

The Best of England

Planning a trip to England presents a bewildering array of options. We've scoured the country in search of the best places and experiences; in this chapter, we share our very personal and opinionated selections. We hope they give you some ideas to help you get started.

1 The Best Travel Experiences

- **A Night at the Theater:** The torch passed from Shakespeare still burns brightly. London's theater scene is acknowledged as the finest in the world, with two major subsidized companies: the Royal Shakespeare Company, performing at Stratford-upon-Avon and at the Barbican in London; and the National Theatre on the South Bank in London. Fringe Theater offers surprisingly good and often innovative productions staged in venues ranging from church cellars to the upstairs rooms of pubs.
- **Pub Crawling:** The pursuit of the pint takes on cultural significance in England. Ornate taps fill tankards and mugs in pubs that serve as the social heart of every village and town. Quaint signs for such names as the Red Lion, the White Swan, and the Royal Oak dot the landscape and beckon you in, not only for the pint but also for the conviviality—and perhaps even the entertainment or the food.
- **Motoring through the Cotswolds:** If *driving* involves a determined trip from one place to another, *motoring* is wandering at random. And there's no better place for it than the Cotswolds, less than 161km (100 miles) west of London, its rolling hills and pasturelands peppered with ivy-covered inns and honey-colored stone cottages. See chapter 13.
- **Punting on the Cam:** This is Cantabridgian English for gliding along in a flat-bottom boat with a long pole pushed into the River Cam's shallow bed. You bypass the weeping willows along the banks, watch the strolling students along the graveled walkways, and take in the picture-postcard vistas of green lawns along the water's edge. See p. 557.
- **Touring Stately Homes:** England has hundreds of mansions open to visitors, some centuries old, and we tell you about dozens of them. The homes are often surrounded by beautiful gardens; when the owners got fanciful, they added splashing fountains and miniature pagodas or temples.
- **Shopping for Antiques:** Whatever treasure you're looking for, you can find it somewhere in England. We're talking Steiff teddy bears, a blunderbuss, an 1890 tin-plate toy train, an egg cup allegedly used by Queen Victoria, a first-edition English print from 1700, or the definitive Henry Harper grandfather clock. No one polishes up their antiques and curios

quite as brightly as English dealers. From auction houses to quaint shops, from flea markets to country fairs, England, particularly Victorian England, is for sale.

- **Cruising on Lake Windermere:** Inspired by the lyric poetry of Wordsworth, you can board a boat at Windermere or Bowness and sail England's most famous lake. You'll

see the Lake District's scenery, with its tilled valleys lying in the shadow of forbidding peaks, as it was meant to be viewed—from the water. A great jaunt is the round-trip from Bowness to Ambleside, at the head of the lake, and back around to the village of Lakeside, at the southern tip. See p. 649.

2 The Best of Literary England

- **Samuel Johnson's House** (London; ☎ 020/7353-3745): The backwater at No. 17 Gough Sq., situated on the north side of Fleet Street, was Johnson's home from 1748 to 1759. Here he worked on his Rambler essays and his Dictionary, and here his beloved wife, "Tetty," died in 1752. See p. 194.
- **Keats House** (London; ☎ 020/7435-2062): Most of the poet's brief life was spent in London, where he was born in 1795 in a livery stable run by his father. He moved to Hampstead in 1817 and met his fiancée, Fanny Brawne, there. In this house, he coughed blood into his handkerchief. "That drop of blood is my death warrant," he said. "I must die." He left for Rome in 1820 and died there a year later. See p. 200.
- **Jane Austen Country:** The author of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility* wrote of rural delights and a civilized society—set mainly in her beloved Hampshire. In 1809, she moved with her mother to Chawton, 80km (50 miles) south of Bath, where she lived until 1817. Her house is now a museum. Her novels *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* are associated with the city of Bath, where she visited frequently in her youth and lived from 1801 to 1806. In her final year, she moved to 8 College St. in Winchester. She is buried in Winchester Cathedral. See p. 336.
- **Stratford-upon-Avon** (Warwickshire): Although the bard remains a mysterious figure, the folks who live in touristy Stratford gleefully peddle his literary legacy, including Shakespeare's Birthplace, where the son of a glover was born on April 23, 1564. He died in Stratford on the same day, 52 years later. Anne Hathaway's Cottage, in the hamlet of Shottery, is also popular; Shakespeare married Hathaway when he was only 18 years old. See "Stratford-upon-Avon," in chapter 14.
- **Sherwood Forest** (East Midlands): You won't find Errol Flynn in Technicolor green tights gallivanting through a forest of mighty oaks with his band of merry men. Although most of the forest has been open grassland since the 14th century, it lives on in legend, literature, and lore as the most famous woodland in the world. At the Sherwood Forest Visitor Centre at Edwinstowe, the world of Friar Tuck and Little John lives on. See "Nottinghamshire: Robin Hood Country," in chapter 16.
- **Grasmere** (The Lake District): William Wordsworth lived here with his sister, Dorothy, who commented on the "domestic slip of mountain" behind their home, Dove Cottage. The cottage itself is now part of the Wordsworth Museum, displaying manuscripts and memorabilia. The

poet also lived for a time at nearby Rydal Mount, just north of Ambleside (one of his descendants still owns the property), where you can see gardens landscaped by the poet. Throughout the region, you'll find the landscapes that inspired this giant of English romanticism, including the shores of Ullswater, where Wordsworth saw his famous "host of golden daffodils." See "Grasmere," in chapter 18.

- **Haworth** (West Yorkshire): Second only to Stratford-upon-Avon as a

major literary pilgrimage site is the home of the Brontë Parsonage Museum. Here, the famous Brontë sisters lived and spun their web of romance. Emily wrote *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte wrote *Jane Eyre* and *Villette*, and even Anne wrote two novels, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and *Agnes Grey*, though neither measures up to her sisters' work. See "Haworth: Home of the Brontës," in chapter 19.

3 The Best of Legendary England

- **Stonehenge** (near Salisbury, Wiltshire): The most celebrated prehistoric monument in Europe, Stonehenge is some 5,000 years old. Despite "definitive" books on the subject, its original purpose remains a mystery. The romantic theory that Stonehenge was "constructed by the Druids" is nonsense; it was completed before the Druids reached Britain in the 3rd century B.C., but the legend persists. See p. 375.
- **Glastonbury Abbey** (Somerset): One of the great abbeys of England and once a center of culture and learning, Glastonbury quickly fell into ruins following the Dissolution of the Monasteries. One story about the

abbey says that Jesus came here as a child with Joseph of Arimathea. According to another legend, King Arthur was buried at Glastonbury, the site of the fabled Avalon. See p. 398.

- **Tintagel** (Cornwall): On the windswept Cornish coast, the castle of Tintagel is said to be the birthplace of King Arthur. The castle was actually built much later than the Arthurian legend, around 1150. But who wants to stand in the way of a good story? No one in Cornwall, that's for sure. Tintagel merrily touts the King Arthur legend—in town, you can order an Excalibur! See "Tintagel Castle: King Arthur's Legendary Lair," in chapter 12.

4 The Best of Ancient & Roman England

- **Roman Painted House** (Dover, Kent): Called Britain's "buried Pompeii," this 1,800-year-old structure has exceptionally well-preserved walls and an under-floor heating system used by the Romans. It's best known for its unique Bacchic murals. See p. 291.
- **Avebury** (west of Marlborough, Wiltshire; east of Bath, Avon): Although not as famous as Stonehenge, this is one of Europe's leading prehistoric monuments. Its circle of more than 100 stones—some of

them weighing in at 50 tons—is arrayed on an 11-hectare (28-acre) site. See p. 375.

- **Roman Baths** (Bath, Avon): Dedicated to the goddess Sulis Minerva, these baths were founded by the Romans in A.D. 75. Among the finest Roman remains in the country, they're still fed by Britain's most famous hot-water spring. The site of the Temple of Sulis Minerva is excavated and open for viewing. See p. 386.

- **Corinium Museum** (Cirencester, in the Cotswolds): This museum contains one of the best collections of archaeological remains from the Roman occupation of Britain. You'll see Roman mosaics that have remained in Britain, along with provincial sculpture, such as figures of Minerva and Mercury. See p. 467.
- **Hadrian's Wall** (near Hexham, Northumberland): A World Heritage Site, this wall—now in ruins—was ordered built by Hadrian, the Roman emperor, in A.D. 122 to hold back

barbarian invasions from the north. Marking the far northern border of the Roman Empire, the wall stretched 118km (73 miles) from Wallsend, or Wall's End, north of Newcastle upon Tyne in the east to Bowness-on-Solway beyond Carlisle in the west. A *milecastle* (small fort) was added at every mile along the wall. A highlight is Vindolanda, the last of eight successive Roman forts built on a site adjacent to the wall. See "Hexham, Hadrian's Wall & the Pennine Way," in chapter 19.

5 The Best of Norman & Medieval England

- **Battle Abbey** (East Sussex): At this site of the famous Battle of Hastings (fought on Oct 14, 1066), the Normans defeated King Harold's English army. William the Conqueror built a great commemorative abbey here; the high altar of its church was erected over the spot where Harold fell in battle. The abbey was destroyed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1538–39). Some ruins and buildings remain, about which Tennyson wrote, "O Garden, blossoming out of English blood." See p. 297.
- **Hastings Castle** (Hastings, East Sussex): Now in ruins, this was the first of the Norman castles erected in England (ca. 1067). The fortress was defortified in 1216. An audiovisual presentation of the castle's history includes the famous battle of 1066. See p. 298.
- **Rye** (East Sussex): Near the English Channel, this port—one of England's best preserved towns—was a smuggling center for centuries. Writer Louis Jennings once wrote, "Nothing more recent than a Cavalier's Cloak, Hat and Ruffles should be seen on the streets of Rye." See "The Ancient Seaport of Rye," in chapter 8.
- **Dunster Castle** (Somerset): This castle was built on the site of a Norman castle granted to William de Mohun of Normandy by William the Conqueror shortly after his conquest of England. A 13th-century gateway remains from the original fortress. The Luttrell family held possession of the castle and its lands from 1376 until the National Trust took it over in 1976. See p. 403.
- **Warwick Castle** (Warwickshire): One of the major sights in the Midlands, little remains of William the Conqueror's motte-and-bailey castle of 1068, but much of its external structure remains unchanged since the mid-1300s. Today, Warwick Castle is the finest medieval castle in England, lying on a cliff overlooking the Avon River. Its most powerful commander in the 1400s was the earl of Warwick, who, during the War of the Roses, was called the "King-maker." One of the best collections of medieval armor and weapons in Europe is behind its walls. See p. 511.
- **Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal** (southwest of Ripon, in North Yorkshire): These ruins evoke monastic life in medieval England. In 1132,

Cistercian monks constructed “a place remote from all the earth.” Explore the ruins as well as the Studley Royal, whose lavish 18th-century landscaping is one of the few surviving examples of a Georgian green garden. See p. 691.

- **Conwy Castle** (North Wales): Edward I ordered this masterpiece of

medieval architecture constructed after he’d subdued the last native prince of Wales. Visitors today can tour the royal apartment where Edward brought his queen, Eleanor. The castle’s eight towers command the estuary of the River Conwy. See p. 764.

6 The Best of Tudor & Georgian England

- **Hampton Court Palace** (outside London): The most magnificent of the grand residences and royal palaces lining the River Thames west of Central London, Hampton Court was built in grand style for Cardinal Wolsey—until Henry VIII snatched it away. Henry added the great hall in 1532, forcing laborers to toil 24 hours a day in shifts. The sheer size of the palace is amazing, and on its grounds is the world’s first indoor tennis court. See p. 200.
- **Bath** (Avon): Much magnificent 18th-century architecture remains exactly as Jane Austen saw it, despite repeated World War II bombings. At one time, Bath was the most fashionable spa in Britain. Architect John

Wood (1704–54), among others, helped create a city of harmony and beauty, with landscaped terraces, famous crescents such as the Royal Crescent, and Palladian villas. See “Bath: Britain’s Most Historic Spa Town,” in chapter 10.

- **Kenilworth Castle** (Warwickshire): This castle was the setting for Sir Walter Scott’s romantic novel, *Kenilworth*, first published in 1862, which recounts the supposed murder of Amy Robsart, wife of Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester. Elizabeth I had presented Kenilworth Castle to her favorite earl in 1563. The castle was destroyed after the civil war and is now in ruins. See p. 512.

7 The Best of Victorian England

- **Albert Memorial** (Kensington Palace, London): If any statue symbolizes an era, this flamboyant tribute to Victoria’s consort, her beloved Albert (1819–61), does; it is the epitome of Victorian excess. The statue depicts Albert holding a catalog of the Great Exhibition. He overlooks the South Kensington Culture Centre, his last legacy. The 4m (14-ft.) high statue, with the blessing of the queen, went into place in 1876 and was instantly described as an “outrageous reliquary casket.” See p. 177.
- **Houses of Parliament** (London): No government building in England symbolizes the Victorian age like the Palace of Westminster, housing Parliament. Replacing a palace destroyed by fire in 1834, it cost £2 million to build, a princely sum at the time. The building was completed in 1860 and turned out to be a Gothic fantasy, its facade decorated with monarchs ranging from William the Conqueror to Queen Victoria. See p. 171.
- **Osborne House** (southeast of East Cowes on the Isle of Wight): This was Queen Victoria and Prince

Albert's most cherished residence. Constructed at Queen Victoria's own expense, it is imbued with her spirit. The rooms are a perfect period piece of Victoriana, with all their artifacts and stuffy chairs—a cozy clutter best evoked by her sitting room. Grief-stricken at the death of Albert in 1861, the Queen requested that the house be kept as it was upon the death of her husband. See p. 353.

- **Manchester** (Lancashire): A major inland port since 1894, Manchester long had a reputation as a blackened, foggy, and forbidding city, grim and dowdy, the worst of the Midlands. But it has been cleaned up, and today its center is filled with masterpieces of

sturdy, solid Victorian architecture, including homes built for the great industrial barons of the 19th century. See “Manchester: Gateway to the North,” in chapter 17.

- **National Railway Museum** (York): The first national museum to be built away from London is devoted to the locomotive that changed the face of Victorian England. Set in an original steam locomotive depot, the museum is filled with railway memorabilia left by the Victorians. More than 40 full-size locomotives are on display, plus the century-old Royal Saloon, in which Queen Victoria rode until her death (it's like a small hotel!). See p. 676.

8 The Best Museums

- **The British Museum** (London): When Sir Hans Sloane died in 1753, he bequeathed to England his vast collection of art and antiquities for only £20,000, forming the nucleus of a collection that would one day embrace everything from the Rosetta stone to the hotly contested Elgin marbles (Greece wants them back). It's all here—and much, much more—in one of the world's great museums. See p. 173.
- **The National Gallery** (London): One of the world's greatest collections of Western art dazzles the eye. Artists ranging from da Vinci to Rembrandt to Picasso are represented here. The gallery is especially rich in works by Renaissance artists. See p. 176.
- **Tate Britain** (London): Two great national collections—some 10,000 works—call this gallery home. Sir Henry Tate, a sugar producer, started the collection with only 70 or so paintings. But the Tate has grown and grown and was considerably enlarged when J. M. W. Turner bequeathed some 300 paintings and 19,000 watercolors to England upon his death. The Tate Modern, a repository of avant-garde modern art, is directly across the river. See p. 175.
- **The American Museum** (Claverton, 3km/2 miles east of Bath, Avon): Housed in a neoclassical country house, this collection presents 2 centuries of American life and styles—including George Washington's mother's recipe for gingerbread. See p. 385.
- **The Fitzwilliam Museum** (Cambridge, East Anglia): Although London dominates this list, some outstanding regional museums exist, including this gem near King's College. Exhibits range from paintings by Titian and Renoir to Chinese, Egyptian, and Greek antiquities. See p. 557.
- **Walker Art Gallery** (Liverpool, Lancashire): One of the finest collections of European and British paintings in Britain, this gallery deserves to be better known. A nearly complete study of British paintings is displayed here, from Tudor days to the present. The

gallery also owns an outstanding collection of pre-Raphaelites. See p. 628.

- **National Museum of Wales** (Cardiff): This museum, Wales's finest, presents the panorama of the

history of this little country from prehistoric times until the present. And its collection of 18th-century porcelain is one of the finest in the world. See p. 721.

9 The Best Cathedrals

- **Westminster Abbey** (London): One of the world's greatest Anglo-French Gothic buildings has witnessed a parade of English history—from the crowning of William the Conqueror on Christmas Day 1066 to the funeral of Princess Diana in 1997. With few exceptions, the kings and queens of England have all been crowned here, and many are buried here as well. See p. 170.
- **Canterbury Cathedral** (Canterbury, Kent): The object of countless pilgrimages, as described in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, this cathedral replaced one that was destroyed by fire in 1067. A new cathedral was also destroyed by fire in 1174, when the present structure was built. Thomas à Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered here, and his shrine was an important site for pilgrims until the Reformation. See p. 284.
- **Winchester Cathedral** (Winchester, Hampshire): Construction of the cathedral that dominates this ancient city and capital of old Wessex began in 1079. In time, Winchester Cathedral became England's longest medieval cathedral, noted for its 12-bay nave. Many famous people are buried here, including Jane Austen. See p. 336.
- **Salisbury Cathedral** (Salisbury, Wiltshire): The most stylistically unified of England's cathedrals, this edifice was built in the mid-13th century. Its landmark spire—its most striking feature—was completed in 1325. The cathedral epitomizes the Early English style of architecture. See p. 373.
- **Durham Cathedral** (Durham, Yorkshire): Completed between 1095 and 1133, this cathedral exemplifies Norman architecture on a broad scale. Its nave, a structure of almost majestic power, is its most notable feature. See p. 704.
- **York Minster** (York, Yorkshire): The largest Gothic cathedral north of the Alps is also among the grandest, with incredible stained-glass windows. Its unusual octagonal Chapter House has a late-15th-century choir screen by William Hyndeley. See p. 677.
- **Llandaff Cathedral** (Llandaff, Wales): Begun under the Normans, this cathedral outside Cardiff makes a dramatic impression. Its west front is one of the best works of medieval art in Wales. That didn't prevent Cromwell's armies from using the edifice as a beer hall. See p. 720.

10 The Best Castles, Palaces & Historic Homes

- **Woburn Abbey** (Woburn, Bedfordshire): A Cistercian abbey for 4 centuries, Woburn Abbey has been visited by everyone from Queen Victoria to Marilyn Monroe. You'll see Queen Victoria's bedroom, and the

Canaletto room, with its 21 perspectives of Venice. The grounds, more popular than the house, include the Wild Animal Kingdom, the best zoological collection in England after the London Zoo. See p. 276.

- **Hatfield House** (Hertfordshire): Hatfield was the childhood home of Elizabeth I, who was under an oak tree there when she learned she had become queen of England. Hatfield remains one of England's largest and finest country houses, with antiques, tapestries, paintings, and even the red silk stockings Elizabeth I wore. See p. 275.
- **Windsor Castle** (Windsor, Berkshire): The largest inhabited stronghold in the world and England's largest castle, Windsor Castle has been a royal abode since William the Conqueror constructed a motte and bailey on the site 4 years after conquering England. Severely damaged by fire in 1992, the castle has been mainly restored. Its major attraction is the great Perpendicular Chapel of St. George's, begun by Edward IV. The chancel is known for its three-tiered stalls, with its misericords (ledges used for support) and ornate carvings. See p. 239.
- **Blenheim Palace** (Woodstock, near Oxford, Oxfordshire): England's answer to Versailles, this extravagant baroque palace was the home of the 11th duke of Marlborough and the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill. The structure was designed by Sir John Vanbrugh, of Castle Howard fame. Sarah, the duchess of Marlborough, battled the architects and builders from the beginning, wanting "a clean sweet house and garden be it ever so small." That she didn't get—the structure measures 255m (850 ft.) from end to end. Capability Brown designed the gardens. See p. 268.
- **Knole** (near Tonbridge, Kent): Begun in 1456 by the archbishop of Canterbury, Knole is celebrated for its 365 rooms (one for each day of the year), its 52 staircases (for each week of the year), and its seven courts (for each day of the week). Knole, one of England's largest private houses set in a 404-hectare (1,000-acre) deer park, is a splendid example of Tudor architecture. See p. 301.
- **Penshurst Place** (near Tonbridge, Kent): One of England's most outstanding country homes, this mansion was the former residence of Elizabethan poet Sir Philip Sidney (1554–86). In its day, the house attracted literati, including Ben Jonson. The original 1346 hall has seen the subsequent addition of Tudor, Jacobean, and neo-Gothic wings. See p. 303.
- **Hever Castle & Gardens** (Edenbridge, Kent): This was the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII and mother of Queen Elizabeth I. In 1903, William Waldorf Astor, an American multimillionaire and Anglophile, bought the castle, restored it, and landscaped the grounds. From the outside, it still looks as it did in Tudor times, with a moat and drawbridge protecting the castle. See p. 303.
- **Beaulieu Abbey–Palace House** (Beaulieu, in New Forest): Home of the first Lord Montagu, Palace House blends monastic Gothic architecture from the Middle Ages with Victorian trappings. Yet many visitors consider the National Motor Museum, also on the premises and with a collection of more than 250 antique automobiles, more fascinating than the house. See p. 349.

11 The Best Gardens

- **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew** (near London): A delight in any season, everything blooms in profusion in this 121-hectare (300-acre) garden,

from delicate exotics to commonplace flowers and shrubs. It's all part of a vast lab dedicated to identifying plants from all parts of the globe and also growing some for commercial purposes. An easy trip from London, Kew Gardens, as it's known, possesses the largest herbarium on earth. Famed landscape architect Capability Brown helped lay out part of the grounds. See p. 202.

- **Sissinghurst Castle Garden** (near Maidstone, Kent): A notorious literary couple, Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson, created this garden. Its flamboyant parentage, unusual landscaping (the grounds were laid between the surviving parts of an

Elizabethan mansion), and location just 34km (21 miles) northeast of Cranbrook make it the most intriguing garden on London's doorstep. Overrun by tourists in summer, it's lovely in autumn, when the colors are at their dramatic best. See p. 304.

- **Wisley Garden** (Wisley, Kent): Wisley Garden sprawls across 101 hectares (250 acres), filled with an abundance of flowers and shrubs. Maintained by the Royal Horticultural Society, it ranges from alpinelike meadows to summer carpets of flowers. In early summer, the gardens are brilliant with flowering rhododendrons. The landscaped orchid house alone is worth the trip here. See p. 306.

12 The Best London Experiences

- **Cruising London's Waterways.** Tube: Charing Cross. In addition to the Thames, London is riddled with an antique canal system, complete with towpath walks, bridges, and wharves. Replaced by the railroad, the system was forgotten until rediscovered by a new generation. An urban renewal effort has restored the system, with bridges painted and repaired, and towpaths cleaned up. See "Organized Tours," in chapter 6.
- **Viewing the Turners at the Tate.** Upon his death in 1851, J. M. W. Turner bequeathed his personal collection of 19,000 watercolors and some 300 paintings to the people of Britain. He wanted his finished works, some 100 paintings, displayed under one roof. Today at the Tate, you get not only Turner but also glimpses of the Thames through the museum's windows. How appropriate—the artist lived and died on its banks in Chelsea and painted the river in its many changing moods. See p. 175.
- **Enjoying a Traditional Afternoon Tea.** Nothing is more typically British, and it's a great way to spend an afternoon. We suggest our favorite places for tea (p. 164).
- **Rowing on the Serpentine.** When the weather is right, we like to head to this 17-hectare (41-acre) artificial lake, dating from 1730 and located in Hyde Park. A stream was dammed to create the artificial lake, whose name derives from its winding, snakelike shape. At the Boathouse, you can rent a boat by the hour. With the right companion, it's one of the most idyllic ways to spend a sunny London afternoon.
- **Wandering through Covent Garden.** George Bernard Shaw got his inspiration for *Pygmalion* here, where the character of Eliza Doolittle sold violets to wealthy operagoers and became a household name around the world. The old fruit and vegetable market, with its Cockney cauliflower peddlers and butchers in blood-soaked aprons, is long gone. But what's left is just as interesting:

Covent Garden today is London's best example of urban renewal. An antiques market is in the piazza on Monday, a crafts market Tuesday through Saturday. See p. 214.

- **Watching the Sunset at Waterloo Bridge.** Waterloo Bridge is the best place in London to watch the sun set over Westminster. From here, you can also see the last rays of sunlight bounce off the city spires in the East End.
- **Spending a Night at a West End Theater.** London is the theatrical capital of the world. The live stage offers a unique combination of variety,

accessibility, and economy—and a look at next year's Broadway hit. Coverage of the London theater scene begins on p. 215.

- **Crawling the London Pubs.** With some 5,000 pubs within the city limits, you would be crawling indeed if you tried to have a drink in each of them. Enough traditional ones remain, especially in central London, to make it worthwhile to go on a crawl, perhaps fortifying yourself with a ploughman's lunch or a plate of shepherd's pie. Our favorites include **Grenadier** (p. 229), **Salisbury** (p. 231), and **Red Lion** (p. 231).

13 The Best of Modern Britain

- **Tate Modern** (London; ☎ 020/7887-8008): A Bankside Power Station in Southwark was transformed into a vast collection of modern art, even 21st century avant-garde works. Works by all your favorite artists are showcased here, including every painter from Matisse to Andy Warhol, from Salvador Dalí to Picasso and Francis Bacon. In addition to the permanent collection, there are first-rate changing exhibitions. See p. 175.
- **British Airways London Eye** (☎ 0870/500-0600): Taking a ride in this "pod," you can see for 40km (25 miles) on a clear day. It's London viewed as a bird might see it. For nearly half an hour, you hover over the city in a slow-motion flight. See p. 197.
- **The Eden Project** (Bodelva, St. Austell; ☎ 01726/811-911): Lying 48km (30 miles) west of Plymouth, this geodesic dome shelters some of the world's most exotic plants, including those rare species that grow in the Amazon, yet it's in breezy

Cornwall. The gardens spread over 51 hectares (125 acres) in a former clay quarry. Locals refer to the attraction as "the Garden of Eden." See p. 440.

- **Castlefield:** In the city of Manchester, the historic core of Castlefield has been designated as an urban heritage park, inviting exploration. In an amazing feat of gentrification, city authorities are turning this once-blighted area of warehouses and canals into a thriving community full of restaurants, bars, museums, and art galleries. The first railway station in the world, dating from 1830, has been converted into The Museum of Science and Industry. See p. 618.
- **National Space Centre** (Leicester; ☎ 0870/607-7223): Crowned by a futuristic rocket tower, this is Britain's only attraction dedicated to space science and astronomy. Visitors are taken through eight theme galleries, where they see space rockets, satellites, and capsules. Many attractions are hands-on. See p. 589.

14 The Most Charming Villages

- **Clovelly:** It is said that the little Devon community of Clovelly has been featured on more calendars than any other village in England. Starting at a great height, the village cascades down to the harborfront along a narrow, cobblestone High Street. You park your car at the top and make the trip on foot. Supplies are carried down by donkeys. See p. 430.
- **Bosham:** A real discovery, the Sussex village of Bosham (p. 309) lies 6.5km (4 miles) west of Chichester. It seems to slumber in a time warp. Once a stamping ground for Saxon kings, it lives with its memories, its historic beauty, and old cottages intact. Its church was even depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry—that's how old it is.
- **Painswick:** Deep in the heart of the Cotswolds, this old wool town is still remarkably well preserved, its ancient buildings still guarding the narrow streets blanked by antique cottages of honey-colored stone. Its church is known for the 99 yew trees. According to legend, the Devil won't let the 100th yew tree grow. To the north of the town, its Rococo Garden is visited by people from all over the world. See p. 467.
- **Bibury:** For sheer charm and quaintness, the old Cotswold town is a rival

of Bibury for the title of most picturesque village in England. Sitting idyllically on the Coln River, Bibury is known for its Arlington Row, a charming cluster of 17th-century weavers' cottages that are remarkably preserved. See p. 474.

- **Chipping Campden:** Elegant, regal Chipping Campden seems frozen in time, fighting other Cotswold villages, Bibury and Painswick, for the title of most beautiful in England. It is a dream of long ago when wealthy wool merchants built honey-stoned cottages in prosperous towns. Look for weather-beaten roofs, original mullioned windows, and a fine perpendicular church from the 15th century. See p. 491.
- **Betws-y-Coed:** Deep in the heart of the national park of Snowdonia, this oddly named village lies in a tree-lined valley of the River Conwy. With an antique church, it also comes complete with tumbling rivers and waterfalls set against a backdrop of mountain scenery. The town, which is also known for its eight bridges, makes an ideal center for exploring the attractions of North Wales. See p. 750.

15 The Best Walks & Hikes

- **New Forest:** Requisitioned by William the Conqueror as a game reserve in 1079, the New Forest isn't very new, covering about 374 sq. km (144 sq. miles). Today the New Forest is one of southern England's best rural playgrounds, attracting eight million annual visitors, thousands of whom walk its carefully laid out trails. You can ramble at leisure, or else take a guided scenic walk offered

by the **Forest Commission**. Our favorite walk in the Forest is the **Arboretum Sensory Trail**, stretching for .8km (½ mile).

- **Dartmoor National Park:** Rich in legend and lore, this national park northeast of Plymouth is home to gorges, fields of purple heather, and the Dartmoor pony. The park is crisscrossed with about 805km (500 miles) of walking and hiking trails

along with bridle paths. To get the scenic most out of this area, join one of the guided walks offered by the **Dartmoor National Park Authority** (p. 417), ranging from an easy 1½ hours to 6 long hours of trekking.

- **The Great Cotswold Ramble:** One of the most memorable walks in England is between the two idyllic villages of Upper and Lower Slaughter. And it's only 1.6 km (1 mile). A well-worn footpath, Warden's Way, meanders beside the edge of the swift-flowing River Eye. You pass cottages of honey-colored stone, antique houses, stately trees, footbridges, and old millponds. You can also extend the walk another 2.5km (1½ miles) to romantic Bourton-on-the-Water. See p. 482.
- **The South Downs Way:** Beginning in the cathedral city of Winchester in the West Country, the South Downs Way, one of the most scenic hikes in the south of England, goes all the way to the town of Eastbourne. The distance across the bucolic terrain is 159km (99 miles). A bridleway forms the trail across these chalk uplands as you traverse miles of woodland. A highlight is the "Cliffs of the Seven Sisters." Bookstores in Winchester sell copies of *A Guide to South Downs*

Way by Miles Jebb (Constable Press) and the even more detailed *South Downs Way* by Paul Millmore (Aurum Press).

- **The Cotswolds Way:** One of the great hiking "rambles" of England is the Great Cotswolds Way, a 167km (104-mile) trail that cuts through some of England's most beautiful scenery in the bucolic Cotswolds. Laid out as late as 1968, the ramble goes from the town of Chipping Campden, arguably the most beautiful in the Cotswolds, in the north going all the way to the spa city of Bath. The trail is clearly signposted at every intersection en route. The hike takes from 7 to 8 days, but, of course, you can stop at any point. See p. 460.
- **Peak District National Park:** A district of moors, dales, green valleys, waterfalls, and steep hills, the Peak District National Park is the scenic highlight of the East Midlands, covering some 91,404 sq. km (542 sq. miles). The Peak District National, the park's main office (p. 591), will supply you with rich details for hiking through this rugged terrain. The most evocative walk is the Monsal Trail lying between Buxton and Bakewell, two towns that make the best centers for touring the park.

16 The Best Historic Luxury Hotels

- **Brown's Hotel** (London; ☎ 020/7493-6020): All Chippendale and chintz, Brown's was launched by the former manservant to Lord Byron in 1837, and it has been going strong ever since. Today, it occupies 14 historic houses just off Berkeley Square and coddles its well-heeled guests in luxury. See p. 121.
- **Chewton Glen Hotel** (New Milton, Hampshire; ☎ 800/344-5087 in the U.S., or 01425/275341): On the fringe of New Forest between

Lymington and Bournemouth, this hotel/health-and-country club is the best place to stay in southwest England. Service, taste, and quality are its hallmarks. The health club has a stunning design, with a centerpiece swimming pool and 28 hectares (70 acres) of manicured grounds. Guest rooms feature period furniture. And the meals served in the Marryat Room Restaurant are prepared with first-rate ingredients. See p. 346.

- **The Lygon Arms** (Broadway, Cotswolds; ☎ 01386/852255): Dating from 1532, this fabled inn in the Cotswolds has hosted many famous guests—Charles I used to drop in, and even Oliver Cromwell spent a night here, on the eve of the Battle of Worcester. Some of the inn’s antiques are listed in *The Dictionary of English Furniture*. Request a room in the Tudor Wing with its tilted oak floors and wooden beams. Number 20, with its massive canopied bed, is our favorite. See p. 489.
- **Sharrow Bay Country House Hotel** (Lake Ullswater, the Lake District; ☎ 01768/486301): This gem is known as much for its cuisine as for its accommodations. The location alone would justify checking in: a 4.8-hectare (12-acre) site, with several gardens, in a national park on bucolic Lake Ullswater, beneath Barton Fell. The lakeside dining room offers panoramic views of the water, and whether it is grilled scallops from the Kyle of Lochalsh or noisettes of English lamb, you can always find something delectable on the menu. See p. 665.
- **Bodysgallen Hall** (Llandudno, North Wales; ☎ 800/260-8338 in the U.S., or 01492/584466): One of Wales’s greatest country-house hotels, this 17th-century mansion lies on 81 hectares (200 acres) of gardens and parkland. Even though an antique, it oozes with modern comforts while retaining its charms in elegantly furnished suites. See p. 766.

17 The Best Modern Luxury Hotels

- **The Sanderson** (London; ☎ 020/7300-1400): Ian Schrager, king of New York hip, took an office building near Oxford Street and turned it into a bastion of modern luxury living—or, as they call it, an “ethereal, transparent urban spa.” The menu and concept for the restaurant were the creation of the great Alain Ducasse. See p. 126.
- **Jonathans** (Birmingham; ☎ 01214/293757): This modern hotel looks like an antique—but it’s not. Set within a classic 19th-century country house outside Birmingham, it’s been recycled and brilliantly converted into a hotel. Although it’s filled with Victoriana, including four-poster beds and fireplaces, its facilities are up to date. The bedrooms are all suites and furnished individually. See p. 517.

18 The Best Moderately Priced Hotels

- **The Sanctuary House Hotel** (London; ☎ 020/7799-4044): In a historic building close to Westminster Abbey, a brewery has converted an old building into a traditional English inn with pub downstairs. It’s like something you might find in the countryside of England, but instead it’s in the historic heart of London. The place is a bit nostalgic, like the food served—all the old favorites such as roast beef, Welsh lamb, and Dover sole. See p. 132.
- **Fielding Hotel** (London; ☎ 020/7836-8305): Named after the novelist Henry Fielding of *Tom Jones* fame, this hotel is one of the most eccentric in London. You’ll either love it or hate it. Most guests love its cramped, quirky, quaint aura, and its location at Covent Garden is unbeatable. Everything is old-fashioned and traditional, but if you complain that the

bedrooms are too small, Smokey, the African Gray parrot, will tell you off! See p. 131.

- **Jenkins Hotel** (London; ☎ 020/7387-2067): Hailed by one London publication as one of the 10 best hotel values in town, the Jenkins was featured on the PBS *Mystery!* series, *Poirot*. Those seeking decent accommodations in Bloomsbury, at an affordable price, have made their way to this address in Cartwright Gardens ever since Maggie Jenkins opened the place in the 1920s. Rooms are small but well furnished, and some of the original Georgian charm remains. See p. 129.
- **Howfield Manor** (west of Canterbury, Kent; ☎ 01227/738294): This former manor house outside the cathedral city retains architectural treasures from its days as part of the Priory of St. Gregory. Bedrooms are divided between the original house and a new one. The manor is filled with character and has lots of details such as solid oak pieces and exposed beams. See p. 283.
- **Mermaid Inn** (Rye, Sussex; ☎ 01797/223065): England's most famous smugglers' inn, the Mermaid sheltered Elizabeth I on her visit to Rye in 1573. At the time of the queen's visit, the inn had already been operating for 150 years. Still going strong, it leans heavily on English romance—old-world furnishings, some four-poster beds, and even a secret staircase. From its doorstep, the cobblestone streets of ancient Rye await exploration. See p. 293.
- **Powder Mills Hotel** (Battle, Surrey; ☎ 01424/775511): Near the famous battlefield at Battle Abbey, this Georgian house stands on 61 hectares (150 acres). A historic property that once catered to luminaries such as the Duke of Wellington has been successfully converted to receive paying guests, housing them in style and comfort—all at an affordable price. See p. 297.
- **Apsley House Hotel** (Bath, Avon; ☎ 01225/336966): Away from the city center, this 1830 house was supposedly constructed for the duke of Wellington. Its owners have restored it and created a period house of character with an ambience of subdued elegance. See p. 381.
- **Chideock House Hotel** (Chideock, Dorset; ☎ 01297/489242): A former 15th-century thatched house, once used by the Roundheads in 1645, is now a hotel of charm and grace with fireplaces and individually decorated bedrooms. See p. 362.
- **Ravenwood Hall** (Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk; ☎ 01359/270345): Deep in the heart of East Anglia, this discovery was once called Tudor Hall. Today, it stands in a 2.7-hectare (7-acre) park and gardens with an outdoor pool and tennis courts. Sleep in a four-poster bed and immerse yourself in old England after having had a good dinner and a toasty “warm-up” at the fireplace. See p. 565.
- **Henllys Hotel** (The Old Courthouse, Betws-y-Coed, North Wales; ☎ 01690/710534): This luxurious B&B has the amenities of a small inn. It was converted from a Victorian magistrates' court and is set in lovely gardens along the river. See p. 751.

19 The Best B&Bs

- **Collin House** (London; ☎ 020/7730-8031): Near Victoria Station, this B&B was constructed back in 1830 but has stayed abreast of the time. Comfortably furnished and well-maintained bedrooms await you

in one of the most convenient sections of London. The English breakfast is fit fortification for the day. See p. 133.

- **The Vicarage Hotel** (London; ☎ 020/7229-4030): In Royal Kensington, the Diviney family have long been hailed as the most hospitable B&B keepers in London. Not far from the Portobello Road Market, this restored Victorian town house is an inviting oasis of comfort and charm—all at an affordable price. See p. 136.
- **Fir Trees** (Windermere; ☎ 01539/442272): This attractive and inviting guesthouse lies near Lake Windermere, so beloved by the poets such as Wordsworth. A warm welcome greets you as you're ushered to one of the comfortably furnished bedrooms in this antiques-filled Victorian house that was successfully converted to receive guests. See p. 648.
- **White Vine House** (Rye; ☎ 01797/224748): In the romantic old seaport

of Rye in Sussex, this B&B has won many awards for the beauty of its garden and the quality of its restoration in a former 1568 sea captain's house that was but a derelict shell when restored in 1987. The creeper-clad cottage offers inviting bedrooms with both modern comforts and antiques. See p. 293.

- **The Beadles** (Salisbury; ☎ 01980/862922): This modernized Georgian house with antique furnishings and a view of the Cathedral is a standout. Set in well-manicured gardens, it lies 7 miles (11km) from Salisbury in a well-manicured garden with tastefully furnished bedrooms. See p. 370.
- **The Big Sleep Hotel** (Cardiff; ☎ 029/2063-6364): In the capital of Wales, this B&B—hailed by *Condé Nast Traveller* as “one of the coolest places to stay”—has been converted from a 1960s office tower. A hotel of affordable prices and chic minimalism, it is owned in part by actor John Malkovich. See p. 716.

20 The Best Restaurants

- **Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's** (London; ☎ 020/7499-0099): Gourmet—and famous Broadway musical producer—Andrew Lloyd Webber has proclaimed this hot chef the finest in London. Maybe that's going a bit far, but Ramsay is dazzling *tout* London with his pots and pans. Everything he does bears an innovative twist, and though he has learned from the past, he's hardly anchored there. Try anything, but make sure you sample his “cappuccino” of white beans with grated truffles. You'll want to adopt him and take him home. See p. 139.
- **Le Gavroche** (London; ☎ 020/7408-0881): Long known for its top-rate French cuisine, this stellar restaurant has risen to the top again following a

bit of a slump in the 1990s. Go here for that grand meal and skip the trip to Paris (we don't really mean that). The menu options are a delight, with such tantalizing dishes as a cassoulet of snails with herb-seasoned frogs' legs. Naturally, the wine cellar is among London's finest. See p. 139.

- **The Square** (London; ☎ 020/7495-7100): One of the great London restaurants to have emerged in the 21st century, this gourmet citadel is the domain of master chef Philip Howard, whose continental cuisine has dazzled the food critics of London. Howard is justifiably praised for his “magic” in the kitchen and for his use of “stunningly fresh” ingredients, which he deftly concocts into his masterpieces. See p. 142.

- **Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons** (Great Milton, southeast of Oxford, Oxfordshire; ☎ 800/845-4274 in the U.S., or 01844/278881): The country-house hotel and restaurant of self-taught chef Raymond Blanc have brought him a TV series, as well as cookbooks and a school of cuisine. A new lightness, inspired mainly by Japan and the Mediterranean, is more evident in the celebrated chef's creations, and more meatless dishes appear on the seasonal menu. But the intensely French loyalties remain: sweetbread-stuffed pigs' trotters, kidneys, and foie gras, even veal tongue. See p. 259.
- **Le Champignon Sauvage** (Cheltenham, the Cotswolds; ☎ 01242/573449): David Everitt-Matthias has awakened the sleepy taste buds of

Cheltenham. Thoroughly imbued in the French classics, he also adds more modern and lighter touches to his table *d'hôte* menus, the finest at this old spa. Some dishes reach into the old English repertoire, including stuffed leg of wild rabbit served with black pudding and turnip sauerkraut. His desserts are acclaimed as the most luscious in England. See p. 472.

- **The Moody Goose** (Bath, Somerset; ☎ 01225/466688): The spa city of Bath offers some of the finest dining in the West Country, and in Bath itself this English restaurant is the market leader. A most refined cuisine is served here in an elegant Georgian setting. The kitchen is known for its passion for fresh ingredients, and everything is cooked to order and to perfection. See p. 382.

21 The Best Pubs

- **Salisbury** (London; ☎ 020/7836-5863): Glittering cut-glass mirrors, old-fashioned banquettes, and lighting fixtures of veiled bronze girls in flowing togas re-create the Victorian gin-parlor atmosphere in the heart of the West End. Theatergoers drop in for homemade meat pie or salad buffet before curtain. See p. 231.
- **Grenadier** (London; ☎ 020/7235-3074): Arguably London's most famous pub, and reputedly haunted, the Grenadier was once frequented by the duke of Wellington's officers on leave from fighting Napoleon. It pours the best bloody marys in town, and fillet of beef Wellington is always a specialty. See p. 229.
- **The Ship Inn** (Exeter, Devon; ☎ 01392/272040): Frequented by Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh, this pub near Exeter Cathedral is the most celebrated in Devon. It still provides tankards of real ale, the same drink swilled by the likes of

Sir John Hawkins. You can also eat here; portions are large, as in Elizabethan times. See p. 410.

- **The Cott Inn** (Dartington, near Totnes, Devon; ☎ 01803/863777): Constructed in 1320 and believed to be the second-oldest inn in England, it's a low, rambling, two-story building of stone, cob, and plaster under a thatched roof. A gathering place for the locals of Dartington, it's a good place for a drink on a windy night, as log fires keep the lounge and bar snug. See p. 422.
- **The Punch Bowl Inn** (Lanreath, near Looe, Cornwall; ☎ 01503/220218): Licensed since 1620 as a pub, this was a former rendezvous for smugglers. High-backed settees and old fireplaces evoke the atmosphere of old England. Sample drinks in one of the kitchens—among the few “kitchens” in England licensed as bars. See p. 439.

- **The Turk's Head** (Penzance, Cornwall; ☎ 01736/363093): Dating from 1233, this durable local favorite is filled with artifacts and timeworn beams. Drinkers take their lagers into a summer garden or retreat inside to the snug chambers when the wind blows cold. See p. 444.
- **The Lamb Inn** (Burford, the Cotswolds; ☎ 01993/823155): This

is our favorite place for a lager in all the Cotswolds. In a mellow old house from 1430 with thick stones and mullioned and leaded windows, it's a good place to spend the night, have a traditional English meal, or quaff a beer. Snacks are served in the timeworn bars and lounges or in a garden in summer. See p. 477.

22 The Best Websites

- **Britannia** (www.britannia.com): This site is more than a travel guide; it's chock-full of lively features, history, and regional profiles, including sections on Wales and King Arthur.
- **Automobile Association—UK** (www.theaa.com): An outstanding guide, this site lists hundreds of places to stay, ranked by price and quality with apparently objective reviews. Many lodgings accept online bookings. Dining information includes ratings based on food, service, atmosphere, and price. Most, but not all, restaurants list typical meal prices and which credit cards are accepted.
- **Londontown.com: The Official Internet Site for London** (www.londontown.com): This fab site from the city's tourist board will get you panting to start your trip. It lists accommodations, pubs, events, attractions, and places to live it up

after dark. Daily special features include discount offers. You can download mini-area maps by Tube stop, attraction, theater, or street.

- **This Is London** (www.thisislondon.com): The *Evening Standard* operates this well-rounded site, which includes a frank guide to dining, drinking, and clubbing. You can search for city attractions and events. And the Hot Tickets section offers independent insider advice on theater, music, and comedy.
- **The 24 Hour Museum** (www.24hourmuseum.org.uk): It aims to promote Britain's thousands of museums, galleries, and heritage attractions—and, boy, does this excellent website do a good job. It is entertaining and downloads fast. You can search geographically or gear your holiday around one of its themed "trails" and tour Museums and the Macabre, Art Treasures of the North East, and so on.

London Terror Attacks

Just before this book went to print, three Underground bomb blasts, later followed by an explosion on one of the famous double-decker buses, rocked London on the summer morning of July 7, 2005. More than 50 people were killed and some 700 passengers wounded. London was momentarily paralyzed. But several hours after the explosions, the city was back at work and play. Buses and the Underground were running on time. No theater went dark, and the pubs were full, even on the night of the bombings. As one elderly woman in a pub said, "What can we do? Bond together like we did during the war, hold hands and sing about bluebirds flying once again over the White Cliffs of Dover. Our stiff upper lip has never been stiffer." London culture forges ahead, and so must travelers.