



Cotswolds - Classic

The rolling Cotswold countryside, a glorious patchwork of meadows, fields and woods divided by hedgerows and dry stone walls, has come to epitomise all that is good about traditional England for many people. Countless delightful little villages nestle amongst these green hills, their honey coloured stone cottages, churches and manors merging harmoniously into the landscape.

Peaceful winding lanes lead you through this pastoral scene to many well known villages such as Chipping Camden, Stow-on-the-Wold and the Slaughters, as well as visiting country houses, gardens, farm parks and fascinating museums.

This tour offers an interesting and relaxing experience in the countryside with the reassurance that you are never more than a few miles from the next delightful village.

Main centres:
Cheltenham, Moreton-in-Marsh and
Bourton-on-the-Water

Duration:
6 - 10 night tours available.

Day 1 - After arriving in Cheltenham you can settle into your hotel. If you feel like stretching your legs you can explore this elegant Regency spa town, visiting the many parks and gardens and taking in the fine architecture and shops.

Day 2 - Cheltenham to Moreton in Marsh. Begins with a short transfer from Cheltenham up onto the Cotswolds and continues with nice rolling countryside. Ride through the little ford at Sevenhampton then past great views and through hidden valleys to the picture postcard village of Snowhill. Here the manor houses host a wonderful collection of old objects from traditional farm implements to Samurai armour. Visit the traditional farm breeds at the Cotswold Farm Park, pass the exotic Indian architecture of Sezincote House then freewheel down to Moreton where the wide street is lined with traditional stone buildings and still holds a colourful market every Tuesday.

Day 3 - Circuit from Moreton. Some spectacular views today as you ride to the northern edge of the Cotswolds. Explore one of the areas most historic villages, Chipping Campden, and stroll around the glorious gardens at Hidcote Manor or Kiftsgate Court before enjoying lunch in one of the charming pubs in Ilmington. Shipston on Stour was one of the area's wool markets but the brick built inns and merchant's houses tell of its development as a Georgian coaching town.

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Day 4 - Moreton to Bourton-on-the-Water. A gentle ride along the valley of the River Evenlode. Peaceful lanes wind through quiet villages and lead to wide views across the Oxfordshire countryside. The market town of Stow-on-the-Wold is clustered around a square that once saw up to 20,000 sheep a day. The beautiful villages of Upper and Lower Slaughter offer a wealth of delightful scenes which contrasts with the bustle of Bourton, the area's best known village. With a wide variety of attractions from tropical birds to an eccentric Motor Museum, a perfumery and even a perfect scale model of the village, Bourton has something for everyone.

Day 5 - Circuit from Bourton. Today's ride follows the meandering River Windrush east past lush green water meadows full of wild flowers through Asthall to the little town of Burford. The magnificent high street rises from the river bank and bears witness to the fine building stone and skilled masons for which this area was renowned in the 17th and 18th centuries. Return along the opposite bank of the river through the delightful villages of Little Barrington, Windrush and Sherborne.

Day 6 - Bourton to Cirencester. This ride takes you to Northleach. This is a handsome old market town with a museum covering a nostalgic journey through mechanical music of the last hundred years along with a fine example of the Cotswold wool church and some nice tea rooms. You continue on through Ablingdon and onto Bibury, the village that the 19th century writer and craftsman William Morris called the most beautiful in England. Its most famous feature is Arlington Row, a group of old weavers cottages over the river. Then onto Cirencester, ancient capital of the south west.

It lay at the junction of three major roads, and as a garrison town became a sophisticated cultural centre with villas, temples and an amphitheatre. The full story can be seen at the excellent Corinium Museum. The town also has a splendid parish church, the largest of the Cotswold 'wool' churches, and a lovely selection of quiet walks in the Abbey grounds and Cirencester Park.

Day 7 - Circuit from Cirencester. Cycle out through Daglingworth. Much of this pretty village is owned by Prince Charles as part of the Duchy of Cornwall. The Church of the Holy Rood, at the end of a lane to the left, has some remarkable Saxon features with some of the characteristic 'long and short' building styles at the corners. Inside are four Saxon stone panels from around 1050 which are set into the walls. Continue on through one of the few surviving 'water lanes' where the stoney stream bed was found to be the best available passage for a horse and cart. If you are feeling brave try riding through but it is safer to walk your bikes along the path at the side. Before returning to Cirencester stop to see the grass covered remains of the Roman Amphitheatre. This site lay to the south west of Corinium, just outside the town walls, and may have started as a quarry during the first century. Stone retaining walls supported the earth banks on which tiers of wooden benches could have seated up to 7,000 people. It is thought that they would have come here to see rather crude entertainments such as bear and bull baiting hence its other name of the Bull Ring. From the top of mounds you get a good view across the town between Cirencester Park to the north-west and the Abbey estate on the north-east.

Continued overleaf...



Day 8 - Cirencester to Cheltenham. Follow one of the ancient ridge ways that has followed the high ground away from the dangers of dense forest and marshland since prehistoric times. It was adopted by the Romans to provide access between Corinium and the group of villas around Withington and Chedworth. Carry on through the pretty villages of Shipton and Whittington before descending Ham Hill into Cheltenham.

Day 9 - Circuit from Cheltenham to Stanton & Stanway. Ride along the bottom of the hills to Stanton, often called the perfect Cotswold village. Nearby Stanway is dominated by one of the most romantic manor houses in the country with its attendant church and tithe barn. Winchcombe was an important Saxon borough then became a centre of pilgrimage until Henry VIII had the monasteries destroyed. Sudeley Castle was ruined in the Civil Wars then restored in the 19th century as a country house with wonderful gardens. The wide views from the top of Cleeve Hill take in the Malverns, the Forest of Dean and, on a clear day, the mountains of mid-Wales.

Day 10 - Circuit from Cheltenham to Crickley Hill & Chedworth Roman Villa. Along country roads and very small lanes with some quiet town roads. The ride takes you to see the Iron Age fort at Crickley Hill, it is one of the major archaeological sites in the country with a visitor centre and some great views. The route continues through Withington with its picturesque riverside pub and then on to Chedworth Roman Villa. The Romans were very good at finding beautiful locations for their country houses and the villa at Chedworth is no exception. It is the most complete villa that can be seen in Britain with mosaic floors, bath houses and the heating system all on display in their original settings. There is also a collection of artefacts in the museum and a visitor centre that sets everything in context.

Day 11 - Depart.

The above itinerary is for the 11 day, 10 night tour.

The 10 day, 9 night tour misses day 9.

The 9 day, 8 night tour misses days 6, 7 and 8.

The 8 day, 7 night tour misses days 6, 7, 8 and 9.

The 7 day 6 night tour misses days 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

If day 6 is missed in the above it is replaced by:

Day 6 - Bourton to Cheltenham.

Ride to Northleach, a handsome wool town with an excellent museum and large 15th Century wool church. Continue past the Roman Villa set in beautiful woodland at Chedworth, where the mosaic floors and heating system can still be seen, then visit Withington's delightful inn before your final whizz down Ham Hill back to Cheltenham.

Prices

10 nights

B&B Price: £857.00

Hotel Price: £1004.00

9 nights

B&B Price: £787.00

Hotel Price: £934.00 (misses day 9)

8 nights

B&B Price: £717.00

Hotel Price: £864.00 (misses days 6, 7 and 8)

7 nights

B&B Price: £665.00

Hotel Price: £729.00 (misses days 6,7,8 and 9)

6 nights

B&B Price: £595.00

Hotel Price: £651.00 (misses days 6,7,8,9 and 10)

Local Attractions:

- Batsford Arboretum
- Broadway Tower
- Burford
- Chedworth Roman Villa
- Cotswold Farm Park
- Cotswold Falconry
- Cotswold Heritage Centre
- Hidcote Manor Gardens
- Kiftsgate Court
- Mechanical Music Museum
- Old Mill Museum
- Sezincote Manor
- Snowhill village and Manor.

Ride info:

18-31 miles a day, moderate.