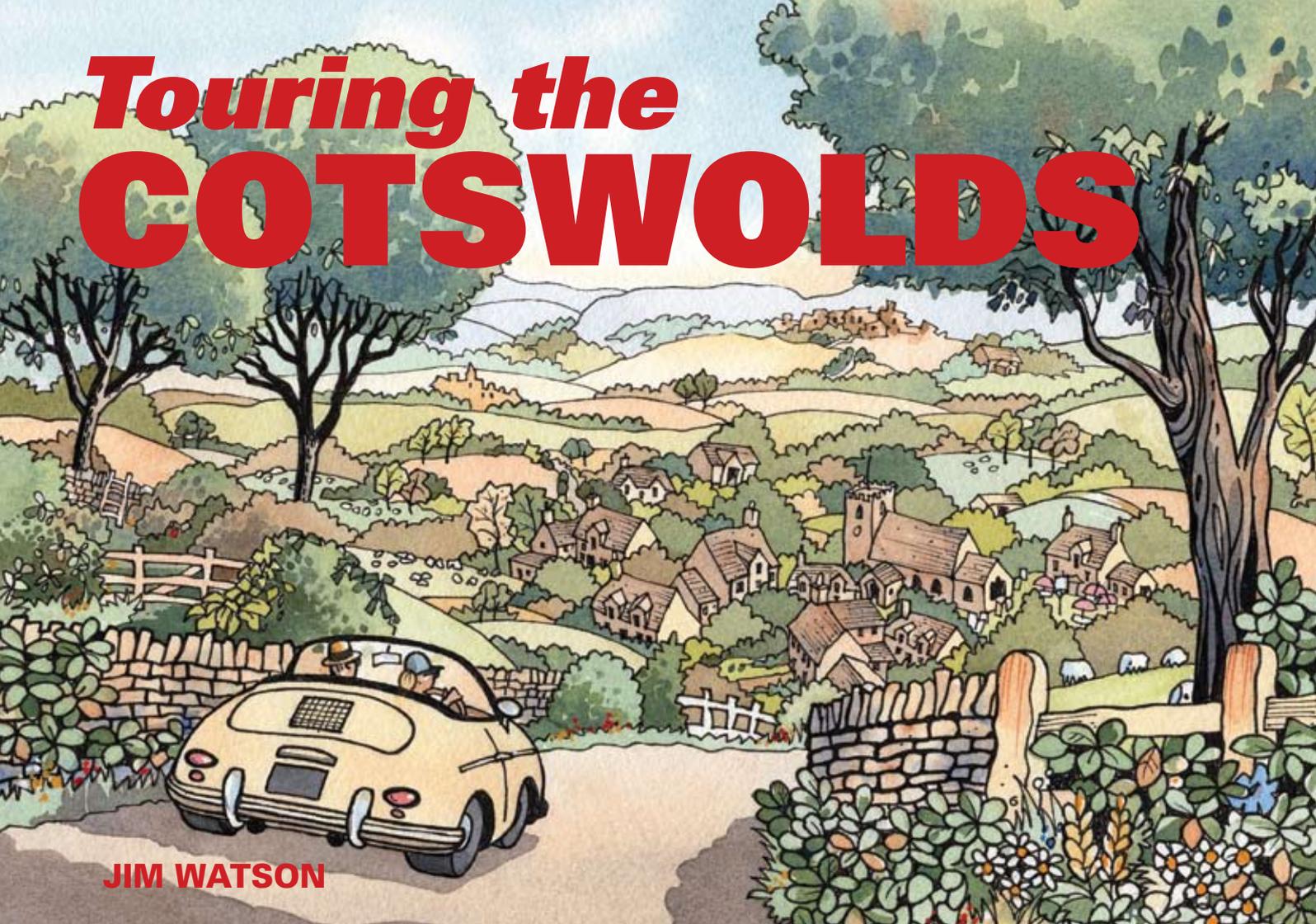


# *Touring the* **COTSWOLDS**



**JIM WATSON**

# *Touring the* **COTSWOLDS**

Jim Watson



*Lychgate, Bisley*



CITY BOOKS • BATH • ENGLAND



*A Cotswold doorway*

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*Naunton from the B4068*



## Introduction

The Cotswolds are unique, a timeless landscape of tranquil country lanes, rolling hills and deep wooded valleys. Its small towns and villages are places of warm, honey-coloured stone, steeped in history and with an undefinable 'Englishness' that makes you immediately feel at home. The favourite haunt of royalty and the landed gentry for centuries, and now also of latterday show-biz 'celebrities' and rock stars, the region has no precise boundaries. There are those who argue that it extends as far south as Bath, but for me its essence is concentrated most richly within the county of Gloucestershire.

This book takes you on eight tours of prime Cotswold country, visiting tourist hotspots and secluded villages with ancient churches, while enjoying expansive views of magnificent countryside.

The Cotswolds are also foodie heaven these days, attracting top awards, often for restaurants or inns out in the countryside,

many of which are included in the tours. Each route is around 20 miles in length which allows time for visiting attractions, strolling round villages and sampling the unrivalled range of gastronomic delights the region has to offer.

Bear in mind that traffic on main roads such as the A40 and A429 can be heavy in summer, especially at weekends, although the routes in this book are mainly along quiet back roads and lanes. However, some country lanes are quite narrow and passing oncoming vehicles is often a matter of negotiation. This is all part of the Cotswold experience and should be enjoyed and appreciated.

Take care and happy motoring!

*Jim Watson*

Rugby 2019

## TOUR 1

# Chipping Campden to Moreton-in-Marsh • 20 miles

Chipping Campden – Hidcote Boyce – Ilmington – Charingworth – Ebrington – Paxford – Blockley – Bourton-on-the-Hill – Moreton-in-Marsh.

### ATTRACTIONS

- 1 Kiftsgate Court Gardens
- 2 Hidcote
- 3 Mill Dene Garden
- 4 Batsford Arboretum
- 5 Sezincote

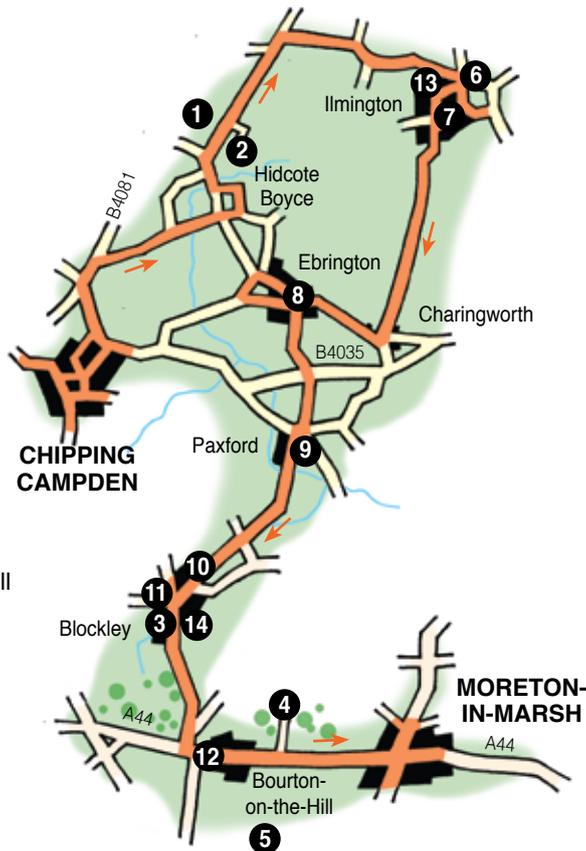
Most of the attractions have small shops and cafés or tearooms

### VILLAGE INNS

- 6 Red Lion, Ilmington
- 7 Howard Arms, Ilmington
- 8 Ebrington Arms, Ebrington
- 9 Churchill Arms, Paxford
- 10 Great Western Arms, Blockley
- 11 Crown Inn, Blockley
- 12 Horse & Groom, Bourton-on-the-Hill

### VILLAGE SHOPS & CAFÉS

- 13 Ilmington
- 14 Blockley



This tour begins at Chipping Campden, one of the great set piece Cotswolds towns. We head north to two world-famous gardens and on to Ilmington, most northerly of the Cotswold villages. Returning south we climb Windmill Hill for expansive views before descending through open farmland to Ebrington, with its multi award-winning inn and thatched cottages. We continue south to Paxford, which despite being only a small hamlet boasts a high-end menu at the local pub, The Churchill. Blockley is a large village, once the centre of a prosperous 19th-century silk industry and an excellent place to park and explore. Quiet country roads and lanes now give way to the busy A44, going through delightful Bourton-on-the-Hill and passing two more major horticultural attractions, Sezincote and Batsford Arboretum, before ending the tour at the market town of Moreton-in-Marsh.



Market Hall on High Street



The pay car park in The Square rapidly fills. Park at the roadside with consideration. Free parking at the school is available during school holidays and at weekends.

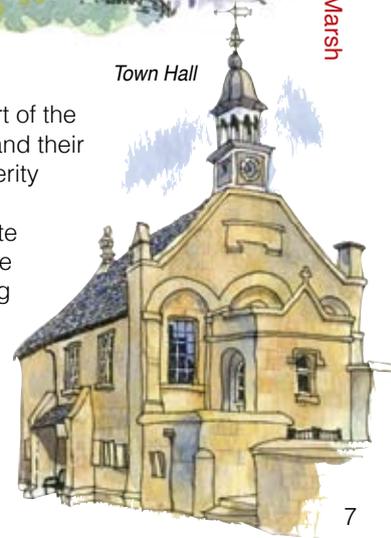
### Chipping Campden

Situated high on the escarpment, and loveliest of all the Cotswold towns, Chipping Campden is famed for its architecture, history, feel-good character and hospitality. The town dates back to the 12th century when it was an important trading centre. During the late Middle Ages, Cotswold wool was a famous commodity throughout Western Europe.

Make time for a stroll up and down the elegant High Street where, apart from the parked cars, everything is worth a look. Substantial buildings line the mile-long

street, each with its own distinct design but also part of the wondrous whole. Many date from the 14th century and their honey-coloured stone still retains the glow of prosperity and well-being.

Campden's bijou Town Hall occupies an island site on the edge of the small square. It's of uncertain age but parts date back to the 14th century. The building incorporates two buttresses, the only remaining parts of St Katherine's Chapel, built in 1180. A plaque on one corner marks the beginning (or end) of the Cotswold Way, a long-distance footpath that follows the escarpment all the way to Bath, one hundred miles south.



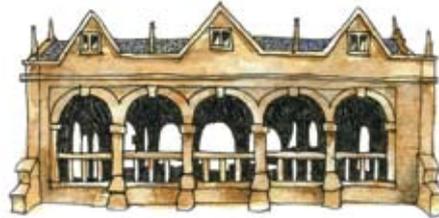
Town Hall



*North-west side of High Street*

The striking Market Hall in High Street, was a gift to the town by Sir Baptist Hicks in 1627 as a shelter for traders selling butter, cheese and poultry. Its simple design – five open arches long by two wide – and uneven floor of well-worn stones provides us an authentic glimpse of what life must have been like in a 17th-century Cotswold village.

Hicks, a wealthy textile merchant, was Member of Parliament for Tavistock and Tewkesbury, and in 1626 was made Viscount Campden.



*Market Hall*

An earlier resident, William Grevel, built Grevel House with its gargoyles, sundial and slender bay widows around 1390. His family had lived in Campden

for many years and made their fortune in the wool trade.

Across the road from Grevel House stands The Woolstaplers' Hall, built a few years earlier by another wealthy wool-trader, Robert Calf, as a place for merchants to gather and buy staples of Cotswold wool.

High Street boasts fine examples of Tudor, Jacobean and Georgian façades, but artfully hidden behind them are state-of-the-art hotels, boutiques and yes, even ordinary shops!

*South-east side of High Street*





*St James' Church tower*



*Campden House gateway*

Sir Baptist Hicks, a founder of the East India Company and one of the richest men in the country, was the town's greatest benefactor. He built Campden House in 1613, a flamboyant Italian-style mansion, which was destroyed by the Royalist Hicks family during the Civil War (1641-51) to prevent it falling into the hands of Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarians. The Jacobean lodges and gateway fronting open fields are all that remain today. Hicks further ensured his legacy by donating the pulpit and lectern in St James' Church, where he is grandly interred in the family chapel.

There was a Norman church on this site before 1180 but it took another 300 years before St James' began to look anything like the archetypal Cotswold wool church it does today. The airy nave was reconstructed about 1490 and the 120ft (36m) high west tower added around 1500.

## Food & Drink

Chipping Campden is particularly well-blessed with eating and drinking establishments. This is only a tiny guide on what the town has to offer:

The **Kings Hotel** overlooks the square and offers brunch, lunch, cream tea or full evening meal.

The popular **Eight Bells Inn** in Church Street provides a genuine old English experience with open fires and candlelit tables plus a choice of local ales and ciders on tap and the finest seasonal produce.

Housed in a five-hundred-year-old building, **Huxleys** boasts a wonderful terrace overlooking the town square. It's an intimate café and wine bar with old oak beams, a roaring log fire in winter and comfy leather sofas.

**Buttys** at the lower end of High Street prepare fresh sandwiches, breakfast baguettes and salad boxes made while you wait.

For something completely different try **Michael's Mediterranean**, a Greek restaurant on High Street with a string of good reviews.



## The Tour

Leave Chipping Campden at the northeast end of the town on the B4035. When the road forks take the right hand B4081 signed Hidcote, then the next right into narrow Furze Lane signed Hidcote Boyce. Cross farmland for about 1½ miles. At the crossroads go straight across, ignoring the sign to Hidcote Bartram, then take the next left through the pleasant hamlet of Hidcote Boyce. At the T-junction at the end of the single street turn right, signed Hidcote Gardens and Kiftgate Court.

Situated on the edge of the Cotswold Scarp, Kiftgate Court Gardens were laid out after the First World War by Mrs Heather Muir. Her daughter and granddaughter have continued the development and the family still live in the house. Kiftgate House is largely Victorian, with a remarkable 18th-century portico, transported piece by piece from Mickleton Manor on a specially constructed light railway.

Hidcote

Kiftgate Court



### 1 Kiftgate Court Gardens

Magnificent situation with stunning views. Rare shrubs, plants and an exceptional collection of roses, including the largest rose bush in England. Water garden and tearoom. Gift and plant shop.

**Open:** check website

**Admission charge**

**Tel:** 01386 438777

**www.kiftgate.co.uk**

### 2 Hidcote

World-famous garden with a seasonal colourful tapestry of narrow paths, secret spots and intricately designed 'rooms'. Café, shop and plant centre.

**Open:** check website

**Admission charge**

**Tel:** 01386 438333

**www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hidcote**

Hidcote is an Arts & Crafts masterpiece, often described as 'the greatest garden of the 20th century'. It was created from eleven acres of largely open Cotswold hill country around a 17th-century manor house by the revered horticulturist, Major Lawrence Johnston, who dedicated 40 years of his life to its creation.

The estate was the first property acquired by the National Trust (in 1947), said to be purely for its garden. The views of distant Bredon Hill and the Malverns across the valleys of the Severn and Avon also draw the crowds. A keen gardener could happily spend all day here.



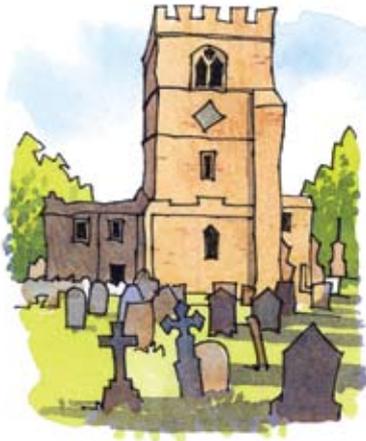
From Kiftsgate Court continue on the straight and narrow road ahead for about a mile to a T-junction. Bear right here into Admington Lane, signed Ilmington. Stay on this road for around two miles into the village.

## Ilmington

Situated in the far north of the Cotswolds – actually in Warwickshire – Ilmington is a widespread, handsome and welcoming village at the foot of Ilmington Downs. Its wealth of old houses and cottages – an attractive mixture of stone and brick, thatch and slate – have mellowed over the years to picturesque perfection. The village is criss-crossed by a tangle of minor roads, lanes and footpaths. An hour or so exploring their nooks and crannies will never be time wasted.



Looking to Frog Lane



St Mary's Church

St Mary the Virgin Church on Back Street has existed in some form since the early 11th century and its Norman belltower is considered to be one of the finest in Warwickshire. Its peal of eight bells have been heard on Radio 4.

The church's oak pews were carved by the Yorkshire furniture-maker Robert Thompson and have 11 of his trademark carved mice hidden amongst them. The embroidered Apple Map (a copy of medieval maps) is another church treasure, which celebrates the 38 varieties of apples grown in the village. St Mary's is open daily from 9am.



The Red Lion serves Hook Norton beer from the local brewery near Chipping Norton, quality craft ales, and a huge range of artisan gins from all over the world.

As a non-alcoholic antidote try their Grizzly Bear coffee, made from ethically produced Arabica beans. There's also weekly live music nights, with the landlord often joining in on guitar.



*The Red Lion*

## 6 Red Lion

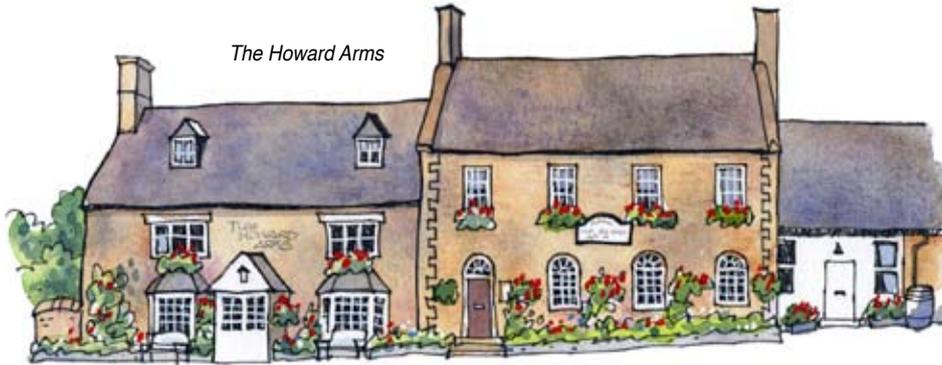
Traditional village pub with the emphasis on drinking and banter with friends. Simple bar snacks available that are 'quick to serve but wholesome and tasty'. Dog friendly.

**Open for food: Fri-Sun noon-2.30pm**

**Tue-Sat 6-8.30pm**

**Tel: 01608 682089**

**[www.theredlionilmington.co.uk](http://www.theredlionilmington.co.uk)**



*The Howard Arms*

## 7 Howard Arms

Popular 400-year-old Cotswold stone inn and restaurant with eight luxury bed & breakfast rooms overlooking the peaceful village green. Acclaimed for the quality of its menus, Sunday roasts and hearty breakfasts.

**Open: Mon-Sat 11am-11pm**

**Sun noon-10.30pm**

**Tel: 01608 682226**

**[www.howardarms.com](http://www.howardarms.com)**

The Howard Arms is named after the Lordship of Ilmington Manor which resides with Lord Howard of Corby, a member of the Flowers family who still reside in the Manor. Edward Fordham Flowers founded Flowers Brewery in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1831 and his son, Charles, was founder of the original Shakespeare Theatre in 1875.

The main building of the Howard Arms dates from the late 16th century and has a bar with a low ceiling and a shiny flagstone floor. The Stratford Gold Ale is particularly recommended. The pub also has an attractive back garden with picnic tables scattered across the lawn. It featured in *The Times* 'Britain's 30 best summer pubs' in 2018.

Situated in the former Catholic Church on the Upper Green, Ilmington shop and café is a community owned cooperative owned by around half of the over 700 village population, who bought shares with a minimum investment of £10. All members have an equal say in how the business is run, irrespective of their level of investment. A team of volunteers welcome visitors, walkers and cyclists seven days a week, with the café closed on Mondays.

Apart from its more obvious picturesque attributes the village was for many years also acclaimed as the home of Morris Dancing, an ancient rural pursuit which involves bells, handkerchiefs, flowered hats and the banging of sticks, accompanied by a melodeon and performed outdoors, predictably close to a pub.

In one respect (and only one!) captivating Ilmington is like Morris Dancing – once seen, never forgotten.



*Ilmington shop and café*

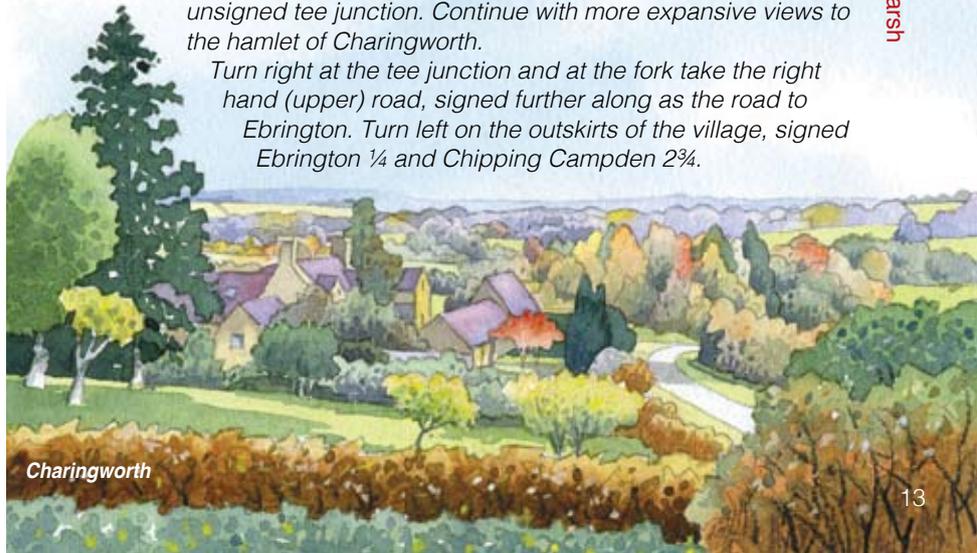


*Leave Ilmington, climbing Foxcote Hill past the shop to some fabulous views across open countryside. Beyond Southfield Farm take the left turn at an unsigned tee junction. Continue with more expansive views to the hamlet of Charingworth.*

*Turn right at the tee junction and at the fork take the right hand (upper) road, signed further along as the road to Ebrington. Turn left on the outskirts of the village, signed Ebrington ¼ and Chipping Campden 2¾.*



*The view east from  
Windmill Hill*



*Charingworth*

*Ebrington thatch*

## Ebrington

An attractive hillside village, known to many locals as 'Yubberton', Ebrington dates back to the 1400s, while the local church, St Eadburgh's, has Saxon foundations and is noted in the *Domesday Book*. The highly-rated primary school dates to Victorian times.

Ebrington Manor has been home to the Fortesque family since the 15th century. There are many monuments to the family in the church, including one to Sir John Fortescue in his robes as Lord Chief Justice.

Head to the centre of the village where there's a small tree-shaded green and the multi award-winning Ebrington Arms. Turn right here and climb the hill past a series of picturesque thatched cottages to the village hall, where you can park and take in the wonderful views across the rolling Cotswold hills.

## 8 Ebrington Arms

This delightful 17th-century inn has won a clutch of CAMRA Pub of the Year awards, featured in the *Good Food Guide* and was rated 'The UK's number one village pub' by *The Times* in 2017. It also has its own craft beer range, serves fine food and boasts five luxurious B&B rooms. Traditional in style with flagstones, low beams and roaring fires.

**Open: Daily 9am until close**

**Tel: 01386 593223**

**[www.theebringtonarms.co.uk](http://www.theebringtonarms.co.uk)**

*Ebrington Arms*



Turn left down May Lane passing the pub and go over the B4035 into an unclassified road signed Paxford 1¼. Turn right at the next T-junction to Paxford.

Swing left through the small settlement, following a sign 'Blockley 2'. Where the road forks, take the narrow one left, signed Aston Magna. This takes you along the tightly packed and bendy village street to the picturesque Churchill Arms and the pretty little Paxford Mission Church across the road. Turn left past the church and continue along the B4479.

## Paxford



The Churchill Arms and Paxford Mission Church

## 8 Churchill Arms, Paxford

Award-winning owner and head chef, Nick Devereil-Smith offers quality modern cuisine in this 17th-century village pub. There's also elegant en-suite bedrooms and predictably a beer named after the Great Man himself.

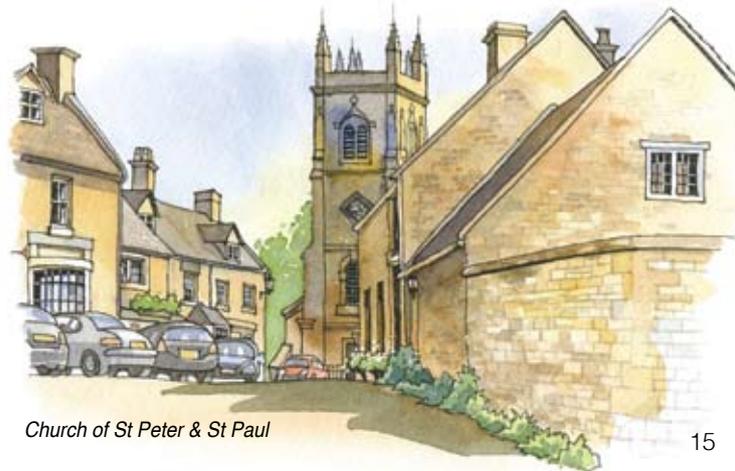
**Open: Tue to Sat 12.30-3pm & 6-9pm. Sun noon-4pm**  
**Closed Mondays**  
**Tel: 01386 593159**  
**www.churchillarms.com**



Go over a railway crossing and pass Northcot brick works. A further 1¼ miles brings you to Blockley, a village worthy of a stop and walk around. Go past the Great Western Arms and turn right into St George's terrace, then turn left signed 'Blockley village only'. You may be able to park at the roadside in Bell Lane by the park. The village has no official car park.

## Blockley

Once the centre of a prosperous 19th-century silk industry, this large, handsome village of Cotswold stone is tiered on the steep slopes of the high wolds above a rushing brook. The church of St Peter & St Paul has a Norman chancel, three 15th-century windows and a Jacobean pulpit. The Gothic tower was added around 1725 by the local quarry-owner, Thomas Woodward. The medieval bishops of Worcester, wisely made Blockley their summer residence.



Church of St Peter & St Paul

A substantial terrace of mainly 18th and early 19th-century houses flows down the hill from the church to the Crown Hotel. There was once 20 shops in this now quiet street and the village had eight pubs.

Blockley boasts a community run shop and café, and the village is an interesting and attractive place to walk around – but you do have to like hills!



High Street, Blockley



### 10 Great Western Arms

Village local with hearty pub grub and local ales from Hook Norton Brewery.

**Open:** Check website

**Tel:** 01386 700362

**www.thegreatwesternarms.co.uk**

### 11 Crown Hotel

Set in an ancient building with old world comfort and service, the Crown boasts 24 en-suite bedrooms and the 'Rafters' restaurant.

**Open:** Phone for details

**Tel:** 01386 700245

**www.crownhotelblockley.co.uk**

### 3 Mill Dene Garden

Another garden, but this one is on a more intimate and personal scale. It's described as 'witty, surprising and beautiful, as well as being horticulturally excellent'. Here you can chill out with a cream tea by the tranquil mill pond with trout, ducks and the resident kingfisher for company. Small car park.

**Open:** check website

**Admission charge**

**Tel:** 01386 700457

**www.milldenegarden.co.uk**



Return to the B4479 crossroads near the Great Western Arms and turn right, going down the hill signed Bourton-on-the-Hill. At a T-junction turn left onto the busy A44, signed Oxford. Pass the Horse & Groom and go down the hill through the village.



*The Horse and Groom*

## 12 Horse and Groom

Long-established in a handsome Georgian building of Cotswold stone, this award-winning and hugely popular free house has a fine reputation for classic British cuisine and the laid back charm of a traditional Cotswold country pub. There's five sumptuous bedrooms, log fires in the winter and a welcome for dogs in the main bar areas.

**Open:** Check website  
**Tel:** 01386 700413  
**www.horseandgroom.info**

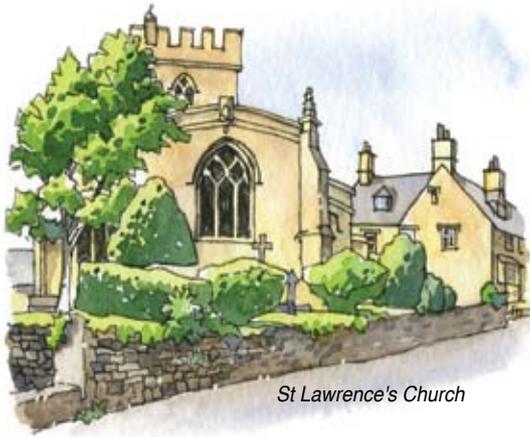
## Bourton-on-the-Hill



*Cottages on the A44*

Once owned by the Abbots of Westminster, who kept large flocks of sheep on nearby Bourton Downs, Bourton-on-the-Hill developed in the 17th century. It's located on a steep hill, once part of the turnpiked London, Oxford and Worcester 'Great Road', now the busy and noisy A44.

Pretty terraces of classic Cotswold cottages line the roadside, clustered around the warm stone of St Lawrence's Church. Bourton House stands at the bottom of the hill with a fine barn dated 1570 in the gardens, which are occasionally open to the public.



St Lawrence's Church

St Lawrence's Church dates back to 1157, though it's been altered and added to over the centuries. Massive columns inside the building reveal its Norman origins.

A clock in the tower was installed in 1904 to replace one that had been there since 1686 and a peal of six bells dates from 1677 to 1873.

Parking is possible with consideration in the streets off Main Street but, apart from the splendid Horse & Groom, the village has no other facilities.



*Continue along the A44 and you soon reach the long driveway to Batsford Arboretum leading off to the left. The lodge entrance to Sezincote House is opposite. Another mile or so along the A44 brings you to the end of this tour at Moreton-in-Marsh.*

Sezincote House



#### 4 Batsford Arboretum

The country's largest private collection of trees and shrubs, spread attractively across 56 acres of hilly countryside. Originally set out in the Chinese and Japanese wild style by Algernon Freeman-Mitford, grandfather of the Mitford sisters who later lived at the house during World War One. Café and gift shop.

**Open daily Mon-Sat: 9am-5pm**

**Sun 10am-5pm**

**Admission charge to arboretum**

**Tel: 01386 701441**

**[www.batsarb.co.uk.co.uk](http://www.batsarb.co.uk.co.uk)**

#### 5 Sezincote House & Garden

Part of a 4,500 acre, family-run estate, Sezincote House is an amazing 200-year-old Mogul Indian palace, set in a romantic landscape of temples, grottoes, waterfalls and canals reminiscent of the Taj Mahal and said to be the inspiration for Brighton Pavilion.

**Restricted opening**

**Check website for times**

**Admission charge (credit and debit cards are not accepted)**

**Tel: 01386 700444**

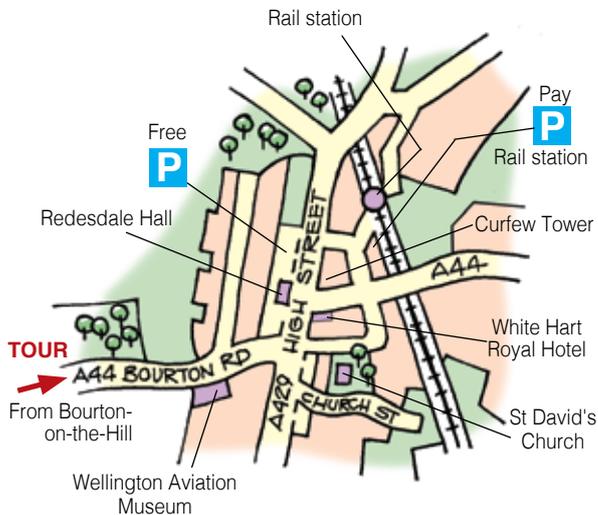
**[www.sezincote.co.uk](http://www.sezincote.co.uk)**

## Moreton-in-Marsh

Situated on the cross roads of the Roman Fosse Way, now the A429, and the A44, the main road between Worcester and Oxford, the unusually wide High Street of the town of Moreton-in-Marsh has been busy with traffic between the Midlands and the south-west for centuries. Modern traffic is even heavier and the town's stone-built shops, houses and old coaching inns face each other across a frequently crowded highway.

Moreton developed as a market town in the 1220s, and 18th-century turnpike road building brought increased prosperity. Local Inns provided changes of horses for the coaching trade with lodgings for drivers and passengers, usually the nobility. Many of the fine buildings in the High Street date from this period. Business boomed from 1853 when the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway opened with a station in the town, which now provides a direct link to London. A market is still held in the High Street on Tuesdays.

Parking in the town can be difficult but you can usually park (currently free) in the High Street on non-market days. Avoid Bank Holidays.



*Houses in High Street*

Once surrounded by low-level, swampy land, Moreton was often flooded, which may explain the present name (never Moreton-in-THE-Marsh!). Despite major work over the years to protect it, heavy rain brought flooding to parts of the town as recently as 2007.

The White Hart Royal Hotel occupies a corner site with its front door on High Street and a side entrance on Oxford Street. This is the oldest part of town, established in the early 1200s by the abbots of Worcester, who owned the land. Formally The White Hart, the hotel dates to the 1400s with its original wattle-and daub construction still visible inside. Charles I is

known to have sheltered here on two occasions during the Civil war. The Mann institute across the road in Oxford Street was built by Miss Edith Mann, in memory of her father, Dr John Mann (son of the first Congregational minister), as a working men's club in 1802.

A striking Palladian townhouse, the Steps, at the southern end of High Street, was built in the mid-18th century, while the Curfew Tower on the corner of Oxford Street dates back to the Norman Conquest. The bell, dated 1633, was rung nightly until the 1860s to order people back to their homes to 'cover fire' for the night. It was also at one time the town's 'lock-up' (jail).



Curfew Tower

