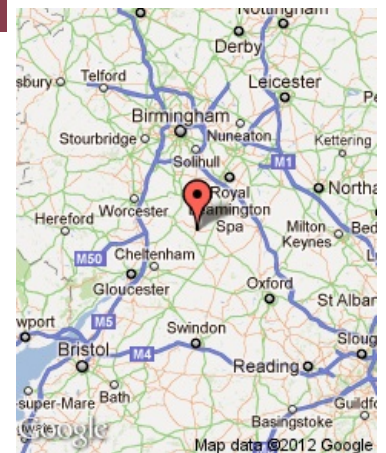


Walk the Cotswold Way!



Highlights

The Cotswolds is a 787 square mile expanse of countryside in the south of England, making it the biggest of England's 38 designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (an accolade on par with that of a national park.) What can be more uplifting than a week in the stereotypically charming English countryside?

For those that are caught up in the drudgeries of urban living in England, it's often easy to forget that there is a plethora of gorgeous country landscapes right on the doorstep. For people who have never visited the England and its countryside, the fanciful notions of gentle hills peppered with quaint little hamlets aren't actually that far from the mark!

The Cotswolds, often referred to as 'the heart of England', is one such place. This tour will take you across the Cotswold Way, 102 miles of fairly easy paced walking, starting from the medieval market town of Chipping Campden and finishing up at the ancient city of Bath. Along the way you'll take in some amazingly expansive views and stay in a hand-picked selection of 3 and 4 star accommodation.

The tour's itinerary features visits to a lot of the idyllic towns and villages which make up the Cotswold communities. The history of these places often stretch back to antiquity, and you'll find well preserved examples of structures that even go back as far as the iron and bronze ages. Of course, the climax of the tour as far as history is considered is at the end point - nearly four million tourists a year come to the city of Bath to see its fantastic Roman architecture, and is (arguably) the most fascinating cultural and historic city outside of London.

The famed British hospitality also shines through in the numerous inns and B&Bs which make up your accommodation for the week. The classic country pub is an institution in England - after a long day in the fresh air, make sure you take half an hour out to 'quaff an ale' at the bar!

Is it for me?

The walking tour is generally easy going and follows well maintained paths and bridleways, but a certain level of fitness is helpful in tackling some of the steep slopes leading up and down the hills. You'll cover a lot of ground on a daily basis, but if you'd like to break the Cotswold Way up into smaller sections you can extend the tour (see itinerary notes below.) Good walking footwear, warm and waterproof clothing and a day bag are required - your main luggage will be transferred to your next stop during each day but it is asked that you keep this luggage to one 15kg case per person.

Accommodation

The tour operators take great pains to seek out the very best independently-run accommodation. As a result, you can expect quality overnight stays in 3 and 4 star establishments, ranging from guesthouses, B&Bs, country pubs and small hotels.

A large breakfast is included on each day of the tour, generally a filling cooked breakfast with all the trimmings, although toasts and cereals are available if you fancy something a bit lighter.

Lunch and dinner is not included in the price, but staff at the accommodation you will stay at on any given day are usually more than happy to make you a packed lunch to take on the walk. In the evening, you can't go wrong with a freshly cooked meal at a country pub - steak and ale pies, gammon and minted lamb shanks are staples of an

Prices from

480 GBP (7 days) per person

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English pub menu and all highly recommended.

Itinerary

The self guided walk is best done in 8 walking days and 9 nights accommodation but is available in shorter and longer alternatives. Eight days of walking offers a pace suitable for most walkers and gives time to relax and enjoy the historical sites. The start point for the tour is the town of Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire, arguably the loveliest of the Cotswold towns and many people choose to stay an extra night in Chipping Campden before starting the walk. A two hour train journey from London to Moreton-in-the-Marsh and 6 mile taxi or bus bring you easily to the start of your holiday.

Chipping Campden to Stanton—10 miles

Leaving the honey coloured architectural beauty of Chipping Campden behind you climb immediately onto the escarpment where Dover's Hill and then Broadway Tower reward with fine views. The tearooms of Broadway are a welcome diversion before heading back into the hills. The idyllic village of Stanton welcomes you at the end of the section.

Stanton to Winchcombe—8 miles

Tearing yourself away from the beauty of Stanton you soon reach the hamlet of Church Stanway. The ornate gatehouse of Stanway House distracts from the steep climb to Stumps Cross which follows. The Iron Age hill fort Beckbury Camp and medieval Hailes Abbey are both of interest before you reach the hustle and bustle of Winchcombe. Winchcombe was once an important Saxon settlement and it's folk museum and the gargoyles of the Church of St Peter are of interest.

Winchcombe to Dowdeswell—11 miles

The scenic and historically interesting six mile stretch to Cleve Hill. The magnificent Sudeley Castle is soon followed by a Roman Villa and Belas Knap, a huge Neolithic burial chamber. Cleeve Hill offers comfortable accommodation and refreshment but those continuing to Dowdeswell will enjoy a series of outstanding views from the Cotswold escarpment.

Dowdeswell to Birdlip—10 miles

A short sharp climb from Dowdeswell takes you back up onto the Wolds where the vistas continue to impress. The distinctive Devil's Chimney and ancient site of Crickley Hill are both fascinating. Birdlip village has a traditional country inn.

Birdlip to Painswick—9 miles

A predominantly woodland walk which delights at any time of year, but especially the spring when wild flowers abound. You pass Coopers Hill, the site of the famous annual cheese rolling festival, before arriving in the delightful Painswick. An elegant town which grew prosperous from the cloth trade.

Painswick to King's Stanley—8 miles

A sublime section of the Cotswold Way. Ancient woodlands, rural tranquillity and vast panoramas combine to deliver walking heaven. Stanley Mill on the edge of King's Stanley once employed 1000 people and is an early example of fireproof construction.

King's Stanley to Wotton-Under-Edge—14.5 miles

A series of short sharp ascents and descents, Neolithic burial chambers and Iron Age hill forts quickly eat up the six and a half miles to Dursley. Climbing steeply back to the scarp edge Tyndale Monument is the main point of interest before reaching Wotton-Under-Edge. A lovely stop which blends old and new.

Wotton-Under-Edge to Tormarton—15 miles

The first eight miles through valleys to Hawkesbury Upton is filled with mills and streams which serve as reminders of the woollen trade which was once so important. Leaving the escarpment behind at Hawkesbury Upton the rural isolation, small villages and tranquillity of the walk to Tormarton are to be recommended.

Tormarton to Bath—17 Miles

Numerous pleasures await on the final section of the Cotswold Way. The spectacular Dyrham Park, wonderful vistas and the architectural delights of Bath make for an unforgettable finale to your Cotswold Way walk.

The final destination for the tour is the city of Bath, a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of England's most popular destinations. After spending a day here (it is recommended to add an extra night in Bath to make sure you have enough time exploring this great city.) A fast and frequent train service can return you to London in 1.5 hours.

Details

Getting there

A two-hour train journey from London will take you to Moreton-in-the-Marsh, only five minutes' drive to Chipping Campden. Public transport also available.

Price includes

Price quoted is for a 7 day / 8 night walk and is per person based on 2 people sharing.

Accommodation, door to door baggage transfer, detailed info pack, guide book and map for the group leader, emergency telephone support

When is best

The summer months, particularly August and September, tend to be good months for walking trips

Available

Mar—Oct

Typical Duration

6 days

Comfort level

Reasonably comfortable (Inns, B&Bs, luxury camping etc.)

Experience required

A reasonable level of fitness and interest is all that is needed