

JANE
AUSTEN  250



GROUPS AND
TRAVEL TRADE
GUIDE 2025

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VISIT
READING

Welcome to the Reading Groups and Travel Trade Guide 2025. Reading has a great deal to offer visitors in 2025 as part of Jane Austen 250, as well as amazing museums, fascinating heritage, relaxing river attractions, great shopping, dining and a wide range of accommodation. Reading's superb location and transport connections makes it easy to reach and a good base for exploring the wider Thames Valley and the Great West Way.

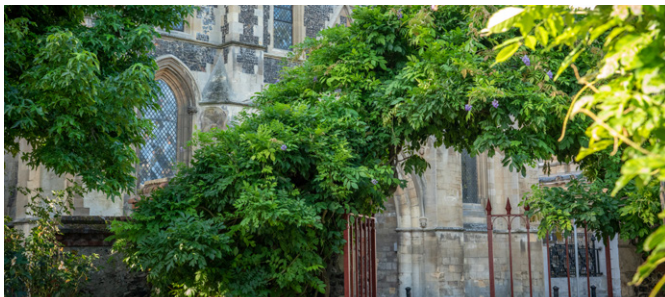


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Visit Jane Austen's school room **NEW**

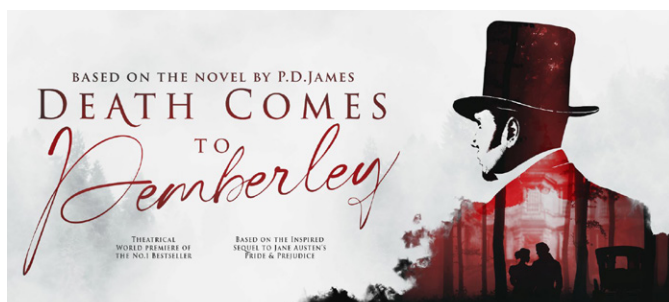
Renowned author Jane Austen spent her school days in Reading. In 2025, as part of the 250th anniversary of her birth, visit the former Reading Ladies Boarding School in the medieval **Reading Abbey Gateway** to find out what life was like for Jane aged 10 in Reading. The author's time there was the inspiration for Mrs Goddard's School in her fourth novel, *Emma*. Book a group visit to Reading Abbey Gateway as part of an Abbey Quarter visit and find out more about her family connections to Reading and the Thames Valley.



Death Comes to Pemberley – the Mill at Sonning

Don't miss the world premiere of a new play at the **Mill at Sonning** as part of Jane Austen 250. *Death Comes to Pemberley* is a Jane Austen themed show, and with dinner included in the historic theatre complex, is ideal for groups. Based on a PD James novel, the play is set in Pemberley, which was home to Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

1 May – 28 June 2025



Pride & Prejudice film location

The **National Trust's Basildon Park**, just outside Reading, became Netherfield, the grand home of Mr Bingley in the 2005 film of *Pride & Prejudice* starring Keira Knightley and Matthew Macfadyen. The 18th-century mansion house has a special exhibition, Visions Unreel, showcasing the many films and TV series Basildon Park has played a role in, including many period dramas.



Plus

- For a tempting Regency era treat, the 5-star **Roseate Reading Hotel** will be offering special Jane Austen Afternoon Teas throughout May and June 2025.
- There will be Jane Austen walks, talks and tours on **Austen Wednesdays** in May and June 2025, organised by Reading Museum.



More at [visit-reading.com/janeausten](https://www.visit-reading.com/janeausten)

Sample itinerary

Father Thames and 1000 years of history

Reading offers a great day-trip itinerary for any year – a wonderful journey down the Thames river, combined with a guided tour of one of our unique museums, making for an easy to manage and inspiring visit.

Thames River Cruise offer private and scheduled cruises, ranging from a 45-minute circular cruise to 3 hours with afternoon tea, lunch or evening drinks. The family-owned water company depart from Caversham Pier in Reading with easy coach drop off riverside.



Reading Museum provide guided tours or introductory 'wow talks' on the **British Bayeux Tapestry**, the full-scale Victorian 70 metre-long replica of the Norman tapestry or the **Huntley and Palmers Gallery** with hundreds of gorgeous biscuit tins. Or take one of their **Abbey Quarter guided tours** (with Jane Austen included). Coach drop off next door.



The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) offers group visits around its galleries dedicated to food, farming and the countryside, including the Ladybird Collection of children's books. The studio can be booked for lunches and coaches can drop off in the car park.

Reading has over 1000 years of history to discover, from King Henry I and medieval abbey ruins to biscuit heritage, Oscar Wilde, Jane Austen and now Banksy. Book a guide for a walk around Reading's compact town centre with coach drop off next to Reading Museum.

Walks and tours

- **Walk Reading** – themed walks or an introduction to Reading from a local enthusiast.
- **Terry's Reading Walkabouts** – over 16 different walks to choose from by Reading-local Terry Dixon.
- **Tours2Order** – Graham Horn is a Blue Badge Guide based locally who can guide groups through Reading's history and its famous 3Bs.
- **Abbey Quarter Tours** – book a tour with one of Reading Museum's knowledgeable volunteer guides.

Or why not try

- Reading's other museums – **The Cole Museum of Zoology** and the **Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology** at the University of Reading.
- The **Museum of Berkshire Aviation** tells the story of the former thriving aircraft industry.
- **Stanlake Vineyard** tour and tastings or visit one of Reading's new microbreweries.
- Get a taste of the Camino de Santiago by walking the accredited English camino, the **St James' Way**, which starts in Reading.
- Group lunches at **Bill's** in the town centre (2 Private Dining Rooms, 56 pax in total) or **Holiday Inn Reading South M4 jct.11**.
- Poolside drinks at **Thames Lido**, Reading's restaurant, bar and pool.
- Theatre at **Reading Rep** or the **Mill at Sonning** – both offer group rates.



Contacts

- Reading Museum / Abbey Gateway – Jane Austen's school room / Abbey Quarter tours 0118 937 3400
- Mill at Sonning 0118 969 6039
- Basildon Park 01491672382
- The MERL (Museum of English Rural Life) 0118 378 8660
- Roseate Reading Afternoon Tea 0118 952 7770
- Cole Museum of Zoology <https://collections.reading.ac.uk/cole-museum/>
- Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology 0118 378 6990
- Berkshire Museum of Aviation 0118 944 8089
- Thames River Cruise 0118 948 1088
- Tours 2 Order 07827 715353
- Walk Reading <https://www.walk-reading.co.uk/>
- Terry's Reading Walkabouts 07505 351517
- Stanlake Vineyard 0118 934 0176
- Bill's Restaurant 020 8054 5400
- Overnight coach parking – Holiday Inn Reading South M4 jct. 11 0118 304 6000
- Thames Lido 0118 207 0640
- Reading Rep Theatre Readingrep.com

Town centre

Roseate Reading 0118 952 7770
Malmaison 0118 334 1331
Penta Hotel 0118 958 6222
Novotel Reading 0118 952 2600
Ibis Reading 0118 953 3500
Sure Hotel Best Western 0118 931 1311
Travelodge 08719 846211
Market House 0118 304 3400

Near to the M4


Holiday Inn Reading South M4 jct. 11 0118 304 6000 (coach parking on site)
Reading Hilton 0118 916 9000
Crowne Plaza Reading East 0118 944 0444
Voco Reading 0118 925 3500

Serviced apartments

House of Fisher 0118 951 4151
Premier Suites 0118 324 9700
Celador Apartments 0118 437 5250

The best-connected destination in the South of England

We are easily reached by coach, rail and air.

 **By coach** – Reading is close to the M4 and A34 and only 40 miles from London. Coaches can **drop off/pick up** in Reading town centre next to Reading Museum or at the MERL. **Day coach parking** can be booked (advance only) with Reading Buses at their Great Knolly Street depot by calling 0118 959 4000. **Overnight coach parking** and group hotel rates at Holiday Inn Reading South M4 jct. 11.

 **By rail** – Reading has direct train connections with 250 destinations in the UK, including airports. We are 23 minutes from London on GWR fast services and the final stop on the Elizabeth Line.

On the Great West Way

Reading is a great base for exploring the Great West Way touring route between London and Bristol. Reading is on the road, rail, walking, cycle and water routes of the multi-modal Great West Way.

With Reading as a base, it is easy to explore the Thames Valley villages, Oxford, Windsor, the Chilterns or North Hampshire. Reading has excellent accommodation options in the town centre near the station or within easy reach of the M4 motorway (see below for details).



More details on Reading accommodation at visit-reading.com

REDA – Reading's Destination and Economy Agency

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