



West Midlands

Warwickshire

SHAKESPEARE'S WARWICKSHIRE

England's greatest play-write, the world's best known theatre company, a glimpse of Tudor England – the one and only – Shakespeare!

## Day One

Morning	<p>Depart from London Marylebone to Stratford-upon-Avon by train approximately 2 hours 20 minutes. On arrival in Stratford-upon-Avon, check into a centrally located hotel or B&amp;B. Then meet up with a local walking guide and join the <a href="#">Stratford Town Walk</a>. As you walk in William Shakespeare's footsteps from cradle to grave, along the historic spine of ancient Stratford, your guide will unravel the Shakespeare story. You will see Shakespeare's Birthplace, Nash's House and the site of New Place and the beautiful Hall's Croft. Other highlights include the picturesque River Avon, the Royal Shakespeare Theatres, Shakespeare's grammar school and Holy Trinity Church. You may wish to see where William Shakespeare is buried in the Chancel with a curse on his grave.</p> <p>Walk duration approximately 2 hours. After the walk enjoy lunch at No.9 Church Street – a lovely restaurant that champions local food.</p>
Afternoon	<p>After lunch enjoy a visit to <a href="#">Shakespeare's Birthplace</a>. William Shakespeare grew up here and he played here. He ate meals in the hall and he slept and dreamed in these rooms. Shakespeare also spent the first five years of married life in this house with his new wife, Anne Hathaway. You will discover the world that shaped the man and you'll find out what other famous writers thought when they visited here. Well-known visitors have included Charles Dickens, John Keats, Walter Scott and Thomas Hardy. Shakespeare's Birthplace is a fascinating house that offers a tantalising glimpse into Shakespeare's early world.</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>Overnight in Stratford-upon-Avon.</p> <p>All venues can be accessed on foot from Stratford-upon-Avon train station and the town offers many quality B&amp;B's and hotels.</p>

## Day Two

Morning	<p>Connect with Shakespeare in a different way today – on two wheels – and trace his rural roots, visiting some of his favourite haunts. Collect a bicycle from <a href="#">Stratford Bike Hire</a> who will provide details of the route, taking in some of the prettiest villages and scenery in the area. The circular route is about 12 miles in total, and mostly flat, making this a really easy and enjoyable morning's ride. Stop en-route at</p>
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	<p>the very pretty village of Welford-on-Avon for lunch before returning your cycles. (Total leisurely ride time with lunch will take about 3.5-4 hrs.) Suggested lunch stop: The Bell, where Shakespeare met with Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton. It's said the Bard caught pneumonia on his way home in the rain. Or try the Shakespeare Inn, both pubs located in Welford-on-Avon.</p>
Afternoon	<p>Now it is your time to sit back, relax and let someone else do the driving. Take a <a href="#">City Sightseeing Tour</a> of Stratford upon-Avon which takes in the major sights in the town, then whisks you off into the countryside allowing you to visit two more important Shakespeare homes – Anne Hathaway's Cottage and Mary Arden's House.</p> <p><a href="#">Anne Hathaway's Cottage</a> is a thatched farmhouse with stunning grounds and gardens, which overflow with beautiful blooms, and traditional shrubs and where the young William Shakespeare courted his future bride. The cottage is in Shottery, a hamlet within the parish of Stratford-upon-Avon. See for yourself the many original items of family furniture, including the Hathaway Bed, dating from Anne's time and take in the beauty and tranquillity of the charming cottage gardens.</p> <p><a href="#">Mary Arden's House</a> - explore the house where Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden, grew up and experience for yourself the daily routine, skills and crafts the young William would have known from visits to his grandparents in the 1570s. Visitors can help with tasks such as basket weaving, threshing, bread making, gardening and animal tending. You will find all the sights, sounds and smells of an authentic Tudor farm.</p>
Evening	<p>If you dare, take an evening '<a href="#">Ghost Cruise</a>' along the River Avon - the gently flowing River Avon with its abundance of wildlife provides a delightful backdrop to charm the senses. The Man in Black or Vincent present a blend of chilling stories enhanced with magic and mind reading, stimulating the imagination.</p> <p>Overnight in Stratford-upon-Avon.</p>
<b>Day Three</b>	
Morning	<p>Today follow in the Bard's footsteps a little further afield by bus, train, or vintage car!</p> <p>Take a bus from Stratford-upon-Avon to the <a href="#">National Trust's Charlecote Park</a>. 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. You'll be rewarded with half price admission to the</p>

	house if you travel by public transport.
Afternoon	<p>Take the <a href="#">Shakespeare Line</a> for a scenic rail journey and a leisurely afternoon in <a href="#">Henley-in-Arden</a>. Admire Henley's famous mile-long High Street with its enchanting 12th to 18th-century architecture, and browse the shops and heritage centre. How about some fine dining in the award-winning <a href="#">Bluebell</a> inn, or tea and ice cream in the 16th-century <a href="#">ice cream parlour</a>? You can also take a short taxi ride from Henley-in-Arden to the tiny hamlet of Aston Cantlow. Shakespeare's parents married in the Church here and celebrated in the local inn – <a href="#">The King's Head</a>. The pub is still offering fantastic food today and is known locally for its excellent Duck Suppers.</p> <p>As an alternative to public transport, you may want to splash out, and hire yourself a <a href="#">beautiful vintage classic car</a> for the day and explore these Shakespeare connections at your leisure.</p> <p>(Train time from Stratford-upon-Avon to Henley – 15mins)</p>
Evening	<p>Return to Stratford-upon-Avon for your return journey to London or a final overnight stay. Why not really get under the skin of The Royal Shakespeare Company by joining one of their <a href="#">theatre tours</a> and a trip to the top of the Tower, at 32 metres, this gives panoramic views of the town and beyond. A perfect way to bid farewell to the Bard!</p>

**NB: UNIQUE EVENT FOR 2012**

The World Shakespeare Festival (WSF) is a celebration of Shakespeare as the world's playwright, produced by the Royal Shakespeare Company, in an unprecedented collaboration with leading UK and international arts organisations, and with Globe to Globe, a major international programme produced by Shakespeare's Globe. It runs from 23 April to November 2012 and forms part of London 2012 Festival, which is the culmination of the Cultural Olympiad, bringing leading artists from all over the world together in a UK-wide festival in the summer of 2012.