



## **Upstairs, Downstairs and Behind Closed Doors**

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Opening in February 2016, Blenheim Palace will be launching three new tours: an Upstairs Tour, a Downstairs Tour and a Private Apartments Tour.

Visitors will have the opportunity to explore never-before-seen rooms, discover fascinating insights into the work habits of staff past and present and to see the private bedrooms where the Marlborough family have lived and been served.

Each Tour details a different side of Palace life. Visitors will hear how the Household functioned and how the servants looked after their famous and glamorous guests.

The intimate tours will be 12-16 people per experience and are bookable via the Welcome Centre and in the Palace.

### **Upstairs Tour**

The 'Upstairs' Tour will take visitors on an exclusive tour of the Blenheim Palace Guest Rooms, none of which have ever been on public display before. Visitors will discover the rooms which have housed notable (and notorious) guests including Sir Winston Churchill and Queen Mary, as well as King Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson.

Visitors will see servants' rooms such as the Linen room and the Tweenies' room along with family rooms such as the Blandford Bedroom, the Sunderland Dressing Room and Bachelors' Row. The tour will take visitors through secret corridors, interlinking doors and spiral staircases.

The tour explains the opulent comfort of life at the Palace alongside the challenges of living in the ancient Baroque house, including the severe lack of bathrooms. Consuelo Vanderbilt, first wife of the 9th Duke, was not accustomed to hip baths and chamber pots: 'The lack of bathrooms troubled my American sense of comfort and awakened stricken feelings towards my housemaids, whose business it was to prepare some thirty baths a day.'

Discover the modernisation of the Palace through the centuries, from candles to gas and finally to electricity along with the upheaval occasioned by the installation of central heating, and which Dukes and Duchesses made their mark on the Palace.

### **Downstairs Tour**

The 'Downstairs' Tour will offer visitors an in-depth and fascinating insight into the running of a great house past and present; from servants' duties to the seamless running of the family side of the Palace.

Servants were essential to the aristocratic way of life. It would have been completely impossible for the family to take care of themselves, to manage the house, look after the children and let alone host a fancy dinner party, without the help of servants.

The 4th Duke had the largest retinue of servants and the number increased each time his wife had a baby. At its largest there were 102 servants to look after the family. 54 worked inside the Palace and the rest in the gardens. However during times of austerity, and particularly during World War I, a handful of staff valiantly managed the Palace, Estate and a temporary convalescence hospital.

Visitors will learn about the hierarchy of staff, uniform and wages. Many of the Dukes and Duchesses of Marlborough were generous and reliable employers and Blenheim Palace has the traditional structure or pecking order of servants. Whilst the Butler at Blenheim Palace held a position of great responsibility and as such he was usually the most highly paid servant this was not always the case. During Georgian times His Grace valued his cook above his Butler paying William Barke (Butler 1764) £20 per year and Thomas Cartier (Cook) £45 per year!

This tour takes visitors into the rooms including the China Room, housing the Blenheim Palace dinner services over 300 years, the Flower Room and Staff Room, as well as the Kitchen and the Pantry. Visitors will also explore the Undercroft, which includes the Wine Cellars and the Log Hole.

Visitors will wander through the network of corridors to see the iconic bell system and learn the gossip and perks of the job from the staff's point of view. This unique tour documents the daily roles and work of servants and staff from the beginning of Blenheim Palace until the present day.

### **Private Apartment Tour**

After the success of the Private Apartment Tours in 2015, Blenheim Palace have refreshed and reopened the exclusive access to His Grace's private residence.

The guided experience will allow visitors to discover the home of the Marlborough family, including the Duke of Marlborough's Dressing Room and Master Bedroom, which has not been on public display for over 11 years.

Visitors will see the beauty of the private Dining Room, Sitting Room and Smoking Room, which contains full size tapestries from the Alexandra the Great series, commissioned by the 1st Duke. The Smoking Room is also home to the painting of a tiger by Stubbs. This tiger lived at Blenheim Palace from 1763 and was a gift to the 4th Duke by Lord Clive, Governor of Bengal.

A limited number of daily tours will also extend into the Grand Cabinet, a room which contains fascinating antiques, artefacts and art.

WHAT: New Upstairs, Downstairs and Private Apartment Tours at Blenheim Palace  
WHEN: Daily from February 13th until September  
WHY VISIT: Three new tours take visitors on a fascinating guided experience exploring the private side of Blenheim Palace.  
WEBSITE: [blenheimpalace.com](http://blenheimpalace.com)

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

The guided tours each last approximately 45 minutes and will run daily at regular intervals between 10:30-17:00. Guests must book at the Welcome Desk or Great Hall on the day. Palace, Park and Gardens ticket is required and additional charges per tour do apply. Please note that Upstairs and Downstairs routes may be subject to change.

### Upstairs Tour

Unfortunately this tour is not suitable for young children and is not accessible for wheelchair users.

### Downstairs Tour

An accessible Tour with a slightly amended route is available for wheelchair users at limited times during the day.

Please note all dates and times are subject to change.

- Opening times and ticket pricing applies
- Blenheim Palace is a member of the Green Tourism Business Scheme.
- Blenheim Palace is a member of the Treasure Houses of England, 10 of the most magnificent palaces, stately homes and castles in England [www.treasurehouses.co.uk](http://www.treasurehouses.co.uk)

### **Annual Pass**

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Blenheim Palace offers an amazing annual pass ticket deal. When you buy a single day ticket to the Palace, Park and Gardens, you can convert it into an annual pass for free and gain unlimited entry for 12 months.

Annual Pass Privilege Card - 15% discount on dining and shopping\*

Blenheim Palace is offering a special Privilege Card upgrade option with the Annual Pass. For an extra £5 you can receive a 15% discount in all Blenheim Palace Shops and Cafés!

\*Terms and conditions apply.