

MASONIC HERITAGE TOUR OF GREAT BRITAIN

September 28-October 11, 2008

Itinerary

Sun, Sept. 28

UNITED STATES TO LONDON

Depart your hometown and take an overnight flight across the Atlantic. Enjoy in-flight entertainment and meals as you travel to London.

Mon, Sept. 29

LONDON ARRIVAL & CITY TOUR

After landing at London's Gatwick Airport and completing customs and immigration formalities, your CIE Tours guide will welcome you to England and escort you to the motorcoach. Take an introductory sightseeing tour of London's most famous landmarks. Drive by the Houses of Parliament, Big Ben and stop to visit the Templar Church. Continue on to visit St. Paul's Cathedral, designed by Sir Christopher Wren and built between 1675-1710 to replace the original cathedral, which was destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666. Then stop at a local pub and enjoy lunch with your fellow travelers. Following lunch, drive to your hotel and check in. After you settle into your room you have a free afternoon to rest or explore some of the city on your own. In the evening, join your fellow travelers for dinner in the hotel restaurant.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: VANDERBILT HOTEL, LONDON

Tue, Sept. 30

WESTMINSTER ABBEY & TOWER OF LONDON

After breakfast this morning continue your sightseeing of London with a local guide. Stop to visit Westminster Abbey with its glorious medieval architecture and impressive tombs and monuments to some of Britain's greatest public figures. Next visit the Tower of London, one of London's most famous landmarks, which sits along the River Thames. Here you will be able to learn much about London's history. In its time the Tower has been a castle, a palace, a prison, an armory and even a menagerie. It is also known for being the gruesome site where aristocrats were beheaded. Then join your group to watch the Changing of the Guard, a famous ceremony consisting of a colorful display of pageantry by the Foot Guards of the Household division of the Army, the Queen's personal guard. Horse Guards Parade is London's largest single open space, built in 1745 to house the old palace guards. Today, the guards are changed at the top of Horse Guards Parade every hour on the striking of the clock, a ceremony well worth seeing. The balance of the day is at leisure so that you can browse, shop and sightsee independently before dinner.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: VANDERBILT HOTEL, LONDON

Wed, Oct. 1

GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND & WINDSOR CASTLE

This morning head over to the Freemasons' Hall on Great Queen Street to visit the United Grand Lodge of England, the governing body of Freemasonry. After your visit drive to Windsor to visit Windsor Castle, the official residence of The Queen. Covering thirteen acres, this is the largest inhabited castle in the world. See the Upper & Middle Wards, the Round Tower and the Lower Ward where St. George's Chapel is situated. Return to London where you have lunch at a local pub with your fellow travelers. Then enjoy the remainder of the day at leisure before dinner.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: VANDERBILT HOTEL, LONDON

Thu, Oct. 2

TRAIN TO YORK & SIGHTSEEING

This morning transfer to the train station and board your train to York. Admire the scenic English countryside as you travel to your destination. Upon arrival in York take a walking tour around the center to see the medieval walls and narrow streets where the houses almost touch. Stop to visit the imposing York Minster, which was built between the 12th and the 15th Century and is the largest Gothic church in England. A visit to the Central Tower offers excellent views over the city. Then check into your hotel and enjoy some time to relax and settle in before joining your group for dinner.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: NOVOTEL HOTEL, YORK

Fri, Oct. 3

MELROSE ABBEY & KING DAVID PRIORY

Depart York and travel north through the scenic English countryside and over the border into Scotland. Stop en route at a local pub to enjoy lunch with your fellow travelers. Continue your drive into the Borders country to Melrose and stop for a tour around Melrose Abbey, founded by the Cistercians in 1136. It is famous for its fine traceried stonework and the figure of a pig playing the bagpipes. After your visit drive to the small town of Dalkeith to visit King David Priory in Balantradoch. Continue your drive into the capital city of Edinburgh and check into your hotel. Enjoy some time to relax and settle in before joining your group for dinner.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: APEX INTERNATIONAL HOTEL, EDINBURGH

Sat, Oct. 4

EDINBURGH SIGHTSEEING

Today take a tour of Scotland's capital city. Start your sightseeing with a drive through the heart of the city along Princes Street, famous for its shops on one side and gardens on the other. See the 18th century New Town with its broad streets, spacious squares and elegant town houses. Then drive along the Royal Mile and stop to visit the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the official Scottish residence of Her Majesty The Queen. Then take a guided tour of the imposing Edinburgh Castle, perched high above the city on volcanic rock. The afternoon is spent at leisure for you to browse, shop and sightsee. After dinner in your hotel this evening, attend a Masonic Lodge meeting with your fellow travelers, which has been planned for you by your Tour Leader.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: APEX INTERNATIONAL HOTEL, EDINBURGH

Sun, Oct. 5

ROSLYN CHAPEL & FREE TIME

Today travel to Roslin to visit Roslyn Chapel, which attracts over 25,000 visitors every year. Founded by Sir William Sinclair in the 15th century, this medieval chapel is rich in unusual carvings and symbolism. This foundation was originally intended to spread intellectual and spiritual knowledge, and the extravagance of their construction depended on the wealth of their founder. Return to Edinburgh and enjoy the balance of the day at leisure before dinner.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: APEX INTERNATIONAL HOTEL, EDINBURGH

Mon, Oct. 6

DAY AT LEISURE

Today is spent completely at leisure where there are many activities from which to choose. You may choose to visit Gladstone's Land, on the Royal Mile, for an insight of life in the Old Town of the 17th century or visit the Georgian House to see life in the Georgian New Town. The Royal Museum of Scotland houses excellent collections of many types in wonderful Victorian galleries and the National Gallery of Scotland contains paintings by the world's leading artists. You could choose to stroll along Princes Street for shopping, especially at Jenners, the oldest independent department store in the world. In the evening join your fellow travelers for dinner in the hotel restaurant.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: APEX INTERNATIONAL HOTEL, EDINBURGH

Tue, Oct. 7

STIRLING CASTLE & DISTILLERY TOUR

Depart Edinburgh and travel along the Firth of Forth to the historic town of Stirling where you will visit Stirling Castle. Captured from the English in 1297 by William Wallace and again in 1314 by Robert the Bruce, Stirling Castle has featured largely throughout Scottish history. At one time it was a royal residence and Mary, Queen of Scots, spent some years here. Then enjoy lunch at a local pub in Stirling with your fellow travelers before journeying north. Stop en route at a local distillery to see how whisky is distilled and sample the finished product. Continue through the dramatic scenery of the Highlands and the Cairngorm Mountains to Inverness and check into your hotel. Enjoy some time to relax and settle in before joining your group for dinner.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: THISTLE HOTEL INVERNESS

Wed, Oct. 8

LOCH NESS CRUISE & URQUHART CASTLE

This morning take a short cruise on Loch Ness to admire the lovely scenery and try to find the monster. Then drive to the village of Drumnadrochit to visit the romantic ruins of Urquhart Castle, once the largest castle in Scotland. The castle is situated on a scenic promontory where many sightings of the monster have been reported. Dramatically situated on the banks of this famous loch. Next visit the Official Loch Ness Visitors Centre to see equipment used in the search for "Nessie." Return along the shoreline of Loch Ness to Inverness and enjoy some time to relax and freshen up before joining your dinner in the hotel restaurant.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: THISTLE HOTEL INVERNESS

Thu, Oct. 9

FREE DAY IN INVERNESS

Today you are at leisure in Inverness to relax, shop and sightsee independently. Inverness evolved from an ancient fort to being the capital of the Scottish highlands. Once one of Europe's fastest growing towns the city of Inverness is home to 65,000 people and is the regional and administrative center for the Highlands of Scotland. It is a vibrant city with excellent travel, retail, leisure and educational facilities and a location for many high tech and traditional industries. In the evening join your fellow travelers for dinner in the hotel restaurant.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: THISTLE HOTEL INVERNESS

Fri, Oct. 10

GLENCOE VISITOR CENTER & KILWINNING LODGE

Depart Inverness and journey through the towering mountains of Glen Coe which is famous for the Massacre of Glen Coe in 1692 when the Campbells slaughtered many of the Macdonald clan. Stop to visit the Glencoe Visitors Center, which lies two miles southeast of the town of Glencoe and provides interesting information about the area and the 17th century massacre of the Macdonalds by the Campbells. Then cross Rannoch Moor and stop to admire Loch Lomond, Britain's largest lake, and take some photos. Continue into Glasgow and stop to visit the Kilwinning Lodge with your fellow travelers before checking into your hotel. In the evening join your group for a farewell dinner in the hotel restaurant.

DINNER & OVERNIGHT: THISTLE HOTEL GLASGOW

Sat, Oct. 11

RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES

Today your vacation has come to its final day. Transfer to Glasgow Airport in plenty of time to check in for your transatlantic flight or your connecting flight. You may choose to do some last minute shopping at the duty free stores before boarding your aircraft for your transatlantic flight. Enjoy your flight across the Atlantic Ocean back to your hometown in the United States.