

England: Oxford & the Cotswolds

Bike Vacation Only

If you're looking for a self-guided biking tour of England's charming Cotswolds region, this unique VBT tour is the best (and only!) game in town. From the moment you meet your English VBT local host, you'll experience the confidence of 24/7 support with plenty of room to design your own pace of discovery. With our deep British roots, we've already done the research for you—finding top hotels and scenic cycling routes that showcase the charm of England's quaint villages. VBT's detailed route notes guide you towards the splendor of Blenheim Palace and show you how to tread in the footsteps of the Bard in Stratford-Upon-Avon—all while discovering top restaurants, adorable shops, and authentic local pubs along the way. Your well-maintained, fitted VBT bike—with puncture-resistance tires—ensures your adventure is comfortable, fun, and worry-free.

Cultural Highlights

- Cycle the rural country lanes of the Cotswolds into cottage-lined villages that have not changed for centuries.
- Indulge in traditional and modern English fare—full English breakfasts, afternoon teas, pub lunches, and farm-to-fork dining.
- Pedal past filming locations of numerous television series such as *Downton Abbey*, *Endeavour*, and *Inspector Morse*.

What to Expect

The England self-guided biking tour is rated easy to moderate. It offers a combination of easy terrain and moderate hills and is ideal for beginning and experienced cyclists. Rides are on designated bike routes that are quiet country roads with a small percentage of the total on dedicated bike paths. The traffic will be somewhat busier when entering and exiting larger towns. Routes on the England self-guided biking tour follow flat river valleys and then ascend to rolling hills. Please verify your bike selection for this tour as it is not always possible to change bikes once you arrive on tour. Travel with your friends and family—we can accommodate multiple guests on this self-guided vacation. Our 24/7 support system is available as needed.

Tour Duration: 5 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 12-27 miles

Average Cycling Time: 2-4 hours

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 72°/49°, June 79°/56°, July 79°/59°, August 81°/61°, September 75°/55°, October 63°/47°

Average Rainfall (in.)

May 2.8, June 2.5, July 1.5, August 2.6, September 2.2, October 2.7

DAY 1: VBT Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation begins / Moreton-in-Marsh Loop

We suggest arriving in England at least one day prior to the tour start date since your tour begins at 11:00 a.m. You will need to make your own travel arrangements to Moreton-in-Marsh. For details, refer to your VBT Vacation Preparation Handbook.

Meet your VBT Local host at 11:00 a.m., along with any other VBT guests arriving on the same day, for your Welcome Orientation in the lobby of the Redesdale Arms Hotel. Please be dressed and ready for cycling. Your Local host will be carrying a VBT sign.

Set out on your England self-guided biking tour into the bucolic landscape of the Cotswolds! Take your time and enjoy these vistas, the essence of rural England. Stop to explore a National Trust House, the Chastleton House, with over 400 years of history to see. Continue your England self-guided biking tour on more lovely roads to Daylesford, where an organic farm shop and café might tempt you into another break.

You will settle in the town of Moreton-in-Marsh in the North Cotswolds for two nights. There are ample dinner options for an evening on your own, either in town or at your hotel. If you plan to dine at the hotel's fine-dining establishment, making reservations upon your arrival is highly recommended.

Today's Ride Choices

Moreton-in-Marsh Loop — 18.9 miles

What to Expect:

Ride out of Moreton-in-Marsh with a possible stop at the Red Line in Little Compton (at 7 miles) and continue with a suggested stop at the Chastleton Trust House (at 8 miles). Continue to Daylesford, for perhaps a later lunch stop at Daylesford Farm Shop (at 12.5 miles). You loop back and then descend

gently into the center of the town of Moreton-in-Marsh.

DAY 2: Cycle to Chipping Campden to Hidcote Gardens to Moreton-in-Marsh / Stay Put Day

Today is a Stay Put Day brimming with possibilities. The route on your England self-guided biking tour leads you to some of the most charming roads and bike paths in the North Cotswolds. Begin with a scenic spin to the historic wool market town of Chipping Campden, home to the quirky “Cotswold Olimpicks,” an annual celebration of sport and mirth that features competitions such as tug of war, shin-kicking, and piano smashing. The hamlet is also celebrated for its Market Hall, built in 1627, its honey-hued limestone buildings, and its long tradition of arts and crafts. You’ll ride through Broad Campden, known for its topiaries filled with thatched cottages.

Then, continue to the village of Hidcote Bartrim and the landscaped Hidcote Gardens. Its series of outdoor “rooms” were designed by American horticulturalist Major Lawrence Johnston in the early 20th century and its pathways are lined with topiary, stone walls, and hornbeam. En route back to the hotel, it is worth stopping at the delightful Ebrington Arms, voted English Pub of the Year in 2018.

Today's Ride Choices

Moreton-in-Marsh to Hidcote Gardens Loop — 18.6 miles

What to Expect:

We suggest an early start in order to enjoy all day has to offer. Departing Moreton-in-Marsh, you will immediately cycle into a countryside of rolling pastures, copses, and charming villages. After ascending to Hidcote Gardens make your return trip through Ebrington, continuing your England self-guided biking tour to Aston Magna where you rejoin the morning route and make a final descent from Batsford to Moreton-in-Marsh.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: Moreton-in-Marsh to Bourton-on-the-Water to the Windrush Valley to Burford / Move on Day

You will depart Moreton-in-Marsh riding to Lower Slaughter with an old mill and river, and into the beguiling village of Bourton-on-the-Water. Known as the “Venice of the Cotswolds,” this pretty town spreads over a wide, flat vale and is graced by the River Windrush and its five quaint stone bridges, the oldest one dating back to 1654.

From there, you will ride an uphill route from Bourton-on-the-Water before coasting down into the Windrush Valley, known locally as “happy valley.” Your England self-guided biking tour traverses the grounds of Sherborne Estate, England’s only remaining 17th-century deer course and grandstand (where live deer were used as “incentives” for dog races) and leads to Burford. This former wool town boasts a medieval bridge and old stone houses with Tudor and Georgian facades. After settling in to your hotel, you’ll find options for dinner in town or at your inn. If you plan to dine at the hotel’s fine-dining establishment, reservations are highly recommended upon arrival.

Today's Ride Choices

Moreton-in-Marsh to Burford — 24 miles

What to Expect:

You depart Moreton-in-Marsh along High Street and are soon cycling little-trafficked country roads past pastureland and into one pretty village after another. A gradual descent leads into Bourton-on-the-Water, a good stopping point for a late lunch or snack. Your afternoon ride has one significant hill followed by an easy descent into Burford.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Cycle to Bibury to Burford / Stay Put Day

You will depart Burford on slightly rolling terrain to Bibury. This utterly charming village is best known for its Arlington Row, a cluster of slate-roofed stone cottages and gardens that have become a national symbol of England. This picturesque little district is so enchanting that Henry Ford had the audacious idea to ship the village in its entirety to the United States! From Bibury, your England self-guided biking tour will take you through other villages and hamlets, seemingly untouched by modern development.

Dinner options are available at the hotel or in town.

Today's Ride Choices

Burford to Bibury Loop — 26.8 miles

What to Expect:

Ride quiet rolling and bucolic rural terrain. Ride back along the Windrush Valley to Northleach, and head down Bibury (at 15.8 miles). Suggested lunch stop in Bibury at The Trout Farm and then return back to Burford.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Burford to Bampton to Oxford / VBT Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation ends

The final ride of your tour descends from Burford as you approach the Thames Valley with your end destination being in the south of the Cotswolds in Bampton. With many scenes of Downton Abbey being filmed here. Shuttle provided to the voco Oxford Spires Hotel.

Aside from London, Oxford is undoubtedly England's most recognizable city, famous the world over for its prestigious university, the oldest in the English-speaking world. Wander the network of cobbled lanes lined with noble buildings, some over 800 years old. Ascend St. Martin's Tower, also called "Carfax Tower," for sweeping views of the city's rooftops and soaring spires. Visit some of the college buildings, such as Christ Church College where you'll find the Tudor dining hall which provided inspiration for the Great Hall at Hogwarts in the Harry Potter films. A tour of Oxford's castle will open the door to stories dating back 1,000 years. For a taste of more recent history, browse the stalls of the historic Covered Market, open since 1774.

Refer to your England self-guided biking tour VBT Vacation Preparation Handbook for departure details. Depending upon your destination, it may not be possible to depart for the U.S. on the last day of the tour. Please check airline schedules carefully. If you plan to schedule return flights immediately following the tour's conclusion, please call your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

Today's Ride Choices

Burford to Bampton — 12.6 miles

What to Expect:

Riding out of Burford, you start with a short ascent, but then have a generally rolling ride, mainly descending through pastures and small villages on narrow lanes, as the route flattens out for about the last five miles to Bampton, where you ride past Saint Mary's church, the filming location for "the church scenes" in Downton Abbey.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Redesdale Arms Hotel (Days 1-2)

The award-winning Redesdale Arms is conveniently located on Moreton-in-Marsh's main High Street, lined with 18th-century buildings. This classic property is steeped in history, occupying a building that dates to 1650. Built from the region's famed honey-hued stone and hand-hewn oak beams, it exudes the authentic character of the Cotswolds. The on-site restaurant serves updated British and international fare in several dining rooms, on outdoor tables, and at the fireside bar. Individually decorated rooms are updated and modern. Please note that the Redesdale Arms is not air-conditioned.

The Highway Inn (Days 3-4)

Both contemporary and traditional, the Highway Inn is a warm and inviting boutique hotel of just eleven rooms. Located in the heart of Burford, this charming inn of stone and timber shows off its unique character and passion for local heritage. Its current owner is proud to oversee a property that has been a true Cotswold inn for more than 500 years. Savor local ales in the lounge and enjoy freshly prepared meals at the restaurant, where all ingredients are locally sourced. The beautiful, finely crafted fireplaces are all original to the 1480 building and a cozy courtyard provides the ideal hideaway to enjoy a glass of wine. Please note that the Highway Inn is not air-conditioned.