



2016 Year of the English Garden

Ten of the best English gardens for groups

England has some of the finest gardens in the world for groups to visit from dramatic historic landscapes designed by 'Capability' Brown to fragrant English rose gardens. 2016 is year of the English garden so come and join us for a sensory tour as we hand pick some of the most exciting. These gardens go out of their way for groups. Experience exclusive tours with dedicated guides, meet the head gardener and enjoy great food together in a private dining room.

Anglesey Abbey Gardens - Cambridgeshire

Anglesey Abbey Gardens, originally created by Lord Fairhaven in the 1930s to inspire and surprise his visitors, are full of spectacular colour and fragrance throughout the year. The gardens are set in the grounds of the Jacobean style abbey and working Lode Mill, now looked after by the National Trust. Take a stroll through the avenues of trees, discover the many statues and enjoy the endless lawns and wildflower meadows. While Lode Mill has been in operation for a couple of centuries, there has been a mill on the site for over one thousand years, as noted in the Domesday Book. There are two garden group tours currently available:

1. The visionary's garden – getting to know the garden through the eyes of the gardeners.
2. Sculpture tour - Lord Fairhaven bought over 100 pieces of garden statuary, now set against the backdrop of Anglesey's gardens. Experts will guide you round the garden, unearthing fascinating stories about the collection.

Group tours last approximately ninety minutes and are available when booked in advance for up to 25 people. Parking is available just 50 yards from Abbey. There is a meet and greet on the coach service available.

Website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/anglesey-abbey

Contact: Groups department

Tel: 01223 810080

Email: angleseyabbey@nationaltrust.org.uk

Belsay Hall, Near Morpeth, Northumberland

The garden at Belsay Hall is one of the finest examples of the romantic picturesque movement in England. This grade I registered heritage garden has been restored to its former glory with seasonal trees, shrubs and flowers creating brilliant colour throughout the year. Not to be missed is the dramatic quarry garden with its ravines, pinnacles and exotic plants. Belsay Hall is now looked after by English Heritage.

Tours are available at Belsay Hall for groups of between 11 and 25 people. The garden tours are led by the Head Gardener, who will take you on a journey of discovery - hear the history behind the creation of the gardens and the work that goes into preserving them. Group tours last two hours. Groups of 11 or more (maximum 25) receive a 15% discount on the entry price (prices may be higher at weekends). Coach driver and tour guide visit for free. Coaches can park just 200 metres from the entrance. Group tours must be booked at least one month in advance.

Website: www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/belsay-hall-castle-and-gardens/groups-and-trade

Contact: Group booking team Tel: 01661 881636

Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, Oxfordshire

Blenheim Palace is an UNESCO World Heritage Site with 'Capability' Brown landscaped parkland and award-winning formal gardens, noted as "the most beautiful view in England". Here you will see a stunning secret garden, majestic water terraces, fragrant rose garden and the grand cascade and lake.

A range of exclusive themed tours can be booked in advance. Themed tours for up to 30 people are with a dedicated guide. Group tours must be booked in advance by contacting Blenheim Palace.

Website: www.blenheimpalace.com/education/groups/group-visits.html

Contact: Groups department or download the group visit information leaflet

Tel: 01993 815600 **Email:** groups@blenheimpalace.com

Burghley House, Stamford, Lincolnshire

A 300-acre deer park set in the grounds of Burghley House. The gardens landscaped by 'Capability' Brown include his signature lake and avenues of mature trees. The Historical Garden of Surprises is just that. Hidden from the outside it features obelisks, statues, flowing water and fountains where visitors of all ages are encouraged to take a paddle on a warm day. The Contemporary Sculpture Garden, opened in 1994, is dedicated to exhibiting innovative sculptures.

Exclusive garden tours and talks are available at Burghley House for groups of 20 or more.

There are three garden tour options:

1. The Burghley experience, a self-guided tour.
2. The gardens at Burghley - Burghley's Head Gardener offers visitors the chance to explore the Garden of Surprises, the Contemporary Sculpture Garden and the private South Gardens.
3. The changing landscape at Burghley - An exciting day with Head Gardener and Head Forester giving an insight into how the park and gardens have been influenced by 'Capability' Brown and famous landscaping gardening double act, London and Wise through to their modern day management. Group tours are subject to change and must be booked in advance by either completing the group booking form or contacting Burghley House.

Website: www.burghley.co.uk/visiting/group-visits/group-garden-tours-and-talks/

Contact: Group bookings

Tel: 01780 752451 **Email:** gemma.rigby@burghley.co.uk

Castle Howard, York, Yorkshire

Castle Howard is one of England's finest historic houses and gardens, home to the Howard family today. The gardens have been designed on a monumental scale with over 1,000 acres of breath-taking grounds to explore. Here you'll find statues, lakes, temples and fountains along with an 18th Century walled garden. Take a stroll through the Ray Wood, the woodland garden acknowledged as 'a rare botanical jewel' and see the many trees, shrubs, rhododendrons, magnolias and azaleas. Not to be missed are the stunning displays of daffodils, rhododendrons, delphiniums and roses.

Group tours can include an exclusive talk with private dining or be more relaxed.

Special group rates for 12 or more. Pre-booked groups receive free entrance for the coach driver and group leader, flexible payment options and familiarisation visits. The group team can help you plan your tour and visit.

Website: www.castlehoward.co.uk/house-and-grounds/groups-and-travel-trade/group-rates-and-booking.html

Contact: Group reservation team

Tel: 01653 648621 **Email:** groups@castlehoward.co.uk

Eden Project, Bodelva, Cornwall

The world-famous Eden Project, located in Cornwall, is a must see on any group itinerary. Here you will see the bio-domes housing thousands of exotic plants from around the world. The garden displays are stunning throughout the year. Explore the world's largest indoor rainforest with steamy jungles and waterfalls; you can even take a walk among the treetops. To keep your group entertained there's a programme of seasonal events and even an ice rink in the winter.

Groups of 10 or more receive a discount at the Eden Project and should allow at least four hours for a visit. Group tours must be booked in advance by contacting the group's coordinator.

Website: www.edenproject.com/visit-us/tickets-and-tours/group-visits

Contact: Group's Coordinator

Tel: 01726 811903 **Email:** cbarret@edenproject.com

Kew Royal Botanical Gardens, London

Kew Gardens, probably the world's most famous garden, is a UNESCO world heritage site. The garden, created in 1759, boasts the earliest and greatest botanic garden, including breath-taking landscapes, historical buildings and glasshouses bursting with tropical plants. There's something to see throughout the year, visit between April and September for a glimpse into Kew's royal past.

Groups can enjoy themed guided walking tours, fascinating commentary on the hop-on-hop-off explorer bus and special catering options. Groups of 10 or more adults receive a discount at Kew when paid in advance. Group tours must be booked in advance by completing the group booking form or contacting the team.

Website: www.kew.org/visit-kew-gardens/plan/groups

Contact: Groups team

Tel: 020 8332 5648 **Email:** groups@kew.org

RHS Garden Wisley, Surrey

Wisley is one of the most visited gardens in England with a calendar of spectacular events including the annual butterfly display. Originally created by George Fergusson Wilson, businessman, inventor and keen gardener, this 60 acre estate is now looked after by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) after being donated to them in 1903. A stunning garden, it has a large number of features including the national heather collection and the Bicentenary Glasshouse which covers three quarters of an acre, divided into three main planting areas; desert, tropical and temperate climates.

Plan a visit with your group either to coincide with a specific event or when booked as a tour with an RHS expert. Groups of 10 or more adults receive a discount at Wisley when booked in advance. The organiser and coach driver receive free entry and the coach driver, a refreshment voucher. Group tours can be booked by completing the group booking form or contacting the team.

Website: www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley/plan-your-visit/group-visits-to-wisley

Contact: Groups team

Tel: 0845 260 9000 **Email:** groupswisley@rhs.org.uk

Tatton Park, Cheshire

Tatton Park is the VisitEngland gold award winner – large visitor attraction of the year, 2014. A picture perfect 50 acre Edwardian garden, with a rare-breed farm and 1,000 acres of deer park. Elements of the garden were designed by Lewis William Wyatt and Joseph Paxton, architect of Crystal Palace. Find out about the different areas including the Walled Kitchen Garden, Japanese Garden and Glasshouses. Lose yourself in the maze and regroup in the Gardeners Cottage Café for English tea and cake.

Tatton Park provides a great day out for groups with a tailored half and full day itinerary, meet and greet service and dedicated dining room for groups to eat together. There are tours and events throughout the year. Groups of 12 or more adults receive a discount and should allow four or more hours for a visit. Group tours must be booked in advance.

Website: www.tattonpark.org.uk/visit/group_visits.aspx

Contact: Groups team

Tel: 01625 374416 **Email:** tattonmarketing@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Trentham Gardens, Staffordshire

Award-winning gardens with a mile long 'Capability' Brown designed lake, Italian Garden, woodland and maze. From spring to autumn take the group on a barefoot walk, but look carefully and you may even see fairies. This garden is a photographer's dream throughout the year; picture perfect views at every turn.

Trentham Gardens provide an enhanced experience for groups starting with their friendly meet and greet service. Groups of 12 or more adults receive a discount. The group organiser gets free admission to the gardens as well as a familiarisation visit. Free all day coach parking, admission to the gardens and a complimentary £5 food and beverage voucher for the driver. Group tours must be booked in advance by completing the group booking form.

Website: www.trentham.co.uk/the-trentham-estate/great-for-groups

Contact: Groups Bookings Coordinator

Tel: 01782 645215 **Email:** jgrice@trentham.co.uk