BLOSSOMS & BULBS

With FLORIADE 2012 & Chelsea Flower Show

Dutch Bulbfields, Chateaux Gardens of France, English Villages & Gardens, the once a decade FLORIADE in Holland and the CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW.

Day 1: AMSTERDAM The tour commences at check-in to our city centre hotel, our home for four nights. We rest from the flight, or take an afternoon canal cruise to get our bearings, before meeting our fellow travellers for a Welcome Drink and Dinner **[D]**.

Day 2: AMSTERDAM Every day on the Great Trains of Europe Tours begins with a full buffet breakfast **[B]**. We spend a full day in one of the world's finest bulbfields, the Keukenhof Garden, with 80 acres of tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and other flowering bulbs, shrubs, ancient trees, exhibitions, gurgling streams, flower parades, and seven themed gardens. Little wonder we need all day to visit the Keukenhof! There are restaurants and tea shops. **[B]**

Day 3: AMSTERDAM We head into the countryside today (who will be first to see a windmill?) to the Gardens of the Dutch Baroque Palace Het Loo, the Royal Palace from the 1680s until 1982. Established by Le Nôtre, the gardens feature perfect symmetry, axial layout with radiating gravel walks, parterres, fountains, basins and statues. **[B]**

Day 4: AMSTERDAM Floriade 2012 The fabulous Floriade happens just once a decade, and this is the year. An early start by train to Venlo gives us the full day to enjoy this rare feast of flowers.
On our 2013 departure, with no Floriade, we offer a day trip to the beautiful town of Dleft, home of Vermeer. **[B]**

Day 5: PARIS A great rail journey today. Our luggage is taken on ahead as we take our reserved First Class seats in the sleek Thalys train, for Paris at 300kph. On arrival we settle in to our 4 star hotel on the Left Bank. On our city sightseeing tour we begin our acquaintance with the City of Lights. **[B,D]**

Day 6: PARIS A quiet morning to stroll in the nearby Luxembourg Gardens or to visit a museum. Monet's waterlilies are finally on view in their original context at l'Orangerie. See them in real life this afternoon on our visit to Giverney and Monet's Garden. We enjoy the flower garden called Clos Normand and the water garden with its famous Japanese Bridge covered with wisteria, which should be at its best this week. Then the weeping willows, and the famous nympheas (water lilies). **[B]**

Day 7: PARIS A high speed French TGV train today into the Loire Valley and the Garden of Villandry, created by Dr Joachim Carvallo, from 1906, in complete harmony with the Renaissance architecture of the chateau. Great horticultural skill was deployed, especially in the use of vegetables. An arbour of grape vines leads to a great parterre, conceived as a Garden of Music. On the other side of the canal is a Garden of Love. **[B]**

Day 8: NORTH YORK MOORS Another of the great rail journeys of the world as we farewell Paris and join the 300 kph Eurostar through the Channel Tunnel. Customs requires that we travel with our luggage today. In London we join British Rail in the tracks of the Flying Scotsman to the mediaeval city of York. We see the Minster and the Shambles, then transfer to our inn in the North York Moors village of Pickering. A pub dinner tonight. **[B,D]**

Day 9: NORTH YORK MOORS This morning we visit the gardens of Castle Howard, laid out by Sir John Vanburgh in the early 18th century. Castle Howard is the palace of the Flyte family in "Brideshead Revisited". We lunch (with Claude Jeremiah Greengrass?) in the village of Goathland, "Aidensfield" in the TV series "Heartbeat". Here we join the historic North York Steam Railway home to Pickering. **[B]**

Day 10: NORTH YORK MOORS This morning we visit historic Harewood House. Its garden is classic Capability Brown - forming an idyllic rural setting. We move on to the spa and garden town of Harrogate for a cream tea or a stroll around its famous gardens. Can you spot Agatha Christie? She "disappeared" here in 1926. **[B]**

Day 11: LAKE DISTRICT We journey this morning through the Yorkshire Dales, immortalized in James Heriot's "All Creatures Great and Small" novels and television series. A village pub lunch stop, then on to the Lake District where we settle into our Lakeside hotel. **[B,D]**

Day 12: LAKE DISTRICT We take a magical rail journey today through some of the Dales' and England's finest scenery on the historic Settle to Carlisle Railway. A pub lunch, an afternoon cream tea and visits to some more of the Yorkshire Dales' picturesque villages.**[B]**

Day 13: LAKE DISTRICT This morning we visit a very special Lakeland garden, Holehird, which specialises in Lakeland flora and offers sweeping views of Lake Windermere.

A bit of whimsy on the way home: we drop in

COMMENCES AMSTERDAM
MAY 6TH 2012
MAY 5TH 2013

DURATION: 20 DAYS

COST: Land Only Content
(Join in Amsterdam, leave in London).

$AU 12,950 per person twin share.
Enquire about competitive airfares.
Single room supplement $2,000

on Beatrix Potter's garden, Hill Top – watch out for the fierce bad rabbit. **[B]**

Day 14: COTSWOLDS Our British Rail journey south today brings us to the Peak District of Derbyshire, to visit the gardens of historic Chatsworth House, dating from 1687. Another Capability Brown garden, Chatsworth has been famous for its beauty since Jane Austen's Day. We move on in the late afternoon to the Cotswolds where we stay in a village inn in the pretty riverside village of Bourton-on-the Water. **[B,D]**

Day 15: COTSWOLDS This morning's sightseeing takes us to picturesque Cotswold villages of honey-golden stone: Lower Slaughter, Stow-on-the-Wold, Chipping Campden. After a village pub lunch we visit one of England's favourite gardens - Hidcote Manor, designed and developed by Major Lawrence Johnston, who scoured the world to secure rare and exotic species for this extremely pretty garden, a series of "outdoor rooms". **[B]**

Day 16: COTSWOLDS Today we visit Stowe Landscape Gardens, covering 750 acres and including 40 listed historic monuments and temples. It is considered one of England's most important landscape gardens and the greatest names in English garden design were involved in its creation from Bridgeman in the 1710s to Vanbrugh, Kent, Gibbs and "Capability" Brown. Afternoon tea in the Cotswold village of Burford, serious about antiques. **[B]**

Day 17: LONDON Back on British Rail today we journey through more of the Cotswolds' rolling hills, as our luggage is taken on ahead to await our arrival in our London hotel. We enjoy London's sights this afternoon. The Oxford Street shops are only a bus ride away from the hotel. A West End Show tonight? **[B]**

Day 18: LONDON The Oxford Street shops or Harrods this morning before an afternoon excursion to the Royal Horticultural Society's Wisley Garden, where keen English gardeners have gone to be inspired for over 100 years. Spread out over 240 acres, Wisley is a lovely, peaceful place for a stroll as well as a demonstration garden full of practical garden design ideas and cultivation techniques. **[B]**

Day 19: LONDON A full day today at the Chelsea Flower Show, arguably, the world's greatest and best known. Our Farewell Dinner tonight. **[B,D]**

Day 20: HEADING HOME Our tour ends this morning after breakfast.

HIGHLIGHTS

With FLORIADE 2012 & Chelsea Flower Show

GARDENS

- Keukenhof Gardens
- Het Loo
- Monet's Garden
- Villandry
- Castle Howard
- Harewood
- Holehird
- Chatsworth
- Stowe
- Hidcote
- Wisley

SIGHTS

- "Heartbeat Country"
- Heriot's Yorkshire Dales
- Lake District
- Cotswold Villages

RAIL JOURNEYS

- High Speed Thalys
- English Channel Eurostar
- Tracks of the Flying Scotsman
- North York Moors Steam Railway
- Settle to Carlisle Historic Rail

INCLUDED FEATURES:

- First Class rail travel in reserved seats
- 4 star city centre hotels
- 3 - 4 star historic village inns
- 6 dinners
- Full luggage handling [not on Eurostar]
- Local expert garden guides [where permitted]
- Full time Australian Historian Tour Director who is the Company Principal