

This visit has been organised by Richard Hartley.

Situated close by Woodstock, approximately 8 miles NW of Oxford, Blenheim Palace is the ancestral home of the Dukes of Marlborough. Originally a gift from a grateful nation to the 1st Duke following his victory at the Battle of Blenheim in 1704, in more recent times it has achieved further fame through being the birth place of Sir Winston Churchill. The Palace achieved World Heritage Site status in 1987. The State rooms reveal the rich history of the place, the formal gardens are award winning and the whole is set in 2,000 acres of Capability Brown's landscaped park – complete with the Great Lake.

The organised part of our visit will start with a guided tour at 10:30 am, break after two hours for a “sandwich platter” lunch in the Indian Room and then continue for another hour, finishing at nominally 2:30 pm. After that, until closing time at 5:30, we're free to wander and/or revisit areas of particular interest. Although somewhat based on a “standard” guided tour, our own tour will contain some additional material – including: “The Gentlemen of Blenheim Palace (Saints and sinners, soldiers and scientists)”, “A Palace at War –Evacuees and Espionage” and “Behind the Scenes at Blenheim Palace”.

In addition to enjoying the Palace and grounds on the day of our visit, those feeling so inclined can “top up” their entrance tickets with an additional £3.70 and so gain a bargain second day of entrance anytime within the next 12 months – including Christmas time. The web site for the palace is at www.blenheimpalace.com and there is a good map of the grounds at www.blenheimpalace.com/assets/files/blenheim-map-2010.pdf

Timetable

10:00 – 10:30 am. Arrive at the main gate to the Palace, park your cars etc and then make your way to the Flag Staff kiosk – where your names will be checked off against a list, you'll be issued with your entrance ticket and then directed to the Indian Room, where coffee and biscuits will be waiting for you.

10:30 – 12:30. The first part of our guided tour.

12:30 – 1:30 pm. Sandwich platter lunch, back in the Indian Room.

1:30 – 2:30 pm. Second part of our guided tour.

2:30 – 5:30 pm. Free to wander in the park and gardens as you will and/or revisit some of the rooms and exhibits within the main building – the last entrance time for which is 4:45 pm.

Getting there

The main entrance to the Palace is on the A44 road at Woodstock, approximately 8 miles NW of Oxford. The car park is on the right half way up the drive to the palace. It is also possible to get there by catching the S3 bus from outside Oxford railway station – they run every half hour with the actual journey time being about 35 minutes – but then allow an additional 10 minutes for the walk from the set down point (the Palace gates) to the Flag Staff kiosk. The post code for the Palace is OX20 1PP.

Numbers

Nominally 25 but up to an absolute maximum of 50 with sufficient prior notice.

Cost

The cost of £25 includes the entrance fee, the standard guided tour plus the additional components, tea, coffee and biscuits on arrival and lunch.

Contact on the day

Richard Hartley will be there from 10am onwards. His mobile number is 07765623133.

Late arrivals

It will be difficult to join the morning tour once it starts at 10:30, so it will be best to aim to arrive early. If you are late, you can collect your ticket at the Flag Staff kiosk and meet us for lunch in the Indian Room.