratford-upon-Avon – 4 miles – car, bus or taxi) Overnight in Stratford-upon-Avon</p>
---------	---

Day Three

Morning	<p>Begin your third day by visiting Ragley Hall, the family home of the Marquess and Marchioness of Hertford, near Alcester. Enjoy a guided tour of this magnificent estate, said to be one of the country's most sustainable stately homes. The early Palladian mansion houses a fine collection of art and porcelain, and the south staircase hall has contemporary murals depicting the history of the house and family. Ragley Hall has been the seat of the Conway Seymour family since 1680. The house sits in beautiful gardens and also boasts the wonderful Jerwood Sculpture Trail.</p> <p>Return to the delightful roman town of Alcester for lunch. Its medieval street pattern prevails remarkably intact and there are plenty of enticing 'turies' (alleyways), historic pubs and half-timbered buildings to admire on an unhurried stroll around. Lunch suggestion: Essence – modern British Cuisine with a sprinkling of international influences or the much more traditional, Holly Bush Inn, a timeless tavern with an impressive array of real ales.</p>
---------	--

Afternoon	<p>Just north of Alcester you next come across Coughton Court - the home of the Throckmorton family since 1409, one of the UK's oldest Catholic families. It holds a unique place in English history with its close connections to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. This fine Tudor house stands testament to a family's courage in maintaining their beliefs. From a position of high favour to one of fear and oppression post-Reformation, the Throckmortons were leaders in a dangerous age, helping to bring about Catholic emancipation in the 19th century. Explore this story of fascinating personalities through the 'family album' of portraits and Catholic treasures around the house. Coughton is still very much a family home with an intimate feel: the Throckmorton family live here, managing the stunning gardens which they have created.</p>
-----------	---

Evening	<p>From Alcester return to Stratford-upon-Avon for a second overnight stay or return journey to London by train – about 2hours20mins.</p> <p>(Stratford-upon-Avon to Alcester for Ragley Hall and Coughton Court – Approx 10-miles – car, bus or taxi)</p>
---------	--