



# Oxford & the Cotswolds

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## Why Go?

Sprinkled with gorgeous little villages, this part of the country is as close to the old-world English idyll as you'll get. It's a haven of rolling green-cloaked hills, rose-clad cottages, graceful stone churches and thatched roofs. Add to this alluring mix the legendary university city of Oxford, with its majestic architecture, historic air and lively student scene, and it's obvious why the region is a magnet for visitors.

Although the roads and most popular villages are busy in summer, it's easy to get off the tourist trail. The golden-hued Cotswolds work their finest magic when you find your very own romantic hideaway. Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire conceal splendid country houses, while Windsor delights with regal character. In the far west, the Forest of Dean beckons with outdoor-adventure appeal.

Much of the area is an easy day trip from London, but Oxford and the Cotswolds deserve at least several leisurely days.

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Hind's Head (p229)
- ➔ Edamamé (p197)
- ➔ Le Champignon Sauvage (p219)
- ➔ Waterside Inn (p229)
- ➔ Wheatsheaf (p209)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Star Cottage (p205)
- ➔ Barnsley House (p204)
- ➔ Glove House (p201)
- ➔ Bradley (p217)

## When to Go

- ➔ Welcome the dawn with Oxford's Magdalen College Choir, which sings hymns from atop the college tower, on May Morning (1 May).
- ➔ In July, sip champagne and watch the rowers whizz by at Henley Royal Regatta.
- ➔ Walking in the Cotswolds is ideal from April to June and in September, when the weather is (mostly) in your favour, without the July and August crowds.
- ➔ In early October, Cheltenham kicks into bookish action for its famous 10-day Literature Festival.
- ➔ Gather among glamorous crowds in June for the country's greatest annual racing meet, Royal Ascot.

## Oxford & the Cotswolds Highlights

- 1 Oxford** (p189) Following in the footsteps of JRR Tolkien, CS Lewis and Oscar Wilde as you explore magical colleges.
- 2 The Cotswolds** (p202) Wandering between perfect gold-tinged Cotswolds villages, such as Chipping Campden.
- 3 Windsor** (p225) Catching a glimpse of regal life at the Queen's weekend hideaway.
- 4 Blenheim Palace** (p201) Lording it up at one of Britain's greatest stately homes in Woodstock.
- 5 Stowe** (p222) Getting lost in a serene world of spectacular 18th-century landscaped gardens.

- 6 Gloucester Cathedral** (p220) Strolling the elegant cloisters of this exquisite Perpendicular Gothic creation.
- 7 Painswick** (p215) Exploring a beautiful and unspoilt town in the Cotswolds.
- 8 Making of Harry Potter** (p223) Unleashing your inner wizard at this studio tour.

