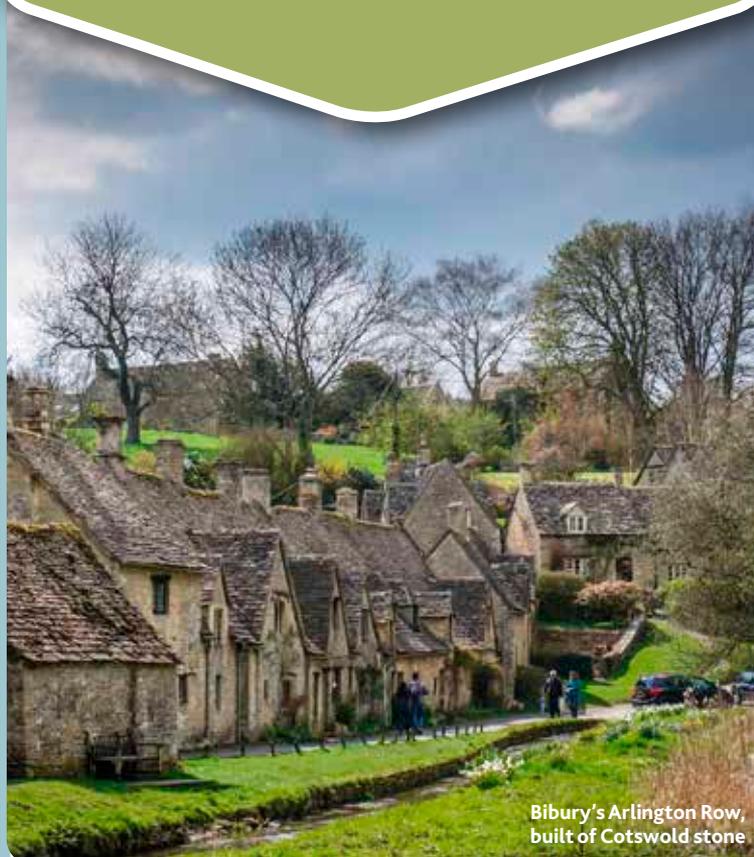


Best of the Cotswolds



Bibury's Arlington Row, built of Cotswold stone

Undulating gracefully across six English counties, the Cotswolds region is a delightful tangle of golden-hued villages, thatched cottages, evocative medieval churches and honey-coloured mansions.

SIGHTS **Arlington Row**

(Bibury, near Cirencester)

Bibury's most famous attraction is this ravishing row of cottages, which has featured in movies such as *Stardust*. They were built as a woolstore in the 14th century and converted into workers' cottages in the 17th century. They overlook Rack Isle, a low-lying marshy area once used to dry cloth and graze cattle, and now a wildlife refuge. Coach parties swarm to admire the cottages and stroll the flower-lined lane alongside them. The row decorates the inside front covers of UK passports.

Corinium Museum **(coriniummuseum.org; Park St, Cirencester)**

Most of this wonderful museum is

dedicated to Cirencester's Roman past; reconstructed rooms, videos and interactive displays bring the era to life. Among the highlights are the 2nd-century AD Jupiter column, a carved capital depicting Bacchus and his drunken mates, and beautiful floor mosaics, unearthed locally, including a 4th-century example depicting mythical lyre-player Orpheus charming animals.

Cotswold Falconry Centre **(cotswold-falconry.co.uk; Batsford Park)**

Home to more than 150 birds of prey, the centre stages displays at 11.30am, 1.30pm and 3pm daily (plus 4.30pm April to October). The birds fly best on windy days. Hands-on experiences include a one-hour 'Flying Start' during which visitors get to fly hawks.

Old Mill

(oldmill-lowerslaughter.com; Lower Slaughter)

Right on the River Eye, the Old Mill houses a café and crafts shop, as well as a small museum, where you can find out about the building's former life as a water-powered flour mill. A watermill is recorded as operating in this location in the Domesday Book (1086).

Rollright Stones

(rollrightstones.co.uk; Great Rollright)

Linked by a footpath through open fields, the ancient Rollright Stones stand to either side of an unnamed road four miles north of Chipping Norton. The most remarkable, the King's Men, consists of the weathered remnants of a stone circle that surrounded a Neolithic ceremonial centre in around 2500BC, while the taller King Stone probably marked a Bronze Age cemetery, a millennium later.

Sudeley Castle

(sudeleycastle.co.uk; near Winchcombe)

During its thousand-year history, this magnificent castle has welcomed many a monarch, including Richard III, Henry VIII and Charles I. Half a mile southeast of Winchcombe, it is most famous as the home and final resting place of Catherine Parr (Henry VIII's widow), who lived here with her fourth husband, Thomas Seymour. In fact, it's the only private house in England where a queen is buried – Catherine lies in its Perpendicular Gothic St Mary's Church. It also has 10 splendid gardens.

EATING

Badgers Hall

BAKERY £

(badgershall.com; High St, Chipping Campden)

Set in a glorious old mansion facing the market hall, this definitive Cotswold tearoom is renowned for its no-holds-barred afternoon teas, served from 2.30pm onwards. Lunch is also a treat, starring the most wonderful cheese scones you've ever tasted. Guests staying in the cosy B&B rooms upstairs (£140) get to sample its baking all week.

Mount Inn

PUB FOOD £££

(themountinn.co.uk; Stanton)

Mount Inn revels in glorious hilltop views above pretty, honey-washed Stanton, which is just off the Cotswolds Way three and a half miles from Broadway. Not only is the inn placed in an idyllic location, but it also serves great pub food: hearty country favourites, prepared with modern flair. Menus include breaded local St Eadburgha cheese, beer-battered haddock, gammon steaks and delicious mushroom-halloumi burgers.

Wheatsheaf

PUB FOOD £££

(cotswoldswheatsheaf.com; West End, Northleach)

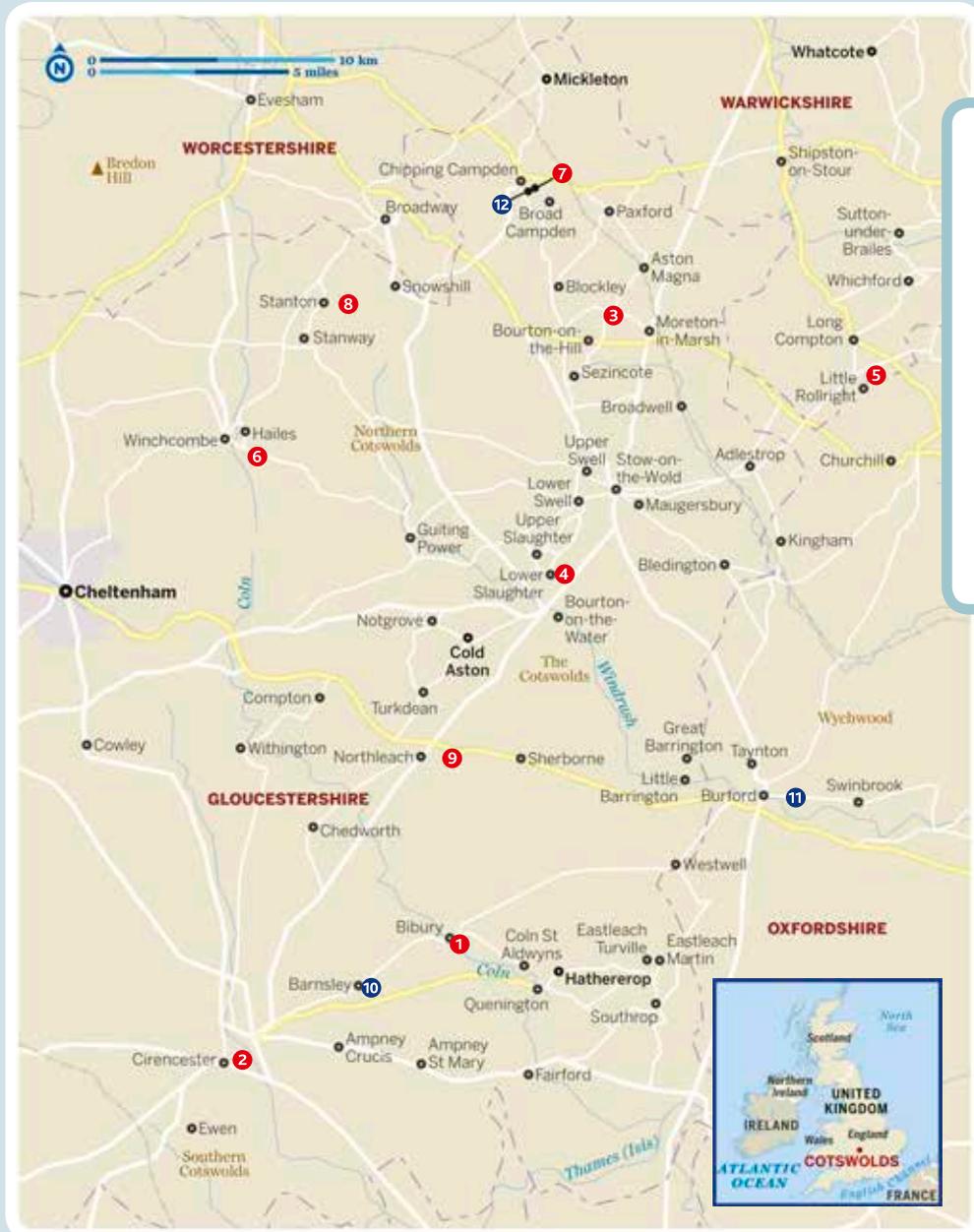
Lively, stylish and laid back, this revamped coaching inn – where diners dig into excellent, elegant seasonal British dishes with a contemporary kick – is a huge hit among locals. The inventive, unpretentious menu is delightful, offering seasonal risottos, shellfish, richly flavoured pies and succulent steaks, as well as essential aperitifs. It also has appealing old-meets-new rooms upstairs.

Good to know

The month of May brings three sporting events to the region. Chipping Campden hosts the **Cotswold Olimpick Games**, first celebrated in 1612 and still featuring many of the original events, such as tug o' war (olimpickgames.co.uk). At the **Woolsack Races** in Tetbury, competitors race up and down a steep hill carrying a sack of wool (tetburywoolsack.co.uk). And finally, in a 200-year-old tradition, **Cheese Rolling** near Painswick sees people tumble down a hill in pursuit of a 7lb–9lb round of Double Gloucester cheese.



BEST OF THE COTSWOLDS



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- 3 Cotswold Falconry Centre
- 4 Old Mill
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EATING

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SLEEPING

- 10 Barnsley House
- 11 Star Cottage
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TOP PICKS

Sleeping

Volunteer Inn

Best for walkers passing through (thevolunteerinn.net; Chipping Campden)

Above a busy, locally loved pub, this clutch of simple rooms – not all are en suite – is a favourite with Cotswold Way walkers and cyclists. Maharaja, its popular Indian restaurant (mains £9.50 to £15), covers all the classics along with unusual fish, good veggie and more adventurous dishes involving local ingredients such as lamb shank.

£ Star Cottage

Best for a B&B option (burfordbedandbreakfast.co.uk; near Burford)

A mile northeast of Burford, this wonderful old Cotswold cottage has two comfortable, characterful en suite rooms done up in tastefully creative blues, whites and greys, with lovely quilted curtains. The smaller room holds a grand canopied bed; the larger has a beautiful bathroom; and the back barn hosts a separate four-person apartment.

££ Barnsley House

Best for beautiful grounds (barnsleyhouse.com; Barnsley, near Cirencester)

For indulgence and romance, this 1697 country house and its famously beautiful gardens are hard to beat. Each of its 18 rooms is individually styled; some have lavish oriental touches or in-room baths, and most are elegantly understated. Facilities include a spa, a pool, a cinema, the Potager restaurant and the knowingly re-named, popular Village Pub.

£££



FURTHER READING

Our *England* travel guide (£17.99) covers the region in its chapter on Oxford, Cotswolds & Around. Download it as a stand-alone PDF for £2.99.