

**HPS/MAG International Trip: Gardens of Scotland with
Optional Extension to RHS Chelsea Flower Show and Classic English Gardens**

Wednesday, May 13, 2026 to Thursday, May 21, 2026
or to Monday, May 25, 2026 (with Chelsea Extension)
Category: Trips–International

2026 HPS/MAG International Garden Trip:

**9-Day Tour – “Gardens of Scotland” with
5-Day Optional Extension –
“RHS Chelsea Flower Show and Classic English Gardens”**

**Scotland: May 13 – May 21, 2026
Chelsea Extension: May 21 – May 25, 2026**

with Brightwater Tour Guide Julia Corden

This is a “Members Only” trip.

Registration opens on Wednesday, December 3, 2025. Scroll to end for details.

Note: *U.S. citizens on this trip will require a valid Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) if they do not have a UK visa or legal residency in the UK or the Republic of Ireland. The ETA acts as a pre-clearance for travel and is part of the UK’s move towards a digital border system. For more information and to apply for an ETA go to:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-an-electronic-travel-authorisation-eta>*

Mobility: *This tour includes walking on hilly and rocky terrain and visiting gardens with long, steep paths and gravel switch back trails on steep sites. If you have mobility or balance problems (ex: walk slowly, have frequent joint pain, need walking aids, etc.) you should not enroll on this trip. If your mobility status worsens prior to the trip, you should withdraw from the trip and use your travel insurance to pursue a refund. The tour guide has the right and responsibility to exclude you from touring sites if he/she deems that you cannot safely traverse the planned sites.*

“Gardens of Scotland”

**Wednesday, May 13 – Thursday, May 21 2026
£2,495 per person (based on min 20 paying guests)**

Overview:

On May 13, 2026, HPS/MAG will begin our tour of the outstanding gardens, fantastic scenery and historic architecture of Scotland, with the option to visit the RHS Chelsea

Flower Show and tour several Classic English Gardens. All travelers will arrange their own air travel to Edinburgh and transportation to the Apex City of Edinburgh Hotel. Those visiting *only* Scotland will arrange their own air travel onward from Edinburgh airport. Those staying for the Chelsea extension will arrange their own travel onward from the Gatwick airport on May 25, 2026.

Itinerary

Day 1 – Wednesday 13 May 2026

Flights under own arrangements.

On arrival in Scotland, please make your own way to our comfortable accommodation at the **4-star Apex City of Edinburgh Hotel**. Check-in is available from 3 pm however should you arrive before this, the hotel will be able to store your luggage to allow you time to explore Edinburgh at leisure.

Notable sights include the **Edinburgh Castle**, which sits on top of a rocky crag and dominates the city centre skyline; the **Royal Mile**, which leads down the hill from the castle past **St. Giles Cathedral** and the controversial new **Scottish Parliament** building to the **Palace of Holyroodhouse**, where Mary, Queen of Scots once lived and where Queen Elizabeth II stayed on her official visits to Edinburgh. **Princes Street**, the main shopping thoroughfare which also has the new **Johnnie Walker Experience**, an immersive, multi-sensory whisky experience that tells the story of Johnnie Walker, Scotland's most famous blended Scotch whisky. The **National Gallery of Scotland**, houses a world-class collection of paintings; and the **New Town**, with its sweeping terraces of elegant Georgian townhouses where notable Scots such as Robert Louis Stevenson once lived. (Entrance fees to these sights are not included in trip cost.)

This evening, we will enjoy a welcome dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 2 – Thursday 14 May 2026

This morning after breakfast we shall be met by our coach and will transfer to our first visit - the **Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh**, one of the finest botanic gardens in the world. A pleasure for all who visit, the Garden offers fantastic views of the capital's skyline, featuring Edinburgh Castle, and is located just a mile from the city centre. Visitors can discover its fascinating history, which dates back 300 years, learn about its plantings and walk around 70 acres of beautiful landscape.

The world-famous Rock Garden (see *photo*) is a particular highlight. James McNab built the first rock garden at Inverleith in 1871 which was comprised of numerous small, straight-sided compartments, each planted and distinctly labelled. In 1914 a new Rock Garden was completed using conglomerate rock from the Callander area in Perthshire, and red sandstone from Dumfries. Today there are approximately 5,000 species planted at any one time in the Rock Garden.



Visitors can enjoy the serenity of the Chinese Hillside or stroll amongst the awe-inspiring Giant Redwood trees in the Woodland Garden. There are also fine artworks to view in the Garden's contemporary art gallery, Inverleith House.

We then make our way to our next stop, **Jupiter Artland**. Set within the picturesque 80-acre estate of Bonnington House, Jupiter Artland is the brainchild of Nicky and Robert Wilson. The garden is a whimsical collaboration between the family, the artists and the landscape. All the works are site specific and personal to Jupiter.

The end product is a journey, narrated by the various artists who are given the freedom to express themselves in the landscape. The transitory nature of the sculpture park makes it hard to believe it is only ten miles outside of Edinburgh.

Full of surprises, from the initial confrontation of Charles Jencks' 'Life Mounds' (see *photo*), which visitors drive through on entering the park, to a jovial creation by Jim Lambie, this garden both delights and astonishes. With no set routes through the park and an emphasis on exploration and discovery, the individual is left to engage with the artworks and the land as a whole.



We return to our hotel where the evening is free at leisure.

Day 3 – Friday 15 May 2026

This morning after breakfast we will enjoy a visit to **Branklyn Gardens** (see *photo*), a haven of peace and colour. Begun in 1922, on a south-facing slope with acid soil, the garden represents a wonderful collection of small rhododendrons, maples, magnolias and woodland plants. Paths wind along the contours of the land bringing the visitor nose to nose with all kinds of distinguished plants, all beautifully grown.



We will visit a **private garden, Lynbrook Garden**, in Errol. Owner Lynda Crouch didn't know much about gardening until she was invited to a meeting of the Scottish Rock Garden Club, which changed everything. She undertook a life-changing project to develop the garden which is now packed with plants.

We continue to our comfortable hotel, the **3-star McKays Hotel in Pitlochry**, where we enjoy dinner this evening.

Day 4 – Saturday 16 May 2026

Today, after breakfast we visit **Blair Castle and Gardens** (see *photo*), home to some of the finest views in Scotland. Throughout the ages the castle has been transformed from its cold and austere beginnings in the Middle Ages to a delightful Georgian mansion and then to a Baronial Victorian castle. Each of these influences can still be seen in the Castle as it appears today. We have some time to explore the Hercules Garden, a walled enclosure of about nine acres recently restored to its original 18th-century design with landscaped ponds, a Chinese bridge, contemporary plantings, and an orchard of more than 100 fruit trees. The glory of this garden in summer is the herbaceous border, which runs along the 275 yard south-facing wall.



We follow this with a visit to the **private garden Mouse Cottage**. The garden sits on a south-facing hill overlooking Strathtay. Small but packed with interesting features, it is a semi-wild haven of secret places where self-seeders mix with annuals and more formal planting. The owner is an artist who adores her garden space and collects quirky planting containers such as dustbins and dolly tubs.

Later we visit the **private garden Craigowan**. This 5-acre, family-developed garden has an extensive range of around 1,000 species and hybrid rhododendrons which should be in their peak in May. There is also an extensive herbaceous border and ornamental trees.

Following our visit, we will begin our journey back towards Pitlochry and to our hotel where the evening is free at leisure.

Day 5 – Sunday 17 May 2026

Following breakfast we travel to **Cluny House Gardens**, near Aberfeldy. Wandering through this wonderful wild woodland garden we will discover rare and exotic plants from around the world. The gardens feature trees and shrubs from America, New Zealand, Japan, China and Tibet, creating the unique atmosphere of a Himalayan woodland paradise. We'll also see Britain's widest conifer - a giant Wellingtonia, 11 metres in girth and over 130 years old.

This afternoon we will visit the splendid formal gardens of **Drummond Castle** (see *photo*). They were first laid out in the early 17th century and re-designed and terraced in the early 19th century. The gardens we see today were replanted during the 1950s preserving such features as the ancient yew hedges and the copper beech trees planted by Queen Victoria to commemorate her visit in 1842. The garden was principally the work of Lewis Kennedy of Vineyard Nursery in Hammersmith, who supplied plants to many of Britain's finest gardens. We will see the famous sundial and the white Italian statuary.



We return to Pitlochry where the evening is free at leisure.

Tonight, we will be offering an optional **Whisky and Chocolate Pairing Evening** which will be hosted at 'The Bothy', a cozy tasting room at nearby Robertsons of Pitlochry where we will uncover the flavours, stories and craftsmanship behind Scotland's finest drams. In addition, we will also enjoy five handmade artisan chocolates which have been specially selected to pair with our sensational whiskies. Owner Ewan McIlwraith of Robertsons and Matt Green, owner of Explore Chocolate, will host the evening, and we will discover the intricacies of producing fine chocolate and whisky that when put together produce a cascade of flavours and sensations that are impossible to replicate.

Day 6 – Monday 18 May 2026

After breakfast we travel south and west and visit **Dumfries House** (see *photo*), near Cumnock. Its stunning interiors are home to a world-class collection of furniture by Thomas Chippendale and many late 18th Century cabinet makers, which were recently featured on BBC's Antiques Roadshow. We are able to make the most of those interiors on our grand tour of the house, followed by tea and shortbread. We will also visit the Queen Elizabeth Walled Garden, which is one of the best examples of its kind in Scotland and in many ways the flagship of the restoration project, with which the then Prince Charles was closely involved. You may also wish to venture into the intriguing yew hedge maze and see if you can reach the Japanese pagoda at its centre – and then find your way out again!



We later check into our comfortable accommodation at the **Cairndale Hotel, Dumfries**. This evening we will dine at a local restaurant.

Day 7 – Tuesday 19 May 2026

Following breakfast, we visit the world-famous **Logan Botanic Garden** (see *photo*), which was started by the McDougall family who lived here for 800 years. Since 1969 it has been in the care of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Logan Botanic Garden is beautifully laid out with a host of spectacular plants, particularly in the walled garden with its fine terraces and well-planned borders under an avenue of cabbage palms. The climate here is exceptionally mild due to the Gulf Stream and several different habitats provide conditions for a huge range of plants. Look out for the glasshouse and its tropical plants.



We then visit **Glenwhan Gardens**, spread out over a windy hilltop with marvellous views of Luce Bay and the Mull of Galloway. Since 1979 a very large, interesting and individual garden has been created. At its heart is an extensive pool, divided by a grassy causeway and fed by a tumbling stream. The slopes above are lavishly planted with trees and shrubs. This evening we return to the hotel where dinner is served.

Day 8 – Wednesday 20 May 2026

This morning after breakfast we will travel to the garden of past Presidents of the Scottish Rock Garden Club, **Drs Ian and Carole Bainbridge**. Their garden is full of treasures including an Alpine house, a woodland garden and a rock garden.

Following this we will visit the iconic **Elizabeth McGregor Nursery** before we continue to our accommodation at the **4-star Norton House Hotel** where we have our final dinner together.

Day 9 – Thursday 21 May 2026

At an agreed time, the group will be transferred back to Edinburgh airport (flights under own arrangement). For those continuing onto the Chelsea extension we will depart on a flight from Edinburgh to London.

Cost of the “Gardens of Scotland” Trip

£2,495 per person based on double occupancy

£875.00 per person single room supplement

Included in the price

- Eight nights' accommodation, bed and breakfast: two nights at the 4-star Apex City Edinburgh Hotel; three nights at the 3-star McKays Hotel, Pitlochry; two nights at the 3-star Cairndale Hotel, Dumfries; and one night at the 4-star Norton House Hotel
- Welcome dinner in local restaurant including wine
- Dinner at local restaurant in Dumfries including wine
- Two evening meals at our hotels (one in Pitlochry, one in Dumfries)
- Comfortable coaching throughout
- Entry to the gardens detailed in the itinerary
- Services of horticulturalist Julia Corden as Tour Manager

Not included (per person)

- Single room supplement £875.00
- International flights
- Optional evening – Whisky and Chocolate Tasting £65.00
- Extra night at Apex City of Edinburgh Hotel (12 May) B&B – double £165.00 pp (single £310pp)
- Optional Extension – Chelsea Flower Show and Classic English Gardens (see below for more details)

Our guide Julia Corden: Julia is a Horticultural Consultant and Botanical/Garden Tour Manager and a past President of The Scottish Rock Garden Club. Her passion is the Blue Poppy of the Himalayas.

Optional Extension:

“RHS Chelsea Flower Show and Classic English Gardens”

Thursday, May 21 – Monday, May 25, 2026

£1,795 per person (based on min 15 paying guests)

Itinerary

Day 1 – Thursday 21 May 2026

We depart on a morning flight from Edinburgh to London.

On arrival we will visit the **Royal Botanic Garden at Kew** (see *photo*), which is now a World Heritage Site and boasts a unique collection of plants from all over the world. Among the attractions are the iconic Palm House, which recreates a tropical rainforest environment, the Temperate House, home to the world’s tallest indoor plant, and the Princess of Wales Conservatory, which contains ten climatic zones and a huge variety of plants including orchids and cacti.



Later we continue to our comfortable hotel, **4-star Guildford Harbour Hotel**. Dinner is served in the evening.

Day 2 – Friday 22 May 2026

After breakfast this morning we depart for our full day visit to the **RHS Chelsea Flower Show** (see *photo*), which holds a rare position as a great British tradition and an exciting source of inspiration and advice. One of the highlights of the show is the collection of over twenty full-sized show gardens. Inside the Great Marquee visitors have their senses ravished by the hundreds of floral displays, many of them incorporating new, rare and unusual plants. Other popular features here include flower arranging, floristry and garden design marquees, courtyard gardens, window boxes and hanging baskets. Lunch is available here (not included).



This evening is free at leisure.

Day 3 – Saturday 23 May 2026

This morning, we will visit **RHS Garden Wisley** (see *photo*), which is where the Royal Horticultural Society shows the gardening public how it should be done. Here the highest standards of practical horticulture are deployed in the setting of a splendid old site rich in fine trees against a backdrop of other plants, all impeccably labelled. We enjoy a delightful light lunch here.



This evening is free at leisure.

Day 4 – Sunday 24 May 2026

Today we visit the magnificently manicured gardens of **Sissinghurst** (see *photo*). This famous garden was created by Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson from 1930 onwards and became the most admired English Garden of its time. Few great gardens live up to their reputations so effortlessly as this. Sissinghurst is a large connoisseurs' garden consisting of a series of small romantic areas enclosed by the surviving parts of an Elizabethan mansion. It never disappoints its visitors, it has the power of enchantment, but it is also an unending source of inspiration for all gardeners. Sissinghurst is surely as close to gardening perfection as you can get, and it continues to be one of the most-copied flower gardens in the world. It keeps its colour well into the autumn, when the avenue of pleached limes takes on a lovely golden hue.



We continue to another classic English Country Garden – **Great Dixter** (see *photo*). The distinguished garden writer Christopher Lloyd (who died in January 2006 at the age of 84) was the genius behind Great Dixter, with its timbered 15th century house. Restored by Edwin Lutyens who also planned the garden, Mr Lloyd has firmly put his lively stamp on it. A recent experiment involved installing a summer tropical garden rich in bold shapes and brilliant colours. No gardener could come to Great Dixter without making discoveries and rekindling a zest for gardening.



Dinner is served back at our hotel in the evening.

Day 5 – Monday 25 May 2026

After breakfast, we transfer to the airport at an agreed time (flights under own arrangement).

Cost of the “RHS Chelsea Flower Show and Classic English Gardens” Trip Extension

£1,795 per person based on double occupancy

£375.00 per person single room supplement

Included in the price

- Four nights’ bed and breakfast at the comfortable 4-star Guildford Harbour Hotel
- Two dinners
- One-way flight from Edinburgh to London
- Comfortable coaching throughout
- Full day ticket for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show
- Entrance to RHS Wisley including a 2-course lunch
- Entrance to Sissinghurst Castle Gardens, Great Dixter, and Kew Gardens
- Service of horticulturalist Julia Corden as Tour Manager

Not included (per person)

- Single room supplement £375.00

Extension Tour Guide: Julia Corden

The trip is limited to 22 people and requires a minimum of 20 paying travelers.

Registration begins December 3rd. We will keep a waitlist once we have 22 registered travelers.

REGISTRATION

Click [here](#) to view and print the detailed itinerary for the Scotland base trip and the Chelsea extension trip.

Click [here](#) to view and print the Brightwater Holidays Booking Conditions

Click [here](#) to view and print the Registration Form: Available December 3rd

This is a “Members Only” trip.

Registration is by paper mail only and on a first come first served basis. To register:

- 1) Download and print the Registration Form**
- 2) Complete your Registration Form**
- 3) Make deposit checks payable to HPS/MAG**
 - **A check for \$235 for Scotland ONLY, or**
 - **A check for \$300 for the Scotland AND the Chelsea Extension**
- 4) Mail your completed registration form and deposit check as per the Registration Form**

Questions: Please contact internationaltrips@hardyplant.org