

Thatching Weekend Courses

The traditional thatching material in the West Country is Combed Wheat Reed, this is specially grown wheat straw. There are three main types of thatching in England:- Combed Wheat Reed, Water Reed and Long Straw.

Devon has over 3000 thatched buildings and has the largest number of medieval roofs in the world, some are 700 years old. We are located between Whiddon Down and South Zeal – a medieval village between Exeter and Okehampton in the lea of Dartmoor, in the Dartmoor National Park. There are about a dozen cob or stone thatched houses including a thatched pub – The Kings Arms.

The surrounding countryside is a mosaic of fields with near views of Dartmoor. It is in these pleasant surroundings that we invite you to spend a relaxed and interesting weekend in Devon. Our wish is to provide you with a friendly atmosphere and an insight into thatching.

South Zeal is only 3 miles from the A30 dual-carriageway at Whiddon Down, this links to the M5 near Exeter (19 miles). The nearest train is Exeter St.Davids and Western Greyhound buses stop nearby.

For those not wishing to take part in the thatching there are many alternative interests locally: RHS Rosemoor Gardens, 1646 Civil War Museum and Dartington Glass in Torrington, a selection of National Trust properties within a one hour drive, walking on Dartmoor or the Tarka Trail nearby. We are only an hours' drive from the Eden Project

in Cornwall and some of the special Cornish Gardens.

NB This course will not equip you to thatch a roof, it takes a 5 year apprenticeship to learn how to thatch. Keen DIY's will find it useful.

Friday

We will give you the opportunity to not only find out about the ancient craft of Thatching but also to have a go. We anticipate our guests (a maximum of 8) to arrive at their chosen accommodation on Friday afternoon. We will meet to have a 2 course homemade evening meal at Holland Park Farm at around 6.30 and introduce you to the tools and materials.

Saturday

The course will start at 9.30 am. This will take place in our barn on made up roof frames, so as to be out of the weather and you need have no fear of heights. During the day you will be thatching, guided by Charles Chalcraft (a retired master thatcher) who will lead you through the process of thatching a roof. We will be using both Combed Wheat Reed and Water Reed but not Long Straw. We will be stopping for coffee, a snack lunch and a genuine Devon Cream Tea with home made scones, clotted cream and strawberry jam. Finish around 5.00pm.

Sunday

The course will start at 9.30 am. There will be a demonstration of ridging and patching and following up any other queries. After coffee (weather permitting) a short walk around South Tawton to see some of the local thatched buildings and the 15th Century thatched Church

House. We will return to a light home made lunch. The weekend course finishes at 2.30.

Notes and Conditions

- Frequency of courses will depend upon demand. We enclose a booking form with some suggested dates.
- A non-returnable deposit of £30 per person to be paid with the completed booking form with the balance payable 3 weeks before the course.
- We reserve the right to cancel any course but alternative dates will be supplied.
- It would be a great help if you will kindly let us know what time you expect to arrive and whether you require vegetarian or special diet.
- All tools will be provided.
- Casual working clothes and comfortable footwear are essential, bring a pair of gloves.
- Collection from British Rail, St.Davids Station, Exeter can be arranged at a nominal charge.
- The cost for the weekend course to include all thatching tuition, 2 x homemade lunches, Friday evening meal, a Cream Tea, and refreshments. @ £195 per person.
- Non thatching partners are welcome to watch but meals and cream teas are extra.

For further information please write, telephone or email Charles and Anna Chalcraft, Holland Park Farm, South Tawton, Okehampton EX20 2PP, Tel: 01647 231706. Mob: 07771512670
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