

# A Literary Pursuit Homes of the Authors

A Tour of England with *Joe Bennett*



CONNECTITALIA   
<https://www.connectitalia-nz.com>



*Come with Joe!*

[info@connectitalia-nz.com](mailto:info@connectitalia-nz.com)



# ABOUT CONNECTITALIA-NZ LTD

Our company's mission is to promote greater liaison between Italy and New Zealand, reflecting the different but complementary backgrounds of the company's two directors, Beniamino Petrosino and Anne Scragg. Our principal focus is planning and escorting exclusive small group tours in Italy offering a cultural experience with a difference. Our tours are most definitely not of the whistle-stop "Today is Tuesday so it must be Belgium" kind. We pride ourselves in providing you with the time and comfort to really enjoy what you are seeing and doing and you will never feel rushed. Our tours are all land based so you are most welcome to join us from anywhere in the world. Whether you are travelling on your own or with others, you can expect individual care and attention from two escorts who are willing to go the extra mile to ensure you have an unforgettable time. We also encourage travellers wanting to visit New Zealand from overseas to contact us so we can provide you with a New Zealand tour package tailored to meet your particular needs and interests. We use accredited tour operators to ensure our tours are trouble free and we insist on the highest standards of customer service in all situations throughout our tours. Your comfort and security are of paramount importance to us. Whether you are planning a trip to Italy or New Zealand or anywhere else with us, it will be our pleasure to look after you. We are confident you will enjoy a unique cultural experience and a lot of fun along the way.

## OUR EXPERT GUIDES FOR A LITERARY PURSUIT

Joe Bennett



Joe Bennett was born in Eastbourne, England in 1957. He attended Brighton, Hove and Sussex Grammar School and then Queens' College, Cambridge where he gained a lowly degree in English Literature but still managed to have a good time. After graduating he taught English, more or less by accident, in Spain, France, Canada and the UK before coming to New Zealand in 1987 with the intention of staying for a year.

He taught at Christ's College for ten years before resigning to make a living as a writer. Since then, he has written about three thousand newspaper and magazine columns, has been NZ Columnist of the Year several times, and is now the author of more than 20 books published both nationally and internationally. His work has been translated into Chinese, Korean, Czech and American. He lives in Lyttelton.

*"Some writers are rooted in place. Dickens is synonymous with London. Hardy is Wessex. I've been to a few of the places on this itinerary but most will be new to me. I look forward to discovering them all with a party of the like-minded."*

Richard Scragg



Richard Scragg is a former Dean and Head of Law at the University of Canterbury. He has also been an Honorary Professor of Law at the University of Auckland.

Richard is a Londoner with a life-long interest in English literature. Over the years he has spent many hours and much shoe leather exploring literary London and he has visited many of the homes of literary figures throughout England.

A published author himself in the field of law, Richard has taught writing as a skill at the University of Canterbury.

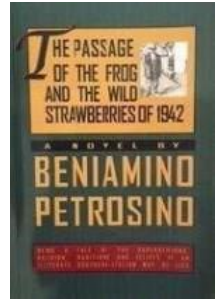
Richard looks forward to creating the opportunity for members of the tour party to experience the excitement he himself has felt in visiting the homes and haunts of leading English writers.

# VACANZE ITALIANE – Come with us!

Beniamino Petrosino



I am the founder of CONNECTITALIA-NZ. I came from Italy to live in New Zealand in the 1980's and have worked as a chef, restaurateur and consultant in the hospitality industry in New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia and the United States of America. I have taught Italian in schools and privately and also English to refugees. In 2003, Hazard Press published my novel "The Passage of the Frog and the Wild Strawberries of 1942" set in the Mezzogiorno regions of Italy where I grew up and it would give me great pleasure to introduce you to this magical land and its people. In late 2015 I met Anne Scragg when she became one of my Italian language students. In 2016 we ran a successful cultural programme in Christchurch showcasing many special Italian foods and wines and introducing our guests to delightful Italian locations off the beaten track. In 2021 and 2022, because of the Covid-19 pandemic we were sadly unable to visit Italy so we organized local tours in our home region of Canterbury New Zealand. In 2025 we plan to travel to the United Kingdom for a very special literary adventure



Anne Scragg



I initially trained as a lawyer and worked in private practice for some years. I had a few years off work while my family was young and then returned to work as an adjudicator and mediator. Over time I became involved in designing and establishing specialist dispute resolution schemes in the public and private sectors. In 2015, I retired from a senior management role with the intention of doing something entirely different. One day my husband came in from the letterbox with one of Beniamino's business cards and I thought Italian language lessons might be just what I needed!

I have been to Italy several times and have loved every visit. I am confident I know what non-Italians need and want when travelling and I want to share my passion for Italy with others. I also want to show our guests from other countries the treasures that my homeland, New Zealand, has to offer. Wherever we travel, we guarantee our clients will enjoy a unique and memorable experience with us.

## Exclusive Tours of Italy

*"Over the last few years we have got together to bring people a genuine glimpse into Italian culture and customs. Now our intent is to take you there for an experience unlike any other."*

For any queries email  
[info@connectitalia-nz.com](mailto:info@connectitalia-nz.com)

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# A LITERARY PURSUIT Homes of the Authors

with *Joe Bennett* and *Richard Scragg*



Duration 15 Days (14 Nights)

NZ\$14,975pp (no single supplement payable)

On this tour, you will:

- Visit homes (both grand and humble) where some of the greatest works of English literature were created
- Be accompanied throughout by knowledgeable and entertaining guides
- See (but unfortunately not touch) hand-written manuscripts of some of our most famous writers
- Stand alongside the writing desk where Jane Austen penned her novels
- Enjoy an outstanding theatrical production in Shakespeare's home town
- Be transported back to your childhood as we visit Hill Top farm, pass through the area that inspired the Hundred Acre Wood and see where Ratty and Toad had their adventures
- Travel extensively and in comfort with others who also have a love of literature
- Take refreshments in famous hostelrys frequented by writers such as Charles Dickens, Dr Johnson, Tolkien, C S Lewis, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and countless others
- Avoid queues and headaches as everything will be arranged for you!

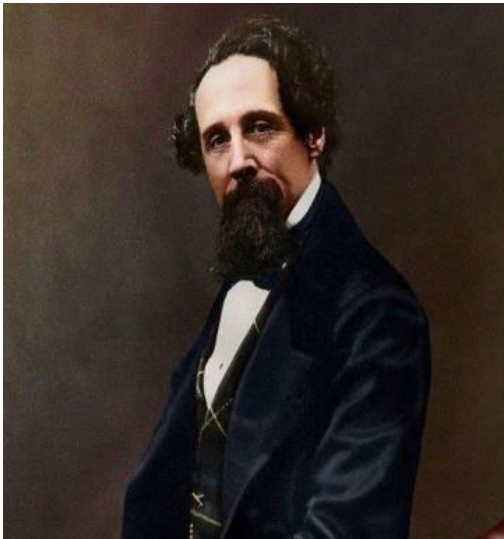




## Tour outline

Start date: 19 September 2025 London

End date: 3 October 2025 Manchester



Note: The tour package is a land package only. Flights to suit your individual needs can be arranged for you or you can make your own flight arrangements if you prefer.

*"... when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford."* Dr Samuel Johnson

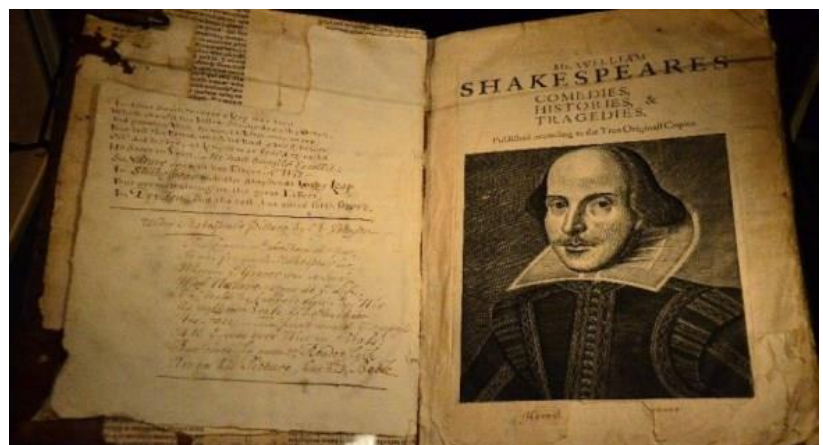


Our first three days will be spent in London. In the morning of our first day, the group will be welcomed at the hotel in central London, which will be our home for three nights.

The programme for the day that is currently described as Day 1 starts with a visit to the Charles Dickens House Museum at 48 Doughty Street. Full of Dickens's own furnishings and original manuscripts, this home provides a real insight into the character of one of England's best loved authors.

From Dickens's House, we will be picked up and taken to the south bank of the Thames, where we will make our way to the Globe theatre.

We will have plenty of time to enjoy this world-renowned education centre and cultural landmark, which is a spectacular recreation of Shakespeare's own theatre. Here we will immerse ourselves in the sights, sounds and secrets of Elizabethan England.







This is also likely to be the day we will visit the George Inn in Southwark, which is the last surviving galleried Inn in London, just a two-minute walk from the popular Borough Market. This authentic 17<sup>th</sup> Century coaching Inn was frequented by Charles Dickens, who wrote about it in *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend*. The area is rich in literary history; next door was The Tabard, which was described in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. The Inn was unfortunately demolished in the nineteenth century but it is not difficult to imagine the scene.



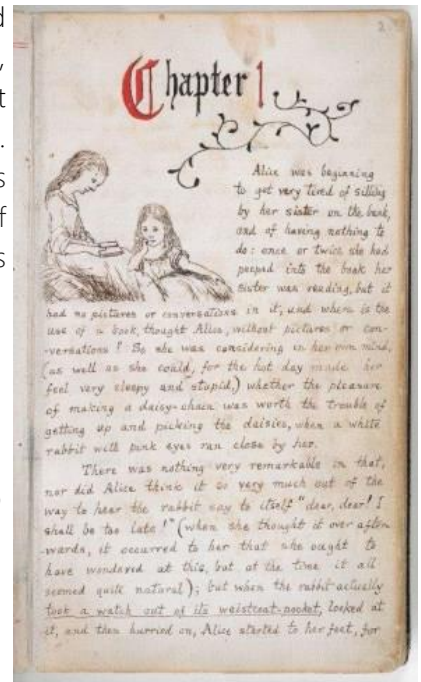
After breakfast on another of our days in London, we will be picked up and taken to the very old area of London, where the long-winded writer and lexicographer Dr Samuel Johnson compiled his great Dictionary of the English Language. His 18<sup>th</sup> Century home in a tranquil spot in Gough Square is now a museum.



After our visit to the house, we will walk a few steps around the corner to the famous 17<sup>th</sup> Century hostelry in Fleet Street, Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese, where Dr. Johnson and many other famous literary figures including Oliver Goldsmith, Mark Twain, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, G.K. Chesterton, and P. G. Wodehouse were regular visitors.



We will take a short stroll along Fleet Street to visit the Temple Church and Middle Temple so we can see where Horace Rumpole had his chambers, before being transferred to the British Library, where some of England's most precious hand-written literary manuscripts are kept safely under lock and key. This library is one of the two largest libraries in the world; its collections include around 14 million books, along with substantial holdings of manuscripts and items dating as far back as 2000 BC. We will see as many as we can!

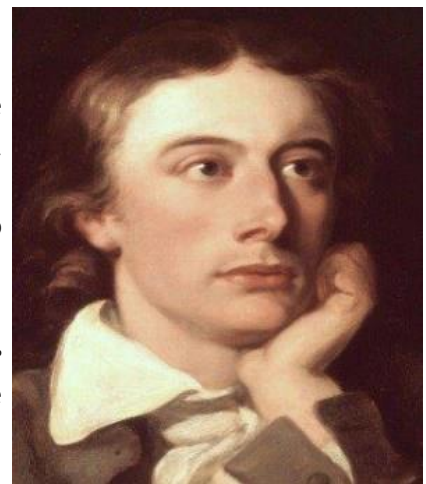


When we leave the British Library, we will be driven to Gordon Square, where the Bloomsbury Circle, founded by Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, lived and created some of their most famous work. This group of early 20th century writers, intellectuals, philosophers, and artists included John Maynard Keynes, E. M. Forster, and Lytton Strachey.

Our last visit for the day will be to the Sherlock Holmes pub in Northumberland Street, St James's. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was a regular patron of this traditional Victorian pub located near Charing Cross railway station and Trafalgar Square, which contains a large collection of memorabilia related to the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes.

On our remaining day in London, we will be taken to the affluent suburb of Hampstead, which has long been known as the home of the intelligentsia, including many famous writers, actors, and avant-garde artists. There are over 60 blue plaques in the area abutting Hampstead Heath, commemorating the many distinguished and colourful personalities who have lived and worked there.

Our first stop will be at Keats's House. According to his friend Charles Brown, who eventually settled in New Plymouth, Keats wrote *Ode to a Nightingale* under a plum tree in the garden. While living in the house, Keats fell in love with, and became engaged to, Fanny Brawne, who lived with her family in the adjacent house.



Sadly, he became increasingly ill with tuberculosis and was advised to move to a warmer climate. He left London in 1820 and died, unmarried, in Italy the following year.





It is only a short distance from Keats's House to Sigmund Freud's final home in Maresfield Gardens. Here we will see Freud's study and its centrepiece, his famous couch, and many of the artefacts he collected from all over the world. The founder of psychoanalysis lived in this house with his daughter Anna, a pioneering child psychoanalyst, until his death in 1939.

By then, we will certainly be ready to call in at the Spaniards Inn. Built in 1585 as a tollgate this pub has more than a few tales to tell. This characterful inn was named after the Spanish Ambassador to James I of England and according to rumour, the highwayman Dick Turpin was born there, while his father was landlord in the early 1700s.



Later in the day, as we return to our hotel, we will see the London haunts of Dame Ngaio Marsh, who, for many years, spent a large part of every year in this city which meant so much to her.



On one of our three nights in London, we will hold the special dinner which is part of the tour. This will be held at a historic restaurant and feature traditional English fare of the highest quality.

On Day 4 it is time to move out of London and head south into the county of Kent.



Our first stop will be the National Trust property Knole, the treasured home of Vita Sackville West and her ancestors. Knole has had many significant literary links through the centuries, starting with its original owner Thomas Sackville, who was a well-respected poet, playwright, and linguist as well as a lawyer and courtier. His descendant Charles Sackville was a patron to many significant literary figures of his day such as Alexander Pope, John Dryden and Matthew Prior.

Knole's most famous literary link, however, is to *Orlando*, which was written in 1928 by Virginia Woolf about her lover, Vita Sackville-West, and Vita's love for her childhood home.

In 1913 Vita married Harold Nicolson, a diplomat at the start of his career. Their relationship was unconventional, with both pursuing multiple, mainly same-sex, affairs. After the end of an affair with Violet Trefusis, herself an author, in 1921, Vita became increasingly withdrawn, telling her mother she would like "to live alone in a tower with her books."



Had Vita been a man, she would have inherited Knole on the death of her father in 1928. Instead, in accordance with primogeniture, the house passed to her uncle, a loss she felt very deeply. She and Harold Nicolson then bought a run-down Elizabethan manor house 25 miles away and this will be our next stop.

When Vita and Harold bought Sissinghurst Castle in 1930, they transformed what was essentially wilderness into the internationally famous garden it is today. Vita also achieved her dream of having her own Writing Room in a tower surrounded by books.

After a night in comfortable lodgings in the lovely countryside of southern England, we will be ready for Day





After breakfast, we will make our way to Bateman's, a beautiful 17th Century Jacobean house in the Sussex Weald. This was the home of Rudyard Kipling, who lived here from 1902 until his death in 1936. When Kipling and his wife first saw the property, they knew immediately this was the house for them. For Kipling, the house and garden represented a vision of an unchanging England and he incorporated many of their features in his later writing. Bateman's also offered privacy. Kipling was in his late 30s and a renowned author before he moved in. *Plain Tales from the Hills* and the two *Jungle Books* had been internationally successful, and he had published *Kim* in 1901 to critical acclaim.



This is a property where you can feel the presence of its last residents. Mrs Kipling bequeathed the house to the National Trust when she died, and the rooms are exactly as the family left them.

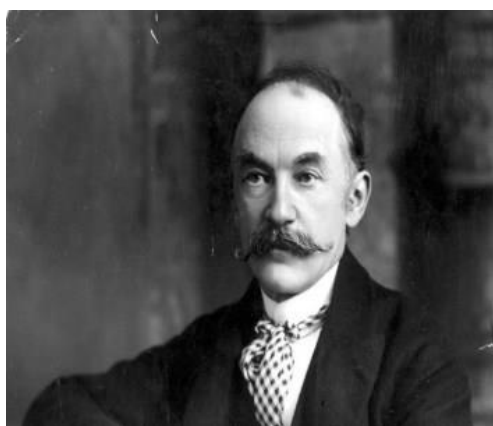


When we leave Bateman's, we will head west on our way towards Winchester. Our route will take us via Hartfield, a village in Ashdown Forest, where A. A. Milne lived. This area is of course famous as the setting for the immortal stories of *Winnie the Pooh*. We will keep a look out for Pooh Sticks Bridge and Pooh Corner and maybe stop somewhere for a jar of 'hunny.' Our hotel for the night is in the cathedral town of Winchester in the county of Hampshire.

On Day 6, after a brief visit to Winchester Cathedral, which houses Jane Austen's tomb, we will set off for the village of Chawton, where Jane Austen lived and wrote her six famous novels. The house is now a museum and it displays a wonderful collection of items including some of Jane's jewellery, first editions, letters and importantly, the writing table she used to create the characters that live on to this day.



When we leave Chawton, we will head south-west for Wessex country and the historic market town of Dorchester, the site of Judge Jeffreys' "Bloody Assizes" and later the trial of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Our focus, however, will be visiting the town we know as Thomas Hardy's "Casterbridge." We will spend the night here before visiting the picturesque cob and thatch cottage, which was Hardy's childhood home and the Hardy Gallery at the Dorset Museum, which features a reconstruction of the famous author's study at his last home, Max Gate.



The remainder of Day 7 will be spent travelling north towards Oxford but we will stop on the way at the village of Pangbourne in Berkshire, where Kenneth Grahame lived at Church Cottage. Although he did not write *Wind in the Willows* in Pangbourne, the River Thames passing through the village is thought to have been the inspiration for E H Shepherd's beautiful illustrations. It is certainly an environment which Mole, Ratty and Badger, not to mention Mr Toad, would have relished.

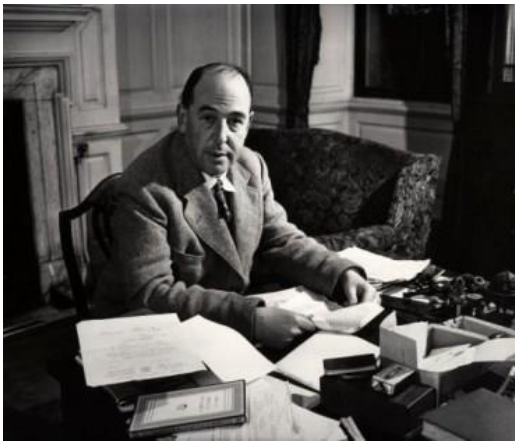


Also significant in Pangbourne is The Swan public house, where Jerome K Jerome's three men (not to mention the dog) stopped during their adventures on the Thames.





Our hotel for tonight and tomorrow night (Day 8) is in *Alice in Wonderland* territory, namely the heart of Oxford. This “city of dreaming spires” as described by Matthew Arnold, has been home to countless literary figures of great renown and we will follow in the footsteps of many of them in a specially arranged walking tour. We might even follow J R R Tolkien and C S Lewis into the 17<sup>th</sup> century pub the Lamb and Flag, across the road from the Eagle and Child pub (also known as “the Bird and Baby”), which they deserted when the landlady installed a dartboard there.



Other famous alumni of Oxford include Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lewis Carroll, Oscar Wilde, Vera Brittain, Dorothy L. Sayers, Robert Graves, Sir John Betjeman and Dr Seuss!



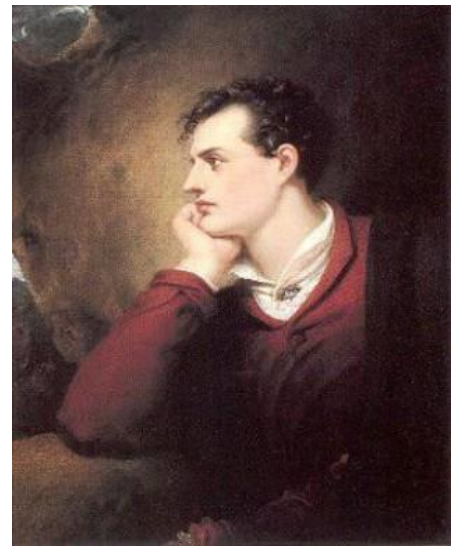
More recently Oxford has become famous for the characters Morse and Endeavour and of course Harry Potter. It is a city bursting with literary achievement and we will have much to see here.

On Day 9, we leave Oxford for the celebrated market town of Stratford-upon-Avon. We will stay here for 2 nights and over the course of our visit we will see

famous landmarks such as Shakespeare’s birthplace, his school, New Place, Holy Trinity Church and Anne Hathaway’s Cottage. Subject to the RSC programme for 2025, we will also attend a theatrical production at the Swan Theatre or the RSC Theatre.



As we will be staying at a centrally located hotel, there will be plenty of free time to potter around the town or along the banks of the river Avon.



On Day 11, we will leave Stratford and head for Robin Hood country, but more particularly to visit Newstead Abbey, the ancestral home of the Romantic poet Lord Byron. The Abbey started its life as an Augustinian priory, but it was converted to a private home by the Byron family following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. George Gordon Byron inherited the property at the age of 10 and the scale of the estate is thought to have contributed to his extravagant taste and sense of his own importance. Inside this splendid Nottinghamshire property, we will see Lord Byron's personal apartments featuring original furniture, letters, manuscripts and portraits, his gilt wood bed, and the desk at which he wrote much of his finest work. In the gardens are the stump of the oak tree he planted there as a child and the grave of his beloved dog Boatswain with its famous *Epitaph to a Dog*.



We will spend the night in the local area.

On Day 12, we will visit the D H Lawrence Birthplace Museum in Eastwood. This is the miner's cottage where the author was born in 1885, one of the four houses the family occupied in Eastwood. We will see the humble beginnings of this controversial writer who scandalised the literary establishment of his day and still causes a few raised eyebrows. After this visit, we will set off for the Lake District to see where some of England's greatest late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Romantic poets such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, Thomas de Quincey, and John Ruskin drew their inspiration.



We will stay tonight and tomorrow night in the picturesque area near Lake Grasmere.



After breakfast on Day 13, we will drive to the lovely Georgian town of Cockermouth to visit Wordsworth House, where William Wordsworth was born in 1770.



In poems such as *The Prelude*, William recalls his childhood in Cockermouth with great warmth. He loved to play outdoors but also enjoyed reading his father's "golden store" of books, committing large portions of verse to memory, including works by Milton, Shakespeare and Spenser. Sadly, Wordsworth's mother died when he was just eight years old, and his father sent him away to school. After time at Cambridge University and 12 years travelling overseas, Wordsworth lived with his sister Dorothy for 8 years at Dove Cottage in Grasmere and later at Rydal Mount until his death in 1850. While William is universally known, Dorothy was in her own right a proficient writer of journals. Her editor de Selincourt described her as "probably the most distinguished of English writers who never wrote a line for the general public." Rydal Mount remains in the ownership of the Wordsworth family and is occasionally open to the public. We plan to visit both properties while we are in the area.



Samuel Taylor Coleridge spent a lot of time in the Lake District with Wordsworth after 1800, when he settled with his family and friends in Greta Hall in Keswick. He was also a house guest of the Wordsworths for 18 months but

as his dependency on laudanum grew, tensions between them intensified and their friendship cooled. This, together with his marital and other problems led to Coleridge writing *Dejection: An Ode*, and his eventual departure from the Lake District.

On Day 14, we will complete our visits in the area with one to Hill Top House and Garden, the 17<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse retreat that belonged to Beatrix Potter. Full of her favourite things, this is an enchanting place to visit.



We must now leave the Lake District and travel south through the rolling hills of the traditional West Riding of Yorkshire. On the way, we may have a brief stop in one of England's famous Book Towns, Sedbergh, which hosted a literary festival in 2023.

We will stay overnight in the Pennines, close to the market town of Halifax.

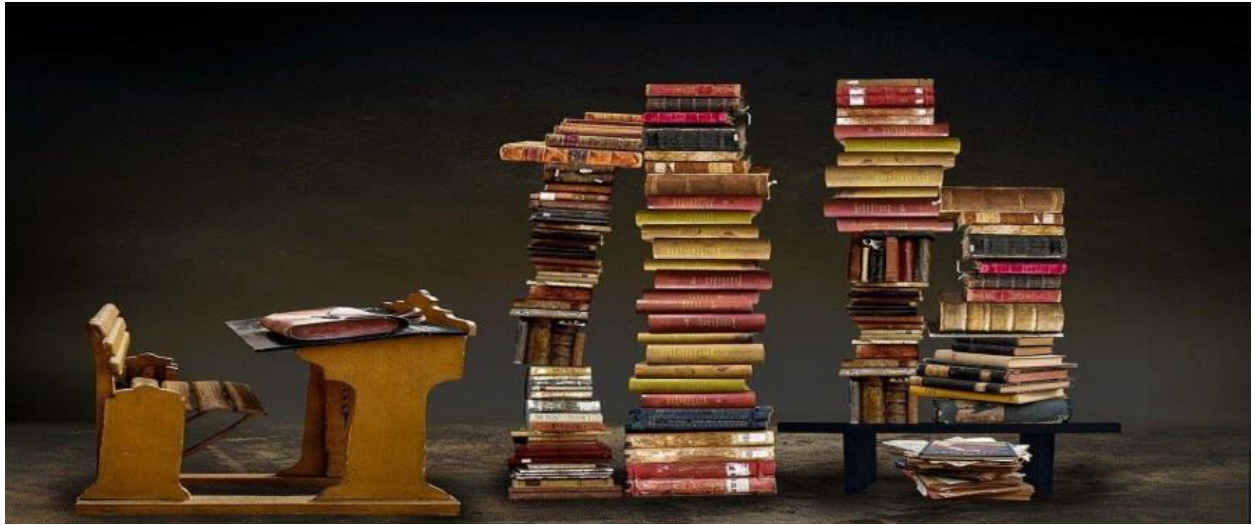
On Day 15, we will visit the Bronte Museum in the village of Haworth. This grey stone building was the parsonage and home of the three sisters, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne, where they spent most of their lives and did almost all their writing. In May 1846, the sisters published at their own expense a volume of poetry. This was the first use of their pseudonyms Currer (Charlotte), Ellis (Emily) and Acton (Anne) Bell. Only two copies were sold but as we all know, the sisters went on to write novels, which have become classics in English literature. The bleak setting of the Bronte home had a profound impact on the Bronte sisters and the celebrated author Mrs Gaskell notes that when she walked on the moors with Charlotte, she heard stories of the local families living there that made her think *Wuthering Heights* tame in comparison. Visiting the Bronte family home will be a real highlight of the tour for us.



Our literary pursuit now comes to an end, and we make our way to Anthony Burgess's hometown Manchester, where you will be dropped off at a central location.

This marks the conclusion of our tour, but it will be our pleasure to assist you with any onward travel plans.





## Tour inclusions

- All accommodation including breakfasts
- All tour travel costs including coach or minibus transport and associated charges such as fuel, tolls and taxes, with a professional driver
- Daily sightseeing
- One group dinner including wine and soft drinks at a specially chosen venue
- All entry fees to homes and museums visited as part of the tour with local expert guides where appropriate
- Ticket to a professional Theatrical Production

**NOTE:** No single supplement will be charged

## Tour exclusions

- Transport before and at the end of the tour
- Meals and beverages other than those included
- Room service meals and mini bar refreshments
- Telephone/internet charges
- Portage
- Gratuities
- Individual sightseeing and outings not undertaken as part of the tour

**WE DO NOT ARRANGE TRAVEL INSURANCE. COMPREHENSIVE TRAVEL INSURANCE IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**



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