

Cotswolds Drive Guide

The classic villages loop, around 60 miles through honey-stone England

Interactive route map + GPX download: the full Cotswolds scenic drives loop, with all 7 stops plotted, is on our website. Download the GPX file to load the route into Google Maps, a sat nav or your phone.

At a Glance

Stage	Road	Highlights
Broadway	A44 / B4632	Broadway Tower, honey-stone High Street
Chipping Campden	A429	Wool town, Market Hall, Court Barn Museum
Stanton & Snowhill	Minor lanes	Untouched streets, Snowhill Manor, lavender
Stow-on-the-Wold	B4068	Antiques, St Edward's yew door, 1646 battle
The Slaughters	Off B4068	River Eye, water mill, riverside walk
Bourton-on-the-Water	A429 (Fosse Way)	Windrush bridges, Model Village
Bibury	A429 / B4425	Arlington Row, trout farm, River Coln

Safety & Driving Tips

The roads between villages are mostly narrow B roads and country lanes, often single track with passing places and bordered by dry-stone walls. Keep your speed down, use the passing places, and be ready to reverse for oncoming traffic. Parking is the biggest challenge in honeypot villages like Bibury and Bourton-on-the-Water, so arrive before 10am or after 4pm and never block lanes or driveways. A small or medium car suits the narrow lanes best. Fuel up in Stow-on-the-Wold, Moreton-in-Marsh or Cirencester, as stations are scarce in between. Drive on the left.

Birmingham, Bristol & Heathrow Airport Access

The Cotswolds sit within about an hour of three major airports, each an ideal place to pick up a hire car. Birmingham Airport is around an hour from the northern villages via the A44. Bristol is about an hour from the southern Cotswolds via the M5 and A46, handy if you are combining with Bath. Heathrow is roughly 90 minutes to the southeast up the M40. Wherever you land, the villages are within easy reach.

Book your hire car at getcarhire.com and compare all the main suppliers in one search, with insurance and taxes included.

Food, Pubs & Places to Stay

The Cotswolds are famous for historic coaching inns and country pubs serving hearty British food. Stops are listed in driving order around the loop. Many of the best inns also offer rooms, so they double as places to stay.

Broadway

The Lygon Arms, a historic coaching inn on the High Street, for its Steak, Ale and Stilton Pie and afternoon tea. The inn also has rooms for an overnight stay.

Chipping Campden

The Eight Bells, a 14th-century inn built for the church stonemasons, serves doorstep sandwiches, fish and chips and renowned Sunday lunches, and offers rooms. The Lygon Arms here is another good option.

Stow-on-the-Wold

The Porch House, reputedly the oldest inn in England (dating to 947 AD), for fish pie, steak and homemade puddings, with characterful rooms above the inn.

Bourton-on-the-Water

The Mousetrap Inn, a cosy spot just off the main throng, for fish and chips and a hearty Sunday roast away from the crowds. Riverside guesthouses and inns line the village for an overnight stay.

Bibury

The Swan Hotel, a grand former coaching inn beside the River Coln, for riverside dining, afternoon tea and the local speciality, smoked Bibury trout. It is also a characterful place to stay.

A Little History on the Drive

The Cotswolds reward those who know the story behind the stone. The A429 you drive follows the Roman Fosse Way, laid around AD 47. The honey-gold buildings were funded by the medieval wool trade, whose merchants built the great wool churches. Stow-on-the-Wold saw the last battle of the First Civil War in 1646, after which Royalist prisoners were held in St Edward's Church. And in the Victorian era William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement fell in love with the region, with Morris calling Bibury the most beautiful village in England.

Menus, opening hours and room availability change, especially out of season, so it is worth checking ahead before relying on any one stop.