



Town and country unites in complete harmony

The Cotswolds covers an almost 800 square miles that takes in the five English counties of Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Worcestershire.

A designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, it offers quintessential English country towns and villages of honey-coloured Cotswold stone

The Cotswolds also has more than 3,000 miles of footpaths and bridleways through ancient woodlands and wildflower meadows with some 4,000 miles of stone walls dividing up the landscape.

It is the harmony between historic heritage and natural beauty that makes the Cotswolds such an attraction to visitors.

Chipping Campden, which derives its name from the old English *ceping* or market-place has its Market Hall, built in 1627 and buildings ranging from the 14th to the 17th century.

The Cotswolds House Hotel and Spa is one of the finest places to stay in the town.

www.cotswolds.com

Ashley Gibbins
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So little changed from days long gone by

By Ashley Gibbins

The view of sun rising in the Badlands of South Dakota or of it setting on the Gulf of Mexico will live long in my memory.

And I am assured the view gazing across the Grand Canyon is just spectacular - it is on the bucket list.

And then there was the view one early morning onto Chipping Campden High Street from our room at the Cotswold House Hotel.

How could this possibly compare to that offered by the world's natural wonders?

Well, easily so.

For it is a view of a pristine, English country town that has remained relatively unchanged since the 15th Century.

Looking out onto the High Street, as the early morning welcomed another day, it occurred to me I was taking in a scene that would, more or less, have been recognised by someone sitting here in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

And this encapsulates the enduring charm of this small Cotswold town.

A flourishing community

For Chipping Campden is not theme park pretty but a flourishing community that goes about the everyday life while still appreciating its remarkable heritage and cherishes it.

The celebrated historian GM Trevelyan wrote, in 1944, that Chipping Campden High Street is *"the most beautiful village street now left in the island"*.

This praise is much used by those looking to encourage visitors.

Although I know little of Trevelyan, I find it difficult to disagree with his view of this small town.

The buildings, of Cotswold stone of course, have age withered, moss smattered, slanting slate roofs, which are topped with imposing chimney stacks.

These date from the 1300s and, though each seems to be propping up its neighbour in a precariously 'drunken' fashion, well they have been doing so successfully for centuries.



www.chippingcampden.co.uk



Definitely one of the most attractive towns

The use of the term *Campden* apparently has its origins from the Saxon *Campa-denu* or *Campadene*, referring to a valley with cultivated land.

And *Chipping* comes from the old English *Ceping*, which refers to a market or market place, and it was as a market that Chipping Campden grew to become one of the most important of the medieval English wool towns.

The prosperity this brought enabled the construction of the buildings that today make Chipping Campden one of the most attractive and towns in the Cotswolds.

And this in an area choc full of picturesque Market towns and villages.

The Market Hall

Dominating High Street is the arched, stone floored Market Hall built in 1627 by silk merchant Sir Baptist Hicks, the town's original benefactor, for £90.00, which must have been quite a sum at the time.

It was built to provide shelter for the market that sold cheese, butter and poultry rather than wool as is often assumed.

Also on High Street are a wide range of hotels, restaurants, tea shops and delicatessens' along with antique shops and some fine old English inns.

And an absolute find for me was the Noel Arms served Old Hooky, my favourite real ale.

I happy supped here as Ann took in some retail therapy.

While strolling up and back Chipping Campden High Street will take up most of your time, please take the short walk to the wool church of St James and the nearby 17th-century Almshouses and Woolstaplers Hall.

The Court Barn near the church now houses a small museum and a studio for local artists selling their works of arts and crafts.

Festivals in Chipping Campden

For those wanting to link a visit to a festival, the town has hosted a rural games championship since 1612.

Known as the *Cotswold Olimpick Games* it takes place on the Friday evening following the UK's late Spring Bank-holiday.

Events include a tug of war, shin-kicking, a pentathlon involving *Static Jump* (jumping as far as possible from a standstill) and *Spurning the Barre* (an old English version of the Scottish tossing the caber).

The Championship of the Hill has traditional team challenges of relays.

These involve wheelbarrows, dustbins, hay bales, slippery running surfaces and lots of water!



After dusk a bonfire is lit, followed by a torchlight procession to the town square where the entertainment continues.

www.olimpickgames.co.uk

The Campden Literature Festival and the en Music Festival are both held in May.

www.campdenlitfest.co.uk
www.campdenmusicfestival.co.uk

A real pleasure

While getting to know Chipping Campden was a real pleasure, the town also provided a very convenient base for touring the northern part of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The 790 sq miles of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty stretches from Bath and Wiltshire through Gloucestershire Oxfordshire and Warwickshire into Worcestershire.

The area's rich, diverse and high quality landscape resulted in the Cotswolds being designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1966.

It is the second largest protected landscape in England after the Lake District National Park and provides a wide range of landscapes and visitor opportunities.

Villages and market towns

The focus for most visitors tends to be the many stunningly attractive villages and market towns with their historic high streets and squares.

Within the area are also some of the country's greatest palaces, castles and country houses led by the magnificent Blenheim Palace and a number of National Trust properties.



For those who enjoy an active break the Cotswolds also offers more than 3,000 miles of footpaths and bridleways geared to the needs of walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

It's the chance to enjoy and appreciate the ancient woodlands and wildflower meadows and the 4,000 miles of historic stone walls that divide up the area.

Local produce is in abundance with cheeses, meats and drinks on the menus of the many country pubs and old inns, small cafes and fine dining restaurants.

For a stay there are country house and boutique hotels and inns, guest and manor houses.

www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk



North Cotswolds

In the north Cotswolds, one finds the market towns of Chipping Campden and Moreton in Marsh along with Broadway, Bourton on the Water, Burford and Stow on the Wold.

Getting to and from each of these one passes through a string of picturesque villages.

South Cotswolds

The south Cotswolds covers the area from Cirencester and the Stroud Valleys to north Wiltshire and towns such as Tetbury and Malmesbury.

The Cotswold Water Park covers 40 square miles and 150 lakes and takes in Nailsworth, Painswick, Fairford and Tetbury.

The Cotswolds Way

For those looking to walk in the area there is the Cotswold Way, which is a 102 mile (164Km) long National Trail from the market town of Chipping Campden to the city of Bath.

It was formally launched as in 2007 following much lobbying by ramblers groups.

Along the Way one gets views from the Cotswold escarpment while passing through picturesque villages and by ancient sites.

Walking the Way one can also enjoy wildflower meadows, shaded beech woodlands rich with bluebells in spring.



Although the official guidebook suggests a seven to ten day trip for walking the length of the Cotswold Way, there are a number of circular walks based on the Trail including one and two day walks and shorter easy access routes.

The route is well way-marked and there are easy to follow guidebooks and maps.

Finally, and while there are a number of steep climbs, anyone who is reasonably fit can walk the Cotswold Way and there are several places suitable for those with restricted mobility or who use an off road mobility scooter.

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/cotswold-way



Tourist and travel information

Cotswolds.com is the official website for the area providing all the information you are likely to need in planning a visit.

They also provided most of the stunning images in this *AllWays Traveller*.

www.cotswolds.com

Blenheim Palace



Stunning Blenheim so deserves its palace status

Visiting the Cotswolds gave us the chance to finally get to Blenheim Palace in Blenheim, Oxfordshire.

The English nation presented the land to John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, in recognition of his Battle of Blenheim victory in 1704 over French and Bavarian troops.

Construction work commenced in 1705 and took 17 years to complete.

Blenheim is an outstanding example of the work of John Vanbrugh and Nicholas Hawksmoor, two of England's most notable architects of the times.

A naturalistic Versailles

The landscaped Park with its two lakes was created by Lancelot "Capability" Brown and is considered a *naturalistic Versailles*.

Blenheim Palace, which was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987, is the only non-royal property in England able to claim the palace title.

It has remained the residence of the Dukes of Marlborough with the current incumbent being Charles Spencer-Churchill the 12th Duke.

The Palace, which was the absolute epitome of grandeur and opulence, also suffered the vagaries of mismanagement by certain of the previous Dukes.

By the end of the 19th Century the Palace was crumbling and facing the prospect of demolition.



But the 9th Duke of Marlborough then married American railroad heiress, Consuelo Vanderbilt who channelled huge sums into its restoration.

It was also the birthplace of Winston Churchill and we know his influence on the British nation.

Visiting Blenheim Palace today one cannot but be staggered by the wealth that must have been at the disposal of the first Duke for him to be able to build a house on this scale.

There is also the chance to tour through the rooms filled with collections of art, tapestry and antiques.



The Palace's extensive park and gardens were merit a visit on their own and there are five miles of public rights of way through the Great Park area of the grounds.

An annual events programme includes medieval jousting tournaments, classical and popular music concerts and a Christmas lights festival.

www.blenheimpalace.com



The aristocrat of accommodation in Chipping Camden

By Ann Mealor

Located right on the high street in quaint and picturesque Chipping Camden stands the elegantly tasteful Cotswold House Hotel.

Looking every inch the aristocrat, this recently refurbished townhouse is the jewel in the crown.

With suitcases in tow, eagerly pushed open the large glass panelled door into the hallway, feeling like guests at a private weekend house party.

The reception area was chic and welcoming, traditional yet modern with comfortable sofas, plumped cushions and Queen Anne chairs.

A sweeping spiral staircase wound its way enticingly up to the first floor.

Our three roomed suite was at street level with a cosy lounge area, huge bathroom and a bedroom with French windows overlooking a pretty enclosed courtyard.

The lounge was a happy mix of the modern and traditional with a large fireplace and a sash window offering views onto the quintessentially English country town.

Our bedroom had a very comfortable bed and large, colourful artwork on the walls. All very impressive, but best of all was the bathroom.

It was huge, magnificent and dominated by an oversized, smooth, egg shaped, free-standing marble bath. Simply luxurious.

White towelling dressing gowns hung from the stone tiled wall and slippers were on a chic glass trolley along with a selection of delicious, scent filled Orla Kiely toiletries.

I have not known a bathroom like it and enjoyed submerging myself in the oval tub each evening.



I always appreciate small in-room treats, and in this case it was the home baked cookies left in the kilner glass jar each morning; the selection of fine infusions and the smart, stainless steel, non-drip tea pot that made the perfect brew.

The small fridge proved useful too, for the jugs of fresh milk I requested for my evening Earl Grey.

All the bedrooms have real character.



Some have hot tubs, fireplaces, wooden beams, sloping ceilings and views over the delightful gardens.

There are plenty of floral filled places to relax in the sun and sip a gin and tonic.

The sumptuous spa at the bottom of the gardens offers an extensive range of treatments using aroma filled *Decleor* products. Guests can also pamper themselves in the hydrotherapy pool, the aromatic steam room and relaxation suite.

A trip to the spa is a day out in itself and if the weather's not good, an ideal me-time retreat.

www.bespokehotels.com/cotswoldhouse

Dining at the Cotswold House Hotel



Cotswold House offers guests two opportunities to dine in the *Fig Restaurant* with 2 Rosettes for culinary excellence and *The Bistro On The Square* for more casual fare writes Ann Mealor

Breakfast

We enjoyed breakfast in the graceful Fig restaurant, which has the feel of an old style Orangery with its large French windows opening out onto the cottage style gardens.

The restaurant is decorated in a relaxing pale green and white, with crisp, white table clothes, fresh flowers and beige covers on the chairs.

Prints of various green foliage and plants hang on the walls.

There was a mouth-watering selection of cooked options for breakfast including the traditional full English as well as a vegetarian version.

Both were perfectly cooked and presented.

The continental buffet had everything you would expect from a quality hotel.

This includes pastries, juices, cereals, yoghurts and fresh fruit salad.

We tucked in and our breakfast kept us going for the rest of the day.

Local produce

The kitchen team source as many ingredients as possible from passionate local producers, including cheeses, wholesome fresh breads and quality Cotswold meats.



Dinner

During our stay we dined in the stylish *Bistro On The Square*, which had a selection of tapas, sharing platters, bar snacks and daily specials.

We enjoyed truffle tagliatelle; smoked salmon with crème fraîche and caviar; pan fried salmon with sautéed potato and creamed spinach; steak with triple cooked chips; a sweet and subtle fillet of bream with new potatoes, beans, olives and confit tomatoes and a flakey hake fillet with white bean, chorizo, pearl barley and spinach.

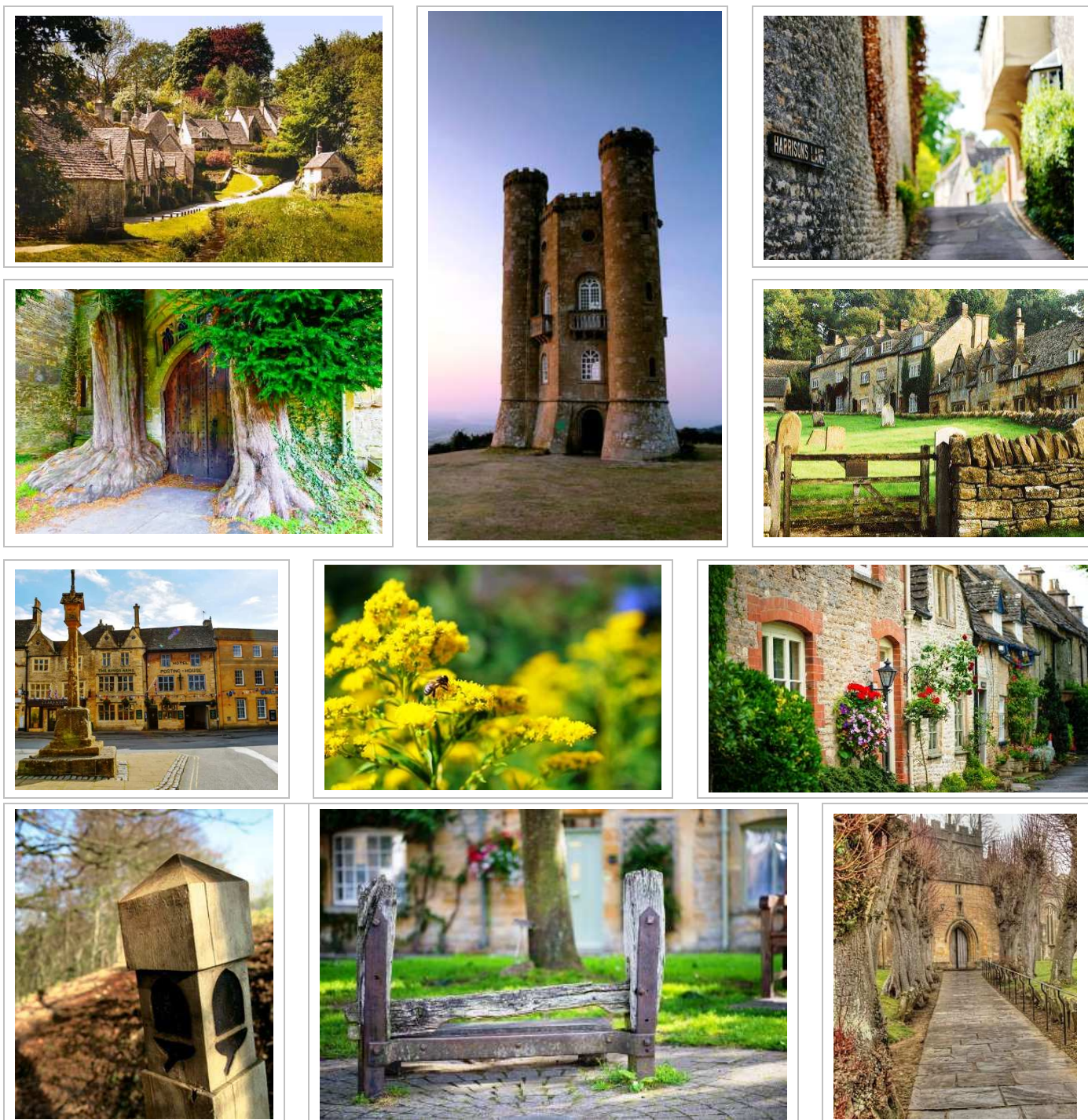
Each dish was well presented with delicious flavours. A highlight was the dessert, apple and rhubarb topped with crispy crumble and a light, lip-licking crème anglaise.



There is an extensive selection of wine and so many gins, you won't know where to start.

However, to help you on your way there is a gin of the month Boutique Distiller whilst we were there, with fever tree tonic and cucumber.

A snapshot of the Cotswolds



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www.itwalliance.com



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