



THE GREAT WEST WAY – A ROUTE FOR ALL SEASONS

There's always a great excuse to treat yourself to a minibreak along The Great West Way, England's new touring route that stretches from London to Bristol and incorporates the best that the country has to offer. From spas to luxury hotels, gardens to historic houses, tearooms to pubs, it truly has something for every season

JANUARY

If your New Year's Resolution is to detox and start afresh, then it's time to spa! The Great West Way has some of the country's best and most unique spas, including: the **Thermae Bath Spa**, which draws on the city's natural thermal waters, the only in the UK; **The Langley** is a new five-star hotel opening in Buckinghamshire in February 2019 on the former country estate of the third Duke of Marlborough and will include a world-class wellness centre, complete with indoor and outdoor pool, thermal area and a fitness suite designed by trainer to the stars, Matt Roberts; **Woolley Grange Hotel** in Bradford-on-Avon has one of the country's few family-friendly spas, with facilities for all ages, so parents can still indulge in some R&R, even with the little ones in tow. The zoned areas offer relaxing spaces for adults, but there are family splash sessions in the pool, family changing rooms and even child-friendly manicures, pedicures and facials.

FEBRUARY

Celebrate Valentine's Day with a Great West Way break, choosing from one of the many romantic hotels, B&Bs or inns along the route. Some top picks are: **Roseate Hotels** has hotels in London, Bath and Reading, which has been dubbed the UK's Sexiest Townhouse Hotel. **Troutbeck Guest House** is just across the road from the Red Lion Pub in Wiltshire, so you can both enjoy a bottle of champagne with dinner and stumble back together. Try and get The Benjamin Room, which has its own private entrance, lobby and large deck with views of the River Avon and has a roll-top bath in the bedroom to make the most of those river views; for something a bit different, try a canalboat holiday. **Moonraker Canalboats** in Wiltshire have luxury, widebeam boats that come complete with king-sized beds, Jacuzzi baths and log burners.

MARCH

If you fancy treating your Mum to afternoon tea this Mother's Day, you are spoilt for choice along the Great West Way. As Afternoon tea is as English as Jane Austen, it seems apt to partake in Bath, where Austen famously lived. **The Regency Tea Room** at the Jane Austen Centre, where staff are dressed in full Regency regalia, offers 15 varieties of loose-leaf tea and has been awarded the Tea Guild's Award of Excellence. In the heart of Bradford on Avon is **The Bridge Tea Rooms** where you'll be served by waitresses in traditional Victorian costumes and enjoy a tea that has deservedly won UK's Top Tea Place by the UK Tea Guild. **Royal Crescent Hotel & Spa** has a choice of three Afternoon Teas, including a dedicated Children's Afternoon Tea, all of which are deliciously decadent and can be taken in the hotel's beautiful gardens, if the weather is fine enough. **Whatley Manor Hotel & Spa** is one of the most luxurious places to take tea, whether you choose to be served in the Garden Room, Drawing Room, Reception Hall, or one of its terraces.

APRIL

HRH Duke and Duchess of Sussex are expecting a Spring baby. If born in April, the bundle of joy will share a birth month with its Great Grandmother, HRH Queen Elizabeth II, so when better to explore the Great West Way's royal links? From King Henry VIII's **Hampton Court Palace**, to **Windsor Castle**, the oldest inhabited castle in the world and venue for the proud new parents' wedding in 2018 and **Highclere Castle**, which was owned by Sir Robert Sawyer, Attorney General to Charles II and James II. It's now home to the 8th Earl and Countess Carnarvon not to mention TV royalty, the cast of Downton Abbey.

MAY

May is the month to enjoy Britain in bloom, when the country is a riot of colour and nowhere more so than The Great West Way, home to some of our most spectacular gardens. The **Woodland Gardens at Bowood House** in Wiltshire are only open for six weeks a year during the flowering season (April to early June 2019) and cover 30 acres worth of bluebells, azaleas, magnolias and rhododendrons. They are considered to be one of the most exciting gardens of its type, whilst HRH Prince Charles' **Highgrove Gardens** are considered the most innovative. Its four-acre wildflower meadow is cultivated in harmony with the seasons and uses 130 species typical to the natural flora of Gloucestershire and **Iford Manor** and its Grade-1 Listed Peto Gardens - a location for 2019 film, Secret Garden, starring Colin Firth – gets covered in wonderful wisteria.

JUNE

There's plenty to treat your Dad to on Father's Day along the Great West Way, from driving experiences at **Castle Combe Circuit** to hot air ballooning with **Bailey's Balloons**, but the pubs and breweries along the route offer a pretty unbeatable way to share some quality time together. Choose from **The Old Bell** in the charming Wiltshire market town of Malmesbury, which is Grade 1 listed and believed to be England's oldest hotel, whilst the pubs of Devizes serve beer as fresh as it comes, delivered by stately shire horses from the town's **Wadworth Brewery**. **West Berkshire Brewery** showcases the finest UK hops to produce high quality, distinctive and award-winning real ales and craft beers.

JULY

The long summer holidays begin but worry not, because the Great West Way has plenty of activities to keep kids of all ages busy, like the fabulous adventure playground at **Bowood House & Gardens**, which boasts a real-size pirate ship, aerial walkways and a flying fox for kids up to the age of 12 and Tractor Ted Little Farm for the junior juniors. For places to stay, you can't get much better than **The Lodge at Bristol Zoo Gardens**, where overnight visitors can enjoy having the zoo all to themselves, with rooms overlooking the enclosures, free entrance included and optional experiences such as a behind-the-scenes tour, animal feeding experiences and breakfast with the Gorillas. **Woolley Grange**, a hotel that puts family first, is another great option. As well as its family-friendly spa (see above) and playhouses, swings, trampoline, nature garden and pond dipping in the 14-acre grounds, the luxury hotel also offers an Ofsted registered nursery, 2 hours daily free childcare and a Children's Breakfast Club, where children are collected from their room at 8am and taken for breakfast so parents can go back to bed!

AUGUST

Summer's here and whilst the Great West Way isn't on the coast (about all it is lacking!), there's still plenty of ways to cool off in the water. There is the new for 2018 **Thames Lido** in Reading, a Grade II listed Edwardian building and one of the oldest open-air municipal pools of its time, which was redeveloped by the same team who breathed new life into the **Clifton Lido** in Bristol, another Great West Way gem. If you prefer to swim in nature, there are plenty of wild swimming spots along the **Thames Path** where you can take a dip, but none better than the stretch between Cookham and Marlow, where the river is beautifully clear and clean and there are sandy beaches where kids can paddle safely. If you prefer to stay on the water, choose **stand up paddleboarding** (SUP Bristol's tours explore the exciting waterways of Bristol

Harbourside) or narrow boating on the bucolic **Kennet & Avon canal**, lined with riverside pubs and featuring the legendary Caen Hill, a series of 105 locks that climbs 72 metres in two miles.

SEPTEMBER

As befitting the start of school, September is awash with literary festivals, including the most legendary: **The Jane Austen Festival**. Taking place from Friday 13th to Sunday 22nd September 2019 and celebrating all things Austen in the UNESCO World Heritage city of Bath, famously home to the author for many years, the festival includes regency dances, costumed walks and readings of Austen's most famous works.

Cliveden, famous for its literary salon which has inspired writers from Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, George Bernard Shaw and Lord Tennyson, also hosts an annual literary festival every September and in the past has attracted writers from the world of TV and film (Stephen Frears, Armando Iannucci), publishing (Tina Brown), non-fiction (Sir Simon Schama, Alain de Botton) and fiction (Sarah Waters, Kier Kreishi).

OCTOBER

As the Autumnal colours begin their annual beauty parade, take a tour of the Great West Way's most stunning woodlands. **Westonbirt** is the country's National Arboretum and its Treetop Walkway runs through the tree canopy for 300 metres. At **Kew Gardens**, the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Royal Botanic Garden, there is an extensive arboretum of some 14,000 trees, many of which cannot be found anywhere else in Britain, whilst **University of Bristol's Botanic Gardens**, tells the story of plant evolution in inspirational displays.

NOVEMBER

Christmas is around the corner so why not get organised and combine your shopping with a trip along the Great West Way? You'll find gifts for almost everyone at **Parkway Shopping Newbury** or the **McArthur Glen Designer Outlet Swindon**, which offers up to 60% off over 100 leading brands and hosts an annual Festive Fashion Event (15th November). For something a bit more unusual, head to **Hungerford Arcade Antiques**, home to more than 100 antiques dealers, and packed to the rafters with weird and wonderful finds. Plenty of Christmas Markets set up shop in November too, including one of the country's biggest, the award-winning **Bath Christmas Market**. Consisting of 180 stalls, set amongst Bath's Georgian streets, the market sells hand-made ceramics, glassware, jewellery and local produce.

DECEMBER

Shopping all done, you can relax and get Christmassy along the Great West Way. The route has some of the country's big-ticket festive must-dos, including **ice-skating at Hampton Court Palace** and **Longleat's Festival of Light**, a stunning display of Chinese lanterns that has to be seen to be believed. However, the route is also home to some of country's lesser known Christmas attractions, including **Lacock's Christmas Tree Festival**, where 20 trees beautifully-decorated by the local community go on display in the National Trust village's atmospheric medieval cloister and the floating Christmas market on the **Kennet & Avon Canal**, taking place in Bradford on Avon on 1st December.

Find out more about the Great West Way at GreatWestWay.co.uk

For further information, images or to arrange a press visit please contact Rebecca Lowe, Head of PR, rebeccalowe@GreatWestWay.co.uk Tel: 07444 601421

Note to editors:

About the Great West Way

The Great West Way is one of a number of successful projects to receive funding from the UK Government's £40 million Discover England Fund, administered by VisitEngland. VisitWiltshire are the Destination Organisation leading the project. For further information go to discoverenglandfund.org

Further information and link to The Story of the Great West Way booklet, a guide for businesses and destinations, is available at visitwiltshire.co.uk/GreatWestWay

The Great West Way Ambassador Network gives access to a wide range of additional Great West Way consumer, travel trade and media marketing activity; connecting businesses and destinations along the route

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For further information on or to join the Great West Way Ambassador Network please contact Claire Margetts, Head of Ambassador Network, ClaireMargetts@GreatWestWay.co.uk Tel: 07850 080679

For further information or to find out more about becoming an Official Tour Operator please contact Florence Wallace, Head of Travel Trade, FloWallace@GreatWestWay.co.uk Tel: 01722 341309 or 07436 588860

About VisitBritain/VisitEngland

VisitBritain/VisitEngland is the national tourism agency – a non-departmental public body funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)

Working with a wide range of partners in both the UK and overseas, our mission is to grow the volume and value of inbound tourism across the nations and regions of Britain and to develop world-class English tourism product to support our growth aspirations. For further information and to access the latest in-depth market intelligence and statistics visit visitbritain.org or visitbritain.com and visitengland.com for consumer information.

About Discover England Fund

In November 2015, the Government announced a £40 million Discover England Fund; an unprecedented opportunity for English tourism. The Fund aims to deliver world-class bookable tourism products joined up across geographies and/or themes; including integrated transport solutions to provide an end-to-end customer experience.

The Fund supports the growth of one of England's most successful export industries, inbound tourism. Tourism is an industry that delivers jobs and economic growth across the English regions – contributing some £106bn each year to the economy and supporting 2.6 million jobs.

The Fund supported a number of pilot projects in year one (2016/17) that tested product development approaches. In years two and three, 2017-19, the fund will support:

- A number of large-scale collaborative projects to be delivered over the two-year period 2017-2019 that will create a step-change in bookable English tourism product for international consumers,
- 2 rounds of smaller funding for piloting new ideas (in year two), and delivering on new themes/ target markets (in year 3)
- There have also been opportunities for existing smaller projects to receive support in each following year to upscale their activities