


Thames Path Guided Trail

Trip style: Guided trails

Destination:  Cotswolds

Trip code: BTN07-LTT01

Grades: 1, 2

Carbon Footprint:  191kg CO2



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Measuring up at a whopping 185 miles, the Thames Path National Trail follows the course of England's most famous river from the Thames Barrier in London to its source in rural Gloucestershire. This guided trail holiday covers the stretch that winds its way from the dreaming spires of Oxford to the rolling countryside of the Cotswolds. Walk peaceful riverside paths and country lanes rich in historical interest, rare wildlife, and more.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Walking the beautiful upper reaches of the River Thames
- Following a trail from Oxford's dreaming spires to the Cotswolds
- Spending time in charming Bourton-on-the-Water
- Wildlife-spotting along Britain's most famous river
- Staying at Grade II-listed Harrington House
- A more personalised experience thanks to small group sizes (maximum 15 people)

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Comfortable en-suite rooms in our country house
- Cream tea on arrival day
- Cooked or continental breakfast every morning
- Daily packed lunches
- Three-course evening meals, plus tea & coffee
- Guided walks with an experienced HF Holidays Leader
- All transport to and from walks where necessary

TRIP SUITABILITY

This Guided Walking/Hiking Trail is graded 2 which involves walks/hikes on good paths, though often quite a distance each day. On the Thames Path we follow a good footpath for most of the way, though occasionally this becomes a track faintly trodden into the riverbank. There are a number of stiles and gates to negotiate. It is your responsibility to ensure you have the relevant fitness required to join this holiday

Your 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

Check-in at the hotel is available from 16:00. If you are a member you can arrive at the house from 14:00. Enjoy a complimentary cream tea at 16:30 and meet other guests.

Day 2: Osney Bridge to Bablock Hythe

We quickly lose sight of the dreaming spires and suburbs of Oxford and enter lush water meadows. We will see Port Meadow, ancient common grazing land presented to the Burgesses of Oxford by William the Conqueror and the remains of the Benedictine nunnery at Godstow; founded in 1139. We continue to Swinford Bridge, one of the two remaining toll bridges across the Thames. At Pinkhill Lock the path leaves the river and crosses fields to reach Bablock Hythe. 11 miles (17km) with 250 feet (75m) of ascent.

Day 3: Bablock Hythe to Tadpole Bridge

We follow the river to the remote lock at Northmoor. We look at one of the weirs which retain the paddle construction of earlier times and continue to Newbridge, the second oldest of the Thames bridges. A remote meandering section of our walk follows with few signs of habitation. We see an isolated chapel in fields at Shifford, once an important town where a thousand years ago King Alfred held a meeting of the English Parliament. We follow Shifford Lock Cut, before rejoining the river to Tadpole Bridge, which was built to carry the turnpike road to Bampton. 9½ miles (15.5km) with 200 feet (60m) of ascent.

Day 4: Rest Day

A day without any walks programmed, giving you the opportunity to explore the local area independently.

Day 5: Tadpole Bridge to Lechlade

We follow a towpath all the way to Lechlade. At Rushey Lock we shall see another paddleweir and, over a side channel at Radcot, the oldest bridge on the Thames. We pass close to Kelmscott Manor; a house lived in by William Morris and his family for 25 years, before coming to Buscot Lock, where the National Trust has restored the lock-keeper's cottage. After St John's Lock, we continue to Lechlade. 10½ miles (17km) with 200 feet (60m) of ascent.

Day 6: Lechlade to Cricklade

Leaving Lechlade at Halfpenny Bridge, we follow the towpath to Inglesham Round House, the point where the Thames and Severn Canal once joined the river, and cross fields to visit the 13th century church at Inglesham. Inspired by William Morris, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings carefully restored the church in the 1880s. There is a section of minor road walking. We rejoin the river for the final section into Cricklade. 11 miles (17.5km) with 200 feet (60m) of ascent.

Day 7: Cricklade to the source

We cross the River Churn and enter the North Meadow Nature Reserve. After passing the Latton Aqueduct, a relic of the North Wiltshire Canal, we follow paths through the Cotswold Water Park, created by the flooding of old gravel pits. Frequent glimpses of the Thames headwaters lead us on to Ashton Keynes where the path will bring us to the last bridge where water can sometimes be seen. Near Upper Mill Farm, once a water mill, a windpump marks a spot where water used to rise vigorously but thereafter it is only just possible to discern the line of the river. We continue across open fields to reach the simple marble slab in Trewsbury Mead that marks the official source of the river and the end of our journey. 12½ miles (20.5km) with 400 feet (120m) of ascent.

Day 8: Departure Day

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making your way home.

Harrington House

You get the best of all worlds at this Grade II-listed retreat just a skip away from the heart of Bourton-on-the-Water – the impossibly pretty Cotswolds town with chocolate-box cottages, old-fashioned tearooms, and low-arched stone bridges that span the River Windrush. Not only will you be within walking distance of the Cotswold Motoring Museum, the Model Village, and Birdland Wildlife Park & Gardens, but it's an easy drive from village beauties Broadway and Bibury. For walkers and hikers, there's no shortage of thrills, especially for those keen to explore the well-trodden trails and paths around the Windrush Valley, Lower and Upper Slaughter, Gloucestershire Way, Cotswold Way, and Monarch Way.

A warm welcome

We want you to feel comfortable from the moment you arrive. You'll find a welcome pack in your room with guest registration forms, menus, order forms for dinners and picnic lunches, the Wi-Fi password, and the front door code. Our houses are locked at night, so we recommend noting the Duty Manager's number on arrival in case of an emergency (or getting locked out).

Evening entertainment

While evening entertainment varies from house to house, HF Holidays Inter-House Quiz night held after dinner on Wednesdays is a weekly staple. Your HF Holidays leader may be around for tips on guided and self-guided walking routes as well as visit-worthy local attractions.

Walks talks

Our HF Holidays walk leaders host guided walking information briefings before dinner on guided walking holiday arrival days. This is followed by a group Walks Talk for information on the following day's guided walks (held before dinner every evening). Self-guided walking guests are, of course, welcome.

The walking day

Prior to setting off on guided walks, your HF Holidays Leader will run you through a short safety briefing. There's also an up-to-date weather forecast on display at the house to ensure you have appropriate clothing and footwear. If you choose to do your own walks or are on a self-guided walking holiday, we ask that you please complete an Independent Walker Card each day. These can be found near the Discovery Point in the house.