

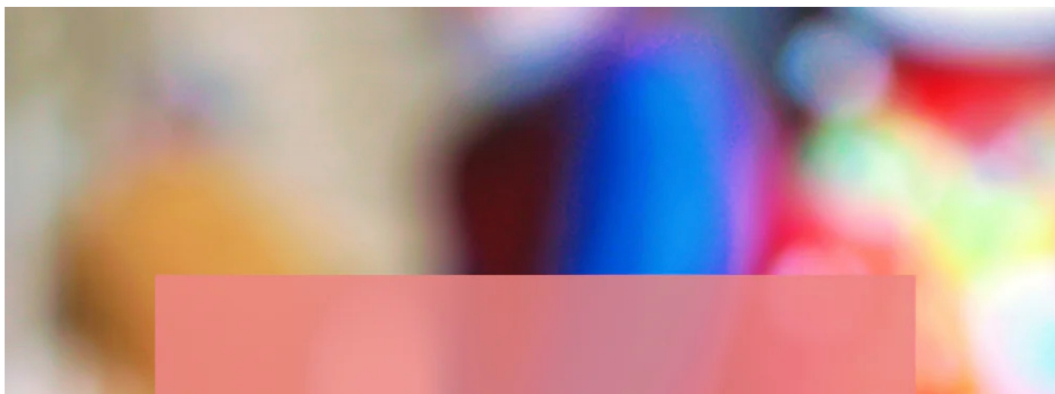


A LITERARY TOUR OF ENGLAND

May 30, 2021



England is known around the world for its numerous contributions to the literary arts, so it's no wonder that the country attracts so many literature lovers each year. From Chaucer to Shakespeare, Shelley to Woolf, and Hardy to Tolkien, England is home to a rich literary history that can pique the interest of almost anyone.



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Here is a brief guide to some of the best literary hotspots around the country to help you plan your literary tour of England.



London

It should come as no surprise that the UK's capital contains a whole host of literary gems. There are so many things you can do to feel inspired in London.

Wander the streets of Bloomsbury for a closer look at the UK's most famous publisher both on board the British Museum's permanent

wander the streets of **Bloomsbury** for a closer look at the UK's most famous publishing hub, or head to the **British Library** to see priceless illuminated manuscripts and Shakespeare's first folio. Stop for a drink at historical pubs that claim impressive literary regulars such as Charles Dickens and Mark Twain – **Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese** and **The George** are local favourites.

See a play at **Shakespeare's Globe Theatre**, which still offers cheap standing tickets to allow almost anyone access to incredible dramas or comedies.



As you wander the streets of London, you can find snippets of literary history all around you, marked by **blue plaques** put up by English Heritage. Keep your eyes peeled for big names such as Enid Blyton, Ian Fleming, Sylvia Plath, Ezra Pound, Oscar Wilde, Agatha Christie and Jerome K. Jerome.

Before you leave, head to **King's Cross station** to have your picture taken at J. K. Rowling's platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ – there's a gift shop nearby that sells wands and Hogwarts scarves if you want to look the part!



Oxford

If you're looking to get out of London, head to Oxford. In this famed university city, you can walk the streets and see the sights that inspired big-name authors such as C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien and Lewis Carroll.





If you can, start with a trip to **The Kilns**. This is where C. S. Lewis lived and wrote his *Chronicles of Narnia*. It's open to tours, but it now functions as a study centre and residence for scholars, so these tours are quite limited. If you can't book in, visit Oxford University's **Magdalen College** instead, where Lewis worked as an English tutor for many years.

Next, take a walk through the **Oxford Botanic Gardens**. Lewis Carroll was known to visit these gardens with the daughter of the dean of Christ Church college, Alice Liddell – the inspiration behind the protagonist of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

When you're tired of roaming around the city, head to the **Eagle and Child**, a pub used as a regular meeting place for the 'Inklings'. The Inklings were a literary discussion group that claimed both Tolkien and C. S. Lewis as members, and their weekly trips to this pub are commemorated by a framed note signed by the society's fellows.

Dorset

If you're looking for fresh air and country cottages, there's no place better than Thomas Hardy's Dorset. Today, **Hardy's cottage** is a National Trust property, well preserved and open to visitors. The cottage is surrounded by an archetypal English country garden and sits next to **Thorncombe Wood**, both of which would have provided Hardy with ample inspiration for his bucolic writings. Take a walk through the woods and imagine yourself roaming through Wessex.

While you're here, don't forget to visit the nearby **Max Gate**, a house designed by the writer during his work as an architect.

Stratford-Upon-Avon



Stratford-upon-Avon is famed across the world as the birthplace and burial site of William Shakespeare. You can visit **Shakespeare's birthplace and early childhood home**, in the very centre of the town, as well as his **school and guildhall**, where he was taught as a child and where he wrote his first works.

There's also a fascinating exhibition on the archaeological site of Shakespeare's family home, known as the **New Place**. It was demolished in the 1700s, but you can now visit the site and learn about what life was like for the greatest of all English playwrights.

While you're in Stratford, don't miss your chance to see one of Shakespeare's best plays performed live at the **Royal Shakespeare Company**.

Sussex

Before you finish your literary tour of England, head to the Sussex countryside to visit **Monk's House**, better known as the property where Virginia Woolf and her husband Leonard lived. Now a National Trust building, this 16th-century cottage still houses a large collection of the couple's possessions. Take a look at Virginia's writing desk and visit the writing lodge where she wrote many of her major works. You can also visit the home's beautiful garden, designed by Leonard and inspiration for Virginia's short story 'The Orchard'.

While you're in Sussex, take a stroll down the **West Sussex Literary Trail**, an 87-km path between Horsham and Chichester Cathedral. You can do the whole thing in about a week, or you can take it easy and just choose the most interesting section. The trail covers areas once visited by Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Galsworthy, Bob Copper, William Blake and John Keats.

England has an impressive literary tradition that persists to this day. If you're interested in learning more about some of the country's greatest authors and seeing where they lived, worked and got inspired, a literary tour of England is a must.

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