Our 2018 tour gives you the opportunity to visit all three countries on the British mainland, or you can choose the part that most interests you. The tour offers a balanced view of what this beautiful island can offer the rail enthusiast, as well as anyone interested in history and scenery. Photographic opportunities abound, and the tour should satisfy your interest in railway, landscape and street photography.

Travel in a group of no more than 20 likeminded guests, hosted throughout by Geoff Cooke. Ride in executive motor coaches, on interesting trains and in boats as we travel from the English Channel to the Scottish Highlands.

All aboard for an exciting ride!

Pretour - Saturday, 25 August 2018
Geoff’s Trains can book your hotel in London for one or more nights before the tour, subject to availability. Arrive early and relax, it’s a great city to explore and you will be ready and refreshed for your holiday.

Day 1. Sunday, 26 August 2018
Your tour starts early this afternoon with a familiarisation tour of London. (If everyone booked on the tour continues to Scotland with us, this tour can be moved to the afternoon of 01 September when we spend a night in London and will not be affected by late flights).

An included dinner will be at a nearby restaurant, followed by a tour of the London Underground railway that visits some of the best-known stations with your guide giving you a fascinating history and anecdotes related to the world’s first underground urban railway. The tour starts and ends at Paddington Station, a short walk from the hotel, and lasts about 2 hours.
Overnight: Mercure London Paddington (D)

Day 2. Monday, 27 August 2018
Travel by train from London to Bristol this morning over Brunel’s Great Western Railway route. This railway was originally built to the broad gauge of 7 foot, tunnels and bridges still show evidence of that era. The line was called Brunell’s billiard table because the gradients were so good. You will pass Victorian stations between London Paddington and Bristol Temple Meades, all designed by Brunel as part of his grand scheme to link London and New York with a high-speed service. On arrival at Bristol’s Temple Meads Station, transfer to Bristol docks.

After a break for lunch, visit Brunel’s famous ship, the SS Great Britain. This was the first trans-Atlantic steam ship and is now preserved in the dry dock where it was built in the 1840’s. Visit the interesting museum, explore below the waterline and board the ship to see what it was like to cross the Atlantic.

There will also be time to wander down the historic dockside and visit the Bristol Industrial Museum. Bristol was a major British seaport and industrial centre, home to Rolls Royce and Bristol Aircraft, the free to enter museum has a fascinating story to tell. Later this afternoon, transfer to the Mercure Holland House Hotel, Bristol. (B, D)

Day 3. Tuesday, 28 August 2018
Travel by coach from Bristol to Bishop's Lydeard, where you will board a West Somerset Railway
steam train bound for the seaside town of Minehead. This is one of the longest main line preserved railways in England, it travels through delightful rural scenery to the Bristol Channel at Watchet, from where it follows the sea to Minehead.

Re-join the coach to drive through the scenic Exmore National Park to your second steam train ride, on the narrow gauge Lynton and Barnstaple steam railway. This is a short but scenic preserved railway with grand ambitions to re-create one of Britain’s most iconic railway routes, the narrow gauge railway from Branstaple to the sea at Lynton. Opened in 1895 and closed in 1935, the railway was taken over by preservationists in 1979, using Woodey Bay Station as their start point with the ambitious plan to re-create the entire railway. The Swiss Chalet style of the station is unusual, a delightful start for the two mile run to the end of the present line and back. Pride of the fleet is a Baldwin re-creation, built new as a replica of one of the original locomotives. This afternoon, continuing by coach to the city of Exeter.

Overnight: Mercure Exeter Rougemont Hotel. (B,D).

**Day 4. Wednesday, 29 August 2018**

This morning, take a train ride along the famous Dawlish sea wall to the coastal town of Paignton to ride on the standard gauge Paignton and Dartmouth steam railway. On arrival at Dartmouth, cross the River Dart by ferry to the town of Kingswear for lunch and possibly to see the interesting atmospheric steam beam engine that is preserved there. This afternoon, join a boat for a trip up the
river to Totnes where a short walk will take you to the station for your train back to Exeter.

Overnight: Mercure Exeter Rougemont Hotel. (B,D).

**Day 5. Thursday, 30 August 2018**

![Image of HMS Victory](image1.png)

Take a train from Exeter to Portsmouth via the city of Salisbury. After a break for lunch visit the Royal Navy’s Historic Dockyard, home to Horatio Nelson’s HMS Victory, the 1860’s battleship HMS Warrior, King Henry VIII’s flagship the Mary Rose and much more. Britain is an island nation, and the history of the Royal Navy is a long and proud story well told in this museum where every building has a story to tell. Your luggage will be cared for and you will transfer to your hotel later this afternoon.


**Day 6. Friday, 31 August 2018**

![Image of electric train](image2.png)

Take a ferry from Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight, arriving at Ryde Pierhead. The ferry ride is itself a part of history, it takes foot passengers only and ties up at the end of the pier in Ryde. From there we will take an unusual ride down the pier and onto the island on an electric train that started its life in the 1930’s on the London Underground. Leave the electric railway at Smallbrook Junction to
meet yet another interesting transport experience, the Isle of Wight Steam Railway to Wooton and back. Later today, retrace your steps back to Portsmouth where we will spend a second night.


**Day 7. Saturday, 01 September 2018**

Travel from Portsmouth to London by rail this morning, arriving shortly before lunch. Your South West of England Tour ends on arrival in London. If you are continuing with Geoff’s Trains, enjoy your afternoon in London.

If you are interested in the legacy of Engineer I K Brunel, builder of the Great Western Railway and the SS Great Britain, Geoff will be happy to show you some of his London landmarks, including a small museum dedicated to him and located in a shaft of his original Thames tunnel, now part of the Underground railway system.
England’s east coast and Scotland

Day 1. Saturday, 01 September 2018
Welcome to the second part of the around Britain tour. If you are joining us today, make your way to the hotel and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure. We will be happy to book pre-tour nights in London if you would like to arrive early.

Overnight: Mercure London Paddington (D) (B, only if you are on the South West of England tour.) Dinner.

Day 2 (8). Sunday, 02 September 2018
After breakfast, travel by train from King’s Cross Station in London to York along the East Coast main line. This is the railway that links London with Edinburgh, one of Britain’s first 125 mph railways. On arrival at York your luggage will be taken to the hotel, leaving you free to explore the magnificent trainshed before walking over to the National Railway Museum in time for lunch (not included, but available at the museum).

Later this afternoon, transfer to your hotel to check in, freshen up and make your way to dinner at the Sidings restaurant. Sidings comprises a number of railway coaches, a central building and a conservatory overlooking the main four track railway. Enjoy your meal as fast trains head to London or Edinburgh and freight trains rumble past on the slow lines. Stand on the balcony and raise your glass to the driver, you often get a hoot back.
Day 3 (9). Monday, 03 September 2018
After breakfast, drive from York to Beamish, a world famous open-air museum, telling the story of life in North East England during the 1820s, 1900s & 1940s. Explore the 1900s Town and see how families lived and worked in the years leading up to the First World War. Visit beautiful Pockerley Old Hall’s new and old houses and enjoy the magnificent gardens. Take a steam train ride at the Waggonway, which tells the story of the birth of the railways, and is home to replica engines Locomotion No.1, the Steam Elephant and Puffing Billy. Wander through the glorious Georgian landscape. Ride on the Tramway that re-creates the experience and atmosphere of tramway operation from an earlier generation, whilst providing an essential means of transport for visitors around the site. Continue to the city of Edinburgh and your hotel at South Queensferry on the banks of the Firth of Forth.

Overnight: Dakota, South Queensferry, Edinburgh. (B,D).

Day 4 (10). Tuesday, 04 September 2018
This morning, enjoy a tour of Edinburgh. Experience the grandeur of Scotland’s brooding capital with a full-day excursion. Visit the city’s main attractions with an expert guide, including the formidable Edinburgh Castle and Holyrood Palace (entry not included). Take a stroll along the Royal Mile and through Old Town, the city’s oldest quarter strewn with historic landmarks.
Dinner tonight will be in a restaurant in the shadow of the famous Victorian Forth Railway Bridge at South Queensferry. The iconic structure is a symbol of Scotland and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Designed by the English engineers Sir John Fowler and Sir Benjamin Baker, construction of the bridge began in 1882 and it was opened on 4 March 1890. The bridge spans the Firth between the villages of South Queensferry and North Queensferry and has a total length of 2.4 km. Over 200 trains pass over the bridge every day.

Overnight: Dakota, South Queensferry, Edinburgh. (B,D).

**Day 5 (11). Wednesday, 05 September 2018**

![Image of a train on the Strathspey Railway](image)

Today you will motor to the Highlands of Scotland. Your first visit will be a distillery at Pitlochry to find out how Scotland’s best-known drink is made, with the opportunity to try a dram. This will be followed by a tour of Blair Castle, a chance to experience a great Scottish stately home and meet Britain’s only private army. As we motor further into the dramatic highlands scenery, our next stop will be at the resort town of Aviemore to ride the standard gauge Strathspey Steam Railway. Our train ride includes high tea served in a dining car as we steam to Broomhill and back. Continue our road journey to the city of Inverness, capital of the highlands, where we will spend the night.


**Day 6 (12). Thursday, 06 September 2018**

Scotland has a number of attractive railway lines, and today we will experience one of the best as we ride a train over Kyle Line to Kyle of Lochalsh. A coach will meet us at the end of our journey for a short drive over the Skye Bridge to the Isle of Skye, where we will stop for lunch (not included) before returning to mainland Scotland.

Visit Eilean Donan Castle this afternoon, a picturesque castle that frequently appears in photographs, film and television. The original castle was blown up during the Jacobite Revolution in 1719 and was rebuilt in the 20th Century, completed in 1932. Later this afternoon, continue over the scenic road to the town of Fort William in the shadows of Scotland’s highest mountain, Ben Nevis.

Overnight: Nevis Bank Inn, Fort William. (B,D).
Day 7 (13). Friday, 07 September 2018

Ride on the ‘Jacobite’ standard gauge steam train from Fort William to the small fishing town of Mallaig. Described as one of the greatest railway journeys in the world, this 84 mile round trip takes you past a list of impressive extremes. Starting near the highest mountain in Britain, Ben Nevis, it visits Britain’s most westerly mainland railway station, Arisaig; passes close by the deepest freshwater loch in Britain, Loch Morar and the shortest river in Britain, River Morar, finally arriving next to the deepest seawater loch in Europe, Loch Nevis. A famous landmark is the Glenfinnan Viaduct – if you are a Harry Potter fan, you will know all about it! You will travel first class out to Mallaig this morning with a break for lunch and time to explore before returning to Fort William in the afternoon.


Day 8 (14), Saturday, 08 September 2018

Drive over the imposing Glen Coe Pass and across Rannock Moore as you head south towards Stirling. The journey through the glen on the main A82 road has been described as one of the classic Highland journeys. The pass has history as well. In 1692, in the aftermath of the Jacobite uprising, an incident known as the Massacre of Glencoe took place in the glen. Thirty-eight men from Clan MacDonald were killed by government forces billeted with them on the grounds they had not been prompt in pledging allegiance to the new monarchs, William II and Mary II. As we leave the pass, we will travel through Rannock Moore, one of the last remaining wildernesses in Britain, the Great Moor of Rannoch is a beautiful outdoor space composed of blanket bog, lochans, rivers, and rocky outcrops.
Later this morning, visit Stirling Castle to find out how this magnificent castle changed hands between the Scottish and English before the Act of Union, and how it has maintained a significant role in Scotland since then.

Continue to the famous Falkirk Wheel boat lift. Near Falkirk, the Forth & Clyde Canal meets with the Union Canal, however at their meeting point the two differ in height by approximately 115 feet. Before the 1930s, travel between these canals was provided by a series of eleven conventional locks, but they became disused and were filled in about seventy-five years ago. In more recent history, the United Kingdom’s Millennium Commission began an effort to restore the canals of central Scotland to reconnect the east and west coasts. As part of that effort, a brilliant, one-of-a-kind contraption was engineered which uses gravity and Archimedes’ principle to transfer boats between the two canals using very little electricity. It’s called the Falkirk Wheel, well worth a visit.

Later, take a mainline train down the West Coast main line to Carlisle, over the border in England, where we will spend the night at the historic railway hotel adjacent to the station.

Overnight: Hallmark hotel, Carlisle. (B,D).

**Day 9 (15), Sunday, 09 September 2018**
This morning, motor to Whitehaven to visit the place where John Paul Jones invaded England in the American war of independence. Americans in the group may like a photograph alongside the statue of the famous patriot before we continue to Ravenglass to ride the 15 inch gauge Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway, a small train doing a big job in dramatic scenery. Travel across the estuary, through the hills, past seven request stops with a 1:40 gradient at times, en route to its destination some seven miles up the line at Dalegarth. After a short break the train will return you to Ravenglass to continue your journey along the scenic coastal road to Haverthwaite, terminus of the standard gauge Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway. A steam train will take you up the steeply graded railway to the shores of Lake Windermere, where you will transfer to an historic lake boat to continue your leisurely journey across the scenic lake to Bowness near Windermere in the Lake District National Park.

Later this afternoon, travel by coach through Windermere to Kendal, where we will spend the night.

Overnight: The Castle Green Hotel, Kendal. (B,D).

**Day 10 (16), Monday, 10 September 2018**
After a leisurely breakfast, drive to Manchester Airport. Drop off at the Hilton Hotel or the airport terminal if you are leaving us today. If you are continuing to Wales tour, we will leave the Hilton hotel after a break for lunch.
**The Trains and Treasures of north and mid Wales.**

**Day 1 (16), Monday, 10 September 2018**

**Monday (continued)**

If you are joining the tour today, meet at the Manchester Airport at 14h00 for a coach journey to Betws y Coed in north Wales, a pleasant journey that will take you along the Dee estuary, Colwyn Bay and the Conwy river valley. Betws-y-Coed is North Wales’ most popular inland resort. It is where the River Conwy meets its three tributaries flowing from the West, the Llugwy, the Lledr and the Machno. Much of it was built in Victorian times and it is the principal village of the Snowdonia National Park.

Overnight: Royal Oak Hotel, Betws y Coed. Meals included: Breakfast if you are continuing from the Scotland tour. Dinner.

**Day 2 (17), Tuesday, 11 September 2018**

After breakfast there will be time to visit the small railway museum adjacent to the railway station before catching a normal service train to Blaenau Ffestiniog, where you will change trains and gauges to the narrow gauge Ffestiniog Railway. Your Ffestiniog train will probably be powered by an unusual double Fairley articulated steam locomotive on your journey to the Irish sea at Porthmadog. After lunch, take a train on the narrow-gauge Welsh Highland Railway, this time probably operated by a Garratt articulated steam locomotive for a 25 mile journey through the Snowdonia national park to Caernarfon. Transfer to our hotel, a short drive from Caernarfon.

Overnight: Seiont Manor Hotel, Caernarfon. (B,D).
Day 3 (18), Wednesday. 12 September 2018

Make a short coach journey inland to one of the main slate quarries of north Wales at Llanberis, scenically located at the base of Mount Snowdon, the highest mountain in Wales. Join the Snowdon Lily, a steam train to the top of the mountain on the 3ft 6in gauge Snowdon Mountain rack railway, the only rack railway in Britain. Your lunch break will be at the National Slate Museum, a fascinating museum built into the original quarry workshops that were powered by the largest waterwheel on mainland Britain. The waterwheel is still there, as are the original machine tools and forges. This afternoon, ride the 2ft gauge Lakeside steam railway along the shore of Lake Pardarn. This railway uses steam locomotives that previously worked on the terraces of the Dinorwic slate quarries, high above the present line.

Overnight: Seiont Manor Hotel, Caernarfon. (B,D).

Day 4 (19). Thursday. 13 September 2018

Before we leave Caernarfon this morning, visit the castle to discover the reason for its very existence, why it was built in such a distinctive shape, how it was defended and why it is still important today. Later this morning, travel by coach to Porthmadog to visit the Boston Lodge workshops of the Ffestiniog Railway. This amazing workshop opened the 1830’s and has been the engineering headquarters of the Ffestiniog Railway since then. This afternoon, take a train on the Cambrian Coast line from Porthmadog to Fairbourne. Hugging the coastline, the line offers spectacular views.
and a crossing of the Mawddach Estuary over an unusual swing bridge and wooden trestle. Ride a 12 inch gauge steam train across the beach on the Fairbourne Railway that has been running from Fairbourne village to the mouth of the Mawddach Estuary, connecting with the ferry to Barmouth, for over 100 years. Continue by road to Aberystwyth, a traditional seaside town livened up by the University of Wales and the National Archives.

Overnight: Aber Park Hotel, Aberystwyth. (B,D).

**Day 5 (20). Friday. 14 September 2018**

Travel by coach this morning to Tywyn, where our first stop will be the Talyllyn Railway’s railway workshops at Pendre. Watch the first steam locomotive of the day being prepared before travelling to Tywyn station to join a train from there to the end of the line at Nant Gwernol before returning to Aberystwyth. After a break for refreshments, continue to Dolgoch Falls where we leave the train to wait for the next train in the opposite direction, which will give you a good photo opportunity. A short coach ride past Talyllyn lake and up the mountain pass will take you to the village of Corris, home of the Corris Railway. Enjoy tea and welsh cakes in the Corris railway museum before boarding a steam train bound for Maespoeth, the line’s depot and workshops and presently the end of the line. This short 2ft 3in gauge railway is probably the shortest you will ride, but it is a firm favourite with many. Return to Aberystwyth by coach.
Overnight: Aber Park Hotel, Aberystwyth. (B,D).

Day 6 (21). Saturday. 15 September 2018

This morning, take a tour of the Vale of Rheidol Railway workshops before riding the 2ft gauge Vale of Rheidol Railway to Devil’s Bridge, a scenic line that was originally built to serve lead mines up the valley, but has now become a popular tourist attraction. There will be time to visit Devil’s Bridge, where three bridges have, over many centuries, been built one on top of the other.
Return to Aberystwyth by train in time for lunch and an afternoon exploring the attractive seaside promenade dominated by a ruined castle and a Victorian pier at one end and a funicular cliff railway up Constitution Hill at the other, which we will ride. Dinner tonight will be in a restaurant on the pier, perched high over the Irish Sea.

Overnight: Aber Park Hotel, Aberystwyth. (B,D).

Day 7 (22). Sunday. 16 September 2018

This morning, travel by coach from Aberystwyth to Welshpool to ride a steam train on the narrow gauge Welshpool and Llanfair railway to Llanfair Caereinion and back. The Welshpool & Llanfair Light Railway opened in 1903 to link the market town of Welshpool to the rural community of Llanfair Caereinion, this 2 foot 6 inch narrow gauge steam railway was built as a Light Railway to avoid some of the costs of railway construction, the narrow gauge allows for tight curves and steep gradients, enabling the line to follow the contours of the countryside. Most trains are steam hauled, either by one of our unique original locomotives or one from abroad. The carriages too are special; those in regular use being from Hungary and Austria with access to the enclosed seating area via an open balcony - a great way to watch the world go by.

On arrival back in Welshpool, transfer by coach to the city of Wolverhampton’s station on the West Coast Mainline. Your tour ends on arrival at Wolverhampton, where you can catch a high speed train to London Euston Station. Geoff will be happy to arrange this for you and assist with your onward planning. A convenient Virgin high speed train to London Euston station departs at 15h45 and arrives in London at 17h38. It is also easy to reach Manchester Airport, Birmingham city and Birmingham airport as well as other destinations in Britain.

Please note:
The times in this programme are subject to change.
All parts of the tour programme are subject to change.
All photographs were taken by Geoff Cooke, your tour manager, on recent tours.