



Based in Cheltenham Spa, England's most complete Regency town, this delightful tour explores the Cotswolds, described as "the most English and least spoiled of all our countrysides" by JB Priestley. Even today there is nowhere quite as quintessentially English as The Cotswolds, an area of outstanding natural beauty with tranquil, honey coloured villages and rolling hills. This charming blend of sleepy villages, bustling market towns and breath-taking natural scenery gives a stunning backdrop to the myriad of interesting and historic places to visit.

FRIDAY 6 APRIL Departing from Oxted at 9.00am and making a stop for coffee along the way we arrive late morning in the historic and elegant town of Cheltenham. Here we shall be at leisure to find lunch and browse before continuing on to our hotel.

SATURDAY 7 APRIL Today we shall be met at the hotel by a local guide and taken on a full day tour of the Cotswolds, renowned for being the epitome of the English countryside, with gentle hills criss-crossed with stone walls and dotted with charming villages. Our tour will take us to Broadway which, as its name

suggests, is dominated by a wide main street. In the northern Cotswolds all roads lead to the hill-top town of Stow-on-the-Wold and this is where we shall make our way for lunch. Stow's town square is large and impressive, with various houses, shops and inns around the edge, all built in the local stone. Our drive this afternoon will take us on via Burford where the steep main street leads down to the medieval bridge over the River Windrush and back to our hotel.

SUNDAY 8 APRIL After breakfast we make our way to Slimbridge Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. The



vision of naturalist and artist Sir Peter Scott, it is home to an outstanding array of wildlife including the world's largest collection of swans, geese and ducks and many rare and endangered species. Here we shall be free to enjoy the award-winning visitor centre overlooking nationally and internationally protected wetlands, see the amazing views over the River Severn from the Sloane Observation Tower and relax as we amble through 50 hectares of landscaped grounds. Early afternoon we make our way to Berkeley Castle, possibly the most outstanding example of Medieval domestic architecture in the country. The most remarkable thing about the Castle is that for nine centuries, the building, the Berkeley family, the archives (which go back to the 12th Century), the contents, the estate and the town have all survived together. Here we shall have a guided tour of this unique building followed by time to view the gardens.

MONDAY 9 APRIL Departing after breakfast we commence our homeward journey, making a stop at Highclere Castle, home to the Carnarvon family since 1679 and with a fascinating connection to ancient Egypt, as the 5th Earl, with Howard Carter, discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922. There is an exhibition that commemorates this historic event. Described as the largest occupied mansion in Hampshire and the finest inhabited Victorian residence in all England, the extravagant interiors range from church Gothic through Moorish flamboyance and Rococo revival to solid masculinity in the Long Library. The gardens feature great stretches of glasshouse in a walled garden, magnificent parkland designed by 'Capability' Brown and a Secret Garden with a beautiful curving lawn surrounded by densely planted herbaceous borders. Downton Abbey, the major drama series from ITV was filmed on location at Highclere Castle. Following our visit we continue our homewards journey, arriving early evening.

What's included

THISTLE HOTEL

Cheltenham

All bedrooms are en suite with TV, telephone & hospitality tray.

3 nights Dinner, Bed & Breakfast.

Time to explore Cheltenham

Full day guided tour of the Cotswolds

Entry to Berkeley Castle, with guided tour

Entry to Slimbridge Wetlands Trust

Entry to Highclere Castle & Egyptology Exhibition

£380.00 PER PERSON

Single Room Supp: £60.00

