

AMC MAJOR EXCURSION #0926
Walking in England's Cotswolds and London Sightseeing
June 6 -20, 2009

The Cotswold Hills, a 25 by 50 mile chunk of Gloucestershire, are dotted with villages and graced with England's greatest countryside palace, Blenheim.

Strewn with countless pretty villages built by medieval merchants enriched by the wool trade, the Cotswolds fulfill most people's idea of a 'typical' English landscape. Here neat fields, gentle hillsides ('wolds'), narrow hedge-lined lanes, ancient woodland and clear streams combine with simple stone cottages, churches, manor houses and tithe barns to create a picture of timeless beauty. Above all, the local honey-colored limestone, used for everything from the stone floors in the houses to the tiles on the roof, has ensured that the area has a magical uniformity of architecture. You will see 'drystone walls' everywhere in the fields. Many were built in the 18th and 19th centuries, a matter of considerable skill as there is no cement to hold the walls together. They represent an important historical landscape and a major conservation feature – and are of course still used by farmers to enclose sheep and cattle. During the 13-15th centuries, the medieval period, the native Cotswold sheep were famous throughout Europe for their heavy fleeces and high quality of wool. Cotswold wool commanded a high price and the wealth generated by the wool trade enabled wealthy traders to leave their mark by building fine houses and wonderful churches, known as "wool churches". Even today, the sight of sheep on the hillside is still one of the classic Cotswold images. We have devised our circular walking tour in the heart of the Cotswolds to seek out these timeless villages and towns that are among the loveliest features of the area.

DAILY ITINERARY

June 6, Sat – flights to London, Heathrow Airport

June 7, Sun – morning meeting at Heathrow; bus pickup. The drive to Chipping Campden will be a scenic one with a stop at Blenheim Palace, home of the 11th Duke of Marlborough and the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill. Blenheim offers a memorable beginning to our trip. Set on 2100 acres of beautiful parkland landscaped by 'Capability' Brown, the exquisite baroque palace is surrounded by sweeping lawns, formal gardens and a magnificent lake.

June 8, Mon - Chipping Campden to Moreton-in-Marsh (8½ miles)

We begin in the loveliest, best preserved, and most historically important of all the Cotswold towns. Our route passes through Broad Campden, with its rare 17th century Friends Meeting House, to the village of Blockley. Blockley is another

charming village that was built on a series of terraces above the deep valley of the Knee Brook. From medieval times sheep were brought to Blockley to be sheared before their wool was washed, spun and woven in the mills lining the valley bottom. When overseas competition destroyed the wool-processing industry in the 18th century, the mills were converted to the production of silk. Many of the mills survive, now converted into houses. From Blockley the trail descends to Moreton-in-Marsh past Batsford Park, a magnificent arboretum planted by Lord Redesdale in 1886.

June 9 Tues - Moreton-in-Marsh to Stow-on-the-Wold (6½ miles)

From Moreton-in-Marsh the route heads across the Evenlode valley to Sezincote House, an unusual Indian-inspired mansion with an outstanding oriental garden, and then passes through the delightful villages of Longborough and Broadwell to Stow-on-the-Wold. Stow is a charming town. Mellow stone houses, shops, inns and hotels overlook the cross and stocks in the large market square; from the square narrow alleys or 'tures' lead off invitingly, begging exploration. The cross was erected as a reminder to medieval traders to deal honestly in a Christian manner; the village stocks to punish those that didn't.

June 10, Weds - Stow-on-the-Wold. An extra day in Stow-on-the-Wold to enjoy some of the sights and perhaps visit the Slaughters. Two of the prettiest villages in the Cotswolds are Upper Slaughter and Lower Slaughter. Lower Slaughter especially is much sought out by tourists eager to record the scenery with their cameras. The name of Slaughter is derived from the old English word Slohtre meaning a muddy place, which it may once have been but not anymore. These villages are completely different in character; they are very secluded and quiet, no shops restaurants or attractions - just Lower Slaughter Manor built in 1658 for the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire and now a grand country house hotel and a Victorian corn mill, with a working water wheel. The mill has been converted into a gift shop and museum and is owned by one of the country's premier former jazz singers. Also worth visiting is the pretty little church of St. Mary, which is usually decorated with flowers. Another nearby village is Bourton-on-the-Water, called by some "the most beautiful in the Cotswolds." It is also possible to rent bikes here to ride the small scenic roads that lead to these towns.

June 11, Thurs - Stow-on-the-Wold to Temple Guiting (8 miles)

We follow the River Windrush through the picturesque villages of Naughton to Guiting Power, a charming village with a superb 15th - century cross carved with the Virgin and Child standing on the village green. The fine cruciform church has an hourglass carved in stone over the doorway to remind all of the brevity of life. There are also many amusing 'gargoyles' carved on the roof supports.

June 12, Fri - Temple Guiting to Winchcombe (5 miles)

Winchcombe is an attractive small town with two or three inns, some fine Tudor houses, cottages with roses clambering over their porches and a magnificent church containing an altar cloth worked by Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII first wife. 45 grotesque gargoyles, each representing a local character from the 1460's adorns its outer walls. Set against the backdrop of the beautiful Cotswold Hills, Sudeley Castle is steeped in history. With royal connections spanning a thousand years, it has played an important role in the turbulent and changing times of England's past. The Castle was once home to Queen Katherine Parr, the last and only surviving wife of Henry VIII. Henry, Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey and Queen Elizabeth I have all lived at or visited Sudeley. Sudeley is now the family home of the Dent-Brocklehursts and Lord & Lady Ashcombe. We will visit the grounds and possibly the castle, if it is open.

June 13, Sat - Winchcombe to Stanton (7 miles)

The trail leaves the town along the old pilgrim's route to Hailes Abbey, and then climbs to Beckbury Camp, a large Iron Age fort, before descending to the village of Stanway. Stanway is another village that rewards exploration - buildings of interest include the Jacobean manor Stanway House with its magnificent renaissance-style gatehouse and baroque water garden, an enormous 14th century tithe barn and a thatched cricket pavilion set upon straddle stones. From here the route cuts across the fields to the pretty village of Stanton, whose church contains a beautiful 15th century stained glass window removed from Hailes Abbey at the time of the Dissolution.

June 14, Sun - Stanton to Chipping Campden (8 miles)

From Stanton the route climbs up to Shenbarrow, an Iron Age hillfort and then follows the Cotswold Edge with some terrific views over the Severn Vale past Snowhill Manor, before descending to Broadway. The village started life as part of a nearby monastery and expanded in the 17th and 18th centuries as a staging post for coaches. The picturesque 'broad way' of the high street is lined with an avenue of red chestnut trees and shops, inns and houses of golden stone with the typical Cotswold mix of tiled and thatched roofs. The route then climbs Beacon Hill to the Broadway Tower, an 18th century folly that provides breathtaking views over 12 counties before descending to Chipping Campden.

June 15 Monday Chipping Campden

We will spend an extra day in Chipping Campden to take in some of the sights that we had missed. Chipping Campden is the loveliest, best preserved and most historically important. Buildings of interest include the open-sided Jacobean Market Hall, built to shelter stallholders from all weathers; the Town Hall, the 14th century Woolstaplers Hall, where the fleeces were sold, which now

houses the town's museum; opposite this is Grevel House built in 1380. St. James' Church is one the best examples of a Cotswold "wool" church and contains the largest memorial bras in the county, to William Grevel, 'the flower of the wool merchants of all England. Next to the church are the gateway and onion-topped lodges of the old manor of Campden, the man itself was destroyed during the Civil War. Nearby on a raised pavement stand the row of Almshouses built during the reign of James I in stunning symmetry. This might be a day to rent a bicycle and visit Hidcote Manor Gardens. Hidcote Manor is a delightful surprise, hidden down a series of twisting country lanes in the Cotswolds. It was designed and developed by Maj. Lawrence Johnston, a wealthy and well educated American. One of England's greatest gardens, an Arts & Crafts masterpiece and is made up of a series of outdoor rooms each with its own unique character.

June 16, Tuesday – public bus to Stratford-upon-Avon. Options here include tours of Shakespeare's home and other historical/literary sites, a boat ride on the Avon River, or just walking about the town on your own. In the evening we can take in a play at the Courtyard Theater (Royal Shakespeare Theatre closed for renovations till 2010).

June 17, Wednesday – train back to London. Settle into our hotel and begin seeing the city – or fly back to the U.S. or other venue if you will not be joining us in London.

June 18, 19, Thurs, Fri – London sightseeing. Leaders will help to coordinate the choices of participants for these days; you are also free to pursue individual interests.

June 20, Saturday – flights back to the U.S, or other destinations you may have.

LODGING AND TRAVEL: Accommodations will be in comfortable inns, B and B's and hotels (double occupancy). Each room has its own bath. In some of the smaller villages we will need to separate into 2 or 3 inns. All breakfasts will be provided and the trip will cover 3 dinners in the Cotswolds. You may order packed lunches at some inns or shop in a local market. On some days a pub stop may be just the thing. In the evening there will be a variety of dining spots to choose from when you are purchasing your own meals. Travel within England will be by chartered coach, trains and local buses. On several days you may wish to rent a bicycle. Once or twice we will be on public transport with our luggage so plan to pack efficiently. The layover days will allow ample time to wash out some clothing.

ON THE TRAIL: The pace of the trip and the distances we cover each day will be moderate, allowing time for photography and appreciation of the scenery. To fully enjoy the trip you should have that expectation. We will need to stay fairly close together to navigate the trails successfully so you should have recent on-going hiking experience to be able to keep up. On the other hand if you are a fast hiker and get impatient if the pace is slower than you prefer, this may not be the trip for you. Since our luggage will be transported each day to the next lodging, you will only need your daypack, lunch and appropriate clothing

LEADERS: You may wish to know something about the experience of your leaders. Jan has led over 50 major excursions. Most recent are hiking/cultural trips to Sicily, Greece, New Zealand, Sedona, Cinque Terre, China and Vietnam, and she will lead a trip to the Galapagos in January, 2009. Fran is an active leader for the Boston Chapter and had led many weekend and 5 day trips to the White Mountains of New Hampshire and the Green Mountains of Vermont. She has traveled and hiked extensively in Europe. This is her first major excursion. Fran was in England last year and has very recent knowledge of London.

TRIP COST: \$1995. Included are the following:

- travel from Heathrow to the Cotswolds and return to London/Heathrow
- all accommodations in B and B's, inns, or hotels (double occupancy)
- all breakfasts and 3 dinners
- admission to Blenheim Palace and Sudeley Castle
- cost of 2 AMC leaders and club overhead

Without London, trip cost is \$1695

Costs not included:

- bicycle rentals
- Stratford-upon-Avon activities and Shakespeare play
- tips at accommodations
- alcoholic and bottled drinks
- personal expenditures
- lunches and all but 3 dinners
- program changes and delays beyond our control

We have priced this trip using a conservative exchange rate. Since then it has changed in favor of the dollar, but the next months are definitely uncertain re: currency values. If the conversion rate continues to be favorable, we will be able to cover more of the optional expenses.

FLIGHTS TO ENGLAND: The leaders will be closely monitoring flights and their costs and will assist you in getting a very good fare. Of course you may choose to use your frequent flier miles. Most flights from the US leave in the evening and arrive early morning the next day. We will establish a morning time and place to meet at Heathrow on Sunday, June 7. That gives you the flexibility to make other travel plans if you wish to arrive before the start of the trip. Group travel has no advantage to this destination; in fact, it might increase the cost.

REGISTRATION AND PAYMENTS: To apply for this trip please fill out the application form and the two other required AMC forms. Send them with a \$1000 deposit (check payable to AMC) to CL Fran Scullin, 3a Strawberry Lane, Johnston, R.I. 02919. Final payment of \$1395 (or \$995) will be due March 15, 2009.

CANCELLATIONS AND TRIP INSURANCE: If you cancel after being accepted for the trip, \$100 is non-refundable. Once we have placed deposits for the lodging, minimally \$500 is non-refundable. However, your cancellation shall not raise the price for other participants or the leaders. We will establish a waiting list. If we can replace you, we will return all monies above \$100. If not, we will be as fair as possible in making refunds. Therefore we strongly recommend purchasing travel insurance. We will send you that information once you have been accepted for the trip. All registrants will be provided emergency medical and evacuation assistance insurance as part of the trip cost.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR LEADERS

Jan Taylor, 4 Trotting Horse Drive, Lexington, MA 02421 781-862-1897
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We hope this trip is appealing to you and that you will join us in England. Feel free to call or email either of us for any further information.

Sincerely, Jan and Fran