



Oxford, Cotswolds & Around

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Why Go?

Dripping with charm and riddled with implausibly pretty villages, this part of the country is as close to the old-world English idyll as you'll get. It's a haven of lush rolling hills, rose-clad cottages, graceful stone churches, thatched roofs, cream teas and antique shops. Add to the mix the legendary city of Oxford, and it's easy to see why the region is a magnet for tourists.

Although the roads and the most popular villages are busy in summer, it's easy to get off the tourist trail. The Cotswolds are at their best when you find your own romantic refuge and discover the fire-lit inns and grandiose manors that persuade A-list celebrities and the merely moneyed to buy property here.

Most of the area is an easy day trip from London, but Oxford and the Cotswolds deserve at least an overnight stay.

When to Go

On 1 May you can welcome the dawn with Oxford's Magdalen College Choir, which sings hymns from the college tower. In July you can swill champagne and watch the rowing at Henley's Royal Regatta and Festival. September is the best time to sample England's finest ales at the four-day St Alban's Beer Festival.

Oxford, Cotswolds & Around Highlights

- 1 Following in the footsteps of Lyra, Tolkien, CS Lewis and Inspector Morse as you tour the **Oxford colleges** (p183)
- 2 Meandering around **Painswick** (p205), one of the most beautiful and unspoilt towns in the Cotswolds
- 3 Getting a glimpse of the high life at the Queen's very own hideaway, **Windsor Castle** (p216)
- 4 Touring the elegant cloisters and taking in a concert at the magnificent **Gloucester Cathedral** (p211)
- 5 Stepping back in time as you down a pint by the fire in the **Falkland Arms** (p199)
- 6 Strolling the tree-lined streets, soaking up the architecture and browsing the chichi shops of Regency **Cheltenham** (p206)
- 7 Touring the monumental **Blenheim Palace** (p194), one of the country's greatest stately homes
- 8 Exploring the vast collection and swanky new makeover at the **Ashmolean Museum** in Oxford (p189)

