

SUFFOLK CHARMS

29th July to 2nd August



With 40 miles of Heritage Coast set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Suffolk exudes a feeling of peace and tranquillity. There is a constant presence of water from the coast and the five rivers, which gives the area a romantic and mysterious atmosphere. The inland areas have many secrets to be discovered; churches, castles, gardens, windmills, museums, tide mills, vineyards and Anglo-Saxon sites. The pastoral landscape of the Stour Valley, on the border of Suffolk and Essex, inspired great painters such as Constable and Gainsborough in the 19th century.

Thursday 29th July Depart Oxted 9.00am for the drive to Colchester. Here you will be at leisure to explore and find lunch before continuing on to Helmingham Hall Gardens described as being a 'Moated house and flower gardens of dreamlike beauty, run by a perfectionist'. The approach to Helmingham Hall is one of the loveliest of any house in England. The drive curves across an ancient deer park, still with fallow and red deer and studded with remarkable old oaks. Two superb gardens, one surrounded by its own moat and walls extends to several acres and has wide herbaceous borders and an immaculate kitchen garden. The second, enclosed with yew hedges, has a special rose garden with a herb and knot garden containing plants grown in England before 1750.

Friday 30th July A morning at leisure to explore historic Ipswich, England's oldest continuously settled Anglo-Saxon Town which has something for everyone – the beautiful Christchurch Park and Mansion, the Waterfront, medieval buildings, and a good selection of shops with the smaller independent shops mingling with the nation's favourite stores. Early afternoon we make our way to the Waterfront where we shall board Orwell Lady for a relaxing 3 ½ hour cruise down the River Orwell past Pin Mill to the Stour Estuary. The cruise includes the opportunity to see from the water (weather permitting) the UK's largest container Port at Felixstowe, Harwich Harbour, and historic Harwich. We then turn in Harwich Harbour and return back up the river to Ipswich. Whilst on board you can choose to enjoy the outstanding views from the open deck or in the luxury saloon whilst the crew regale you with exciting tales which have made this part of the world so famous. Their knowledge of the water scene is second to none.

Saturday 31st July After breakfast we drive to the flourishing Suffolk coastal town of Aldeburgh, a quiet seaside resort which grew on the site of an old medieval fishing and shipbuilding centre. Here



Orwell Lady

you will be at leisure to relax and browse. After lunch we take a drive to the elegant little town of Southwold, with its Pier, Tudor cannon and Victorian terraces which look down on rows of jaunty beach huts with an Edwardian atmosphere.

Sunday 1st August Today we shall be joined by a local guide and taken on a full day tour through the picturesque lanes of Essex and Suffolk passing through Sible Hedingham and on to Finchingfield, said to be the prettiest village in Suffolk. It's then a short drive to Saffron Walden where we shall stop for lunch. During the afternoon the route will take us via Steeple Bumpstead, Clare, Cavendish and Long Melford to the resplendent wool town of Lavenham with its fine medieval timber houses. Here the market square is dominated by a 16th-century cross and a Guildhall which has been a prison, workhouse and almshouse and is now owned by the National Trust.

Monday 2nd August Departing from the hotel after breakfast we take a scenic drive home through Constable Country, making a stop for afternoon tea at Tiptree Jam before making our way home, arriving back late afternoon.

What's included:

Belstead Brook Hotel, Ipswich

4 nights Dinner, Bed & Breakfast.

All bedrooms have private facilities, TV, telephone & hospitality tray

The hotel has an indoor swimming pool, sauna & steam room.

Time to explore Colchester, Ipswich, Aldeburgh & Southwold

Entry to Helmingham Hall Gardens

Boat trip on the River Orwell

Guided scenic Suffolk villages tour

Afternoon teat at Tiptree Jam

COST: £350.00 per person



Aldeburgh