

Oxburgh Hall (Oxborough) - this moated house was built in 1482 by the Bedingfield family, who still live here. Visitors can explore the various rooms, which show development from Medieval to Victorian. There are also rare needlework hangings by Mary Queen of Scots. French parterre, walled orchard and kitchen garden. Bulbs, summer bedding and wildflowers. Woodland walks.

Travel through time at Oxburgh Hall



Afternoon tea: Oxburgh Hall

→ Return to the A134 and head to Thetford. Along the way you pass through Thetford Forest Park.

Thetford Forest Park - covering over 50,000 acres (20,000 hectares) this is Britain's largest lowland pine forest. Created in the 1920's (to supply the growing need for timber), the forest is a patchwork of Corsican and Scots pines, heathland and broadleaves - planted in blocks and intersected with sandy rides and tracks. Rich in animal and bird life, look out for four species of deer, several types of bats, and the park's emblem, the red squirrel. Rare plants include the purple-stemmed cat's tail. Visitors can discover the peace and tranquillity of the forest, or enjoy a great family day out. Numerous waymarked walks and cycle trails to explore, sites for picnics and barbecues, plus a year round calendar of special events. The forest is also rich in historic and archaeological sites, such as Grimes Graves.

→ Remain on the A134, through Thetford, to Bury St. Edmunds.



Overnight - Bury St. Edmunds

DAY 4 - Bury St. Edmunds to Helmingham Hall Gardens (28m/45km)

MORNING - Bury St. Edmunds

This fine Georgian town is known as 'Britain's Floral Town'. Winner of many awards, it prides itself on its superb displays - from window boxes and hanging baskets to the spectacular abbey gardens. These are centred around the ruins of the Abbey of St. Edmund, with bedding plants, herb and rose gardens. Bury is also noted for its cathedral (complete with its new Gothic-style tower), a Georgian theatre and the smallest pub in Britain 'The Nutshell'. *Market - Wed, Sat.* [Tourist Information Centre](#) - 6 Angel Hill +44 (0)1284 764667.

Bury St. Edmunds



Morning coffee and lunch: Bury St. Edmunds

AFTERNOON - Helmingham Hall Gardens

→ Leave Bury St. Edmunds on the A14 towards Ipswich. After 20 miles, turn left onto the A140, then immediately right onto the B1078 towards Wickham Market. 4 miles later, turn left to Helmingham.

Helmingham Hall Gardens - two superb gardens set in 400 acres of ancient park. The main garden is surrounded by a moat and an 18th C. wall, with wide herbaceous borders and planted tunnels intersecting an immaculate kitchen garden. The second is a very special rose garden, enclosed by yew hedges, with a herb and knot garden containing plants grown in England before 1750.

Afternoon tea: Helmingham Hall Gardens

----- END OF TOUR -----



You may like to continue the tour for a further day or two. From Helmingham, you can head north back into Norfolk - where there are some other excellent gardens to visit.

Blickling Hall, Garden and Park (nr. Aylsham) - one of England's great Jacobean houses. Ancient yew hedges, orangery, formal woodland wilderness and Victorian parterre garden.
Bressingham Gardens (nr. Diss) - two separate world renowned gardens. Alan Bloom's Dell Garden has forty seven island beds containing nearly 5,000 species/varieties of hardy perennials.
East Ruston Old Vicarage Garden (nr. Norwich) - unusual exotic garden with tropical borders, sculptures and desert wash.
Fairhaven Woodland and Water Garden (South Walsham) - private inner broad, mature trees, flowering shrubs and wildflowers.
Felbrigg Hall (nr. Cromer) - 17th C. country house with traditional working walled garden. Dovecote, orangery and herbaceous borders.

Bloomin' Beautiful Discovery Tour A

For further information on this tour (including opening times of attractions listed), please contact the **East of England Tourist Board** on +44 (0)870 225 4800, or visit

www.visiteastofengland.com



Explore the secret gardens of the East, and enjoy the spectacular colours and delicate fragrances of some of Britain's finest gardens. From the Queen's favourite blooms at her country retreat, to the floral town of Suffolk. Discover prize-winning African Violets, giant herbaceous borders and a working lavender farm.



Starting point: King's Lynn (Norfolk)

Duration: Four days **Mileage:** 158 miles/254 kilometres

Route of tour:

- Day 1: King's Lynn - Sandringham - Norfolk Lavender Limited (Heacham) - King's Lynn (overnight)
 Day 2: King's Lynn - African Violet Centre (Terrington St. Clement) - The Butterfly and Wildlife Park (Long Sutton) - Spalding (overnight)
 Day 3: Spalding - The Fens - Wisbech - Oxburgh Hall (Oxborough) - Thetford Forest Park - Bury St. Edmunds (overnight)
 Day 4: Bury St. Edmunds - Helmingham Hall Gardens



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Discovery Tour A

DAY 1 - King's Lynn, Sandringham and Norfolk Lavender Limited (Heacham) (27m/43km)

MORNING - King's Lynn

Historic port and market town - dating back to the 12th C. Explore the narrow streets and lanes leading down to the quayside, to find former merchant's houses, hidden courtyards and back gardens overflowing with flowers. There are two market places and two medieval guildhalls, one houses the town's regalia; the other is the largest 15th C. guildhall in England. Other historic buildings, include the 17th C. Custom House (now the Tourist Information Centre), the Hanseatic warehouse and the 12th C. St. Margaret's Church with its moon clock and tide marks. *Market - Tues, Fri, Sat.* [Tourist Information Centre](#): The Custom House, Purfleet Quay +44 (0)1553 763044.

Morning coffee and lunch: King's Lynn

AFTERNOON - Sandringham and Norfolk Lavender Limited (Heacham)

→ Leave King's Lynn on the A1076 to the roundabout with the A149. Turn left towards Hunstanton. 2 miles later you reach the roundabout with the A148, go straight ahead (remaining on the A149). After a further 2 miles, turn right onto the B1439 to Sandringham

Sandringham - the much-loved country retreat of Her Majesty The Queen. It was brought in 1862 as a country home for Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, who had just turned 21. He later became King Edward VII, and demolished the existing structure to make way for the present building. Completed in 1870, it has passed down through four generations of monarchs.

Sandringham



Visitors can tour the house and see some of the rooms regularly used by the Royal Family, filled with their mementoes and treasures - porcelain, jade and crystal oriental figures, arms and armour. Close by is the fascinating museum with royal vehicles, a safari room, collections of gifts and the estate's own fire brigade.

Discover the Queen's favourite blooms in 60 acres (24 hectares) of gardens - lawns and lakes, dells and glades, shrubs and trees create colour and contrast all year. Arboretum, water and woodland gardens. Also 600 acre (243 hectare) country park, with a visitor centre and tractor/trailer tours.



The Queen

➔ From Sandringham, take the B1440 north to Dersingham. At the T-junction in the village, turn right and follow the road through Ingoldisthorpe and Snettisham, to the roundabout with the A149. Turn right, and follow this north towards Hunstanton. About 2 miles later (on your right) you reach Heacham, the home of Norfolk Lavender Limited.



Norfolk Lavender Limited (Heacham) - this is the largest full-scale lavender farm in Britain. It was here in 1932, that nurseryman Linn Chilvers planted six acres of lavender, and harvested the first crop a year later. Visitors can see the National Collection of Lavenders, with over 100 different species. The adjacent herb garden is set out like an old monastery garden; whilst the fragrant meadow garden displays plants chosen for their aromatic qualities. Entrance is free to the gardens.

From mid June to the start of August, visitors can join special guided tours, which will take them to a nearby field where the lavender is grown. The tour ends in the distillery where you can see how the precious oil is extracted from the plant. There is a small charge for tours.

Treat your senses at Norfolk Lavender



Afternoon tea: Norfolk Lavender Limited

➔ Return to King's Lynn on the A149.

Overnight - King's Lynn

DAY 2 - King's Lynn to Spalding (30m/48km)

MORNING - African Violet Centre (Terrington St. Clement) and The Butterfly and Wildlife Park (Long Sutton)

➔ Leave King's Lynn on the A17 towards Spalding. After about 4 miles, turn right into the village of Terrington St. Clement.

African Violet Centre (Terrington St. Clement) - this is a unique and specialist nursery, which has been growing and displaying the beautiful African Violet for over thirty years. Visitors can see the show-house where gold medal winning exhibition plants are grown for major horticultural shows (such as the Chelsea Flower Show). There are also free cultural talks and staff are on hand to answer any questions.



Prize-winning blooms at Terrington St. Clement



Morning coffee: African Violet Centre

➔ Remain on the A17 to Long Sutton, where you follow the signs to The Butterfly and Wildlife Park.

The Butterfly and Wildlife Park (Long Sutton) - discover a world of tropical plants and vegetation, full of free flying exotic butterflies. There is also a collection of reptiles and a 'leaf-eating' art room. Outside visitors can watch flying displays of owls, falcons, hawks and vultures, or wander in the surrounding meadows to see wallabies, possums and friendly farm animals.



Exotic butterflies at Long Sutton

Lunch: The Butterfly and Wildlife Park



AFTERNOON - Spalding

➔ Return to the A17, and follow this for 7 miles, to the roundabout with the A151 (on the outskirts of Holbeach). Turn left onto the A151 to Spalding.

Spalding - since the end of the 19th C. this peaceful market town, with its Georgian terraces overlooking the river, has been at the centre of the British bulb industry. Here during the early spring, the fields burst into colour as millions of daffodil and tulip bulbs come into flower. *Market - Tues, Sat.* **Tourist Information Centre** - South Holland Place, Market Place +44 (0)1775 725468.

Spalding is situated in The Fens, a unique and distinctive area, which was once a wet wilderness. Over the centuries, it has been drained by man, using a system of rivers and dykes, to leave a silt soil excellent for bulb growing. Commercial bulb growing began in 1890 - and by the 1920/30's the fields were full of tulips, and visitors too, who came to view the annual spectacle. But in the following years, more growers moved to the dry bulb trade, as opposed to growing bulbs for flowers. To promote the growth of the bulb, they removed the tulip heads - but this meant the displays in the fields were reduced. So in 1959, a novel way was suggested of not only using the millions of removed flower heads - but also attracting back the visitors. This was the start of the Spalding Flower Festival, which sees floats decorated with as many as ½ million tulip heads.

Don't miss a visit to the Springfields Festival Gardens, with 25 acres (10 hectares) of themed, educational and inspirational gardens - including ones designed by famous gardening celebrities, such as Charlie Dimmock.



Springfields



Afternoon tea: Spalding

Overnight - Spalding

DAY 3 - Spalding to Bury St. Edmunds (73m/117km)

MORNING - The Fens and Wisbech

➔ Leave Spalding on the A151 to the roundabout with the A16. Turn right and follow this south for about ½ mile to the next roundabout, where you turn left onto the B1165. Follow this for 14 miles, passing through The Fens to the village of Newton. ½ mile after the village you reach the A1101, where you turn right to the town of Wisbech.

The Fens - stretching out from The Wash across Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, the Fen landscape of today is the result of man's desire to tame and control this former wet wilderness - and in turn, create some of the most fertile land in Britain (used to grow cereals, flowers, fruit and vegetables). The Romans were the first to try their hand at drainage, but it was not until the early 17th C. that a major reclamation scheme was undertaken. Today an intricate network of rivers, artificial drains, sluice gates and pumps help to protect the land. The Fens are one of the country's most important wildlife areas, home to a huge array of birds, insects and rare flora species. Visitors can explore the tranquil waterways by hiring boats for the day or longer.

Wisbech - this prosperous market town is surrounded by hundreds of acres of orchards, which in springtime are enriched with the colour and scent of blossom, and in autumn, by delicious fruit. Wisbech is also the main rose growing area of the country. This is celebrated each June/July, with a rose fair. *Market - Thurs, Sat.* **Tourist Information Centre** - 2-3 Bridge Street +44 (0)1945 583263.

Wisbech grew up around its port, trading from medieval times. Then with the drainage of The Fens, it became a great trading centre for the local produce. The town has some of Britain's finest Georgian street architecture, such as 'The Brinks' - a series of elegant houses overlooking the River Nene, built by wealthy 18th C. merchants.

There are two gardens to visit - *Peckover House* was once the home of a rich merchant. It is famous for its outstanding and rare two acre (one hectare) Victorian garden with roses, summerhouses, a fernery and orangery. Close by is the *Elgood's Brewery Gardens* with its 4 acres (2 hectares) of gardens set behind a 200 year old Georgian brewery, including unusual mature trees, a lake and hedge maze.

Victorian treats at Peckover House



Morning coffee and lunch: Wisbech

AFTERNOON - Oxburgh Hall (Oxborough)

➔ Leave Wisbech on the A1101 to Outwell, then take the A1122 to Downham Market. Follow this through the town, across the A10, and onto the village of Stradsett. Here you turn right onto the A134 to the village of Stoke Ferry (4 miles). Turn left in the village onto the unclassified road to Oxborough.

