

Shakespeare's Way Guided Trail

Tour Style: Trails

Destinations: Cotswolds, United Kingdom & England

Trip code: BNLSK

Trip Walking Grade: 2



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Follow Shakespeare from magnificent Oxford to iconic Stratford through lovely Oxfordshire and Cotswold countryside. Discover historic Blenheim Park and delightful Cotswold towns and villages such as Chipping Norton and Halford. We may even have a little bit of fun with the bard's works on our journey.

HOLIDAYS HIGHLIGHTS

- Follow Shakespeare from Oxford to Stratford through lovely Oxfordshire and Cotswold countryside
- Discover historic Blenheim Park and delightful Cotswold towns and villages
- We may even have a little bit of fun with the bard's works en route

TRIP SUITABILITY

This Guided Walking/Hiking Trail is graded 2 with walks/hikes on good paths, though often quite a distance each day. It is your responsibility to ensure you have the relevant fitness required to join this holiday.

Fitness

We want you to be confident that you can meet the demands of each walking day and get the most out of your holiday. Please be sure you can manage the mileage and ascent detailed in the daily itineraries. It is important for your own enjoyment, and that of your fellow guests that you can maintain the pace.

It makes a lot of sense to spend time getting some additional exercise before your holiday. We suggest that you try to fit in a number of longer walks, including some on hilly terrain. Other exercises such as cycling, jogging and swimming are also excellent for developing increased stamina.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

Day 2: Oxford To Woodstock

We see where Shakespeare stayed in Oxford and briefly explore the main sights of this famous University City. Then, we head along the River Thames and Oxford Canal towpaths and across farmland into the Oxfordshire countryside. We visit Winston Churchill's grave at Bladon and arrive at the fascinating town of Woodstock.

Distance: 11 miles (18 km), with 125 feet (40 m) of ascent

Day 3: Woodstock To Enstone

We start with a walk through Capability Brown's landscape at Blenheim Park, with views towards Blenheim Palace. Farmland and a brief section of Roman Road bring us to another estate, Ditchley Park, again with Churchill connections. Then we encounter woodland and a lovely village and church on our way to Enstone.

Distance:

10 ½ miles (17 km), with 375 feet (120 m) of ascent.

Day 4: Rest Day

A day without any walks programmed and the opportunity to explore the local area independently.

Day 5: Enstone To Long Compton

Continuing to follow the River Glyme towards its source, we encounter the sites of medieval villages and more lovely woodland. We pass through the typical Cotswold town of Chipping Norton, followed by more Cotswold villages, before reaching a delightful rural church at Little Rollright. We have an optional one mile diversion to see the Bronze Age Rollright Stones (think of them as an intimate version of Stonehenge) before reaching Long Compton.

Distance: 12½ miles (19.5km), with 840 feet (270m) of ascent.

Day 6: Long Compton To Halford

Emerging from the morning woodland we will have fine views looking down on the Midland Plain. The succession of delightful villages and peaceful farmland continues. After a brief look at the lively market town of Shipton-on-Stour we have easy walking on lanes to our day's destination.

Distance: 12½ miles (20.5km), with 750 feet (240m) of ascent.

Day 7: Halford To Stratford-upon-Avon

We follow the River Stour walking through woodland and farmland. On our approach to Stratford we can visit Holy Trinity Church, where Shakespeare was christened, married and buried, before walking through the town with which he is most associated, to finish our journey next to the house where he was born.

Distance: 11 ½ miles (18 km), with 310 feet (100 m) of ascent.

Day 8: Departure Day

ACCOMMODATION

Harrington House

In one of the prettiest spots in the Cotswolds, Harrington House provides a stylish escape in the form of a traditional country retreat, with the trimmings and flourishes you'd expect. All set in a stately Georgian house that mirrors the mellow architectural styles of the Cotswolds and retains many of its original features; the most breathtaking is the sunny walled garden, surrounded by attractive landscaped gardens. As well as 29 bedrooms, two lounges, a cosy bar and pleasant dining room, there are further feathers in this handsome house's hat. Quintessential English countryside, described by JB Priestly as, 'the most English and least spoiled of all our countryside', is just a short stroll away with pretty villages such as Chipping Campden and the Slaughters, rolling landscapes and classic trails from the Cotswold Way to the Gloucestershire Way and Monarch Way waiting for you to discover them.

At The House

- Excellent boot and drying rooms
- Main house there is a lounge, dining room and a bar
- Ballroom
- At the very top of the house is the observatory
- Free WiFi in public rooms
- Range of board games and books
- At the rear of the house there is an attractive walled garden with a large croquet law

Dining

All holidays at our Country Houses are full board accommodation including evening meal on arrival to breakfast on the day of your departure. All of our Country Houses have a well-stocked bar serving local beers, wine and spirits.

- Start your day with our extensive breakfast.
- Take your fill from our famous self-service picnic lunches
- A relaxed social dinner is a highlight of any stay at our Country Houses

Your Evenings

Just relax and take it easy, or if you'd like to continue to chat with our guides and fellow guests then why not grab a drink or take part in one of our optional evening activities.

All of our bars are stocked with locally sourced drinks so you can really soak up your surroundings.

Additional Information

- Fire procedure is displayed in each room and explained to guests on arrival. Guests requiring assistance at an evacuation are identified at this time and door hanger cards are issued

- Mobile phone reception is generally good from the main building
- Assistance dogs accompanying visually or hearing impaired guests are welcome; dogs must be kept on a lead or harness at all times
- Information can be provided in large print
- Staff have received disability awareness training
- Special diets can be catered for. Specialist food can be obtained with prior notice
- Fridge for medication can be supplied

Matchless Country House Accommodation

Accommodation Info

Rooms

Tea & coffee-making facilities, TV, Hairdryer, Toiletries, Wi-Fi

Stay in one of the main building's beautifully presented rooms or in the adjacent cottages. With 26 bright and airy bedrooms, Harrington House has plenty of space and there's a range of Good, Better and Best Rooms to choose from: for a stylish stay opt for rooms 1 or 2, both large master bedrooms located on the first floor that come complete with some of the original Palladian features dating back to 1730, pretty feature wallpaper and views out of the front of the building of classic Cotswolds scenery. Alternatively, for a romantic hideaway, plump for Room 23 in the Windrush Cottage and toast your good taste in the private garden that adjoins this large twin room.

All 'Good' rooms are ensuite and furnished to a high standard. There are also several 'Better' and 'Best' Rooms that are either larger or have a desirable view, a more luxurious mattress, larger television, enhanced toiletries and a fluffy bathrobe & slippers – upgrade your stay for just an extra £15-20 per person per night. You can choose a specific room for an extra £30 per room, subject to availability. Upgrade supplements still apply.

Facilities

Free Wi-Fi, boot room and drying room, attractive garden, multi-purpose activity room, lounge, library and board games to borrow

After a day ambling through the Cotswolds, come back to the house and its specially tailored walkers' facilities. Relax by sitting in the gardens or having a game of croquet on the lawn. Retire to either of the two lounges or climb the sweeping stately staircase to the very top of the house where there's an observatory looking out across the rooftops of the village. Then pop in to the snug bar for a pint of local ale and a chin wag with fellow guests about their discoveries.

Food & Drink

As at all our country houses, holidays are full board, from afternoon tea served as a welcome treat through that evening's meal to a hearty breakfast on the day of departure. Lunch is a chance to stock up on our famous picnic snacks. Food at Harrington House is hearty and has a strong emphasis on ingredients from the area and seasonal produce. Once a week the dining room hosts a Local Food Night, when, over a sociable evening, you might tuck in to Cotswold leg of lamb, Bibury rainbow trout and a selection of Gloucestershire cheeses, accompanied with Harrington House homemade chutneys.

Accessibility

For accessibility and assistance information, please contact our expert team on 020 3974 8865

Travel Details

Our address is: Harrington House, Sherborne Street, Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire, GL54 2BY

By Train:

The nearest railway station is Moreton-in-Marsh. However, the nearest mainline station is at Cheltenham Spa which may be more convenient. For train times and route planning by train visit www.nationalrail.co.uk or phone 03457 48 49 50.

By Taxi:

From Moreton-in-Marsh station a taxi takes approximately 20 minutes and costs £21 if pre-booked. From Cheltenham Spa station a taxi takes around 30 minutes and costs £40 if pre-booked. Details of our current recommended taxi company and rates will be sent to you with your final dispatch documents, four weeks before departure. The return taxi journey can be arranged on your behalf by the Harrington House Manager.

By Bus:

From Moreton-in-Marsh station catch the 801 bus to Bourton-on-the-Water, from where it is a short walk to our Country House. Alight next to the Edinburgh Woollen Mill Shop. Cross the road to the war memorial and continue across the bridge. Follow this road for 150 metres until the road forks. Harrington House is on the left.

By Car:

From the A429 take the road into the centre of Bourton-on-the-Water. At the war memorial by the village green, turn into Sherborne Street. Cross the narrow bridge and continue for approximately 100yds. Just before the road forks, Harrington House is on the left. Look out for our sign. A car park is available in the grounds with free parking.

Travelling From Overseas

For most guests, travelling to London Heathrow airport is the most convenient option.

From Heathrow first take the train to London Paddington station. From here there are direct trains to Moreton-in-Marsh. It's a relatively straightforward journey - just over 2 hours. See www.nationalrail.co.uk for train times.

From Moreton-in-Marsh you can travel on to Bourton-on-the-Water by bus or taxi (see above).

Local Area

Bourton-on-the-Water is situated at the heart of the Cotswolds, a beautiful area of rolling green hills and attractive stone towns and villages.

Harrington House is located in a quiet street, just 100 metres from the centre of Bourton. This is one of the most popular villages in the Cotswolds, frequently busy with visitors. The River Windrush winds its way through the central village green and is crossed by a series of attractive stone bridges.

Bourton-on-the-Water is a popular destination in its own right with its specialist shops and attractive village green. Local attractions include the motor museum, model village and Birdland wildlife park, all within easy walking distance.

The village has a good range of facilities including a small supermarket, post office, newsagent, pubs and bank.

During your stay at Harrington House you may enjoy visiting the following places of interest:

Chipping Campden

The mellow market town of Chipping Campden, about 30 minutes' drive north of Bourton-on-the-Water, is one

of the most visited towns in the Cotswolds.

Hidcote Manor Gardens

Owned by the National Trust, Hidcote is a small manor house with an exceptional garden designed in the Arts and Crafts style. Around 35 minutes' north from Bourton-on-the-Water. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hidcote

Broadway

Considered as one of the most beautiful villages in Britain it is easy to see why so many visitors are attracted to Broadway. Don't let this put you off; Broadway is still worth a visit. To get away from the crowds, consider a walk to Broadway Tower for stunning views of the Vale of Evesham. Around 30 minutes' drive from Bourton.

Stratford-upon-Avon

Famous for its Shakespeare connections, Stratford is an attractive town spanning the River Avon. Of particular interest are the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the Shakespeare Birthplace Museum. Around 40 minutes' drive from Bourton. www.rsc.org.uk or www.shakespeare.org.uk

Blenheim Palace

Blenheim Palace is one of the grandest and best-known stately homes in Britain. It sits in extensive parkland and is also famous as the ancestral home of Winston Churchill. www.blenheimpalace.com

Cheltenham

The fine Regency spa town of Cheltenham has an excellent range of shops and facilities. Cheltenham is around 25 minutes' drive from Bourton, and can also be reached by an hourly local bus.

Gloucester

The Cathedral city of Gloucester is about 35 minutes' drive to the west of Bourton. The fine Norman cathedral is well worth visiting, as is the National Waterways Museum. www.gloucestercathedral.org.uk or www.canalrivertrust.org.uk

Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railway

Ride the steam railway through attractive Cotswold countryside from Cheltenham to Toddington about 30 minutes' drive from Bourton. Now restored, this was once the Great Western main line to Birmingham. www.gwsr.com

Oxford

The famous university city of Oxford is about an hour's drive from Bourton-on-the-Water. You may wish to stroll through the historic colleges or visit the Ashmolean Museum. www.ashmolean.org

Hidcote Gardens image ©National Trust Images/Jonathan Buckley

About

Meadow/Hill Country House • 26 Bedrooms • Open February to November & Festive Period • Standard check-in from 2.30pm • Free Parking on site • Free Wi-Fi throughout • Walkers' Facilities including Boot Room & Drying Room • Discovery Point with route guides and maps

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Holiday Information

We try to create a relaxed atmosphere on the walk but please listen to safety instructions from your leader.

Keep members of the group in view especially when weather or visibility is poor. If you leave the group, then your leader will no longer have responsibility for you. Our leaders consider the safety of the group as a whole and are likely to be more cautious over potential risks such as bad weather.

What To Bring

Essential Equipment

To enjoy walking/hiking comfortably and safely, footwear, clothing and equipment needs to be suitable for the conditions. Safety is our priority and Britain is famous for its changeable weather, so our advice is to come prepared for all eventualities.

- Footwear with a good grip on the sole (e.g. Vibram sole) is the key to avoiding accidents
- Walking/hiking boots providing ankle support and good grip are recommended (ideally worn in), and specialist walking socks to avoid blisters
- Several layers of clothing, which can be added or removed, are better than a single layer (include spares)
- Fabrics (lightweight and fast drying) designed for the outdoors are recommended
- Waterproof jacket and waterproof over trousers
- Warm hat and gloves. Gaiters are an optional but useful extra
- Denim jeans and capes are not suitable on any walks
- Rucksack with a waterproof liner
- Thermos flask for hot drink
- Water bottle (at least 1 litre)
- Spare high-energy food such as a chocolate bar
- Small torch
- First aid kit – your leader's first aid kit doesn't contain any medication or blister kits (such as Compeed)

Optional Equipment

- Walking poles are useful, particularly for descents
- Insect repellent
- Sun hat
- Sunglasses
- Sun cream
- Camera

Useful Information

Ticks

Ticks are tiny creatures that live in vegetation and can attach themselves to passing animals or walkers and may carry a risk of Lyme Disease. Please refer to NHS advice and guidelines for information prior to your holiday.

Our experienced and knowledgeable volunteer leaders undergo a thorough assessment to lead you on your Guided Walking/Hiking Trail and are delighted to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with you.

Please ensure you complete and hand in your registration form on arrival and let the leader know about any medical problems you may have. This may be useful in the event of a problem on the walk and will be treated confidentially by the leader.

In The Event Of A Problem

If you become separated from the party, please stay where you are. Your leader will retrace their steps to find you.

All our leaders carry a mobile phone, group shelter, spare maps and a compass. In the unlikely event your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack. Call the emergency services (call 999 in the UK, or 112 overseas).

Please then try to call the hotel where you are staying to let them know there is a problem.

Your trail leader will carry all the necessary maps and guides. For your own interest you may consider looking at the following:

Shakespeare's Way Association Guide book and East to West Supplement included

Maps: Explorer 180,191, 205 and OL45 of the Cotswolds

HOW TO BOOK

When you're ready to book, you can choose to **book online** or book **over the phone**. Our website offers secure online booking for our holidays, is available 24/7, and offers more in-depth information about all our holidays. If you prefer to call us, our experienced and knowledgeable team are available to answer any specific questions you have and can offer guidance as to which holiday is best suited to your needs.

Our office is open: Monday to Friday: 9am – 7pm Saturday & Sunday: 9am – 1pm Bank Holiday Monday: 9am – 1pm

PAYING YOUR DEPOSIT

To secure the holiday of your choice, you will need to pay a deposit: UK & European Holidays: £150 per person and Worldwide Holidays: £250 per person. You can pay your deposit by debit or credit card with no additional card fees charged or make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account, please see details under BACS payments. You can also pay your deposit by cheque within seven days of booking. Cheques should be made payable to 'HF Holidays Ltd' with your booking reference / Order ID on the back.

ASSOCIATE'S FEE

Non-members can join our holidays by paying an Associate's fee of £10 per person per holiday. Alternatively, full life membership is available from £100 – visit hfholidays.co.uk/membership for details.

BACS PAYMENTS

Please quote your booking reference / Order ID when you make your payment online: Bank Name: Svenska Handelsbanken AB (publ) Account Name: HF Holidays Ltd Account Number: 35923304 Sort Code: 40-51-62 IBAN: GB92HAND40516235923304 Swift / Bic Code: HANDGB22

Once we have received your booking and deposit, we will send a confirmation invoice to the lead name. Please check this carefully. For bookings 'with flights' it is essential that the names on your booking confirmation invoice match those on your passport for bookings overseas. Please advise us immediately of any errors. Any name changes after the balance of your holiday has been paid will be subject to a fee levied by the airline.

MANAGE MY BOOKINGS

Payments can also be made through the Manage My Booking function on our website. Click on the link at the top of our homepage. This is available to all customers who provide an email address at the time of booking.

YOUR FINAL BALANCE

The balance is due 10 weeks before departure. As with paying your deposit, you can pay your final balance by debit or credit card, make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account or pay by cheque.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is an important part of any booking and essential for one of our holidays. HF Holidays works with specialist. Insurance Brokers Campbell Irvine Direct. For more information or to obtain a quote call them on 01702 427 236 or visit hfholidays.co.uk/insurance

PEACE OF MIND

ATOL:

The air holidays and flights in this brochure are ATOL-protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 710. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA will ensure that you are not stranded abroad and will arrange to refund any money you have paid us for advance bookings. For further information visit the ATOL website atol.org.uk

MEMBER OF ABTOT:

HF Holidays is a member of ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited) which provides financial protection under the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 for HF Holidays Ltd and in the event of their insolvency, protection is provided for the following: 1. non-flight packages commencing in and returning to the UK; 2. non-flight packages commencing and returning to a country other than the UK; 3. flight inclusive packages that commence outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland, which are sold to customers outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland. 1, 2 and 3 provides for a refund in the event you have not yet travelled. 1 and 3 provides for repatriation. Please note that bookings made outside the UK and Republic of Ireland are only protected by ABTOT when purchased directly with HF Holidays Ltd.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

PRICE GUARANTEE

We promise that our earliest published prices will always be the best and if we reduce our holiday price after your booking has been confirmed, we will pass this reduction on to you. Our price promise applies if any subsequent offer price is for an identical holiday, duration, location and date and does not cover any optional extras, flights or additional services.

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