The Jousting Lists – Solution

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The diagram in this puzzle consists of 52 squares; excluding the cell marked START, each cell can be interpreted as a rule for transforming words. In the spirit of a word ladder, the goal of the puzzle is to traverse the grid while applying these transformations in succession.

The phrase *touring knights* in the flavortext suggests that our path through the grid is a knight's tour, i.e. a sequence of moves of a knight (from chess) that visits each square exactly once. The starting square (and initial word) is clearly marked: START. From here, we perform knight moves, transforming the word START at each stage. Paraphrasing instructions, we have:

Given	START	*Singularize*	TETHER
First 4 letters	STAR	*Anagram without a T*	THREE
Anagram with W	WARTS	*Extract an interior letter*	THEE
Change letter #3 to I	WAITS	*Insert a compass point abbr.*	THESE
Homophone	WEIGHTS	*Change penult. letter to R*	THERE
Anagram odd-indexed letters	WISH	*Last 4 letters, any order*	HERE
Caesar shift letter #4 by 8	WISP	*Homophone (same length)*	HEAR
Move letter #1 to home row	LISP	*Append a letter*	HEARD
Anagram with C	CLIPS	*Caesar shift letter #2 by 10*	HOARD
Remove a letter other than #1	CLIP	*Change letter #5 to a bigram*	HOARSE
Extract a ≥2-pt. Scrabble letter	LIP	*5-letter homophone*	HORSE
Prepend 2 top row letters	TULIP	*Anagram with D*	SHORED
Remove letters #2 and #3	TIP	*Remove letter #6*	SHORE
Anagram with A	PITA	*Anagram without S*	HERO
Extract the second vowel	PIT	*Extract a letter from N–Z*	HER
Remove letter #3	PI	*Anagram with B*	HERB
Surround with 2 STEED letters	SPIT	*Pluralize*	HERBS
Caesar shift	DATE	*[Previous] & . . .*	SPICES
Append a period 3 elem. sym.	DATES	*Change letter #2 to 2 letters[a]*	SLUICES
Reverse 2-letter substring	AD	*Extract last letter, A–Z order*	SLICES
Unshortened form	ADVERTISEMENT	*Extract the letter after E*	SLICE
3-letter internal substring	MEN	*Make penult. a home row key*	SLIDE
Insert a vowel after vowel #1	MEAN	*Anagram the 4 non-S letters*	LIED
Make letter #2 a diff. vowel	MOAN	*Extract vowel #2*	LID
Remove odd-indexed letters	ON	*Change center to EN*	LEND
Advance 2 in flavortext	TETHERS	*Extract letter #1*	END

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[a] . . . separated by a shift of 9 letters

Note as well that eight instructions reference 'extracting' letters. The extracted letters, when read in path order, spell this puzzle's answer: CAROUSEL.