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COAST AND COUNTRY BY CAR · 6 DAYS, HEATHROW TO GLOUCESTER

West Country, Devon & Cornwall Self-Driving Itinerary

See another side of the United Kingdom on a scenic West Country 6 day road trip with DriveNow. From historic towns and villages to seaside retreats, prepare to fall in love with this special corner of England.

After you've picked up your hire car from Heathrow Airport, head away from the big smoke to discover the scenic area of the West Country. Get ready to discover the rolling hills and seaside towns of Devon and the sandy beaches of Cornwall at the most southwestern tip of Blighty.

From Torquay and Penzance to Bath and Bristol, there's a discovery to be made around every corner. Your final destination of Gloucester is the icing on the cake, positioning you perfectly to explore Wales and the Cotswolds.

DISTANCE	DAYS	ROUTE	DRIVING TIME
About 975 km (605 mi)	6 days, 6 drives	One way, Heathrow to Gloucester	About 16 h by car

LONGEST DRIVE	VEHICLE
200 km (125 mi), Bournemouth to Paignton	Car or motorhome



St Ives, day 4 · Illustrative image



Planning overview, not navigation. Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors · coastline Natural Earth.

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

165 km (100 mi) from Heathrow

about 2 h 20 min by car · about 2 h 50 min by motorhome | Via **M25**

DAY 1

Heathrow Airport to Salisbury to Bournemouth

PICK-UP

Once you emerge from the sprawling Heathrow Airport, start up your hire car and jump onto the M25, following London's outer ring road until you reach the turn off for the M3. This will take you all the way to your first stop of Salisbury, about 1 hour 30 minutes from Heathrow.

As you draw closer to Salisbury, you'll be able to catch a glimpse of the cathedral spire - it's the tallest in Britain! The Salisbury Cathedral also houses one of the four surviving copies of the Magna Carta, dating back to 1215.

This gorgeous Wiltshire town is also the perfect base to visit some of the area's attractions such as Wilton House, just 10 minutes' drive on the A36. Home to the Earls of Pembroke, this historic English country home also houses an impressive art collection with works by Brueghel and van Dyck. From Wilton House, it's also a short drive to Stonehenge, one of Britain's mysterious, most well known landmarks.

On your way back to Salisbury, you can also stop by Old Sarum, the site of an ancient fort dating back to the Iron Age. Legend has it that an arrow was fired from this very site to determine the location of what would go on to be the present-day Salisbury Cathedral.

When you've finished exploring Salisbury, jump onto the A338, passing through the village of Downton en route to Bournemouth. Here, you can enjoy the beauty of your first seaside town. While you're here, don't miss Hengistbury Head, as well as the city's beautiful gardens. You can even try to catch a football game at Vitality Stadium, the smallest in the English Premier League.

DRIVE

200 km (125 mi) from Bournemouth

about 3 h 30 min by car · about 4 h 15 min by motorhome | Via **B3157**

DAY 2

Bournemouth to Weymouth to Paignton

From Bournemouth, continue west to the Dorset town of Weymouth with its pleasant beach. If you set off early enough you'll have time for breakfast or brunch at UNCLE Charlie's Restaurant, an American-style diner with mouth-watering pancakes. Fancy a good cuppa? You can pop in at Abbotsbury Tea Rooms Restaurant for a pot of tea with a lovely garden view.

Check first:
We couldn't confirm that UNCLE Charlie's in Weymouth is still trading, so check it's open before you go.

You'll be taking the B3157 road to your next stop, passing Abbotsbury Castle on your right as you eventually join the A35. Take the turn off for the A358, keeping to it until you reach the turn off towards Colyford. Follow the road until it becomes the A3052 and look out for Dunscombe Lane on your left.

Here you'll find the Donkey Sanctuary, a place sure to bring a smile to everyone's faces. Once you've said hello to the donkeys, continue on the A3052 to the historic city of Exeter, dating back to Roman times.

Visit the magnificent Exeter Cathedral before swinging by the lively quay area for lunch, then head down to the English Riviera region in Devon via the A380. Enjoy the surrounds of Torquay, a quintessential English seaside town renowned for its beaches and Victorian aesthetic. Just south along the coastline is Paignton, where you'll be spending the night.

DRIVE

175 km (110 mi) from Paignton

about 2 h 40 min by car · about 3 h by motorhome | Via **A38**

DAY 3

Paignton to Plymouth to Penzance

Spend a relaxed morning in Paignton at the Zoo or Goodrington Sands, a charming beach with its row of colourful beach huts. For a quieter spot, there's also Broadsands Beach nearby.

While you're in this Devonian port city, make sure you check out the historic Barbican district with its cobbled streets, as well as the aquarium by the harbour. If you're feeling peckish, take the opportunity to get some lunch at the Mission, a restaurant housed inside an old church. With high ceilings, wonderfully preserved architecture and delectable food, you can't go wrong with the Mission and its menu of modern British cuisine.

> **Check first:**
> Some listings show the Mission in Plymouth as closed, so check it's open before you go.

The last stop of the day brings you towards the most southwestern tip of the isle, to the historic city of Penzance. You'll be taking the A38, passing through Helston before you are reunited with the coast. If you have time, take a small detour to the Cornish town of Marazion, whose shoreline faces the picturesque St Michael's Mount.

Take the Longrock Bypass and follow the A30 into Penzance town centre, where you'll be stopping for the night.

DRIVE

190 km (120 mi) from Penzance

about 2 h 50 min by car · about 3 h 30 min by motorhome | Via **A30**

DAY 4

Penzance to St Ives to Newquay to Barnstaple

Ahoy and welcome to Penzance! The unlikely setting for a pirate-themed comic opera, The Pirates of Penzance, this is a great place to start the fourth day of your West Country road trip. You'll want to set off relatively early to visit the beautiful St Ives on the opposite coast. Another wonderful Cornish coastal town, you'll find an almost Mediterranean shoreline at Porthminster Beach, as well as the postcard-perfect wharf with boats anchored just a stone's throw away from the cobbled street.

Take the Old Coach Road, staying with it until it turns into Mill Hill. When you reach the St Erth Roundabout, make sure that you take the second exit onto Hayle Bypass. Then it's smooth sailing to the seaside resort of Newquay, home to some of the biggest swells in the UK. Tuck into lunch with an ocean view at either The Fish House or Lusty Glaze Restaurant.

Jump back into the driver's seat and head along the A3059 to St Columb Major, home to the Screech Owl Sanctuary and Wildlife Park. Started in 1990, this conservation haven for owls allows visitors to get up close and personal with the birds, many of whom are rehabilitated and released back into the wild.

Season The Screech Owl Sanctuary is open daily from late March to early November; over winter it takes pre-booked visits only.

Back on the A39, you'll take the turn off for the historic port town of Bideford - keep an eye out for the charmingly named town of Westward Ho! on the way. Once you cross the River Torridge, stay on the A39 until you arrive in Barnstaple, the final stop of the day.

DRIVE

170 km (105 mi) from Barnstaple

about 3 h 15 min by car · about 4 h by motorhome | Via **A39**

DAY 5

Barnstaple to Bridgwater to Glastonbury to Bath

Setting out from Barnstaple, hug the coast on the A39 through the scenic Exmoor National Park until you reach the old market town of Bridgwater. Grab a bite at one of the local pubs such as the Crown Inn, the Babbling Brook or Bower Inn. There's also the ancient ruins of Burrow Mump to visit nearby if you have time to spare.

Next up is the town of Glastonbury, famous for its popular annual music festival held in June. Here you can visit a number of historic sites such as the Glastonbury Tor and the Chalice Well as well as the ruins of the Glastonbury Abbey. If you have time on the way up to Bath, stop in at Wells to see the stunning cathedral with its impressive stained glass windows.

Your final stop for the day is Bath, an ancient city in Somerset that dates back to Roman times. If you fancy staying the night in Georgian-style accommodation, drop your bags at the luxurious Royal Crescent Hotel and Spa, or The Gainsborough Bath Spa.

DRIVE

77 km (48 mi) from Bath

about 1 h 20 min by car · about 1 h 30 min by motorhome | Via **A36**

DAY 6

Bath to Bristol to Gloucester

RETURN

Take your time to explore the wonderful Bath, from the Royal Crescent to Bath Abbey and the actual Roman baths themselves, dating back to the 2nd century. There's also the magnificent Assembly Rooms

where lavish dances used to take place in the 18th century. The well-presented Fashion Museum that adjoined them closed in 2022 while it moves to a new home in Bath, due to reopen around 2030.

When you're ready to bid Bath adieu, you can find the A36/Bath Road to head northwest towards Bristol, a city with a long maritime and industrial history. Make sure you visit the Cathedral while you're here, an icon of the city. (The Grand Pier is at Weston-super-Mare, on the coast south-west of Bristol.) There are plenty of great places to stop for lunch, including Souk Kitchen. (The Wild Beer Co and Birch, which this itinerary also suggested, have closed.)

On your way out, jump back into the car for the last time and drive over the spectacular Clifton Suspension Bridge. You'll be following the M5, which will bring you to your final stop of the road trip, Gloucester. As you approach the 'Cathedral City', you'll be treated to a glimpse of the renowned Cotswolds beauty as you near the city, a wonderful way to end your tour of the West Country.

Returning the car in Gloucester

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've been dreaming of your perfect British road trip, DriveNow is here to make it happen. Skip the scouting around a bunch of different hire car websites and go straight to DriveNow to see the best deals for hiring a car from London Heathrow airport, or any UK destination.

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