

# The Cotswolds

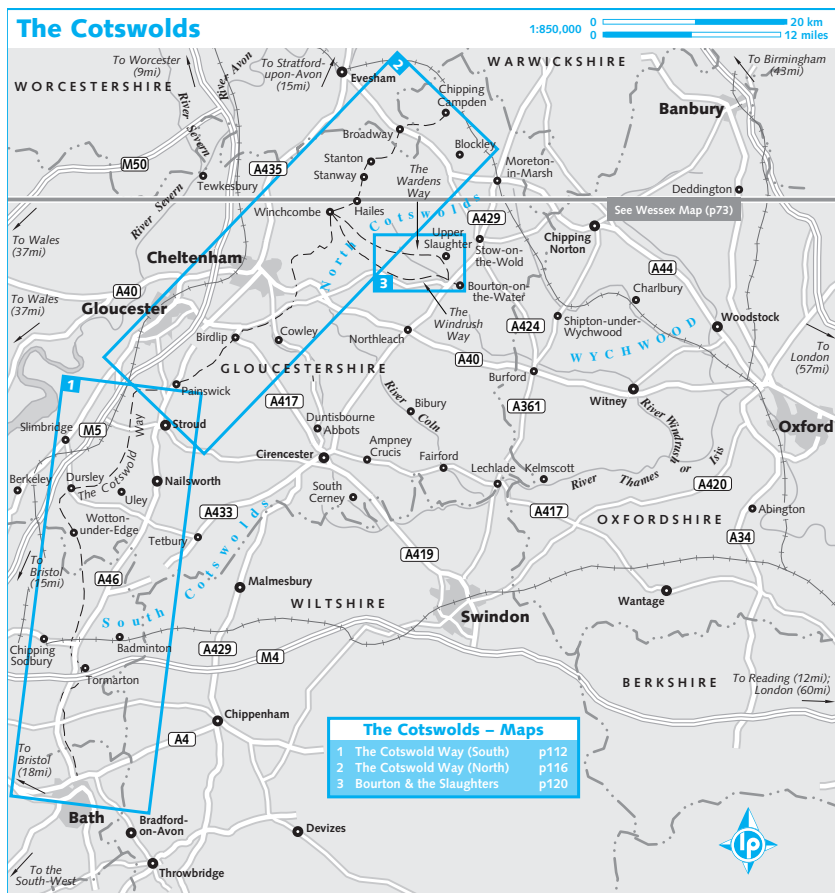
Intimate and benign, the Cotswold Hills beckon you, in a polite, English sort of way, to their central ribbon of rolling countryside. North of Bath, east of Gloucester and west of Oxford, this is the land of afternoon tea, warm beer and bicycling vicars – it is quintessentially English. Neat fields, lush woodland, clear rivers and narrow, hedge-lined lanes crisscross a network of pretty villages. In them the houses, churches, cottages and farms are built of the famous warm, honey-coloured Cotswold stone. Walking here is a delight.

The region is defined by that stone. It's the golden building blocks of the villages, but it's also the limestone bedrock of the hills, and peeps out beneath your feet where the topsoil has peeled away. The Cotswold Way traces the spine of these hills, often along the steep escarpment that slices down their western edge, offering exhilarating views over the River Severn and Wales beyond.

The human landscape of the Cotswolds is down to wool. Sheep here produced a large portion of medieval England's wealth, and some of that money was clearly spent locally, on still-fine buildings. In the 17th century the wool trade died but the massive physical changes of the Industrial Revolution bypassed the Cotswolds. Of course, the hills are not set in aspic and have, thankfully, engaged with the modern world, but today this is England at its most affluent. Villages exude a heady aroma of solid bank accounts and abound with expensive public schools, new cars and golf courses. But beneath the picture-postcard views, high property prices make it impossible for many locals to buy a home in their home town.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The better-than-bird's-eye view over Cheltenham and the River Severn, and towards the Brecon Beacons, from **Leckhampton Hill** (p116)
- Wandering the Windrush Way to cross tiny bridge after tiny bridge in the 'Venice of the Cotswolds' – **Bourton-on-the-Water** (p120)
- With only 30 miles of the Cotswold Way to go, being smoothed, stretched and soothed at a luxury spa in **Cheltenham** (p117)
- The gorgeous golden buildings of **Chipping Campden** (p111) – a fitting finish to a fantastic trail



## INFORMATION Maps

Useful maps for walking include Ordnance Survey (OS) Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 172 *Bristol & Bath*, 162 *Gloucester & Forest of Dean*, 163 *Cheltenham & Cirencester*, 150 *Worcester & the Malverns* and 151 *Stratford-upon-Avon*. The OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 45 *The Cotswolds* covers only the northern part of this area (north of Cirencester and east of Cheltenham).

For maps covering individual walks, see the Planning sections for each walk.

## Books

There are shelves-full to choose from. Try *Cotswold Teashop Walks* by Jean Patefield,

and *Pub Walks in the Cotswolds* by Nigel Vile. For a quieter atmosphere, *Discovery Walks in the Cotswolds* by Julie Meech avoids the tourist honey pots. For a range of walks, with good maps and route descriptions, *The Cotswold Pathfinder Guide* (published by Jarrold) is ideal. The AA's *50 Walks in the Cotswolds* by Christopher Knowles provides an excellent variety of clear, concise routes, while Jarrold's *The Cotswolds* offers 20 routes of up to 5.5 miles.

For books specific to the Cotswold Way, see p110.

## Guided Walks

The **Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (☎ 01451-862000; www.cotswoldsao nb.com)

organises a series of guided walks. Tourist offices also have details. As well as the national companies organising trips (see p26), one local specialist is **Cotswold Walking Holidays** (☎ 01242-254353; www.cotswoldwalks.com).

## Information Sources

A good starting point is the Southwest's official **tourist board** (☎ 0870 442 0880; www.visit southwest.com). The local authority site is www.cotswold.gov.uk, while www.cotswolds.info is also useful. Key tourist offices include those in Bath (p110), Cheltenham (p117), Chipping Campden (p111) and Bourton-on-the-Water (p119).

## GETTING AROUND

The most useful train service for walkers is the Worcester–Oxford–London line, which runs through the northern part of the Cotswolds and includes a very handy stop at Moreton-in-Marsh. Many other places can be reached from here by local bus.

## GATEWAYS

Key gateway cities and transport hubs for the Cotswolds are Bath, Gloucester, Cheltenham, Oxford and Stratford-upon-Avon. These are easily reached by National Express coach and car. Train stations in the Cotswolds include Moreton-in-Marsh, Kemble and Stratford-upon-Avon.

**Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2608; www.traveline.org.uk) has local travel timetables, while the *Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport* leaflet has general information and is available from tourist offices.

## THE COTSWOLD WAY

<b>Duration</b>	7 days
<b>Distance</b>	102 miles (164km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	easy–moderate
<b>Start</b>	Bath (p110)
<b>Finish</b>	Chipping Campden (p111)
<b>Transport</b>	train, bus
<b>Summary</b>	A delightful jaunt through picture-book English countryside. Walking a spine of steep hills, you step through rolling farmland, dappled woods and enchanting villages.

Always picturesque, at times dramatic, the Cotswold Way charts a course between two exquisite tourist towns and delivers England

at its most enchanting en route. From Bath to Chipping Campden, via a steep, exhilarating escarpment, you constantly track up and down; from villages in intimate valleys to expansive ridges with bird's-eye views. The Way is also a trail through time, passing prehistoric hillforts and burial mounds, reminders of the Romans, and some fine monuments and stately homes.

It's a comfortable walk compared with wilder options in this book, but underestimate it at your peril. The days are long, the walking is often demanding and the weather can turn nasty very quickly. But the huge number of delightful pubs and B&Bs mean a pint, a warm bed and a good meal are never far away.

## PLANNING

You can walk the Cotswold Way in either direction, although we describe it from south to north, giving you the sun and the wind at your back. It was upgraded and relaunched as a national trail in 2007, and with few exceptions the waymarking is very good – either small arrows with a white dot in the centre or the national trail acorn symbol. But it is still possible to miss turns simply because there are so many interconnecting paths, so it's wise to carry maps.

We outline the stages where you need to buy lunch before setting out. In terms of cash, the only ATMs directly on the route we describe are at Bath, Wotton-under-Edge, Dursley, Painswick, Cheltenham, Winchcombe, Broadway and Chipping Campden.

The following itinerary covers the walk in seven days. The most convenient places to start and finish each day are shown in the table:

Day	From	To	Miles/km
1	Bath	Tormarton	16/26
2	Tormarton	Wotton-under-Edge	13.5/22
3	Wotton-under-Edge	Uley	10.5/17
4	Uley	Painswick	13/21
5	Painswick	Cheltenham	19/31
6	Cheltenham	Winchcombe	12.5/20
7	Winchcombe	Chipping Campden	17.5/28

## Alternatives

Each of Days 1, 5 and 7 can be comfortably split into two, with overnight stops at Cold Ashton or Marshfield and Broadway.

The fifth night, in Cheltenham or Charlton Kings, is the only overnight stop that takes you a couple of miles off the Way.

Hours given are for walking times only, and a few days to rest and explore the many churches, manor houses, villages and monuments you encounter would give you a relaxed and entertaining 12-day jaunt.

## Maps

The Harvey Long Distance Route 1:40,000 map *Cotswold Way* covers the whole trail in a strip map, although we've based our description on OS references.

The OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 45 *The Cotswolds* covers only about a quarter of the route (in the north) so detail addicts need to supplement it with OS Explorer 1:25,000 maps No 155 *Bristol & Bath*, 167 *Thornbury, Dursley & Yate*, 168 *Stroud, Tetbury & Malmesbury* and 179 *Gloucester, Cheltenham & Stroud*.

Good waymarking, however, means the following combination is perfectly adequate: OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 172 *Bristol & Bath*, 162 *Gloucester & Forest of Dean* and 163 *Cheltenham & Cirencester* with OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 45 *The Cotswolds*.

## Books

The one book you shouldn't be without is *The Cotswold Way Handbook & Accommodation List*, produced by the **Ramblers' Association** (☎ 0207-339 8500; www.ramblers.org.uk) and available from the association or from tourist offices along the route.

A new National Trail Official Guide, *The Cotswold Way* by Anthony Burton, complete with OS 1:25,000 maps, accompanies the Way's relaunch. *The Cotswold Way* by local expert Mark Richards is a brief and affectionate account of the walk. Other titles include *The Cotswold Way* by Kev Reynolds, which describes the route in both directions.

## Accommodation

B&Bs and hotels here often cost above the British average – allow for £30 to £50 a night and be prepared to book early. The only hostel directly on the Way is in Bath and there are relatively few places to camp. We've listed recommended places to stay; for more options consult *The Cotswold Way Handbook & Accommodation List*.

## Information Sources

The best starting point is the official Cotswold Way website at www.nationaltrail.co.uk/cotswold, which also has updates on route alterations. Also useful are www.cotswold-way.co.uk and the **Cotswold Way National Trail Office** (☎ 01453-827004). Individual tourist offices are outlined in the route description.

## Baggage Services

**Sherpa Van** (☎ 0871 520 0124; www.sherpavan.com) provides baggage transfers along the Cotswold Way. *The Cotswold Way Handbook* also has contact details for baggage services.

## NEAREST TOWNS

### Bath

pop 90,144

Bath is undoubtedly one of Britain's most beautiful cities. The short-sighted developmental approach that's disfigured so many places has left Bath relatively unscathed, and the splendid Georgian architecture is a delight to explore. You might be itching to hit the trail but try to build in at least a day to experience this lovely place.

There's a **tourist office** (☎ 0906 711 2000; www.visitbath.co.uk) in the Abbey Churchyard and the **Guide Friday Tourism Centre** (☎ 01225-444102) at the train station. If the 102 miles ahead isn't enough for you, clock up some more on a free **two-hour walking tour** (🕒 10.30am & 2pm Sun-Fri, 10.30am Sat); they leave from the Abbey Churchyard.

Bath's blockbuster sight is the **Roman Baths** (☎ 01225-477785; www.romanbaths.co.uk; Abbey Churchyard; adult/child £10/6; 🕒 9am-5pm Mar-Jun, Sep & Oct, 9am-9pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-4.30pm Nov-Feb), where you get to wander the complex the invaders built.

Bath is also a city of **festivals** (☎ 01225-463362; www.bathfestivals.org.uk), the main one being the International Music Festival (late May to early June).

## SLEEPING

Bath's cheaper options get snapped up fast, especially in the summer and during festivals. Many also charge more at weekends so we've indicated the range of prices below. Our recommendations are all central.

The nearest camp site to Bath, **Newton Mill Camping Park** (☎ 01225-333909; www.campinginbath.co.uk; Newton Rd; sites for 2 £16), is 3 miles west

## BATH'S PAINFUL REBIRTH

What's in a name? For Bath – everything. Its waters have been the source of its moniker and its money ever since the Romans first built a system of baths and a temple to Sulis-Minerva on the site of what they called Aquae Sulis.

Those waters still mattered in the 18th century when Bath was the most fashionable and elegant haunt of English society. Aristocrats flocked here to gossip, gamble and flirt. Fortunately, they also paid the brilliant architects who designed the Palladian terraced housing, circles, crescents and squares that still define the city today. But two centuries later the thermal bubble finally burst when, in 1970, what was then the last spa closed for reasons of health. For more than a quarter of a century, bathers and visitors were denied access to the mineral-rich reason for the city's name and fortune.

Fast forward 25 years to **Thermae Bath Spa** (☎ 01225-335678; www.thermaebathspa.com; 2hr spa session £19, 50min treatments from £64), a stunningly high-tech glass-and-steel project – complete with roof-top pool, thermal waters and steam rooms. Trouble is, it went £20 million over budget and almost four years over schedule. Now open, but still an infant in terms of this city's spa past, the next twist in the saga is anybody's guess. But it has left the people of Bath hoping their thermal future is as clear as their thermal past.

of town at Newton St Loe. The funky **Bath Backpackers** (☎ 01225-446787; www.hostels.co.uk; 13 Pierrepoint St; dm £13, d £35-45) is the best budget option. There's also the slightly institutional **YMCA** (☎ 01225-325900; www.bathymca.co.uk; Broad St Pl; dm £13-15, s £24-28, d £36-44), in a small square just off Walcott St.

The **Henry Guest House** (☎ 01225-424052; www.thehenry.com; 6 Henry St; s/d £35/60) is charming; all rooms have shared bathrooms. **Romany Guest House** (☎ 01225-424193; 9 Charlotte St; d £45) also has shared bathrooms and rates don't include breakfast. Across the river around Poultney Rd there's a cluster of B&Bs charging around £35 for singles and £55 for doubles; check with the tourist office.

For some pre-trail luxury, try the pleasant **George's Hotel** (☎ 01225-464923; www.georges-hotel.co.uk; 2-3 South Pde; s/d £60/75), or **Three Abbey Green** (☎ 01225-428558; www.threeabbeygreen.com; 3 Abbey Green; s £85-112, d £95-125), which is delightful.

## EATING

In Bath, you're spoilt for choice. Northumberland Pl has the **Hub** and **La Croissanterie**, which both serve tasty pastries and baguettes.

Near the Abbey, the groovy **Café Retro** (☎ 01225-339347; 18 York St; lunch £5; 🍳 breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Thu-Sat) offers an excellent, varied menu. The Indian restaurant **Jamuna** (☎ 01225-464631; 10 Cheap St; 🍳 lunch & dinner) has a set dinner for £8. **Tilley's Bistro** (☎ 01225-484200; www.tilleysbistro.co.uk; 3 North Pde Passage;

🍳 lunch & dinner) does wonderful food in intimate surroundings – bargains include a two-course early dinner from £10. Meanwhile, dishes at **Demuth's** (☎ 01225-446059; www.demuths.co.uk; mains £12; 🍳 lunch & dinner) will make vegetarians smile. The **Moon and Sixpence** (☎ 01225-460962; 6A Broad St; mains £17; 🍳 lunch & dinner) provides fine bistro dining with an alfresco seating option.

The central streets are heaving with good pubs. The best is the **Old Green Tree** (Green St), a cosy little place that exudes warmth and charm. Others include the **Pig & Fiddle** (with its outside tables), on the corner of Walcott St, and the tiny **Coeur de Lion** (Northumberland Pl).

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bath is easy to reach; it's on the main railway line between London and Bristol, and is also served by National Express coach. By car, it's south of the M4 motorway between London and Bristol.

## Chipping Campden

Locals claim the stonework in the houses of Chipping Campden is the finest in the Cotswolds and it certainly is gorgeous – making this town a fitting finale to the Cotswold Way. Buildings of interest include the medieval **town hall**, **St James' Church** and the 1627 **market hall**. Further up the street, William Grevel's **late-14th-century house** can lay claim to being the oldest and finest in the village.

**SLEEPING & EATING**

B&B options include the **Old Bakehouse** (☎ 01386-840979; Lower High St; s/d £30/60), the beautifully restored **Bantam Tea Rooms** (☎ 01386-840386; www.thebantam.co.uk; High St; s/d £49/75) and the **Red Lion** (☎ 01386-840760; www.redlionchippingcampden.co.uk; High St; s/d £65/79) – full of dark beams and creaky floors. You can also stay at the lovely **Badgers Hall** (☎ 01386-840839; www.badgershall.com; High St; d £80), but there's a minimum two-night stay. The **tourist office** (☎ 01386-841206; High St) can give further suggestions.

For food, pubs that offer meals include the **Kings Arms**, the **Red Lion** and the **Eight Bells**. Otherwise, **Joel's Restaurant** (☎ 01386-840598; mains £8-17; ☎ lunch & dinner) serves delicious food and has a wide-ranging menu. Next door is **Huxley's** (☎ 01386-840520; mains £11; ☎ lunch & dinner), while there's also (another) **Lygon Arms Hotel** (☎ 01386-640318; mains £18; ☎ lunch & dinner). All are on the high street.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

Local buses run Monday to Saturday only between Chipping Campden, Stratford, Evesham and Moreton-in-Marsh – so you can't arrive at, or leave, Chipping Campden via public transport on Sunday.

Moreton is on the Worcester–Oxford–London railway line, and you can link up with trains or National Express coaches from Stratford or Evesham to other destinations.

By car, Chipping Campden lies north of the A44 between Evesham and Oxford, about 12 miles south of Stratford-upon-Avon.

**THE WALK****Day 1: Bath to Tormarton**

7–8 hours, 16 miles (26km)

*A moderately difficult but rewarding introduction to the Way, with a couple of steep ascents early on. There are interesting historical sites to delay you so it's wise to get an early start.*

From the Abbey, walk northwest past the beautiful Georgian architecture of the **Circus** and around the **Crescent** before heading north to pick up the Cotswold Way markers, which point you across the Approach Golf Course and through a couple of suburbs. A short, sharp push up Penn Hill rewards you with fine views of Bath and the River Avon, and you're in the countryside proper at last.



The next couple of miles offer good walking along tracks before you skirt Bath Racecourse. Immediately after, you come to a series of grassy ridges: the remains of **Little Down Fort** and the first of scores of Iron Age hillforts to dot the route. After some more fields you encounter the **Granville Monument**, which commemorates a 1643 Civil War battle. Here 'more officers and gentlemen of quality than private soldiers were slain'. Calamity indeed...

The Way wanders ridgeways and fields before a long, steep hill takes you up to the village of **Cold Ashton**. You can break for the night at the **Chestnuts** (☎ 01225-892020; camp sites for 2 £6, s/d £39/58). A few places in nearby Marshfield, including **Knowle Hill Farm** (☎ 01225-891503; Beeks Lane; s/d £25/50), offer a pick-up service.

Leaving Cold Ashton you cross the A420, then pass the **White Hart** (☎ 01225-891233; ☎ lunch & dinner) pub. Across a short field is Pennsylvania, where **Old Swan Cottage** (☎ 01225-891419; www.old-swan-cottage.co.uk; s/d £35/50) offers comfortable accommodation. More fields and woods lead to the pretty village of Dyrham, noted for **Dyrham Park**, a grand mansion and deer park run by the National Trust. A footpath leads directly from the Way into the grounds. You weave north, then east across fields and the A46 before joining a lane at Lower Lapdown Farm, which leads over the M4 motorway and into Tormarton.

**TORMARTON**

This tiny village is noted for its Norman church of **St Mary Magdalene**. The best place to stay is the traditional **Portcullis Inn** (☎ 01454-

218263; s/d £30/44; ☎ lunch & dinner). Other options include **Noades House** (☎ 01454-218746; Old Hundred Lane; camp sites for 2 £5, s/d £30/50). Two miles further on, Old Sodbury (see below) has other choices.

**Day 2: Tormarton to Wotton-under-Edge**  
6–7 hours, 13.5 miles (22km)

*An easy day of undulating countryside with plenty of farmland and a brace of hillforts. You pass several small villages but no shops, so bring lunch with you.*

Leaving Tormarton, ignore the old metal 'Cotswold Way' signs, continue past the Portcullis Inn and pick up the wooden waymarks across a lovely series of ancient stone stiles and into **Old Sodbury**. Here, **1 The Green** (☎ 01454-314688; s/d £30/50) is tucked just behind the petrol station. The beautifully beamed **Dog Inn** (☎ 01454-312006; s with/without bathroom £50/30, d with/without bathroom £70/50; ☎ lunch & dinner) opposite is an excellent choice and offers tasty meals.

Out of the village the Way passes a series of medieval stepped terraces before going up a steep escarpment to the prominent ramparts of the Iron Age **Sodbury Hillfort**. Going straight ahead along the public path avoids the steep bit, but it's a shame to miss the huge fortified expanse at the top. Next, it's down into the small village of **Little Sodbury**, where William Tyndale worked on the first translation of the Bible into English (see boxed text, below).

From Little Sodbury you cross fields, pass through the pretty village of Horton and then come to **Horton Court**, the oldest house on the Way, dating from Norman times. This is beautiful, peaceful, green and

**WILLIAM TYNDALE – MARTYR TO THE ENGLISH WORD**

Born in the mid-1490s in North Nibley, William Tyndale is remembered as the man who first translated the Bible into English – and got himself executed for his trouble.

Forced by pressure from the Catholic Church to go to Germany to work on his translation, Tyndale led a precarious existence, one step ahead of vengeful authorities. His first edition of the New Testament was printed in 1526 and condemned by English church leaders, but proved immensely popular with their congregations. Fearing Tyndale's influence, Henry VIII sent men to the Continent to track him down – he was eventually tried for heresy in Belgium and burnt at the stake. In a dubiously merciful gesture, he was spared the flames by being strangled before the fire was lit. His last words reportedly were: 'Oh Lord, open the King of England's eyes'.

Ironically, the Lord apparently did. A scant two years later, Henry VIII passed a law requiring every church in England to hold an English-language copy of the Bible – it was cold comfort to Tyndale's friends and family that it was based largely on his work.

pleasant England – all birdsong and gushing streams. A long gravelled section skirts fields to the fringe of Hawkesbury Upton and the grandiose 1846 **Somerset Monument**, commemorating Battle of Waterloo hero General Lord Somerset. After a stroll through some lovely woods to Alderley, the Way continues to the edge of Wortley, where the route swings to the east of **Wotton-under-Edge** (usually called Wotton) and climbs to a viewpoint. There's a sharp left at Blackquarries Hill before going down and then up towards Coombe Hill and finally into Wotton.

### WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE

Wotton is another once-prosperous wool town, but it's retained its charm and boasts a host of fine buildings plus an excellent array of pubs and eateries. The ancient **St Mary the Virgin church** dates from at least 1283, while the **Hugh Perry's Almshouses** have a daunting list of regulations inside the entrance. There's a **tourist office** (☎ 01453-521659; 15 Bradley St; ☹ 9am-12.30pm Mon-Fri) inside the civic centre; if it's closed, try the **Heritage Centre** (☎ 01453-521541).

**Wotton Guest House** (☎ 01453-843158; 31a High St; s/d £45/55) welcomes walkers and has charming rooms and a walled cottage garden in which to put your feet up. Another option is the **Ridings** (☎ 01453-842128; s/d £25/50); it's about 1 mile north of town, but provides lifts to walkers. For food, there's the atmospheric **Falcon Inn** (☎ 01453-521005; Church St; ☹ lunch & dinner) or, a few doors down, the **India Palace** (☎ 01453-843628; mains £9; ☹ lunch & dinner), doing excellent curries. The **White Lion**, in the high street, is a good place for a (well-deserved) pint at the end of the day.

### Day 3: Wotton-under-Edge to Uley

4½–5½ hours, 10.5 miles (17km)

*One of the best days on the route, with the most exhilarating views so far. Accommodation is thin at the end of the day, so ensure you have a booking.*

Leaving town, go steeply up Wotton Hill to the curious **Jubilee Clump**, a circle of trees planted in 1815 to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo. A delightful section of path through the dappled Westridge Wood (rich in birdsong) leads you past Brackenbury Hillfort. Here you enter a plateau with almost aerial views – a lovely mishmash of

fields and woods, toy tractors and model sheep. The 111ft **Tyndale Monument** (adult 50p), erected in 1866 to commemorate William Tyndale's work to produce a Bible in the vernacular (see the boxed text, p113), looms next. You can climb hundreds of steps to the top; if it's not open, get the key from the village shop in North Nibley.

North Nibley also has a few B&Bs, including the wonderful **Nibley House** (☎ 01453-543108; www.nibleyhouse.co.uk; camp sites for 2 £4, s/d £30/50), a mini-mansion on the western fringe of the village. Or there's the welcoming **Black Horse Inn** (☎ 01453-543777; s/d £45/65; ☹ lunch & dinner) in the centre, which also does great food. Next, the path edges downhill, over a stream beside an old mill, then climbs steeply to the golf course that sprawls across Stinchcombe Hill. The route hugs the edge for a couple of miles but, apart from the breadth of views, there's little of interest. You can miss this section by heading for the clubhouse, cutting right (east) down the public footpath just before it, and then descending a steep hill into **Dursley**.

Here, facing Dursley's 1738 Market House, is **St James' Church** – minus its spire. In January 1699, the bells were rung to celebrate the completion of major repairs but the vibrations brought stonework tumbling down, killing a number of spectators. Queen Anne, who helped pay for the rebuild, was rewarded with a singularly unattractive statue in a niche in the Market House.

You can sleep at the traditional **Old Bell Hotel** (☎ 01453-542821; 15 Long St; s/d £30/47). For food there's a host of cafés along Parsonage Lane, **Dursley Tandoori** (☎ 01453-548833; 41 Long St; mains £8; ☹ lunch & dinner) or the **Old Spot Inn** (☎ 01453-542870; May Lane; ☹ lunch daily, dinner Mon-Thu), a great old pub.

Leave Dursley down Long Street, go up a lane and through fields towards Peaked Down, where you ascend steadily, skirting its eastern edge. From here it's a stiff climb up to **Cam Long Down**, then time for another aerial-photo moment. Here the views are 360-degree and extraordinary – back to the Tyndale Monument and across the Severn to Wales. Follow this ridge for several hundred metres, perform a switchback descent, then climb again towards the wide sweep of Uley Bury hillfort. Here the Way goes through the delightful **Hodgecombe Farm** (☎ 01453-860365; www.hodgecombefarm.co.uk; camp

sites for 2 £6, s/d £37/55; ☹ Apr-Oct). If you stay the owners will even ferry you to the pub in the evening. Continuing uphill, if you're walking into **Uley** itself, leave the Way just before the B4066 and take the public bridlepath on the right (south), which winds into the village and saves risking life and limb on the road.

### ULEY & NYMPFIELD

Uley is a tiny place nestled in a valley below the hillfort. The friendly **Old Crown Inn** (☎ 01453-860502; s/d £45/80; ☹ lunch & dinner), on the main street, is the best place to stay. You can also B&B at **Little Meadow** (☎ 01453-861608; South St; s/d £26/52), a modern bungalow a few minutes walk from the centre.

There's a fabulous pub in Nymphsfield, a couple of miles through Coaley Wood – the **Rose and Crown Inn** (☎ 01453-860240; www.roseandcrown-nymphsfield.com; s/d £59/70, mains £10; ☹ lunch & dinner). All old beams and wooden floors, it also serves imaginative food.

### Day 4: Uley to Painswick

5½–6½ hours, 13 miles (21km)

*Woodland and a short section of town walking lead to a wonderfully scenic section and a picture-perfect village to finish. Despite the urban areas, you don't actually pass a shop, so stock up before you leave Uley.*

Haul yourself out of Uley's valley, then descend into Coaley Wood to follow the contour along a pleasant track. A short detour to the impressive prehistoric burial site of **Hetty Pegler's Tump**, a long barrow, is worth the short climb. A little later you come to the **Nymphsfield Longbarrow** before another long but enjoyable stretch through the steep-sided Buckholt and Stanley woods.

The Way cuts north at Pen Hill, transfers onto pavement at Middleyard, then back onto fields, before another road-side stretch round King's Stanley and across the A419. (An alternative is planned here, over Selsley Common and along the Stroudwater Canal.) Turn right (east) for 200m before cutting north between houses and across the railway line. Then it's fields beneath your feet once more as you head to Maiden Hill and the cool of Standish Woods.

Next comes more ridge walking, around the edge of the plateau on **Haresfield Hill**, its dramatic views down onto the Severn Valley providing you with a textured, living

map. A circuit around Haresfield Beacon and back leads you through more woods, which open to reveal the highly picturesque village of **Painswick** nestling in the valley below. Farmland ushers you down to pass a stone marker in a field, telling you Chipping Campden is 47 miles away; you're nearly halfway there.

### PAINSWICK

The compact town of Painswick attracts plenty of visitors and it's certainly a place with a history: New St was new in 1253. The town is remarkably preserved, and pretty much all built of the now-familiar Cotswold stone. The 14th-century **St Mary's Church** features a large collection of table-top tombs and 99 neatly trimmed yew trees – legend has it no more than 99 will grow at any one time. On the same street (Stroud Rd) you'll find the **tourist office** (☎ 01452-813552; ☹ closed Sun & Mon) in the local library.

Painswick can be pricey, but try the chintzy **Hambutt's Mynd** (☎ 01452-812352; Edge Rd; s/d £30/60) – it's to the right of the Way as it enters the village from the south. In the centre, lush hanging baskets frame the lovely **Thorne** (☎ 01452-812476; Friday St; s/d £30/60), with its old beams at crazy angles, while the old **Falcon Inn** (☎ 01452-814222; New St; s/d £45/72, mains £11; ☹ lunch & dinner) is hugely atmospheric. Or you can experience the extraordinarily sumptuous **Cardynham House** (☎ 01452-814006; www.cardynham.co.uk; The Cross; s/d from £50/69). Here, four-poster luxury awaits, but prices rise at the weekend, and if you want a room with its own private pool (and who doesn't?) it'll cost even more – from £160.

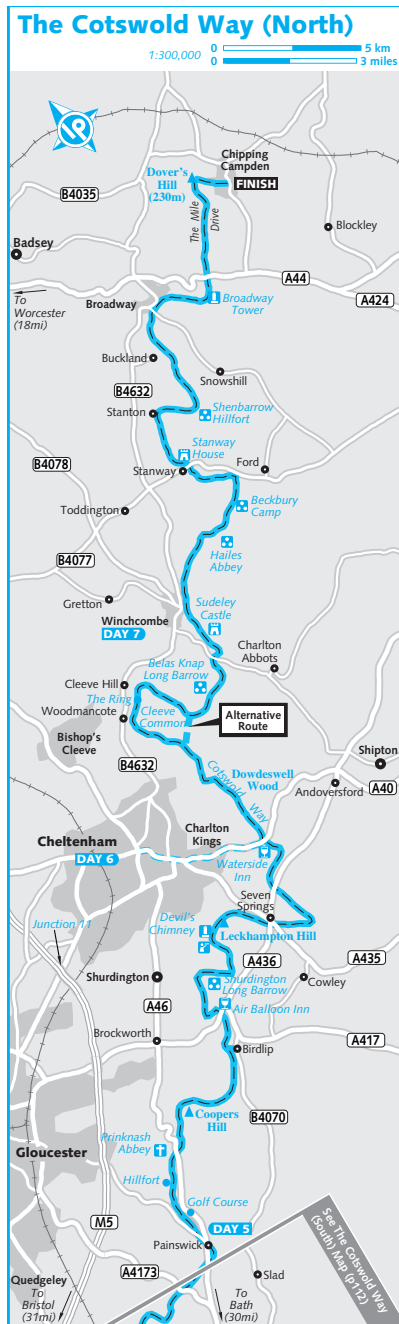
For food, there's decent pub grub at the **Royal Oak** (☎ 01452-813129; St Mary's St; ☹ lunch & dinner), the **March Hare Thai Restaurant** (☎ 01452-813452; The Cross; set menu £25; ☹ dinner Tue-Sat) or the rather grand **Painswick Hotel** (☎ 01452-812160; Kemps Lane; 3-course meal £30; ☹ lunch & dinner).

### Day 5: Painswick to Cheltenham

8–9 hours, 19 miles (31km)

*A long and tough day, not helped by the fact that you have to leave the Way at the end to find a bed. But the walking is lovely, dominated by woodland and peppered with hillforts and golf courses.*

From Painswick the path climbs steadily beside a golf course, heading northeast



across more fairways and past the Painswick Beacon hillfort. Then it's into the woods, past Prinknash Abbey. Here the waymarking become slightly haphazard – hunt out the yellow arrows, accompanied by the Cotswold Way white dots, painted on trees. Eventually you emerge at **Coopers Hill**, where there's a painfully steep field. This is the site of the annual bank holiday cheese-rolling contest ([www.cheese-rolling.co.uk](http://www.cheese-rolling.co.uk)) – an insanely dangerous pursuit dating from medieval times at which broken bones are still not uncommon.

A couple of miles of woods take you past the village of **Birdlip** – a short but steep climb away. You can break for the evening if you want, but the only option, the **Royal George Hotel** (☎ 01452-862506; [www.theroyalgeorge-hotel.com](http://www.theroyalgeorge-hotel.com); s/d £70/90; ☺ lunch & dinner), isn't cheap and feels more like a motel than the old coaching inn it is.

Another sharp uphill section leads eventually to a roundabout where the **Air Balloon Inn** (☎ 01452-862541; ☺ lunch & dinner) offers snacks and meals. You pass another hillfort just before the Crickley Hill Country Park and the well-preserved Neolithic Shurdington Long Barrow. A few miles more and you're at the vertiginous **Leckhampton Hill**, where the view stretches from the Brecon Beacons in Wales to Cheltenham spread out like a model town below. Next, a signed, and very short, detour leads to the rock pillar that's come to symbolise the Cotswold Way – the intriguing **Devil's Chimney** reaching for the sky.

The Way edges south, then across the A435 at Seven Springs (some say, the source of the River Thames) and under fizzing power lines. After heading northeast through Chatcombe Wood, Cheltenham swings into view again and you scramble down a perilously steep path and into the pretty Lineover Wood. This leads you to the A40 by the **Waterside Inn**; from here you can walk, take the bus coming in from Bourton-on-the-Water or catch a **taxi** (☎ 01242-514341, 07850-982899) into Charlton Kings or Cheltenham for the night.

At Charlton Kings, **Detmore House** (☎ 01242-582868; [www.detmorehouse.com](http://www.detmorehouse.com); London Rd; s/d £35/55) is a glorious melange of architectural styles spanning centuries. More impersonal is the upmarket **Charlton Kings Hotel** (☎ 01242-231061; [www.charltonkingshotel.co.uk](http://www.charltonkingshotel.co.uk); London Rd; s/d £65/95).

## CHELTEMPHAM

pop 98,875

The elegant Regency town of Cheltenham hasn't survived the 20th century quite as well as Bath, but numerous sights and a good selection of places to stay and eat may tempt you to rest for a day. The town is also a handy escape point as transport links are good.

The **tourist office** (☎ 01242-522878; [www.visitcheltenham.info](http://www.visitcheltenham.info); 77 Promenade; ☺ closed Sun) stocks Cotswolds walking guides. If you want a break from pounding the hills, pound some pavements instead on a **walking tour** (1hr £3; ☺ 11am Mon-Fri & 11.30am Sat late Jun–mid-Sep) of Regency Cheltenham; tours leave from the tourist office. Alternatively, have your calves caressed and your hamstrings made happy at the luxurious **Chapel Spa** (☎ 01242-518075; [www.chapelspa.co.uk](http://www.chapelspa.co.uk); North Pl; 55min £45), but be sure to book well in advance.

The **YMCA** (☎ 01242-524024; [www.cheltenhamymca.com](http://www.cheltenhamymca.com); 6 Vittoria Walk; dm/s £17/21) is institutional but cheap, while over the summer holidays, **Cheltenham & Gloucester College** (☎ 01242-532774; [www.glos.ac.uk](http://www.glos.ac.uk); The Park; s £24) lets out student rooms.

The best place to search out B&Bs is the trendy Montpellier area, just southwest of the centre. Here, **Montpellier Hotel** (☎ 01242-526009; [www.montpellier-hotel.co.uk](http://www.montpellier-hotel.co.uk); 33 Montpellier Tce; s/d £30/54) has pleasant rooms. Nearby, the highly engaging **Lonsdale House** (☎ 01242-232379; [lonsdalehouse@hotmail.com](mailto:lonsdalehouse@hotmail.com); Montpellier Dr; s with/without bathroom £44/30, d with/without bathroom £65/55) offers a Regency feel. Moving up a price bracket, the gorgeously Georgian **Lypiatt House Hotel** (☎ 01242-224994; [www.lypiatt.co.uk](http://www.lypiatt.co.uk); Lypiatt Rd; s/d £70/80) is resolutely unstuffy, while the **Beaumont House Hotel** (☎ 01242-578450; [www.bhhotel.co.uk](http://www.bhhotel.co.uk); 56 Shurdington Rd; s/d/stc from £56/79/129) is the place to go if your tastes extend to African-themed creations with whirlpool baths.

Bath Rd, to the southeast of town, is full of cheap cafés and takeaways, while the Montpellier and neighbouring Suffolks areas are good for restaurant and bar hunting. Try the vibrant **Beehive pub** (☎ 01242-702270; 1-3 Montpellier Villas; mains £9; ☺ lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat) or, for a taste of Spain, head to the funky **Ole Tapas Bar** (☎ 01242-573556; 50 Suffolk Rd; tapas from £4; ☺ lunch Wed-Sat, dinner Tue-Sat). There's Mediterranean-British fusion at **Laze Daze** (☎ 01242-257878; 81 Promenade;

mains £11; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat); check out its weekday early-evening two-course supper for £11.

For drinks, you'll find the slightly chic **Residence Bar** (Montpellier Walk) next to the very Irish pub **O'Neils**, while the relaxed **Montpellier Wine Bar** (Montpellier St) is on a parallel road.

## Day 6: Cheltenham to Winchcombe

5–6 hours, 12.5 miles (20km)

*A comfortable day's walk through quintessential English countryside. The windswept views and a remarkable ancient site add extra spice. Buy your lunch before you set out.*

From the Waterside Inn the path climbs steeply up the edge of Dowdeswell Wood, then continues through farmland for a couple of miles to **Bill Smiley's Reserve**, an area alive with butterflies. There are plans to make the route round Cleeve Common less circuitous; currently you can cut off a couple of miles by taking the footpath heading northeast, but you miss some excellent views and relatively wild terrain.

The Way skirts the edge of golf links, past the rugged ramparts of a hillfort (popular with climbers) and an Iron Age earthwork dubbed the **Ring**. Here the views are expansive, and you get a real sense of walking the spine of these hills. There are lots of crisscrossing paths here, so keep your eyes peeled for the waymarks.

Farmland soon returns, bringing with it more clouds of butterflies, and you turn left (northeast) onto a track at the derelict Wontley Farm. This leads you to **Belas Knap**, a 4000-year-old Neolithic long barrow (burial mound). With dry-stone walls at the false entrances, it's in remarkably good condition. Its history is gloriously grisly: bits of bone from 38 people have been found in the chambers. There's also evidence ritual feasting went on alongside the burials – something to think about as you munch your lunch...

From here it's a steep descent through a wood, along a short stretch of road and down past the ruins of a Roman villa, hidden by a dense copse. A few more fields and you're in **Winchcombe**.

## WINCHCOMBE

The small and engaging town of Winchcombe was once a medieval abbey but after Henry VIII conducted his monastic

land-grab in 1539 it almost completely disappeared. One exception is **St Peter's Church** (1465) with its outstanding collection of leering gargoyles. The other principal attraction is **Sudeley Castle**. The home of Henry VIII's sixth wife, Catherine Parr, it was deliberately damaged after the Civil War and not rebuilt for nearly 200 years.

B&Bs include **Gower House** (☎ 01242-602616; 16 North St; s/d £35/55), just off the high street, and ivy-clad **Blair House** (☎ 01242-603626; 43 Gretton Rd; s/d £30/50), a 10-minute walk up North St. Highly recommended is the charming, and surprisingly Swedish, **White Hart Inn** (☎ 01242-602359; www.the-white-hart-inn.com; High St; s £30-50, d £40-70). Its cheaper 'ramblers rooms' (shared bathroom) are a bargain, and the smorgasbord buffet breakfast is a delight. Check at the **tourist office** (☎ 01242-602925; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-4pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) in the old town hall for more options.

For food, the **Plasterer's Arms** (Abbey Tce; ☎ lunch & dinner) does good pub grub and meals at the **White Hart Inn** (mains £9; ☎ lunch & dinner) are excellent, while the plush **Wesley House** (☎ 01242-602366; High St; 2-course dinner £30; ☎ lunch & dinner) also has a tapas bar next door.

### Day 7: Winchcombe to Chipping Campden

7½–8½ hours, 17.5 miles (28km)

*Another taxing day to finish the Cotswold Way, but the route takes in stunning views and another two hillforts before culminating with a stately finish along the Mile Dr.*

Leaving Winchcombe via Puck Pit Lane, the path goes gently upwards to the ruins of **Hailes Abbey**, which once attracted streams of medieval pilgrims to see its famed sample of Christ's blood (later proven to be coloured honey).

After **Hayles Fruit Farm** (☎ 01242-602123; www.hayles-fruit-farm.co.uk; camp sites for 2 £8), which does snacks and camping, you enter Hailes Wood and go steeply up to Beckbury Camp – a large Iron Age fort and a good place for a breather. Dropping down again, the Way wanders past the extraordinary Jacobean gatehouse of **Stanway House**, then into the pretty village of Stanton, where the **Mount Inn** (☎ 01386-584316; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat) has a decent lunch menu. It's another long climb out of town, this time to Shenbarrow hillfort, before you descend steadily to **Broadway**.

The village of Broadway today veers towards kitsch, but it started life as part of a nearby monastery before expanding to become an important stagecoach stop. The golden stone buildings, topped with tile and thatch, ensure many – albeit more modern – coaches still visit today. Book early if you want to spend the night.

Camping is available at **Leedon's Park** (☎ 01386-852423; Childswickham Rd; sites for 2 £10). B&Bs include the **Olive Branch Guest House** (☎ 01386-853440; www.theolivebranch-broadway.com; 78 High St; s/d £44/75), which is chintzy but cosy, and the welcoming **Crown & Trumpet** (☎ 01386-853202; Church St; s/d £50/65), although this pub has a two-night minimum stay at weekends. You could decide to splash out at the extremely grand **Lygon Arms** (☎ 01386-852255; www.paramount-hotels.co.uk/lygonarms; High St; s/d/ste £290/300/550) – all oak panelling and antiques. The **tourist office** (☎ 01386-852937; 1 Cotswold Ct; ☎ closed Sun & Jan-Feb) has other options.

Eateries include the **Swan Inn** (☎ 01386-852278; The Green; mains £8; ☎ lunch & dinner), which does pub/bistro meals. There's also the traditional **Horse & Hound** (High St; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat), while the **Lygon Arms** (mains £18, 3 courses £40; ☎ lunch & dinner) offers fine dining.

If you're walking to the end, it's another long ascent to **Broadway Tower**, an incongruous little folly dating from 1798. From here it's plain sailing as the path gradually descends to the Mile Dr, an extremely broad, grassed avenue that takes you quickly along to one last dogleg up **Dover's Hill** (which takes its name from Robert Dover, who instituted a local 'Olympick Games' in 1612, featuring such fine sports as shin kicking), before you enter **Chipping Campden** (p111).

## BOURTON & THE SLAUGHTERS

<b>Duration</b>	6 hours
<b>Distance</b>	12 miles (19.5km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	easy
<b>Start/Finish</b>	Bourton-on-the-Water (opposite)
<b>Transport</b>	bus

**Summary** Delightful walking through farmland and valleys, over rolling hills, along river banks and past chocolate-box villages.

No, Bourton & the Slaughters is not the name of a local rock band; instead, they

are some of the prettiest places in the Cotswolds. Both the villages of Upper and Lower Slaughter and the town of Bourton-on-the-Water (usually called just Bourton) attract crowds – Bourton is dubbed the 'Venice of the Cotswolds'. While this is optimistic, the River Windrush's gentle course through the village (and the numerous tiny bridges over it) does create a charming atmosphere. This walk sidesteps the coach parties and presents the villages and the surrounding country in idyllic peace and quiet.

## PLANNING

Our circular walk follows sections of two longer routes, the Windrush Way and the Wardens Way (p121), both of which are well waymarked – although a map is still recommended. If you want a shorter route, you can cut south from Naunton and meet the Windrush Way just east of Aylworth.

## Maps

The route is on the OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 45 *The Cotswolds*.

## NEAREST TOWN

### Bourton-on-the-Water

The Bourton-on-the-Water **tourist office** (☎ 01451-820211; www.bourtoninfo.com; Victoria St; ☎ closed Sun) can provide information on accommodation, transport and local walks.

Campers should head, surprisingly, to the local football club, **Bourton Rovers** (☎ 01451-821977; Rissington Rd; sites for 2 £6); you don't actually pitch on the pitch, but at one end.

**Rose Cottage** (☎ 01451-821033; Sherborne St; s/d £25/50) is lovely – packed full of character and wonky beams; there isn't a straight line in the house. **Broadlands Guest House** (☎ 01451-822002; Clapton Row; s/d £35/55) is friendly, while **Manor Close** (☎ 01451-820339; High St; s/d £50/55) is right at the start of the walk and has its own walled cottage garden.

For food, Bourton has sandwich shops and plenty of pubs and restaurants. The **Duke of Wellington** (☎ 01451-820539; www.dukeofwellingtoninn.com; Sherbourne St; mains £5-9; ☎ lunch & dinner) is a relaxed pub, while the **Rose Tree Restaurant** (☎ 01451-820635; High St; mains £8; ☎ lunch & dinner) is also recommended.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

The easiest route is by train to Moreton-in-Marsh (on the London–Worcester line), then

## THANKFUL UPPER SLAUGHTER

Unlike most other places in the Cotswolds, and throughout Britain, Upper Slaughter has no war memorial – extraordinarily, the local men who fought in WWI and WWII all came home again. Such places are known as 'thankful villages', and a plaque in Upper Slaughter church thanks God for their protection. In contrast, of the 65 men from nearby Naunton who served in WWI, 13 were killed.

by bus. Buses tie in with train times and run to Cirencester via Bourton-on-the-Water and Stow-on-the-Wold. They run about 10 times a day Monday to Saturday only. Alternatively, if coming from the West Country, it may be easier to get a train to Kemble (on a main line to/from London), then a bus to Bourton-on-the-Water from there. Again, this bus does not run on Sunday.

On summer Sundays (May to September) your only options are the one or two buses that run between Moreton-in-Marsh and Cheltenham via Stow-on-the-Wold and Bourton-on-the-Water. Check with the tourist office for the latest times.

By car, Bourton-on-the-Water is on the main A429 between Cirencester and Stow-on-the-Wold.

## THE WALK

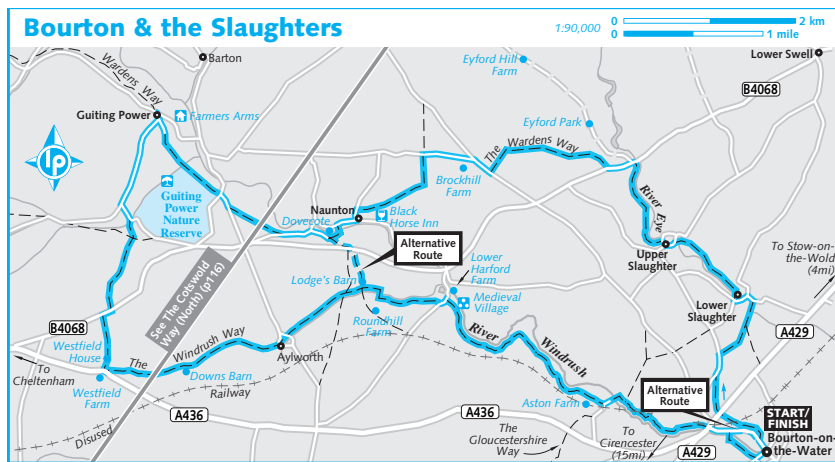
### Bourton-on-the-Water to Naunton

2 hours, 4 miles (6.5km)

The first part of the route follows the Wardens Way, signposted from the church at the centre of Bourton. From here a footpath leads northeast past a school. When it meets the road, go left (northwest, signed 'Heart of England Way'), then right across the A429, then left (northwest) 50m later (signed 'Wardens Way').

From here you're out in the country; the route crosses fields and meets up with lanes to lead into the village of Lower Slaughter. (On some maps the Wardens Way is shown slightly further north than the route described but both ways lead you to Lower Slaughter.)

**Lower Slaughter** is a smaller version of Bourton, with a shallow river running between grassy banks through the heart of the village. Its name has nothing to do with killing but comes from Schlotre, the family name of



the original Norman landowner. Head west through the centre of the village, cross the river on a small stone-slab footbridge, passing some cottages on your right, then turn left (northwest) onto a footpath again just after the Old Mill (which has a **tearoom**). From here it's a gentle riverside walk across fields before entering **Upper Slaughter**. Here, make sure you swing right (north) and then left around the church to follow a small path through a patch of woodland, then across fields and into woodland again.

About 1 mile later you come to a road and turn left (take care, as there's no path) and follow it for 300m. Here, on the right, two tracks appear very close together – take the second track. This leads you through fields, around a barn and along a track to meet another lane near Brockhill Farm, where you turn right (northwest), looking out for the path in the fields running parallel to the road.

Soon the road forks – take the route on the left, then a short while later turn left again (south) onto a track. This leads you through more fields, then steeply down into the quiet and not-too-cutesy village of **Naunton**. Turn back east a short distance along the village main street to reach the **Black Horse Inn** (☎ 01451-850565; mains £8; ☺ lunch & dinner), which serves coffee, good beer and excellent lunches.

### Naunton to Bourton-on-the-Water

4 hours, 8 miles (13km)

Go westwards along Naunton's main street,

then turn south (look for the 'Wardens Way' signs), down to the river and along a back lane past the 17th-century **Dovecote**, where hundreds of pigeons used to be farmed for their meat. The lane out of the village goes up a hill before waymarks lead you clearly at a northwest slant across fields all the way to **Guiting Power**, another charming village featuring sturdy Cotswold stone houses around a little square. The **Farmers Arms** (☎ 01451-850358; ☺ lunch & dinner) makes a good lunch, while **Well House** (☎ 01451-850298; s/d £25/50) offers traditional B&B. You can buy cakes and snacks from the time-warped village **shop** behind the **bakery**, where the friendly lady also makes sandwiches to order (cheese or ham – that's the choice).

Here we say farewell to the Wardens Way. Heading back the way you came, turn right (southwest) down the lane in front of the school. Follow this for 1 mile to a fork, where you go left (south). Just before a bridge, go through a gate on your right and across a field to reach a junction of footpaths, one of which is the **Windrush Way** and the route home.

Head south through a lovely patch of woodland, then fields, to meet the B4068, where you go right, then almost immediately left, into a field that runs along the back of some cottages. This path cuts just left of Westfield House then south towards the A436. Just before you get there, it swings left (east) along a wonderful old track that winds beside hedgerows and through cornfields. Pass through the settlement of Aylworth

and then walk gradually downhill beside a stream (a tributary of the Windrush) to eventually meet a lane near Lower Harford Farm. Turn left (north), go down the lane for 100m, then right (east) onto the path and through a field. The bumps here are the remains of the medieval **Harford village**. Now the route traces a beautiful course beside the River Windrush before turning uphill and entering woodland. Just to the south of the path are the remains of an old railway and the large, dark bridge hidden deep in the wood comes as a sudden surprise.

You cross the River Windrush only once more, after Aston Farm, on a bridge by an old mill. The path climbs up to and follows the old railway for 100m before jumping down into fields again for a lovely finish through water meadows. The busy A429 has to be crossed and then you can walk down the street called Lansdowne, but it's best to turn right onto one last, gorgeous section of river-side path and into the centre of Bourton.

## MORE WALKS

### DIAMOND WAY

A 60-mile (96km) circular meander through the heart of this beguiling, essentially English region. Starting from Moreton-in-Marsh, it winds north to Chipping Campden, west to Guiting Power and south to Northleach before taking in Bourton-on-the-Water on the way home.

It's a pretty, rural route that also connects with many of the area's long-distance paths – the Cotswold, Monarch's and Macmillan Ways (see p148) – and you'll need around five days to do it justice. You'll find relevant transport and tourist information in this chapter's introduction, while Elizabeth Bell's *North Cotswold Diamond Way* guides you through the whole route. The walk itself is covered by the OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 45 *The Cotswolds*.

### THE WARDENS & WINDRUSH WAYS

This delightful, 27-mile (43km), two-day route – pretty much a region highlight – traces an oval from Bourton-on-the-Water in the east to the incredibly picturesque Winchcombe, on the Cotswold Way, in the west. Following the entire length of the Windrush and Wardens Ways, it also includes the Bourton & the Slaughters walk (p118). Adding the hilly western section, the extra day and an overnight stop in Winchcombe makes for a much more rounded journey.

Day 6 of our Cotswold Way description (p117) covers Winchcombe, while our Bourton & the Slaughters day walk (p118) features transport information. The map to guide you round this lovely piece of English wandering is the OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 45 *The Cotswolds*.

### AN AVON AMBLE

This half-day walk shepherds you out of Bath via the famous Crescent to climb the first hills of the Cotswold Way (see the Cotswold Way Day 1 description, p112). Once at Little Down Fort head down and then through the pretty village of North Stoke. Follow the road south out, admiring views of the River Avon on the way. At the busy A431 turn right then immediately left to join the footpath that parallels the River Avon for over 800m. Your legs then lead you past a picturesque weir, locks and a row of lovely old cottages. At a gloomy railway tunnel, hop up onto the raised old railway track itself. Built in the 1860s, this line linked Bristol to London before closing a century later – it's now a popular foot and cycle path. You leave it just under 1 mile later – immediately after crossing the bridge at Kelston Park. Take the steps on the left (north) that lead down to the River Avon Trail then turn right (east) to shadow the river all the way back into Bath.

This lush 8.5-mile (14km) wander is best accompanied by the OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 155 *Bristol & Bath*.

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