



In Churchill's Footsteps

Celebrating the 150th anniversary of his birth

1–6 July 2024 (MK 345)

6 days • £3,090

Lecturer: Katherine Carter

Visits key places in the life of WSC in the 150th anniversary of his birth.

An extended version of an established MRT tour, some of the extra visits emphasising WSC's role in the Second World War.

Many special arrangements and out-of-hours visits, including privileged access to the Churchill Archive in Cambridge.

In the company of Katherine Carter, Churchill expert and Curator of Chartwell.

'Winston Churchill was the greatest Englishman and one of the greatest human beings of the 20th century, indeed of all time.' So Max Hastings began *Finest Years: Churchill as Warlord* (2010). Roy Jenkins concluded his 2001 biography with the verdict that Churchill was 'the greatest human being ever to occupy 10 Downing Street'. These are the views of first rate historians, not of hagiographers or eccentrics. They are shared by millions around the globe.

It has not always been thus. In 1932 a British delegation in Moscow was being questioned by Stalin about contemporary politics. 'What about Churchill?' he asked. 'Oh,' replied Nancy Astor with a scornful little laugh, 'he's finished'. Detractors were legion for much of his political career, the earlier years of his wartime premiership being no exception. A steady flow of revisionist historians have followed suit, and recently his ethics and world view have come in for the sharpest criticism.

Churchill was more right about more things than an average handful of statesmen put together. It is also true that his judgement was intermittently badly flawed, the consequence perhaps of the huge range of matters to which he turned his attention, his exceptionally long political career, his boundless energy, his boldness and his ambition. Anti-Churchill myths are strangely tenacious (no, he didn't send in troops against the strikers at Tonymandy), but on most of the major issues of his time, not only was his judgement sound but it was frequently in defiance of prevailing wisdom, and often demonstrated almost preternatural foresight.

The use of 'human being' in both the quoted encomia is striking: alternative substantives



Winston Churchill, photograph publ. 1942.

are inadequate for such a towering – and humane – personality. Compassion was the virtue he ranked highest, a belief in decency the bedrock of his political life, liberty his goal. Yes, he was possibly the greatest war leader the world has known; yet the quantity and impact of progressive social legislation he shepherded through Parliament was probably unsurpassed by any other British politician of the 20th century. He had a will of iron, colossal courage and the intellect of a genius, but he was lovable and approachable, and easily moved to tears by the sight of suffering or forbearance. His famous wit was rarely acerbic and never cruel.

This unique tour illuminates Churchill and his tumultuous times through visits to places which formed a critical backdrop to his life.

Itinerary

Day 1: London, Harrow. The tour begins with you leaving your luggage on the coach, parked close to Whitehall, and starting from there at 1.30pm. Walk the few minutes to the Churchill Museum, an excellent presentation of his life and works. Return to the coach to drive to Woodstock, Oxfordshire, where you stay for two nights.

Day 2: Blenheim, Bladon, Ditchley. Blenheim Palace, Churchill's birthplace, is the grandest house in Britain, given in 1705 by a grateful nation to John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough. See some WSC memorabilia during an out-of-hours visit to the state apartments. There is time to enjoy more of the palace, gardens and park before visiting Bladon, where WSC is buried, and Ditchley Park, a fine country house built in the 1720s where Churchill stayed for 15 weekends 1940–42 'when the moon was high' (Chequers being feared visible to the Luftwaffe).

Day 3: Uxbridge, Bletchley. The bunker at RAF Uxbridge was the command and control centre for the Battle of Britain – a moving memorial. An excellent museum of air warfare is attached. With a workforce of up to 9,000, the code breakers at Bletchley Park contributed hugely to victory in WWII. Top secret, even Churchill's secretaries did not know what was in the packages they daily put into his in-tray. The surviving buildings and contents make a profound impression. The night is spent in Cambridge.

Day 4: Cambridge, Duxford. Churchill College, Cambridge hosts the papers WSC accumulated during one of the longest and most active careers in political history. Special arrangements include a talk by the director and a viewing of some of the most salient letters, speeches and other documents. A selective tour of the Imperial War Museum Duxford, the largest aircraft museum in Europe, focuses on the Second World War. First of two nights in Whitehall in the heart of London.

Day 5: Chartwell, London. On the way to Kent, digress via Sidney Street of 'Siege' fame (1911). Then to Chartwell, his beloved family home in the country from 1924 to the end of his life. 'I love the place – a day away from Chartwell is a day wasted.' Returning to London mid-afternoon, there is some free time before a special evening opening of the underground Cabinet War Rooms. From here country and

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empire were governed and the war directed; the rooms remain as they were when they closed the day the war ended.

Day 6: London. A morning walk encompasses sites associated with Churchill in and around Whitehall and Downing Street (mainly exteriors): Parliament Square (statue by Ivor Roberts-Jones), Ministry of Health (balcony appearance on VE Day), Admiralty House (official residence), former War Office (office of one of his ministerial appointments), National Liberal Club (portrait inside). Visit the recently re-opened and splendidly rehung National Portrait Gallery. The tour ends at the Royal Horseguards Hotel by c. 4.00pm.

Lecturer

Katherine Carter. Curator and Historian, specialising in early 20th century political history. As Curator of Chartwell, the home of Winston Churchill, Katherine leads the research, presentation, interpretation and conservation of the house and collections. Her exhibitions include 'Death of a Hero', 'Into the Trenches' and 'Churchill & The Crown'.

Elected a Churchill Fellow by Westminster College, Missouri and America's National Churchill Museum, she is an Associate Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. She speaks on the subject of Winston Churchill internationally, advises film and television productions, and appears frequently in print and broadcast media. Her first book, *Churchill, Chartwell and the Countdown to War* will be published by Yale University Press in 2024.

Practicalities

Price, per person: £3,090. **Single occupancy:** £3,690.

Included: travel by private coach; accommodation as described below; breakfasts, 1 lunch and 4 dinners with wine; all charges for museum admission and special arrangements (including some not mentioned above); tips for restaurant staff and drivers; the services of the expert speaker and tour manager.

Accommodation. The Feathers, Woodstock (www.feathers.co.uk): a boutique hotel in a former townhouse in the heart of Woodstock and very close to Blenheim Palace. **University Arms, Cambridge** (universityarms.com): a luxurious hotel with tasteful interiors by interiors by Martin Brudnizki.

Royal Horseguards Hotel, London (guoman.com/royal-horseguards-hotel). A 5-star hotel just off Whitehall, made up of the National Liberal Club and its apartments. The style is that of an international hotel and bedrooms are comfortable with all mod cons. *Single rooms throughout are double for sole use.*

How strenuous? The tour involves quite a lot of walking and should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Average distance by coach per day: 62 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 22 participants.

Combine this tour with: *Medieval West Midlands*, 24–28 June 2024; *Vienna's Masterpieces*, 24–30 June 2024; *Savonlinna Opera*, 7–11 July 2024; *Western Ireland Archaeology*, 8–14 July 2024; *Scottish Houses and Castles*, 10–19 July 2024.