

# Learn English With Photos 19 – Saltram House

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Hello and welcome to episode 19 of Learn English With Photos. My name is Jeffrey Hill and I'm going to be using some photos I've taken to help you improve your English vocabulary and practise your listening and speaking skills. The subject of this lesson is Saltram House, a magnificent Georgian mansion overlooking the river Plym on the outskirts of my hometown, Plymouth in south-west England. I'd often visited the lovely park around the house, but I'd never actually gone inside. However, on a drizzly Thursday afternoon in May 2014, I finally corrected that omission.

The first part of the house was constructed between 1743 and 1750 on the site of an earlier Tudor house by Sir John and Lady Catherine Parker. In 1768 their son John Parker employed the famous Scottish neoclassical architect Robert Adam to carry out extensive alterations to the east wing. In 1818 the porch was added but since this time no other material changes have been made to the house.

The Parker family continued living at Saltram until 1957, when the house, park and contents were accepted by the Treasury in payment of death duty and given to the National Trust, an independent UK conservation charity.

Fans of costume drama might recognize the house, since it was used to represent Norland Park in the opening scenes of the 1996 movie version of Jane Austen's novel "Sense and Sensibility", starring Hugh Grant and Emma Thompson.

After buying my ticket, I made my way through the courtyard and up to the house. Unlike some stately homes I've been to, there isn't a guided tour and visitors are free to wander around the house more or less as they please. However, National Trust volunteers are on duty in most of the rooms to answer any questions you might have — and to make sure you don't steal any of the valuable paintings or furniture! You are allowed to take photos but not using a flash, which is why some of my pictures may look a little dark.

This is Robert Adam's magnificent neo-classical Saloon, or Great Drawing Room. The chandeliers are particularly impressive.

The Morning Room features a large number of paintings of various sizes hanging on its red velvet walls including this huge portrait of John Parker (the son) and his sister painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds in 1792.

The grand top-lit Staircase Hall leads up to the first floor, where the various bedrooms are situated. This is Lady Morley's bedroom with its four-poster bed. And here's the Chinese Bedroom.

Among the other rooms on display are the Velvet Drawing Room, the library with its collection of leather-bound books, and the Mirror Room.

The house contains its original contents including collections of furniture, paintings, pottery and porcelain. The John Parker who employed Robert Adam was responsible for a great part of these

collections. In contrast with the ostentatious living rooms, the kitchens are plain, and the 18<sup>th</sup> century equipment of display is positively primitive.

After spending a couple of hours admiring the wonderful interiors of the house, it was time to explore the grounds. Saltram sits in 500 acres of parkland which has been landscaped with mature trees and a collection of follies. A folly is an ornamental building with no practical purpose. This is the octagonal Castle Folly, which was built in 1770 as a summer house by the estate's carpenter at the request of Theresa Parker who wanted a summer house with a view towards the sea.

Fanny's Bower, built sometime after 1743, was intended as a shelter for viewing the Plym estuary and distant Dartmoor, but as you can see, that view has now been obscured by trees.

The formal gardens include an orangery, which overlooks a fountained garden and lawns bordered with camellias, magnolias, and rhododendrons.

This 700-year old oak featured in the film "Sense and Sensibility", but suffered severe damage during a storm in February 2014.

This avenue of lime trees was first planted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and is some 250 metres long. Many of the original trees remain but some were blown over by fierce winds in 1990.

The wonderfully named Melancholy Walk, which runs along the northern perimeter of the garden, is the oldest existing path. There are several historical features along the walk including Bobby's Grave, which is dated 1929, and presumably commemorates a family dog.

After all that walking, I was feeling a bit peckish, so I stopped off at the new Chapel Tearoom for a Devon cream tea, which traditionally comprises a pot of tea taken with scones, clotted cream and jam (although I had coffee instead). In fact, there's a big debate as to as to how a cream tea should be eaten. The Devon method is to cover each half of the scone with clotted cream, and then add strawberry jam on top. In Cornwall, they put the cream on top. As you can see, I prefer the Cornish method. There's also a debate over the right way to pronounce the word 'scone'. I've always said 'scone' but many people insist it should be 'scone'.

Well, that more or less completes our visit to Saltram House. Of course, the exit is through the gift shop, where I bought some postcards and a guide book.

Now let's look at some of the vocabulary in more detail. I'll say each word twice and you can repeat it after me if you like. I'll give a definition and make some additional comments where appropriate.

# Vocabulary

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- ❑ **alteration** — a change in the appearance or form of something
- ❑ **architect** — someone whose job is to design buildings
- ❑ **blow over** — if something blows over or is blown over, the wind makes it fall
- ❑ **border** — a narrow area at the edge of a lawn or garden path, with flowers and other small plants
- ❑ **camellia** — a red, white, or pink flower shaped like a rose
- ❑ **carpenter** — someone whose job is to make things from wood
- ❑ **chandelier** — a large light that hangs from a ceiling and has branches for holding lights or candles
- ❑ **chapel** — a small church
- ❑ **charity** — an organization that provides help and raises money for those in need.
- ❑ **clotted cream** — very thick cream made by heating milk until large lumps of cream form
- ❑ **commemorate** — to show that you remember a person by creating a special object
- ❑ **conservation** — the management of land and water to prevent it from being damaged
- ❑ **costume drama** — TV or cinema production set in a particular historical period, in which the actors wear costumes typical of that period
- ❑ **courtyard** — a square area that is surrounded by buildings or walls
- ❑ **Cornwall** — a county in the far South-West of England
- ❑ **death duty** — a tax paid by a person who inherits the assets of the person who died
- ❑ **Devon** — a county in southwest England
- ❑ **drawing room** — a room that is mainly used for receiving visitors
- ❑ **drizzly** — with very light rain falling
- ❑ **estuary** — the part of a large river where it becomes wide and flows into the sea
- ❑ **exit** — a door that leads out of a public place such as a room or building
- ❑ **fierce** — fierce weather is very strong or severe
- ❑ **floor** — one of the levels in a building
- ❑ **folly** — a building that has no practical use and is built as a decoration
- ❑ **formal** — formal gardens have plants and paths arranged in a set of regular patterns
- ❑ **four-poster bed** — an old-fashioned bed with four tall posts at the corners
- ❑ **furniture [U]** — the chairs, tables, beds, cupboards etc. that you put in a room or house
- ❑ **Georgian** — in a style typical of the UK and the US in the 18th century
- ❑ **gift shop** — a shop selling things that people like to give and receive as presents
- ❑ **grave** — a place of burial for a dead body, typically a hole dug in the ground and marked by a stone or mound
- ❑ **grounds** — the land, gardens, and lawn that surround a large house or other building
- ❑ **historic** — important because it is old and interesting or impressive
- ❑ **jam** — a sweet sticky food made from boiled fruit and sugar that is usually spread onto bread
- ❑ **landscape** — an area of land that is beautiful to look at or that has a particular type of appearance
- ❑ **lawn** — an area of grass that is cut short, especially in someone's garden
- ❑ **leather-bound** — having a cover made of leather
- ❑ **library** — a room in a house used for keeping and reading books
- ❑ **lime tree** — deciduous broadleaf tree, native to the UK and parts of Europe
- ❑ **magnolia** — a tree with large white, yellow, or pink flowers

- ❑ **mansion** — a large house, especially a beautiful one
- ❑ **National Trust** — organization in the UK that owns and looks after historical buildings
- ❑ **neoclassical** — similar to ancient Greek or Roman ideas or art
- ❑ **novel** — a long written story about imaginary or partly imaginary characters and events
- ❑ **oak** — a large tree that can live for a very long time and produces small hard fruits called acorns
- ❑ **obscure** — to cover something so that it cannot be seen
- ❑ **octagonal** — having eight sides
- ❑ **orangery** — a building made of glass where orange trees are grown
- ❑ **ornamental** — designed to be used as decoration
- ❑ **ostentatious** — intended to impress people or attract their admiration
- ❑ **outskirts** — the areas of a town or city that are furthest away from the centre
- ❑ **overlook** — to have a view of something from above
- ❑ **painting** — a picture made using paint
- ❑ **parkland** — an open area with grass and trees
- ❑ **path** — a way from one place to another that people can walk along
- ❑ **peckish** — slightly hungry
- ❑ **plain** — simple in design, with no decoration
- ❑ **porcelain** — dishes, cups, decorations etc made from porcelain, a hard white shiny substance
- ❑ **porch** — a small area covered by a roof at the entrance to a house or other building
- ❑ **portrait** — a painting, drawing, or photograph of someone, especially of their face only
- ❑ **postcard** — a small card you send to someone with a picture of a place you are visiting
- ❑ **pottery** — plates and cups made out of clay and baked in an oven so that they become hard
- ❑ **primitive** — old-fashioned, simple, and without modern features or comforts
- ❑ **rhododendron** — a large bush with big flowers and leaves that stay green all year
- ❑ **scone** — a small soft cake that sometimes contains dried fruit and is usually eaten with butter.
- ❑ **shelter** — a place where people are protected from bad weather
- ❑ **staircase** — a set of stairs in a building, including the banister that you hold onto when you go up
- ❑ **stately home** — a large house in the UK that has an interesting history and belongs, or used to belong, to an important family
- ❑ **storm** — an occasion when a lot of rain falls very quickly, often with very strong winds
- ❑ **strawberry** — a small soft red fruit with a lot of very small seeds on its skin
- ❑ **tea** — a hot drink made by pouring boiling water onto the dried leaves of the tea bush
- ❑ **Treasury** — the government department responsible for a country's financial matters
- ❑ **Tudor** — belonging to or connected with the period between 1485 and 1603 in England
- ❑ **valuable** — worth a lot of money
- ❑ **velvet** — cloth that is very soft on one side and smooth on the other
- ❑ **volunteer** — someone who is not paid for the work that they do
- ❑ **wing** — a part of a building that sticks out from the main part

# Questions

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1. Have you ever visited a stately home? If so, describe your visit. If not, would you like to?
2. Why do you think visiting stately homes is such a popular pastime in Britain?
3. Which period of history are you most interested in and why?
4. Do you like watching costume dramas such as “Sense and Sensibility”? Why, or why not? Which ones have you seen?
5. How important is it to preserve our architectural heritage?
6. Do you think the government should be responsible for the upkeep of historical buildings?
7. If you were the owner of a stately home in need of funds, what would you do to attract visitors?
8. What modern buildings do you think people will visit in the future?

