

Proposed itinerary

Wednesday Day 1 – Departing your last pick-up at **8.30am** we travel north to, **Hutton-in-the-Forest** where a visit to the **House & Gardens** is included. From the medieval Stone Hall to the high Victorian Drawing Room, the rooms represent a succession of historical eras and styles. The rooms contain fine period furniture sitting alongside contemporary ceramics. There are interesting collections of portraits (including – unusually – several by 17th and 18th century women artists), good examples of needlework and tapestries (some more than 500 years old), and fierce decorative weaponry. The beautiful **Walled Garden** has a wide-ranging collection of bulbs, herbaceous plants, annuals and roses set against the backdrop of old pear and apple tree. Fine terraces to the South and West of the house act as a plinth for the massive strength of the architecture and were considerably restored in the 19th Century. Lady Vane was responsible for much of the topiary dating from the 1890's, reflecting the arts and crafts revival of interest in topiary. Lunch can be purchased before continuing on to Scotland, making a final stop at **Elizabeth MacGregor Nursery**. This is a small nursery and garden, run by Elizabeth MacGregor, husband Alasdair and son John, selling plants by mail order. Arriving at the hotel, dinner is included this evening.

Thursday Day 2 – Breakfast included. This morning begins with an included visit to **Dumfries House** and a **90-minute Grand Tour** of the house. This is one of Britain's most beautiful stately homes with an outstanding collection of 18th-century furniture, including fine examples of the work of Thomas Chippendale. A light lunch is included before departing to today's final visit, **Castle Kennedy Gardens**, romantically situated on an isthmus between two lochs and one of Scotland's finest gardens, set in 75 acres and offers something for everyone to enjoy. From spectacular flowering plants and exotic trees, to beautiful scenery, sculptured landforms, magnificent walks and popular bird hides, these gardens are a hidden treasure. Originally laid out by the 2nd Earl of Stair in the 1730's they are famous for their rhododendron displays, including many of Sir Joseph Hooker's original introductions. These include 21 Champion trees and a 2-acre circular lily pond. Hotel dinner included.

Friday Day 3 – Breakfast included. Checking out of the hotel we retrace our steps homewards making a stop at nearby **Glenwhan Gardens** filled with seasonal blooms, exotic plants and rare species. This unique garden has gentle footpaths meandering through a variety of habitats. Described as one of the best newly created gardens in recent times, the story of its development is certainly inspiring. Thirty-six years ago, there was nothing but bracken, gorse and the odd willow here but careful planting has created a 12-acre garden, filled with glorious collections of plants from around the world. Today, the gardens are focused around several small lakes where the plants luxuriate in a variety of habitats. Lastly is an included visit to **Cally Gardens and Specialist Plant Centre**, where lunch can be purchased. The garden is a modern, natural and organic garden and nothing remains of the formal 18th century plan. The towering 18th century walls shelter over 5000 rare plants all hand selected from their natural habitat by the famous plant collector Michael Wickenden. After Michael's death the gardens closed for a few years and reopened in 2018 under the ownership of another plant hunter (and ecologist) Kevin Hughes. Continuing homewards, a comfort stop will be made enroute to your original departure point.

Simply Groups reserve the right to make minor changes to this itinerary due to circumstances beyond our control.

The 3* North West Castle hotel offers an impressive 73 en-suite bedrooms, along with leisure facilities including swimming pool, spa bath, gym and its very own indoor curling rink! The Castle itself, was formerly the home of Sir John Ross, who was once a famous Arctic explorer, and was instrumental in the discovery of the ice bound trading route which is now known around the world as the 'North West Passage'.