

# Armchair Travellers Guide to England

Great Britain is one of the best places to visit from the comfort of your armchair. Especially in the colder months of the year. When the days are short, the fields are muddy, and the sky is more than 50 shades of grey.

To make up for these dreary months, there have always been copious amounts of tea, humour and creative storytelling to get people through.

A favourite list of books and movies are listed here, divided into the past and present. This way you'll get a gist of the country as it was, and how it is today. All while allowing you to enjoy the journey from here to there without leaving the comfort of home.



So, let's get to it, and start with:

## **The Past: Endless Drama and Intrigue of**

# Kings and Queens

England's Kings and Queens are tricky to follow, there's always a I, II, III all the way to VIII fighting someone with a similar name who is equally treacherous. Heads come off more regularly than a visit to London Tower. Making books on the subject a jolly good read. Full of excessive drama, intrigue and best of all they are based on true events.

While your average textbook is as boring as a poke in the eye, writers like [Philippa Gregory](#) bring the stories to light in a most novel way (pun intended). Making them easy to read, leaving you on edge of your seat late into the night. Now, there might be an embellishment here and there, yet, Ms Gregory knows her history. My favourites are:

[The White Queen](#): Elizabeth Grey married Edward the IV, against the wishes of his family and the Kingmaker. Not only was she a mere daughter of a knight, but also a widow with two children. Highly unusual and sensational at the time. Yet for many years their marriage was successful. Like most stories about love and power, there's also plenty of drama. She has a lot of children, including the two Princes, that went missing in the tower. If you prefer to watch it rather than read it, it is also available on [DVD](#).

[The White Princess](#) is a follow on about the eldest daughter of the [White Queen](#) who was forced to marry Henry VII. The family hoped that the union would bring peace, which it did for some time. She was also the mother of Henry VIII, so the story sets a good background on the Tudor era of England's History. You can also buy this book in the [Cousin's War Boxset](#) for anyone interested in the whole period. The [movie is available on DVD](#).



[The Red Queen.](#) Is a part of ['The Court Tudor series'](#), this series covers the queens and stories around the Tudors, such as Henry VIII and his many wives. The Red Queen is about his grandmother Margaret Beaufort, who doesn't often get much attention. Yet, she played quite a significant role and had a strong hand in the upbringing of her son and grandson. She is often believed to be behind the disappearance and likely death of Two young Princes locked in the tower.

Philippa Gregory's stories are told from a woman's perspective, which wasn't a popular angle put forward at the time. Yes, while many women at that time were simply a pawn in a larger game. There were intelligent strategists and survivalists among them and Ms Beaufort was among them.

[The Tudors](#) is a suspenseful TV mini-series that is based on the life and a few of the marriages of Henry VIII, as well as the establishment of the Church of England.

A series called ['The Spanish Princess'](#) covers the life of Katherine of Aragon, Henry's first wife. Katherine's earlier life and first marriage aren't often written about. She was left in the lurch when her first husband King Arthur died, and her mother the Queen of Spain refused to pay her dowry. It was a tough beginning, without a happily ever after. Yet her courage, grace and character make it a great story.





[Daughter of time –](#) Is set in the current day. The story is about a bedridden detective, who decides to uncover the unsolved fate of The two Princes in the tower. His investigation takes him deeper into the life of their uncle, Richard III. You'll find it presents an interesting hypothesis of what might have happened.

## Time Travelling back to England's Darker Past

There are really more books that cover the United Kingdom's history than you can read in one lifetime. Obviously, I can't cover them all, but here are a few of the best:

Books like the '[Time Travellers Guide to Medieval England](#)' is fabulously funny and take a deep dive into what the era would have been like if you were sent back in time.

The further you travel back in time, the less factual stories become. Earlier tales border on myths and legends of the British Isles. One of my favourites of that period is [The Sevenwaters series](#) by Juliet Marillier. Who does a brilliant job of bringing stories back to life and weaving in an old myth or two at the same time.

Another author that can be harder to find as they are often out of print is [Morgan Llewelyn](#). She brings stories of Ancient Albion and Ireland to life. I especially enjoy *The Bard* and *The Druid*.



If this is an era that rocks your boat, there is also a new [TV series that looks at this period called \*Britannia\*](#). While there aren't any poetic bards, it does have the Celts, druids, magic and a few gnarly Romans. The period is the time of the first Roman invasion around 43AD. You can find it on Sky TV or [Amazon Prime](#).

## **On-Screen Period dramas that Whisk you back through Time**

[Downton Abbey](#). Resistant at first, as the show seems a bit cliché, in all honestly it is well worth watching. A great cast of actors and characters brings this whole period drama to life. It has the right amount of humour, warmth and scheming to keep you captivated all the way through to the end. Even the [latest box office movie of the same name is a keeper](#).

Others that are also set in the period are [Poldark](#), which



takes you through the challenges of rural life in Cornwall. The series is based on the famous [Poldark books by Winston Graham](#).

[Outlander](#), will take you North and up into Scotland, and is a period drama with a modern twist. Outlander is set in Jacobian times, and despite the love, and drama of this wartime era. It is the landscape and its timeless features that really steals the scene.



For any of those out there who enjoy a bit of comical black wit, on which English humour is based. Then you'll love the [Black Adder TV series](#). Written by Ben Elton and starring Rowan Atkinson and many of the cast of the equally [funny and famous Monty Python movies](#), it is the most comical view of England's history.

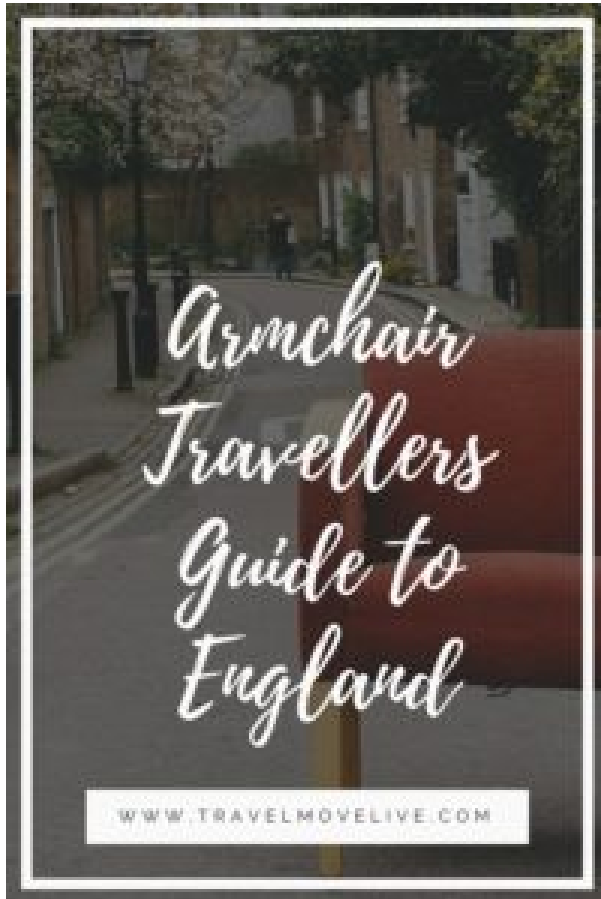
## Modern Books and Movies of Great Britain

While the richness of England's history is never-ending, modern-day Britain has talent. As much as I like [Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes books](#), the [latest TV series Sherlock](#) makes London look so fabulous you'll want to visit immediately.

[Dare to be wild](#) is another perfect example. Based on true events, it contains a bit of romance, yet it is mostly about bringing a bit of wild nature back into English gardens. It's a story of a young gardener's dream to exhibit in the Chelsea flower show. It shows the English countryside and its magical landscapes in a most poetic light.



[Lad, A Yorkshire Story](#) – Such a touching story about life and death. It's often the ordinary everyday moments that become extraordinary. Most of us are touched by death, family issues and struggles. It's in these mundane moments we have the opportunity to uncover who we truly are.



This story is just that, every day that reaches out and touches us profoundly. It's a moving story, based on true events around the death of a boy's father and the effect it has on the family.

**Johnny English** – is what's needed after a serious movie. Good 'ole Rowan Atkinson, of Mr Beam fame, is a spy, and offers the is the best way to laugh off any and all sadness. Of course, the movie captures everything that is so quintessentially British and worth laughing at.

**Finding your feet** – The ideal feel-good movie. It's a view into everyday life in the UK, with a great acting cast of characters. It takes you through life turned upside down by events, the break up of a marriage, family and the magic that can come out of chaos.

It portrays hidden parts of London we don't often see on the big screen. Yes, you can swim in the ponds at Hampstead Heath and live on a canal boat. There are unknown suburbs, all worth a gander should you ever visit the city.





[Miss potter](#) – We all know the darling drawings by Beatrix potter but few of us know the author. This movie looks at how it all started out for Beatrix and how her little animals came to life.

It was quite rare at the time for women to have such freedom to create. While she did eventually marry it wasn't until she was much older. Overall its a great story of how nature can inspire us in the most charming of ways.

[Anonymous](#) – Who doesn't love a conspiracy theory? This one takes us on a deep dive into who the real Shakespeare might have been. Putting forth the most popular option of Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford.

Super actors really bring this movie to life and give us plenty of food for thought.

Personally, I am a fan of thinking it might it have been either [Mary Sidney](#) or [Amelia Bassano Lanier](#). Both of whom are better contenders than the Bard of Stratford.

If you are a Shakespeare fan, [Upstart Crow](#), is a comical series made in the same vein as [Black Adder](#) and is a very

funny view into what the real Shakespeare may have been like.



[Jam and Jerusalem](#) – This isn't a very well-known series, but it should be. It's a riot a comical take on country life written by Jennifer Saunders. Pure British humour at its best.

## **Timeless books about England. Warning: May increase the desire to travel**

So many incredible writers come from England and weave wordy magic around this fair Isle of Albion. The top of the list are:

[The Shepherds life](#), A tale of the Lake District.

An old classic is pretty much as it sounds. A humble, honest and poignant view into the life simple life of a shepherd set in one of the most stunning parts of the country: The Lake District.





### [The Living Mountain, Nan Shepherd](#)

A short but poetic book about the Cairngorm mountains in Scotland. It captures so beautifully the author's love for and relationship with them. The Living Mountain is a magical book written about and for nature.

*"So simply to look on anything, such as a mountain, with the love that penetrates to its essence, is to widen the domain of being in the vastness of non-being. Man has no other reason for his existence."*

– Nan Shepherd, [The Living Mountain](#)

### [A Croft in the Hills](#), Katharine Stewart

Another bookshelf classic, it covers the tale of Katharine and her partner buying a croft (small countryside house) in the Scottish Highlands. It covers the simple, day-by-day challenges of life without luxury. Yet it does so in the purest form.

It is both romantic and honest in its simplicity and yet shows us that living a modest rural life can have more bite than a Rhodesian ridge-back with rabies.

Obviously, this lifestyle isn't for everyone, which is why



reading about it and experiencing it from your armchair is all the more entertaining.

### [The Old Ways, Robert McFarlane](#)

Robert McFarlane's books are spellbinding, they'll carry you through highways, byways and countryside paths, stories and memories. So vividly engaging you may confuse their reading with your own future memories of adventures yet to come.

I started copying down phrases that resonated with me, only to realise I was copying the whole book, word for word. Eventually, I simply bought a copy for myself. I will inspire a long list of places to see and visit. It motivates us to a deeper exploration of the countryside. Leading to the article on why '[The Best way to see Britain in on Foot](#)'.



**From here to there and everywhere, Get down, get cosy...**

Kick back with your favourite beverage of cocoa or wine. Make popcorn, get comfortable and let yourself be transported both near and far by the greatest storytellers this country has

ever known.

This fair land of Albion is worth visiting anytime from the comfort of your armchair, or via plane, train or boat.

If you'd like to be transported to other countries through books and movies, check out my ['Armchair Travellers guide to Argentina'](#).

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