Join WXXI for a memorable trip to England next spring! Masterpiece Theatre’s *Downton Abbey* has seduced audiences both in Britain and here “across the pond”, by its superbly crafted script of simmering sub plots and four-dimensional characters, deftly portrayed, upstairs and down, by an unforgettable cast. On a tour of historic England, we discover the world of Downton in fact and fiction, past and present, culminating in an exclusive private tour and reception at Highclere Castle, the real Downton Abbey.

From Edwardian London and the iconic Houses of Parliament, to the Georgian splendour of Jane Austen’s Bath and the hallowed halls of Oxford, invited scholars and expert guides will help us explore our enduring fascination with the aristocracy, their grand estates, and how they survive today. We will learn the codes they live by, their manners and customs. We will hear about the changing roles of women, the servants’ insurgence, and the rise of the middle classes.

Alastair Bruce, historical advisor for *Downton Abbey* and a Royal Commentator for the press, will address us in the House of Lords and at lunch in a London Club. We’ll have high tea in the home of the Dowager Countess (Maggie Smith), and stroll the streets of “Downton” village.

We’ll put all this in context with visits to other Masterpiece locations and historic sites. What did Jane Austen’s bonneted women really do in Bath? Where is the Abbey in Downton? Why is the Royal family called Windsor? Where did Lord Grantham go to school? Was life below stairs so rosy? Do Inspector Morse’s Professors really discuss Shakespeare in pubs?

We’ll enjoy an evening of theatre. We’ll lodge in 4-star hotels, take over our own country house, and dine in fine restaurants. Your hosts are WXXI’s own Vice President of TV Elissa Orlando and Kathy Reed, Director of Major and Planned Giving.

**TOUR HIGHLIGHTS**

- Private tour and reception at Highclere Castle, location for exterior and interior scenes of *Downton Abbey*
- Private tea at Byfleet Manor, location of the Dowager Countess’s home (Maggie Smith)
- Private guides, talks and visits with experts on British history and the Downton era in particular
- Tours of major historical sites in London and elsewhere, including the House of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, St James’s, the Victoria & Albert Museum, Windsor Castle, Blenheim Palace, Oxford and its University and Colleges, Lacock Abbey, Bampton village (Downton village scenes), Bath, Sandham Memorial Chapel (WWI memorial) among others
- Prime tickets to a theatre performance in London, plus evensong in Oxford
- Deluxe 4-star accommodations in London, Oxford, and Ston Easton
- Private, air-conditioned motorcoach transportation to all destinations
- Free time for additional site-seeing, shopping, or relaxing
- The company of other *Downton Abbey* devotees!

**TOUR COST:** $4,985 pp, ground only; Group limited to 25

The World of *Downton Abbey* is an exclusive presentation of WXXI and is organized by The Grand Tour Travel Company, Peterborough, New Hampshire.
**Daily Itinerary**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 4**
Group flight departure from Rochester to London Heathrow, with arrival the following day.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 5 Arrival in London**
On arrival at Heathrow we are met by our Tour Manager, Alasdair Clayre, and transfer to the centrally located, four-star Kingsway Hall Hotel in the heart of the West End Theatre district. This evening we get together over a welcome drink and dinner at Simpson’s-in-the-Strand, a historic London eatery where for 170 years they have served traditional roast beef from silver-domed trolleys. After dinner we’ll take a brief coach tour of this great capital lit up at night.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 6 A City of Lords**
After breakfast daily at our hotel, Alastair Bruce, OBE, the historical advisor for *Downton Abbey*, writer, broadcaster, and an expert on manners, military and dress, joins us for the day as we set off to take a private tour of the Houses of Parliament, focusing on the “upper” house, the House of Lords. We’ll also visit Westminster Abbey, begun in 1245 and the resting place of seventeen monarchs. Lunch is at a private London club, an exclusive retreat from the bustle of town life. After a free afternoon in London, this evening we attend a performance of a major drama or musical within walking distance of our hotel.

**SUNDAY, APRIL 7 Windsor, Eton and the Dowager’s House**
Today we make the short trip to Windsor Castle. Originally built by William the Conqueror, home to St George’s Chapel and the Order of the Garter, Windsor is the largest inhabited castle in the world and still a favourite residence of the Queen. A short walk across the river brings us to Eton College, where we enjoy a rare guided visit of the school. Founded by King Henry VI in 1440 to educate a new class of men for the Royal Court, Eton was more recently the school of David Cameron, The Archbishop of Canterbury and Princes Harry and William. By now we will have earned the right to relax with a private high tea at nearby Byfleet Manor, Maggie Smith’s Dowager House in *Downton Abbey*. Evening free.

**MONDAY, APRIL 8 To the Manor Born**
This morning we enjoy a guided tour of the Victoria and Albert Museum and in particular its collection of men and women’s costumes through the centuries. We’ll focus on the Edwardian Era, named for the early 20th century period of Edward VII, as featured in *Downton Abbey*. After lunch, we bid good-bye to London and travel west to our next home near Bath. We stop off to visit the charming village of Lacock, preserved by the National Trust, where scenes from *Pride and Prejudice*, *Cranford* and *Harry Potter* were filmed. Then we arrive at the Ston Easton Park Hotel, an 18th century Palladian mansion set amid 36 beautiful acres in the rolling hills of Somerset. The group will have the run of the hotel which includes an Edwardian era kitchen, a Victorian garden, and an elegant Saloon. We’ll take a tour of the house and garden before dinner at their award-winning restaurant.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 9 Jane Austen in Bath**
A short drive brings us to the charming city of Bath. Historically an important religious site and Roman settlement, Bath later became a fashionable Georgian resort town and the setting for several of Jane Austen’s novels. Austen scholar Hazel Jones takes us to the jewels of Regency Bath: the Assembly Rooms, the Pump rooms where you have a chance to taste the waters, the Parades, the Georgian baths, the Circus and Royal Crescent. Lunch is at the lovely Royal Crescent Hotel. We return to Ston Easton for high tea and a late supper. There Emma Craigie, a local writer and teacher, will talk to us about her childhood at Ston Easton. Her father, Lord Rees-Mogg, bought and restored the crumbling mansion.

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10 The City of Spires**
After breakfast, we head northeast through the lower Cotswolds towards Oxford, stopping first for lunch at the Trout Inn, the favoured pub of Inspector Morse. Then a short drive brings us to magnificent Blenheim Palace, home to the Dukes of Marlborough and Winston Churchill’s birthplace. Designed by Vanbrugh in the rare British Baroque style, Blenheim is perhaps best known for its park, landscaped by Capability Brown. We will tour the lovely park and gardens before our arrival in Oxford and check in to the charming Cotswold Lodge, close to the historic city center. We’ll enjoy an early evening walking tour of the city and its colleges. Too many names to mention are associated with Oxford, from Sir Christopher Wren to Tolkien and Bill Clinton to Harry Potter. The University can claim 47 Nobel Laureates, 12 Saints and 8 current Cabinet ministers.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 11 Downton**
We start with a visit to the nearby village of Bampton for a stroll through the streets of Downton. See the house given to Isobel Crawley, visit the church where Matthew and Mary marry, and the little library used for the village hospital exterior. Lunch in Oxford on your own. In the afternoon, we travel past Watership Down, an area famous for its race-horse stud-farms, towards Sandham Memorial Chapel. Built to commemorate the unknown dead of the First World War, and housing the murals of war-time artist Stanley Spencer, this is a reminder of the momentous events that shook the world of Downton Abbey. Suitably refreshed by a light supper at the Carnarvon Arms, we proceed to Highclere Castle for our private guided tour through the magnificent state rooms, so familiar to us from the series, and our Champagne reception. Highclere Castle has been in the Carnarvon family for over 300 years and is still home to the present Earl and Countess of Carnarvon who have extended us a warm welcome.

**FRIDAY, APRIL 12 Evensong and Farewell**
We have a day of leisure in Oxford to explore its world class museums, the shops of the covered market, or go “punting” on the river. This evening we gather for evensong in a College Chapel, sung by the young boys of the College’s own school, followed by a fitting farewell dinner in a hallowed College Formal Hall, a privilege reserved for distinguished visitors to Oxford, with special guests.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 13**
Tour ends after breakfast. Coach returns to London and the group flight return to Rochester, with arrival the same day.

Itinerary is subject to change. Meals in bold are included in the price of the tour.

**TOUR REGISTRATION**

**$4,985 per person, ground only, double occupancy**

- Single supplement: $660
- Optional group flight: $1075
- DEPOSIT: $700 per person, first come, first served
- Tax-deductible contribution to WXXI: $200
- Balance deadline: February 4, 2013
- After that date, call for availability.

To reserve your place on the tour, send registration form, with check or credit card information for the deposit amount to WXXI Downton Tour, c/o Laura Garrison, WXXI, PO Box 30021, Rochester, NY 14603. Registration materials may be found online at www.wxxi.com

**QUESTIONS? Contact Laura Garrison at 585.258.0309 or lgarrison@wxxi.org or The Grand Tour at 800.727.2995 or info@thegrandtour.com**