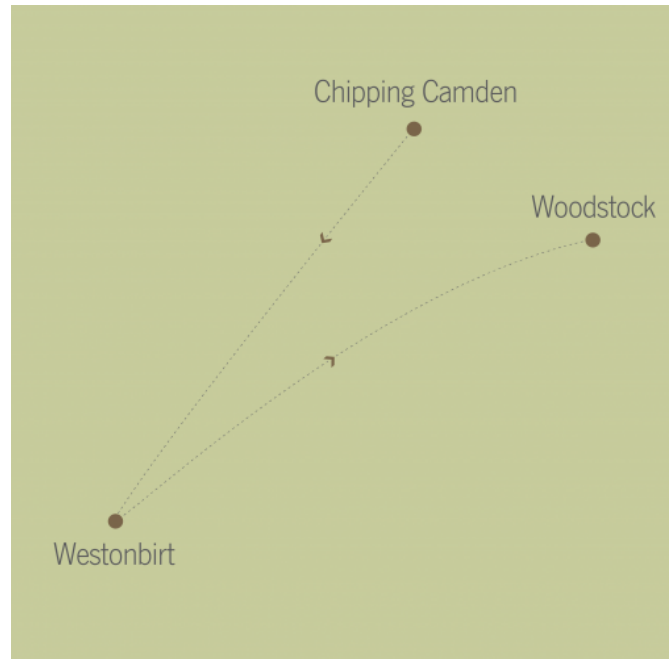


England: Bath & the Cotswolds

Tour-Only Itinerary

Journey through a fairy-tale landscape of verdant hills, wooded glens, and charming villages on a delightful Cotswolds walking tour. Follow the famous Cotswold Way and Monarch's Way, and tour pretty villages, feeling century-old stones beneath your feet. In Bath, soak in the city's historic ambiance much as the ancient Romans soaked in the well-preserved ruins that give the town its name. Visit a local vineyard and learn about the success of growing Siegerrebe grapes from the farm's owner and vintner as you sample the crisp white wine produced in his limestone-rich soil. Picnic lunches in the open air and regional specialties at pubs and restaurants fuel your travels, while at the end of each day you'll relax at comfortable accommodations with modern amenities. This walking tour of the Cotswolds is a pleasant adventure through idyllic countryside, historic villages, and tranquil forests.



Highlights

- Stroll the footpaths of Hidcote Gardens, one of England's most influential Arts and Crafts gardens
- Marvel at breathtaking vistas along the famed Cotswold Way and Monarch's Way, traversing bucolic pastureland dotted with sheep and small wooded glens
- Explore the fine 16th-century stone buildings of the village of Broadway, the "Jewel of the Cotswolds"
- Tour the gardens of the grand, Jacobean-style Stanway House – home to the tallest gravity fountain in the world, with a 300-foot-tall fountain jet
- Walk into 17th-century market towns, where wool, yarn, and farm produce were traded and sold for centuries

- Pass Highgrove House, the family residence of Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall
- Explore the UNESCO World Heritage city of Bath, with its stunningly well-preserved Roman bathhouses and grand Georgian architecture
- Visit Blenheim Palace, birthplace of Winston Churchill and home to 2,000 acres of magnificently landscaped grounds

On all Flex-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Opportunities to break away from the group and explore on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 20 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious multi-course meals—a majority are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Flex-Guided Walking Adventures, rated easy to moderate with an average of 3.5 to 7 miles of walking daily. The walks feature a combination of paved roads and easy terrain, mixed with

moderate hills, moorland, and uneven footpaths. Due to England's climate, the footpaths can often be wet and muddy. Several stiles, usually a series of steps for crossing a fence or wall, constructed so as to allow humans but not livestock to pass, are encountered on the routes. Ideal for enthusiastic beginners and experienced walkers. Several of the walks require a transfer from your hotel to the start of the walk or from the end of the walk back to the hotel. Our guides often use this time in the van for our morning route review, so we can enjoy a more leisurely morning at breakfast. As one of our Flex-Guided tours, some days offer options for self-exploration, cultural visits, or free time to relax on your own.

DAY 1

Join your *England: Bath & the Cotswolds* tour

Hidcote Gardens to Chipping Campden; 3.5 miles, easy. Optional afternoon loop walk; 2.5 miles, easy to moderate

Meet your guide(s) at 9:30 a.m. in the lobby of the designated meeting point hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon, The Arden Hotel. Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for walking.

Upon arrival at Hidcote Gardens, one of England's most influential Arts and Crafts gardens, there'll be time to explore its hedge-lined pathways that lead to pretty topiaries and rare trees. Created by the talented American horticulturist Major Lawrence Johnston, the colorful and intricately designed outdoor "rooms" are always full of surprises.

After a picnic lunch, you'll set off on your walk along the Monarch's Way footpath toward Chipping Campden. We will only follow a fraction of this historic 615-mile footpath. On your way, you'll enter into the chocolate-box Cotswold hamlet of Hidcote Bartrim. These traditional thatched-roof stone cottages were once home to Johnston's gardeners. Admire them as you pass through and continue into the open Cotswolds countryside. Later, arrive in the small market town of Chipping Campden (*chipping* is a derivation of "market" in Old English). Enter into town on High Street, lined with limestone buildings the color of honey. The stone of these masterful structures—an oolitic limestone called Cotswold stone—was quarried locally. At the town center, admire the Market Hall with its splendid arches, built in 1627 by Sir Baptist Hicks to provide shelter for local farmers selling cheese, butter, and poultry.

Check in to the Noel Arms Hotel, one of the Cotswolds' oldest inns. Charles II is thought to have stayed

here during the English Civil War in the mid-1600s. Once settled, you may wish to continue with a circular walk to the small pretty village of Broad Campden.

Tonight, enjoy a welcome dinner in the hotel's restaurant.

Accommodation: Noel Arms Hotel

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2

Walk to Broadway Tower. Broadway

6 miles, easy to moderate

After breakfast, step onto the Cotswold Way, a 102-mile UK National Trail that links Chipping Campden and the city of Bath. Your tranquil route, first envisioned by England's Ramblers, the largest walking group in Great Britain, passes quaint houses as it makes its way into the countryside and up the Cotswold Edge escarpment to Dovers Hill. Here, enjoy the extensive views west to the Malvern Hills. Around 1612, Robert Dover instituted annual games here, giving them the grand title of the "Olimpick Games," and they continue to this day.

Your walk continues through bucolic pastureland dotted with sheep, through small wooded glens, into a lateral valley, and up a gentle slope to Broadway Tower. Built in 1799, it is a typical example of an 18th-century Gothic folly, a structure built by the nobility simply for pleasure. This one was erected for Lady Coventry of Worcester, who wondered whether a torch lit here upon a tower could be seen from her home 22 miles away. (It turns out that it could, much to her delight.) Today, at 1,024 feet above sea level, Broadway Tower still offers an extensive view across the Worcestershire countryside. Take time to ponder the folly of Lady Coventry during a cream tea break in a converted barn nearby.

After, continue downhill to the village of Broadway, often referred to as the "Jewel of the Cotswolds" for its fine 16th-century buildings made from the local stone. High Street is particularly inviting with its many shops, cafés, and other amenities. There'll be time for you to enjoy lunch on your own and explore the village before shuttling back to your hotel.

Dinner is on your own tonight. Chipping Campden has several options for a fine meal.

Accommodation: Noel Arms Hotel

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3

Walk from Buckland to Stanway House

Buckland to Stanway House; 3 miles, easy. Optional afternoon walks of 2.5 and 1.5 miles, easy to moderate

A 20-minute morning shuttle delivers you to the small rural village of Buckland, starting point for today's ramble. You traverse open country to the hamlet of Laverton, where a cluster of stone cottages evokes more of rural Old England. Later, arrive in Stanton, an idyllic village little changed in 300 years. Walk past 16th- and 17th-century houses built in typical Cotswolds style with steeply pitched gables, mullioned windows, and glowing honey-colored limestone. Stanton takes its name from the stan (or stone) from which it is built.

Upon arrival, visit the grand Stanway House, an outstandingly beautiful example of a Jacobean manor house. Owned by Tewkesbury Abbey for 800 years, it changed hands to the Tracy family for 500 years and is still the home of their descendants, the Earls of Wemyss and March. Enjoy a private guided tour of the house, with time to explore the gardens. The centerpiece of the beautifully manicured grounds is the Stanway Fountain, a piercing 300-foot single jet, the highest in Britain and the tallest gravity fountain in the world. Savor a ploughman's lunch of local produce on the outdoor terrace before getting underway.

Consider an optional visit a to local vineyard this afternoon and learn about the success of growing Siegerrebe grapes from the farm's owner and vintner as you sample the crisp white wine produced in his limestone-rich soil. Stroll back to hotel directly or opt for a longer route through the nearby village of Broad Campden where you will have the opportunity to pick up on the local flavor by visiting a classic English pub.

Dinner is on your own tonight.

Accommodation: Noel Arms Hotel

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4

Walk from Stow-on-the-Wold, Lower Slaughter, to Bourton-on-the-Water

5.5 miles, easy to moderate

After breakfast today, check out of the hotel and shuttle to Stow-on-the-Wold, a small market town in Gloucestershire. Founded by Normans where two busy trade routes converged, this pretty town is situated on an 800-foot hill. This was a major center of the Cotswold wool industry. Enormous annual fairs attracted farmers from all reaches with as many as 20,000 sheep to sell. Today's walk starts in the Market Square, flanked by an ancient cross on one end and the town stocks on the other. You will walk in the footsteps of the 21-year-old King Charles II who, in 1651, was defeated in the Battle of Worcester and hotly pursued by Parliamentary troops down the aptly named Monarch's Way. Rejoin this footpath that you left behind a couple of days ago.

Descend from the escarpment through timeless pastureland. This is the Cotswolds of dreams, wide green fields edged with limestone walls and dotted with sheep. Later, arrive in the idyllic small village of Lower Slaughter straddling the River Eye. The town's name is derived from the Old English word *slothre*, meaning "muddy place." Admire the charming stone bridges spanning the river and the 16th- and 17th-century yellow limestone cottages built in the traditional Cotswolds style. Leave this charming hamlet and continue through a small wooded area, before traversing more pastures down to the Windrush River, which leads you into Bourton-on-the-Water. This pretty village is known as the "Venice of the Cotswolds" for the bridges that span its river.

There'll be time here for lunch and to explore the village and its many craft shops before shuttling approximate 50 minutes to your home for the next three nights, the Hare & Hounds at Westonbirt, near Tetbury.

Dinner is at the hotel tonight.

Accommodation: The Hare & Hounds Hotel

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5

Circular walk to Tetbury

7 miles, easy

After breakfast, stroll directly from the hotel along a meandering trail through tree-dotted pastureland. Your route traverses the tree-lined Highgrove House, the family residence of Prince Charles and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall. Gatcombe Park, home of Charles' sister Princess Anne, is also nearby. Shortly afterwards, walk into Tetbury, developed on the site of an ancient hill fort. Tetta's Monastery was first mentioned in a charter by King Ethelred of Mercia in 681. In medieval days, Tetbury was an important market town for the Cotswolds wool and yarn trade. The town center is still dominated by the splendid pillared Market House, built in 1655. Many of the wool merchant houses look exactly as they did 300 years ago.

During your free time in Tetbury, visit one of its inviting cafés, its lovely church, or the Highgrove shop which sells produce from the gardens of the Highgrove estate. The town is also locally famous for its antique shops. You're sure to find a pleasing spot for lunch on your own.

The walking trail circles back, to Westonbirt House. Dating back to the end of the 19th century, it's now a prestigious girls' boarding school with beautiful gardens and not often open to the public. Stop here just before arriving back at your hotel for a private guided tour.

After time to relax back at the hotel, dinner is on your own. You may wish to eat in the hotel's restaurant or return to Tetbury by taxi.

Accommodation: The Hare & Hounds Hotel

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6

Bath

7 miles, easy to moderate

After breakfast, board your shuttle to Bath (approximately 50 minutes), which has been attracting travelers for some 2,000 years. This UNESCO World Heritage site is home to some of England's grandest

Georgian architecture, as well as one of the world's best-preserved Roman bathhouses.

Today's walk starts just outside Bath and follows the final leg of the Cotswold Way, the path you followed to Broadway a few days ago. Begin by traversing Lansdown Hill, site of the bloody Battle of Lansdown during the English Civil War. From here, you will cross a plateau, passing the promontory Iron Age hill fort at Little Down and the famous Bath Horse Racecourse. Shortly afterwards, you will have your first views of Bath in the valley below. Walk through some fertile farmland before you emerge into the more suburban environs of Weston. As your walk draws to a close, you will have glimpses of finely landscaped parks and grand Regency architecture, including the famous Royal Crescent, 30 terraced houses forming a sweeping crescent, designed by John Wood the Younger in 1767. Conclude your walk at Bath Abbey, where a round carved stone set into the pavement outside the ornate west doors marks the end of the Cotswold Way.

You will have free time to explore Bath and have lunch on your own before returning to the hotel. This evening, recount your memorable journey over a festive farewell dinner.

Accommodation: The Hare & Hounds Hotel

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7

Transfer to Woodstock. Your *England: Bath & the Cotswolds* tour concludes

Your tour ends at your Woodstock, England hotel today. Kemble is the nearest train station to the Hare & Hounds Hotel, around seven miles away, with non-stop service to Paddington Station, London. The hotel will help arrange a taxi to the station.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓
11 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 3 dinners	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Emergency travel assistance hotline available 24/7	✓