

## England: Bath & the Cotswolds

### Bike Vacation + Air Package

The charming Cotswolds of your imagination come to life before your eyes on this UK cycling holiday. You'll pedal along tranquil country lanes, viewing the woodlands, sheep-dotted pastures, and agricultural fields of the Windrush Valley, pausing to explore market towns, tiny hamlets, and thatched-cottage villages. Contrast these discoveries with visits to the splendid Hidcote Gardens, magnificent Blenheim Palace, and the Georgian jewel of Bath. You'll also touch the region's ancient roots as you cycle the 2,000-year-old Fosse Way, explore the Roman ruins of Bath. Lunch at a local pub, daily English breakfasts, and overnights at small country estates round out your authentic experience of this wonderful corner of England.

### Cultural Highlights

Enter the world of *Downton Abbey* in Bampton, its stand-in on the beloved PBS series.

Explore the gardens and state rooms 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.

Marvel at the artistry of Hidcote Gardens, one of England's most influential Arts and Crafts gardens.

Probe the region's Roman heritage on a 2,000-year-old cycling route and end at the ancient ruins in Bath.

Fuel up each morning with a hearty English breakfast.

### What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain mixed with moderate hills, mainly on quiet country roads.

Our VBT van support is always available for those who need assistance with the hills. Ideal for enthusiastic beginners to experienced cyclists.

**Tour Duration:** 10 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 10 - 42

**Average Cycling Time:** 01:00 - 04:15

### Climate Information

### **Average High/Low Temperature (°F)**

May 61°/46°, Jun 64°/52°, Jul 68°/55°, Aug 68°/55°, Sep 63°/52°, Oct 55°/46°

### **Average Rainfall (in.)**

May 1.7, Jun 1.7, Jul 1.5, Aug 1.6, Sep 1.8, Oct 2.3

## **DAY 1: Depart home / Fly overnight to London**

Depart home for England. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

## **DAY 2: Arrive in London**

Upon arrival at London Heathrow Airport, claim your luggage and clear customs. If your luggage is lost, fill out a PIR form before leaving the customs area—VBT representatives are not allowed in the customs area. Make certain your VBT luggage tags are affixed to your bag so your representative can identify you as you enter the arrival hall.

Once you have cleared customs, a VBT representative holding a VBT sign meets you and assists you with your transfer by taxi (of approximately one hour and 15 minutes) to your centrally located hotel in Oxford. The meeting location will depend on your arrival terminal:

Heathrow Terminal 2: Currency Exchange Kiosk (Travelex)

Heathrow Terminal 3: WHSmith Store, located on the right-hand side of the arrivals gate

Heathrow Terminal 4: Costa Coffee Shop

Heathrow Terminal 5: Costa Coffee Shop

If you are going to be delayed meeting our transfer representative for more than 15 minutes due to delayed or lost luggage, please let our transfer company know by calling Airport Pickups London +44 20 8688 7744. You may also contact Allianz Global Assistance to advise of your delay and they will contact our transfer service on your behalf. Our drivers are generally able to wait for up to 45 minutes from the time your flight lands, after which you would be responsible for your own transfer.

The rest of the day is free to explore this heralded university town and dine on your own, using the VBT City Information as your guide.

Please note: Your hotel room may not be available until 2:00 p.m. If you arrive early in the day, you may store your luggage with the reception desk.

Please note: VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you fly in before the scheduled program dates, transportation from the airport will be at your own expense.

Accommodation: voco Oxford Spires Hotel, Oxford

## DAY 3: Oxford / Burford

There'll be time to relax or explore Oxford after breakfast this morning. After checking out, you can store your luggage at the hotel's reception desk as you will not leave Oxford until after lunch. Plan to eat 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 ensure you are dressed ready to start cycling. You may change into your biking gear in the hotel's public restrooms.

Take a short support vehicle shuttle to the village of Bampton, the start of your cycling adventure. After a safety and bike-fitting session, enjoy a pleasant pedal through the countryside to Bampton. This charming village will seem familiar to *Downton Abbey* fans: it doubled as the fictional Yorkshire village of Downton in the beloved PBS series. Continue cycling through small hamlets and past tree-lined fields into Burford, your home for the next two nights.

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

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 km (12 miles)

*Afternoon*

Bampton to Burford: 19 km (12 miles)

What to Expect: Cycle along mainly flat quiet country lanes, with a gradual incline into Burford.

Accommodation: The Lamb Inn, Burford

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 4: Windrush Valley / Blenheim Palace

Cycle 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 centerpiece of the day is your visit to Blenheim Palace, birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill and a UNESCO World Heritage site. The 2,000-acre estate features beautifully manicured grounds laid out by one of England's—and history's—great landscape designers, Capability Brown. All pathways lead to the resplendent palace, where you have free time for lunch and an included visit of the state rooms and the Churchill exhibition. You may also enjoy a leisurely stroll around the grounds. After a

rewarding visit, ride or shuttle back to Burford.

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

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 – 67km (10 - 41 miles)

*Morning*

Burford to Charlbury: 16 km (10 miles)

OR

Burford to Blenheim Palace: 34 km (21 miles)

*Afternoon*

Blenheim Palace to Burford: 32 km (20 miles)

What to Expect: Today's route is more undulating than yesterday's but again follows quiet country lanes. As you cycle the picturesque Windrush Valley, enjoy views of dry-stone walls, pastures, and agricultural fields along the roadside. Pass the great woodlands of Wychwood Forest before coasting into the small market town of Charlbury. Continue on to the breathtaking Blenheim Palace, the mid-point of the day, and enjoy the impeccably designed landscape as you explore the grounds and estate rooms. The afternoon route departs Blenheim and traces lovely country lanes to the thatched-cottage village of Minster Lovell. Continue along the Windrush Valley back into Burford.

Accommodation: The Lamb Inn, Burford

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 5: Bourton-on-the-Water / Lower Slaughter**

More of the stunning Windrush Valley unfolds before you today, a picture-perfect canvas of the Cotswolds. By day's end, you will understand why our trip leaders call this peaceful region "happy valley." The Windrush was named for the way its namesake river winds through the rushes, or the tall grasses along the waterway's banks. Enjoy a spin through the historic Sherborne Estate, part of 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. This quaint village is sometimes called the "Venice of the Cotswolds" for the graceful arched stone bridges that cross the River Windrush in town. There'll be time to explore its many charms and have lunch on your own or even seek out a famous cream tea.

Later, cycle to the old mill town, Lower Slaughter. The 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. After time here, you may shuttle to your next hotel in Moreton-on-Marsh, or enjoy a longer riding day through more beautiful countryside, where you may visit the renowned Daylesford Organic, one of the UK's most sustainable organic working farms. This evening, share your discoveries with fellow travelers over dinner at the hotel.

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 – 56 km (17 - 35 miles)

*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 hill climb leads up to Clapton-on-the-Hill. Then it's a lovely downhill coast to Bourton-on-the-Water. Park your bike and enjoy a stroll around this pretty town with its many bridges and shops. Continue along more rolling countryside into the scenic village of Lower Slaughter. The day's longer option leads to the hamlets of Lower Swell and Upper Swell through pastures dotted with sheep.

Accommodation: The Manor House Hotel, Moreton-in-Marsh

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 6: 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 the American-inspired Hidcote Gardens, one of England's most influential Arts and Crafts gardens. Its colorful and intricately designed outdoor "rooms" are full of surprises.

After, you may ride or shuttle up to Broadway Tower, where, on a clear day, you will be rewarded with extensive views of the surrounding countryside. Lady Coventry of Worcester had this Gothic folly built at 1,204 feet (367 meters) above sea level strictly for her pleasure. The views take in 16 counties and stretch all the way to Wales on a clear day.

Inspired by this beguiling canvas, you continue your ride through the lavender fields at Snowhill and on to the tiny hamlet of Kineton for lunch at a local pub. Formerly owned by Corpus Christi College, The Halfway Inn creates the best homemade burgers in the Cotswolds and is well known for its great atmosphere and variety of pub dogs. After lunch, you may ride or shuttle back to the hotel.

This evening is free for you to explore Moreton-in-Marsh and try one of its restaurants.

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 – 64 km (12 - 40 miles)

*Morning*

Moreton-in-Marsh to Hidcote Gardens: 19 km (12 miles)

OR

Moreton-in-Marsh to Kineton: 41 km (26 miles)

*Afternoon*

Kineton to Moreton-in-Marsh: 22 km (14 miles)

What to Expect: The first section of today's ride is slightly undulating along lovely tree- and hedge-lined country lanes, passing through pretty hamlets. Stop in Chipping Campden to explore ancient High Street and the Market Hall. You pass over the railway line on the outskirts of Chipping Campden, then cycle uphill towards Hidcote Gardens. Park your bike by the entrance and enjoy a visit. You can shuttle or cycle to Broadway Tower; the ride is 5.5 miles (8.9 km) with a long steady uphill climb. After you take in the 360-degree views, the route leads through beautiful countryside down a long, steady hill to the tiny village of Kineton, where a well-deserved pub lunch awaits. From here, either shuttle or ride through undulating country lanes back to the hotel.

Accommodation: The Manor House Hotel, Moreton-in-Marsh

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 7: Cycle through 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, you cycle along the Fosse Way, a 2,000-year-old Roman route linking Exeter and Lincoln. Remarkable for ancient engineering, the road never veers more than six miles (10 km) from a straight line for its full distance of 182 miles (293 km). You, however, will ride just a fraction of this historic pathway, eventually leaving it to follow a road into the heart of Bath, the elegant Georgian jewel of England. You approach the city via the 200-year old Kennet and Avon Canal, lined with beautifully painted

narrow boats.

Rendezvous with your trip leaders at the Holburne Museum. The rest of the day is free to enjoy lunch and the many sights of this beautiful city, including the unmissable Roman Baths, the Royal Crescent, the King's Circus, Jane Austen's House, and Bath Abbey. Bath also boasts many boutique shops and opportunities to join locals for English afternoon tea. Try one of the many local restaurants for dinner tonight.

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 34 km (21 miles)

*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 to join the canal. The route along the Fosse Way is very straight. Cycle along quiet lanes through beautiful countryside, a bit less sedate in feel to the northern Cotswolds but nonetheless beautiful. Upon reaching the canal, you follow a car-free towpath of compact gravel. Pass through one of the canal tunnels before arriving at the Holburne Museum. In keeping with local etiquette, please walk your bike through Sydney Gardens to the museum.

Accommodation: Francis Hotel, Bath

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 8: Bradford-on-Avon / Lacock / Bath**

This morning's ride leads out of Bath along the Kennet and Avon canal, over the magnificent Dundas and Avoncliff aqueducts which were built to traverse the valley in 1800. Follow the river valley to the old wool town of Bradford-on-Avon, where you might stop for an early coffee or tea at one of the many cafés. Shuttle to lunch from here or continue riding to Lacock as the Cotswold Hills and Mendip Hills mark your progress along the way.

Enjoy plentiful options for lunch in Lacock. A village wholly owned by the National Trust, it was recently featured in both the *Downton Abbey* and *Harry Potter* films. Complete with a 13th-century Abbey, the village will surely charm and delight historians and gastronomes alike. Take the return shuttle to Bath or continue riding through the countryside to rejoin the canal system leading into the city. This afternoon, there'll be free time to continue your exploration of Bath or just to relax and reflect on your week. This evening, recount your memorable journey over a festive farewell dinner.

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 – 61 km (10 - 38 miles)

*Morning*

Bath to Bradford-on-Avon: 16 km (10 miles)

OR

Bath to Lacock: 34 km (21 miles)

*Afternoon*

Lacock to Bath: 27 km (17 miles)

What to Expect: The beginning and end of today's ride features gentle terrain along the car-free canal system in and out of Bath. The remaining miles are more undulating and explore the scenic Cotswold countryside through small hamlets and historic villages. 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.

Accommodation: Francis Hotel, Bath

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 9: Bristol

After breakfast, check out of the hotel, say goodbye to your trip leaders, and transfer approximately 50 minutes to Bristol. Please note that hotel check-in time is 3:00 p.m. You may leave your bags with reception while you explore.

Bristol is steeped in English and world history. John Cabot set sail from here in 1497 and discovered the Canadian province of Newfoundland. Despite its inland harbor location, Bristol was one of the world's greatest ports in the 17th and 18th centuries.

When trade declined, the burgeoning city became noted for its engineering prowess. It was soon synonymous with its famous engineer, Isambard Kingdom Brunel, a titan of the Industrial Revolution. The city is a living history of his accomplishments. He designed the magnificent Temple Meads Railway Station and the steamship, *SS Great Britain*, the first iron-hulled, screw-propelled steamship to cross the Atlantic. His Clifton Suspension Bridge is a symbol of the city.

Bristol today is modern, vibrant, and attractive, home to richly varied architecture. Fine old churches, elegant Georgian terraces and crescents (especially in the Clifton suburb), and imposing Victorian public



buildings all grace its cityscape. Strap on your walking shoes and stroll Gloucester Road, said to be Europe's longest stretch of independent shops. Sample a buffet of international cuisine at the St. Nicholas Market. And perhaps grab a pint at a pub along the city's shop-lined Floating Harbor. One of the best ways to take it all in is via the Open Top sightseeing bus.

Accommodation: Hotel du Vin Bristol, Bristol

Included Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 10: Depart for home

Early this morning\*, transfer to London Heathrow Airport for your departing flight. Please ensure you are ready in the hotel reception area at the designated transfer time\*\*.

\*Please note: For guests with early-morning departures, breakfast at the hotel may not be available. Please check with the front desk to verify the times that breakfast is served.

\*\*Please note: VBT recommends that you check your transfer time in your "Transfer Reminder." VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport will be at your own expense.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

### Francis Hotel Bath (Days: 7,8)

Located in the heart of the storied city of Bath with views of historic Queen Square, the air-conditioned Francis Hotel exudes Georgian sophistication. The plush armchairs and period furnishings of the beautiful 18th-century townhouse lend this fine hotel an elegant authenticity. Even the Beatles were lured here by its refined elegance; they were guests in 1963. During your stay, you may take afternoon tea in the Tea Room, enjoy a cocktail in the bar, and savor a meal at the Brasserie Blanc, the onsite French-themed restaurant.

### The Lamb Inn (Days: 3,4)

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: 5,6)**

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.

### **voco Oxford Spires Hotel (Day: 2)**

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.

### **Hotel Du Vin Bristol (Day: 9)**

Few hotels recall the history of Bristol with such authenticity. Occupying the city's Sugar House district, a restored collection of 18th-century sugar warehouses, the Hotel du Vin has been remarkably transformed into a fine boutique hotel. High ceilings and exposed brickwork evoke an industrial past while luxurious loft-style bedrooms with ample amenities pamper the traveler of today. During your stay at this air-conditioned hotel, relax in the secluded courtyard and dine in the award-winning bistro. The many shops and eateries of Bristol's Floating Harbor are a 10-minute walk away.