

Sisley unlocks gate to England's finest private gardens with five new tours

Luxury breaks include exclusive access to rarely open places



Photos: Sisley Garden Tours; The Eastbury Hotel

Sisley Garden Tours (01423 396506; www.sisley.co.uk) is launching five new three and four-night breaks that offer rare and exclusive access to some of England's most beautiful and intriguing gardens.

The family-run company has spent 30 years introducing overseas visitors to some of Britain and Ireland's finest gardens. Now it is giving UK-based enthusiasts the chance to step inside a variety of beautifully designed spaces that are seldom open to the public and enjoy out-of-hours tours at other notable gardens.

Sisley has drawn on its in-depth knowledge of Britain's gardens and strong relationships with their owners to create the new collection of three and four-night "Exclusive Escapes". Guests will be treated to the sights and scents of a range of places, from large country estates to small cottage gardens, in Dorset, the North York Moors, the Wye Valley, the Cotswolds, and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The relaxed, personal and friendly tours have been designed to suit both serious gardeners and those just hungry for a feast for the eyes. Guests will have time to chat to garden owners, head gardeners and garden designers to gain insights into plant combinations, landscaping, and techniques from training roses to Japanese cloud pruning. The gardens will also provide glorious settings for morning coffee, lunches, and even a fun demonstration showing how to mix cocktails with home-grown herbs.

The small group tours host between eight and 12 guests and are led by a welcoming and experienced tour director. Sisley pays the upmost attention to detail and designs tours that feature private luxury coach travel throughout, hand-picked boutique hotels, and places serving excellent food and drink. Prices start at £2,100 per person, based on two sharing, including three nights' accommodation, most meals, private transport and all garden visits.

Sisley Garden Tours was founded by the late Tony Sissons, a garden writer and plantsman. The Yorkshire-based company is now run by Tony's daughter-in-law, Fran Pride, and close family friend, Colette Walker, who are both professionally trained tourist guides, keen travellers and gardeners.

Speaking about the new tours, Fran Pride said: "When the pandemic restricted foreign travel, we decided to reveal the delightful places to visit within our own borders to a UK-based audience. There are some gorgeous gardens on our doorstep and this very special collection of tours offers unrivalled access to them, as well as a relaxing break."

Exclusive Escape to Dorset, 7-10 June 2021

This four-day tour explores gardens in Thomas Hardy's Wessex, including Harvard Farm, an Arts & Crafts-style garden, and Old Rectory Gardens, which specialises in roses. Guests stay at the Eastbury Hotel (pictured, above left) in Sherborne and meals include lunch at the 16th-century Acorn Inn, referred to as "The Sow and Acorn" in Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Price £2,250.

Exclusive Escape to the North York Moors, 13-16 June 2021

This four-day tour explores gardens in and around the National Park, including Newby Hall (pictured, above centre), renowned for its double herbaceous borders, national cornus collection and intimate garden rooms, and the designs of Tom Stuart-Smith at Mount St John. Guests stay at The Pheasant Hotel in Harome and meals include dinner at a gastropub serving fresh produce grown in the walled garden at Mount St John and a private lunch in an exquisite shell-house (pictured, above right) created by its world-renowned designer and owner. Price £2,100.

Exclusive Escape to the Wye Valley, 12-15 July 2021

This four-day tour explores the gardens of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including Llanover House, with its walled "round garden", and Allt y Bela – home of garden designer Arne Maynard, which incorporates formal topiary, dramatic earth sculpture, and gentle native planting. Guests stay at Tudor Farmhouse Hotel in Clearwell, and meals include lunch with the owners at Wyndcliffe Court and High Glanau. Price £2,100.

Exclusive Escape to the Cotswolds, 6-9 September 2021

This four-day tour explores the gardens of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including Aston Pottery, which champions prairie-style perennial planting, and a tour of a private garden near Cirencester with the Chelsea Flower Show award-winner Rosy Hardy. Guests stay at The Bay Tree Hotel in Burford and meals include lunch in the pool house at Upton Wold. Price £2,100.

Exclusive Escape to Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly, 13-17 September 2021

This five-day tour explores Cornwall and hops by plane to the Isles of Scilly. Visits include a Mediterranean-style plot on the Roseland peninsula, a private lunch with artist and garden designer Charles Fox, and a tour with the curator of Tresco Abbey Gardens. Guests stay at the Carbis Bay Hotel near St Ives, home to this year's G7 summit with a 25-acre private beach, and meals include lunch in the garden at the Bonython Estate. Price £2,650.

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Notes to editors:

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