

## England: Bath & the Cotswolds

### Bike Vacation + Air Package

There's no need to hurry through England's Cotswolds—this well-paced cycling vacation gives you plenty of time to savor the journey. From the moment you meet your local trip leaders, you'll feel right at home in this bucolic countryside of rose gardens, thatched-roof cottages, and green meadows dotted with white lambs. Spin past quaint market towns—perhaps pausing to quaff a pint of ale in an authentic British pub. Explore 12th century colleges in Oxford and visit Blenheim Palace—the birthplace of Winston Churchill. Come home to hotels dripping with Cotswolds charm—including a 15th-century weaver's cottage in Burford—and a 16th-century manor house in Moreton-on-Marsh.

### Cultural Highlights

- Enter the world of *Downton Abbey* in Bampton, its stand-in on the beloved PBS series.
- Explore the gardens and staterooms of Blenheim Palace, birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill and a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- Cycle through a classic English countryside of sheep-dotted pastures, woodlands, market towns, tiny hamlets, and thatched-cottage villages.
- Experience the charms of Bourton-on-the-Water, called the “Venice of the Cotswolds” for its graceful arched stone bridges.
- Probe the region's Roman heritage on a 2,000-year-old cycling route and end at the ancient ruins in Bath.

### What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills, mainly on quiet country roads. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who need assistance with the hills. Ideal for enthusiastic beginners to experienced cyclists.

**Tour Duration:** 9 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 10-42 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 1-5 hours

**Group size:** 14-20 max

### Climate Information

**Average High/Low Temperature (°F)**

May 61°/46°, June 64°/52°, July 68°/55°, August 68°/55°, September 63°/52°, October 55°/46°

**Average Rainfall (in.)**

May 1.7, June 1.7, July 1.5, August 1.6, September 1.8, October 2.3

## FLIGHT DAY: Depart for Your Vacation

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

## ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in London / Pre-Tour Hotel Night: Oxford

A VBT representative will greet you at London Heathrow Airport to start your adventure off right. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel in Oxford. From here, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

## DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Bampton to Burford

There will be time to relax or explore Oxford after an included breakfast this morning. After checking out, you may store your luggage at the hotel's reception desk, as you will not depart Oxford until after lunch. Please plan to enjoy lunch or a snack on your own before meeting your VBT representative, as the next scheduled meal is dinner.

Meet your VBT representative in the hotel lobby at 1:00 p.m. Please be dressed and ready to start cycling.

A short shuttle takes you to the village of Bampton, the starting point of your cycling adventure. After a safety and bike-fitting session, enjoy a scenic ride through the countryside. Bampton may look familiar to Downton Abbey fans—it served as the setting for the fictional Yorkshire village of Downton in the beloved PBS series. Continue cycling through peaceful hamlets and tree-lined fields to Burford, your home for the next two nights.

This evening, gather for a welcome dinner in the hotel's restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Bampton to Burford — 19 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

Cycle along mostly flat, quiet country lanes, with a gentle incline into Burford.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 km (12 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 2: Windrush Valley / Blenheim Palace**

Cycle through the breathtaking Windrush Valley today, crossing the river and traversing the rolling hills of the Cotswolds. Ride through the sylvan Wychwood Forest to the village of Leafield and the charming market town of Charlbury. The highlight of the day is your visit to Blenheim Palace, the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill and a UNESCO World Heritage site. This 2,000-acre (809-hectare) estate features beautifully manicured grounds designed by one of England's—and history's—great landscape architects, Capability Brown.

All pathways lead to the resplendent palace, where you'll have free time for lunch and an included visit to the state rooms and the Churchill exhibition. You may also enjoy a leisurely stroll through the expansive grounds. After your visit, ride or shuttle back to Burford.

Dinner is on your own this evening. Burford offers several excellent options for a fine meal.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Burford to Charlbury — 16 km (10 miles) OR Burford to Blenheim Palace — 34 km (22 miles)

Afternoon: Blenheim Palace to Burford — 32 km (21 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's route is more undulating than yesterday's but still follows quiet country lanes. As you cycle through the picturesque Windrush Valley, take in views of dry-stone walls, open pastures, and cultivated fields along the roadside. Ride past the great woodlands of Wychwood Forest before coasting into the small market town of Charlbury. Continue on to the breathtaking Blenheim Palace—the midpoint of the day—and enjoy its impeccably designed landscape as you explore the estate's grounds and state rooms.

The afternoon route departs Blenheim and follows scenic lanes to the thatched-cottage village of Minster Lovell, then continues along the Windrush Valley back to Burford.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 – 66 km (10 – 43 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 3: Bourton-on-the-Water / Lower Slaughter / Moreton-in-Marsh**

More of the stunning Windrush Valley unfolds before you today—a picture-perfect canvas of the Cotswolds. By day's end, you'll understand why our trip leaders affectionately call this peaceful region "Happy Valley." The Windrush takes its name from the way the river winds through the rushes—tall grasses that line its banks. Enjoy a scenic spin through the historic Sherborne Estate, home to England's only remaining 17th-century deer course, created for sport by one John "Crump" Dutton.

Your route continues to one of the Cotswolds' treasures: Bourton-on-the-Water. Often called the "Venice of the Cotswolds" for the graceful stone bridges that arch over the River Windrush, this charming village invites exploration. There'll be time to wander, enjoy lunch on your own, or indulge in a classic cream tea.

Later, cycle to the old mill town of Lower Slaughter. Its handsome sandstone manor houses and churches recall a stately era of lords and ladies. It is pure pleasure to take a slow pedal through these quintessential English villages. From here, you may shuttle to your next hotel in Moreton-in-Marsh or opt for a longer ride through more breathtaking countryside, perhaps visiting the renowned Daylesford Organic—one of the UK's most sustainable organic working farms. This evening, share the day's discoveries over dinner at the hotel.

### **Today's Ride Choices**

Morning: Burford to Bourton-on-the-Water — 27 km (17 miles)

Afternoon: Bourton-on-the-Water to Moreton-in-Marsh — 27 km (17 miles)

### **What to Expect:**

The route begins along the Windrush Valley, passing through the small hamlets of Little Barrington and Windrush. The day's main climb leads up to Clapton-on-the-Hill, followed by a lovely downhill coast into

Bourton-on-the-Water. Park your bike and enjoy a stroll through this picturesque town, known for its many stone bridges and charming shops. Continue through rolling countryside to the scenic village of Lower Slaughter. The longer route option extends to the hamlets of Lower Swell and Upper Swell, passing through tranquil pastures dotted with sheep.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 – 54 km (17 – 34 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 4: Chipping Campden / Hidcote Gardens / Broadway Tower**

After breakfast, set out into the magnificent hedge- and tree-lined country lanes of the North Cotswolds. Gentle hills surround you as you make your way to the small market town of Chipping Campden, home to the Cotswold “Olimpicks” and honey-hued limestone buildings. Browse its Market Hall and central High Street before continuing your ride to Hidcote Gardens—one of England’s most influential Arts and Crafts gardens—featuring colorful and intricately designed outdoor “rooms” full of surprises.

Afterward, you may ride or shuttle up to Broadway Tower, a Gothic folly built by Lady Coventry of Worcester purely for pleasure. At 1,204 feet (367 meters) above sea level, it offers extensive views—stretching across 16 counties and all the way to Wales on a clear day.

Inspired by this beguiling canvas, continue riding through the lavender fields of Snowhill and on to the tiny hamlet of Kington for lunch at a local pub. Formerly owned by Corpus Christi College, The Halfway Inn is known for its quintessential pub fare, welcoming atmosphere, and friendly pub dogs. After lunch, you may choose to ride or shuttle back to the hotel.

This evening is free for you to explore Moreton-in-Marsh and enjoy dinner at a restaurant of your choice.

### **Today's Ride Choices**

Morning: Moreton-in-Marsh to Hidcote Gardens — 19 km (12 miles) OR Moreton-in-Marsh to Kington — 41 km (26 miles)

Afternoon: Kington to Moreton-in-Marsh — 22 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride features gently undulating terrain along scenic, tree- and hedge-lined country lanes through charming hamlets. Enjoy time in Chipping Campden, then ride uphill to Hidcote Gardens. From there, opt to shuttle or cycle a steady 5.5-mile climb to Broadway Tower for panoramic views. Afterward, enjoy a long descent through the countryside to Kington for lunch at a local pub. Return to the hotel via shuttle or an additional ride along rolling lanes.

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 – 63 km (12 – 40 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 5: Cycle the Southern Cotswolds to Bath

Shuttle this morning for about an hour through the stunning English countryside to the small hamlet of Westonbirt. From here, cycle along the Fosse Way, a 2,000-year-old Roman road linking Exeter and Lincoln. Remarkable for its ancient engineering, the route never veers more than six miles (10 km) from a straight line over its full length of 182 miles (293 km). You'll ride just a fraction of this historic pathway before leaving it to follow a scenic road into the heart of Bath, the elegant Georgian jewel of England. Your approach to the city traces the 200-year-old Kennet and Avon Canal, lined with beautifully painted narrowboats.

Rendezvous with your trip leaders at the Holburne Museum. The remainder of the day is free to enjoy lunch and explore the many sights of this beautiful city, including the Roman Baths, the Royal Crescent, the King's Circus, Jane Austen's House, and Bath Abbey. Bath also offers an array of boutique shops and the perfect setting to join locals for a traditional English afternoon tea. Spend the afternoon continuing your discoveries or relaxing as you reflect on your week. This evening, gather with fellow travelers for a festive farewell dinner.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Westonbirt to Bath — 34 km (21 miles)

### What to Expect:

Today's route is relatively flat, with just three short uphill sections and a long downhill leading to the canal. The Fosse Way is remarkably straight, offering a steady ride along quiet lanes through beautiful countryside—less sedate in feel than the northern Cotswolds, but equally scenic. Upon reaching the canal,

you follow a car-free towpath of compact gravel, passing through one of its tunnels before arriving at the Holburne Museum. In keeping with local etiquette, please walk your bike through Sydney Gardens to the museum.

Cumulative Distance Range: 34 km (21 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 6: Bath Tunnels and Canals / Your VBT Vacation Ends / Post-Tour Hotel Night: Bath**

This morning's ride—your final ride of the tour—leads out of Bath along the Two Tunnels cycle route, following the lush river valley. Later, you rejoin the Kennet and Avon Canal, crossing the magnificent Dundas Aqueduct, built in 1800 to span the valley.

The canal path leads back into the city, where you'll bid farewell to your trip leaders and fellow travelers around lunchtime, at approximately 12:00 p.m. Afterward, feel free to continue exploring at your own pace, using our provided city information to guide your discoveries. Lunch and dinner are on your own today—our city guide includes plenty of great suggestions for local cafés, pubs, and restaurants to help you make the most of your time in Bath.

### **Today's Ride Choices**

Morning: Bath Tunnels and Canals — 21 km (13 miles)

### **What to Expect:**

The beginning of today's ride features the Two Tunnels cycle route out of Bath. A moderate climb leads up to the Tucking Mill viaduct before returning to the canal for gentle riding along the car-free trail system back into Bath. Enjoy the tranquility of this scenic region on your final cycling day. Again, please follow local etiquette and walk your bike through Sydney Gardens to the museum on your return to Bath.

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 km (13 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## DEPARTURE DAY: Departure

After an included breakfast, check out of the hotel and travel approximately two hours to London Heathrow Airport for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

### voco Oxford Spires Hotel (Arrival Day)

With its lovely location beside the Thames River and amid a lovely parkland, the voco Oxford Spires Hotel is a comfortable haven from which to explore the City of Spires. Cotswolds stone and plush yet elegant interiors combine throughout to create a truly welcoming space of understated luxury. Modern amenities mingle seamlessly with traditional touches in this air-conditioned hotel. Deacon's Restaurant promises fine cuisine prepared with ingredients sourced from the Oxfordshire countryside, while the bar and lounge—and an outdoor terrace—offer a casual atmosphere for relaxing over a drink or a spot of tea. Each comfortable room is accented with a warmth and décor inspired by the English countryside.

### The Lamb Inn (Days 1-2)

Situated on a tranquil side street in the historic market town of Burford, the Lamb Inn is a quiet retreat that evokes the charms of English country life. The 15th-century former weaver's cottage is steeped in the history of the wool-trading market town of Burford. Today, its warm touches—from an open log fire and a majestic grandfather clock to inviting sitting areas—offer a soothing welcome after a day of exploring the Cotswolds. And the restaurant, outdoor terrace, and cozy bar provide options for delicious dining. Please note that the Lamb Inn is not air conditioned.

### The Manor House Hotel (Days 3-4)

On the main street of Moreton-in-Marsh sits the Manor House Hotel, a 16th-century golden-stone manor converted into a classic country-house luxury hotel. Bedrooms are un-air conditioned and stylishly decorated with modern furnishings and warm colors, and feature views of the surrounding town and countryside. Common rooms include a library, inviting sofas, and striking artwork. A terrace on the ground floor opens onto a tranquil garden with herbaceous borders, pathways, and a 300-year-old

mulberry tree. Moreton-in-Marsh has been a market town since the 1200s and a travelers' stop for 1,700 years; its main street has many 18th-century inns and houses. Please note: this accommodation is available on limited departures.

### **The Bird Hotel (Days 5-6)**

The Bird Hotel is a unique, independently owned boutique hotel refurbished from a Victorian villa. With 29 individually-designed rooms – many offering views over the famous Recreation Ground, Bath Abbey, and beyond – The Bird is a gentle stroll from the heart of the city and hosts its own cosmopolitan restaurant featuring locally sourced, seasonal ingredients.