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COUNTRY ROAD TRIP BY CAR · 5 DAYS, HEATHROW TO STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

UK - The Cotswolds Self-Drive Itinerary

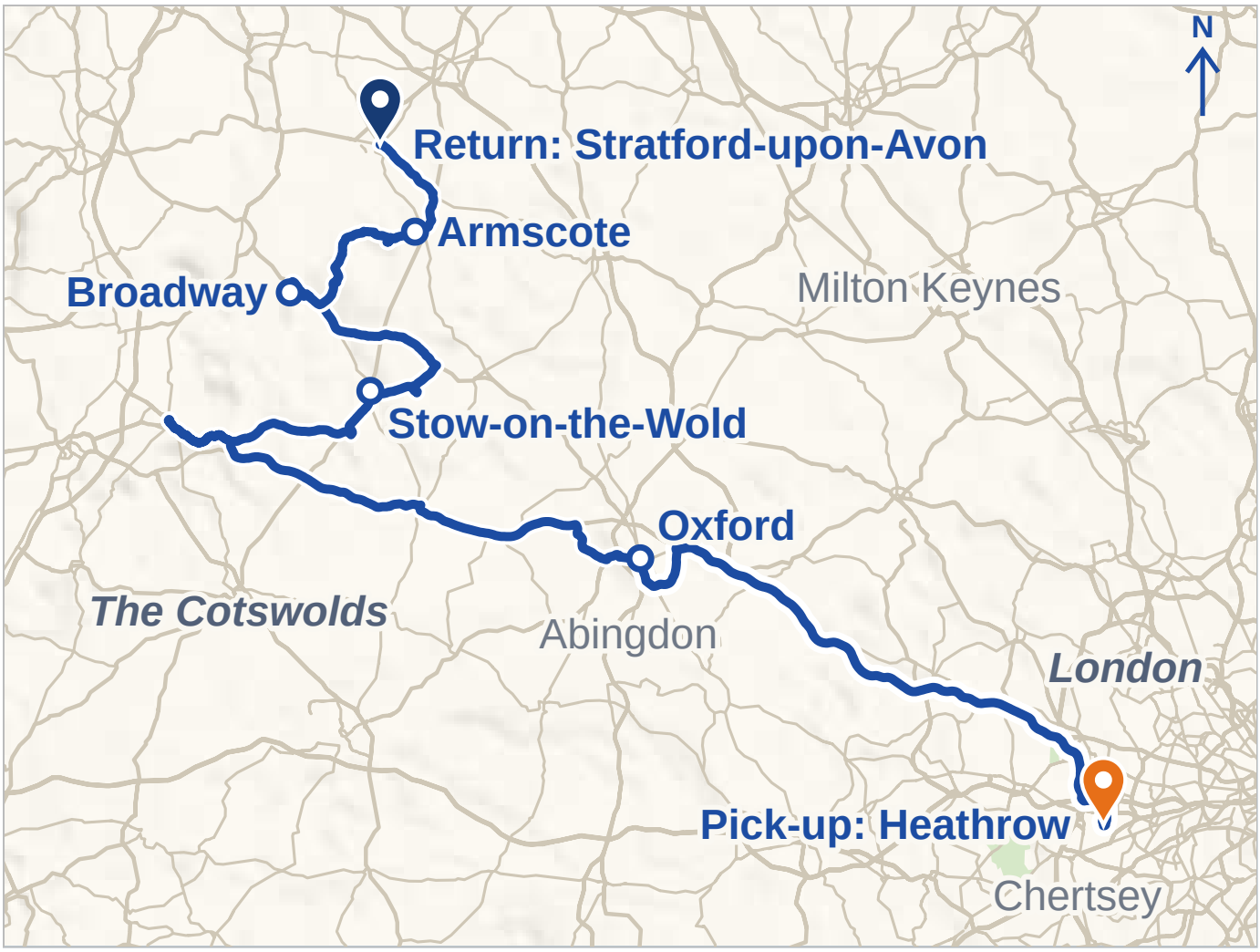
Pick up your hire car from London Heathrow and head to one of the most picturesque, historic regions in the UK, the Cotswolds. Glimpse the England of yesteryear, visiting places such as Oxford, Cheltenham, Stow-on-the-Wold and Broadway, whose past is as old as the surrounding hills, before arriving in Shakespeare's town, the iconic Stratford-Upon-Avon.

DISTANCE	DAYS	ROUTE	DRIVING TIME
About 260 km (160 mi)	5 days, 5 drives	One way, Heathrow to Stratford-upon-Avon	About 4 h 30 min by car

LONGEST DRIVE	VEHICLE
99 km (61 mi), Oxford to Stow-on-the-Wold	Car or motorhome



Bourton-on-the-Water, day 2 · Illustrative image



Planning overview, not navigation. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors · coastline Natural Earth · relief Terrain Tiles (Environment Agency, EU-DEM, SRTM).

Picking up at Heathrow

Bring your physical driver's licence, a card in the main driver's name and your booking confirmation to the counter, and check the car against its condition report before you drive away. See what to bring to the counter and checking the car at pick-up. More on car hire at Heathrow Airport.

DRIVE

82 km (51 mi) from Heathrow

about 1 h 10 min by car · about 1 h 30 min by motorhome | Via **M25**

DAY 1

Heathrow to Oxford

PICK-UP

Upon arriving at Heathrow Airport, one of the first things you'll have to do is pick up your hire car - a painless, stress-free process when you've booked in advance with DriveNow. Once you've got the keys,

jump into your vehicle and make your way towards Oxford via the M25 and M40. Once you pass Headington, you find yourself in one of the most historic cities in England.

Home to the oldest English-speaking university in the world, there's so much to discover down Oxford's cobbled lanes. One of the best ways to explore the city is by going on a guided walking tour of some of the churches and colleges, hearing about some of their history and the great names that played a role in the story of Oxford.

If you're an admirer of Lewis Carroll's work, pop by Alice's Shop for a veritable treasure trove of Alice in Wonderland memorabilia.

Feeling peckish? Head to Turf Tavern, hidden down the cobbled Bath Place for a spot of lunch. Next up, climb to the top of St Mary's for an incredible view of Radcliffe Camera and the Oxford skyline before grabbing afternoon tea and scones at Vaults and Garden, now the Vaults Café on nearby King Edward Street. It left its old home in the Old Congregation House beneath the church, which dates back to 1320, in November 2025.

DRIVE

99 km (61 mi) from Oxford

about 1 h 40 min by car · about 2 h by motorhome | Via **A40**

DAY 2

Oxford to Stow-on-the-Wold

Depart from Oxford early, following the A40 to Burford, your first Cotswolds stop with its famous high street. The Burford Garden Centre is worth a visit - it's on the left just before you reach the Burford roundabout. Then explore the High Street before resuming your westerly drive along the A40 to Cheltenham.

Spend your morning exploring this historic Regency town, known for its horse racing and shopping, as well as great food scene. Check out the offerings at the Fire Station, which offers a 'bottomless brunch' on Saturday mornings, complete with unlimited prosecco and bellinis (for those of us who aren't driving!)

> ⚠ **Check first:**
> Some listings show the Fire Station as closed, so check it's open before you go.

After refuelling in Cheltenham, get back on the road towards Bourton-on-the-Water on the A40 and A436. Fondly known as the Venice of the Cotswolds, Bourton is laced with picturesque bridges that cross the tranquil River Windrush. If you have time, check out the Motoring Museum and the Model Village while you stretch your legs before picking up a snack or coffee at Bakery on the Water. (Mary's Rest Tearoom and Cafe, which this itinerary also suggested, has closed.)

Your last stop of the day is Stow-on-the-Wold, one of the highest villages perched in the Cotswolds hills. It is home to the beautiful St. Edward's Church, as well as plenty of cafes and well-kept townhouses. Drop your bags at the historic King's Arms, a guest house and pub which was lovingly converted from a 500-year old coach house.

DRIVE

36 km (22 mi) from Stow-on-the-Wold

about 40 min by car · about 50 min by motorhome | Via **A436**

DAY 3

Stow-on-the-Wold to Broadway

From Stow-on-the-Wold, set out towards Daylesford on the A436, stopping in at the Farmshop for a scrumptious breakfast before paying a visit to Chastleton House. An incredibly well preserved Jacobean house, Chastleton is home to 400 years of history, and is virtually untouched by modernity, giving visitors a unique insight into the past owners.

When you're ready to continue, follow the A44 up to Moreton-in-Marsh. Stroll through this historic market town, whose past stretches back into Saxon times some 1,000 years ago. As you take a stroll through the town centre, you'll see houses built with the beautiful golden Cotswold stone. Bordering the town is the Batsford Park and its arboretum, the largest private collection of trees in the UK. See everything from wildflowers and orchids to delicate cherry blossom trees amongst the 2,850 species of plants.

Pop into the Black Bear or The White Hart for some hearty pub food before you push on towards Broadway.

DRIVE

28 km (17 mi) from Broadway

about 30 min by car · about 40 min by motorhome | Via **Fish Hill**

DAY 4

Broadway to Armscote

Take the morning to stroll through the historic Broadway, its high street lined by Cotswold stone buildings before paying a visit to Broadway Tower. This three-storey tower has incredible views out towards Wales and the county of Buckinghamshire, and was built for the Earl of Coventry in 1798. Its vantage point ensured that the tower had a role to play in WWII as well as the Cold War.

Your next stop is the elegant town of Chipping Campden, with its striking high street bordered by an unbroken terrace. Don't miss the Hidcote Manor and gardens, as well as St James Church before you continue on through the heart of north Cotswolds farming country.

Stop in at the quiet village of Ilmington for a pint and dinner at either the Red Lion or the Howard Arms before taking your pick of quiet country towns to lay your head for the night, from the Fuzzy Duck in the hamlet of Armscote to The Bell at Alderminster.

DRIVE

15 km (9 mi) from Armscote

about 20 min by car · about 20 min by motorhome | Via **A3400**

DAY 5

Armscote to Stratford-upon-Avon

RETURN

After grabbing breakfast at your B&B, head on the A3400, passing through sleepy Warwickshire towns on the way into Stratford-Upon-Avon. Spot the houseboats bobbing on the River Avon as you cross over the bridge into town, and the families lounging on the grass in front of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre.

There's so much to see in this picturesque little town, but you should naturally start with a visit to Shakespeare's birthplace down Henley Street to see where the legendary playwright spent his early years. Make sure you get a multi-pass for the different Shakespeare heritage sites such as Hall's Croft, Shakespeare's New Place, Anne Hathaway's Cottage & Mary Arden's Farm.

Fancy a sweet treat? Hooray's on High Street has a mouth-watering array of gelato, pancakes and waffles to sample. Magic Alley, whose Creaky Cauldron served magical treats such as butterbeer, has moved and reopened as Magic Alley and The Crimson Chamber, so check what it offers before you go.

At the theatre, you'll want to take a ride up to the top of the Theatre Tower for a stunning view over the town and the river Avon. You can even settle down for dinner at the Rooftop Restaurant before collecting your tickets for the show! Don't forget to book early, as RSC productions are always popular.

Returning the car in Stratford-upon-Avon

Plan to return the car on time with the fuel level your agreement asks for, and if your return time changes, call the branch as soon as you can. See returning your car and late and early returns.

If you want to experience what the Cotswolds has to offer, there's no better way than to hire a car from Heathrow and follow the road into the heart of the British countryside. To make sure you get the best deal on your hire vehicle, check out the deals at DriveNow for a stress-free, convenient way to get travelling.

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