

Group Travel Guide

VISIT 
Buckinghamshire
AND The Chilterns



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visitbuckinghamshire.org



Buckinghamshire and The Chilterns is the perfect year-round destination for memorable short breaks and day trips, stretching from the banks of the Thames, through the glorious rolling Chiltern Hills, and on into the verdant Vale of Aylesbury. Its close proximity to London, coupled with excellent road links, means that you can easily access exciting new destinations, discover fabulous attractions and enjoy welcoming hospitality.

How to get here:

Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns is easily accessible by road, rail and five major airports. The county is well served by motorways, with the M1, M25 and M40 all passing through or nearby, as well as providing links to the M4 & M3 motorways. All towns within the county are linked by good main roads.

The county also has great rail links from London via the underground on the Metropolitan line, while Chiltern Railways offers a number of access points from London Marylebone.



Arts & Culture

Come and walk through thousands of years of Buckinghamshire's national and cultural heritage at the many museums across the county, including **Buckingham County Museum**, **Wycombe Museum** and **Amersham Museum**. Visit **Buckingham Old Gaol**, where you are taken back over 270 years of dark, damp, desperate prison life. Explore the cells that housed murderers, counterfeiters, poachers and thieves and find out who made daring escapes, and who didn't survive to tell the tale. Continuing on this theme, **Hellfire Caves** are a network of man-made chalk and flint caverns which extend a quarter of a mile (500 metres) underground. They are situated above the village of West Wycombe, and the caves run deep into the hillside above West Wycombe Village and directly beneath St Lawrence's Church and Mausoleum (which were constructed by Sir Francis Dashwood around the same time the caves were excavated).



Buckinghamshire annually throws some fantastic cultural spectacles. **Arts at Stowe** has a hugely diverse schedule of productions including opera, children's theatre and musical legends - some of which are outdoors, so you can enjoy them al fresco with a picnic! **Queens Park Arts Centre** presents intimate, contemporary gigs, and also runs a range of workshops that are perfect for any budding performers. Whereas **Aylesbury Waterside Theatre** and **Wycombe Swan** attract those bigger touring productions.

Bucks Art Weeks launches every June and hosts more than 600 artist's exhibitions in 200 venues across the county. **Claydon Courtyard** on the **Claydon Estate**, a national trust property, is establishing itself as a hub for arts and craft businesses, including workshops. Claydon's incredible Courtyard was once the bustling heart of the Estate. It housed workshops, stables, coach houses, estate stores, the laundry, brew house and staff accommodation. Take lunch in the courtyard cafe before heading off to look round the estate house and gardens. **Obsidian Art**, near Aylesbury, is one of the largest art galleries in Buckinghamshire. They run an exciting programme of exhibitions, exhibiting a broad range of selected paintings, printmaking, sculptures, glass, ceramics, jewellery, photography and crafts by some of the best British artists and makers. Why not combine a visit to the art gallery with one of the number of arts and craft workshops that take place there?

National Trust Properties

Did you know that Buckinghamshire is blessed with more National Trust properties than any other county in England? From impressive stately homes and gardens to more modest natural woods, Buckinghamshire is the perfect backdrop for long walks and tours. So why not spend some time exploring one – or two - or all of them!

Well worth a visit is **Cliveden** in Taplow which overlooks the Thames and has far reaching views of beautifully formal grounds. Another must-see is the magnificent **Waddesdon Manor**, a French Renaissance chateau which was originally built to display Ferdinand de Rothschild's outstanding collection of treasures.

Defined as the finest outdoor work of art in Europe, **Stowe** is another timeless landscape which cannot be missed, and **Hughenden** offers a vivid insight into the charismatic personality and colourful private life of the most unlikely Victorian Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, who lived here from 1848 to 1881. **Hartwell House**, another National Trust property, is also one of Buckinghamshire's most celebrated country house hotels and includes a two AA rosette award-winning restaurant.

Buckinghamshire has more National Trust's than any other county in the UK.



Food & Drink

With award-winning restaurants, gastro pubs, unique farm shops, and cafes serving locally produced food and drink, great places to eat and drink in Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns are found around every corner.

We are extremely privileged to be home to a whole host of eateries. Tom Kerridge has not one but three restaurants in Marlow, **The Coach**, **The Butchers Tap** and the most well-known, **The Hand and Flowers**, the only pub in the UK which has two Michelin stars. There is also a variety of other award winning pubs to choose from, including **The Royal Oak**, **The Pointer** and **The Mash Inn**.

If cream teas are your thing there are a number of options available in the grandeur of the 5-star hotels and ornate restaurants in our National Trust properties, as well as the beautiful & quaint tea rooms across the county. Then there's always the option of having tea served in a historic railway carriage on the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway.

Buckinghamshire is not short of fantastic farm shops either. **Lacey's Family Farm** is famous for its delicious Guernsey cream and milk which is used in and around some of the county's best restaurants and cafes. You can also find a selection of meats, deli items, homemade pies and sausages there too. Other farm shops and delis in the local area include, **Beechwood Fine Foods**, **The Deli at No.5**, **Bradmoor Farm Shop** and **Boycott Farm Shop**.

If you love a pint of craft beer, brewed with passion and skill by real-ale enthusiasts, or a glass of wine from a local producer. The area now boasts a number of microbreweries, vineyards and distilleries. If you are someone who is a gin lover, look no further than these Buckinghamshire family run distilleries, **Griffiths Brothers** and **Puddingstone Distillery**. Enjoy a pint or two at one of the more well established breweries, such as **Rebellion Brewery** and **Chiltern Brewery**. There are also some fabulous small-scale producers like **Malt The Brewery**, **Bucks Star Beer**, **Fisher's Brewery** and **Black Pit Brewery**.

Award winning wines are produced at vineyards open to the public, these include **Chafor Wine**, **Harrow & Hope**, **Daws Hill** and **Chiltern Valley Winery**. Book a tour, visit the shop or attend one of their many tasting events in the county.



Historical Highlights

If you are intrigued by history & heritage, Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns has something for you. A first stop could be **The Chiltern Open Air Museum**, where you can see more than 30 rescued historic buildings on display, including an Iron Age House, 1940s prefab, Victorian earth cottage, and blacksmith's forge. You could also explore the costume, agriculture and geological displays at **Buckinghamshire's County Museum**, or discover local military history at **Buckingham's Old Goal** and the historic WWII site of **Bletchley Park**.



In the 18th century, the powerful Temple-Grenville family chose to create an idyllic landscape filled with temples at **Stowe House**. Amidst these enchanting gardens, they built the most lavish temple of all. On a visit to Stowe House you will see the beautifully restored State Rooms and discover fascinating stories of how scandal, intrigue and debt brought one of England's richest families to its knees and the house close to demolition.



Visitors can explore the county's cultural past with a visit to **Bekonscot Model Village**, the oldest and original model village which opened its doors to the public in 1929. The village is happily stuck in a 1930s time warp, so go and see how England use to be and discover a wonderful world tucked away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The village also has a ride-on model railway, but if you are looking for large scale railways then the steam and diesel hauled vintage carriages at **Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway** are just the ticket. Book onto one of the Chinnor & Princes Risborough Cream Tea afternoons, fish & chip quiz nights, or Murder Mystery evenings, and enjoy the stunning countryside, crisp white linen and GWR china crockery.

You can also visit **Buckinghamshire Railway Centre** which has everything on offer for the railway enthusiast, including large express passenger locomotives, the humble shunting engine, and a coach used by Winston Churchill and Dwight D. Eisenhower for secret war strategy meetings.

Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway is the only steam train to have a platform which directly connects to London.

Inspiration

1. Combined River trip and visit to Bekonscot Model Village

For many years, groups have chosen to combine a river trip with French Brothers and a visit to the nearby Bekonscot Village. Both are half day attractions that complement each other.



Start your day with a relaxing 2½ hour cruise from Windsor, during which you will be served a delicious ploughman's lunch. Rejoin your coach and head off to spend the afternoon at the world's oldest model village. Become a giant in a miniature world and gaze in wonder at the buildings portraying rural England as it was in the 1930s. Two French Brothers steam boats are also reproduced, adding yet more authenticity to the bygone era. You will then enjoy a lovely cream tea at Bekonscot. This is a day trip, with ½ day at each attraction. Group tours and prices available.

To book this day trip

E: groups@frenchbrothers.co.uk

T: **01753 827345**

2. Bletchley Park

As winners of the Best Attraction for Groups in both the 2015, 2016 and 2017 Group Travel Awards, you will not be disappointed here. Once the top-secret home of the World War Two Codebreakers, Bletchley Park is now a vibrant heritage attraction. Step back in time to experience the stories of the



extraordinary achievements of the men and women who worked here. Highlights include the restored codebreaking huts, with their WW2 ambience faithfully recreated, plus a stunning new visitor centre with an introductory exhibition and hands on displays. Explore the beautiful grounds and historic buildings with an interactive multimedia guide and enjoy the atmospheric soundscapes, galleries and exhibitions.

Book a premium tour of Bletchley Park and start your day with a private tour with one of their knowledgeable and enthusiastic guides. A private lunch in the beautiful Victorian dining room is provided and you will receive an official souvenir book to take away with you. Allow 4-5 hours. Group tours and prices available.

To book this day trip

E: groupbookings@bletchleypark.org.uk

T: **01908 272673.**

Film, TV, Music & Literary Heroes

It's well known that Buckinghamshire is as pretty as a picture, so it's no surprise that a whole host of artists, writers and filmmakers have been inspired here. The gothic classic *Frankenstein* was written by **Mary Shelley** in her Marlow stomping ground of Albion House, and **John Milton's Cottage** in Chalfont St Giles provided stimulation for the masterpiece *Paradise Lost*. Meanwhile, Old Thatch near Bourne End was the residence of **Enid Blyton** from 1929 until she moved with her family to Green Hedges in Beaconsfield in 1938.



Roald Dahl is one of Buckinghamshire's most famous authors and is celebrated in not one but two museums, as well as having an annual festival in his honour. Great Missenden was home to Roald Dahl for 36 years until his death in 1990. Many of Roald Dahl's stories are based in and around the village, so grab a Countryside Trail leaflet and explore the local area, finding key sights that relate to Roald Dahl's books and life.

As the most filmed county in Britain, visitors will recognise many of Buckinghamshire's idyllic settings that enthrall viewers around the world. Home to the iconic Pinewood studios, the county has been the backdrop for films and TV shows including **James Bond**, **Star Wars**, **Harry Potter**, **Bridget Jones**, **Inspector Morse**, **The Vicar of Dibley**, **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang**, **Grantchester**, and **Horrible Histories**. Also experience the corpse-strewn pilgrimage of one of Britain's most popular programmes, **Midsomer Murders**, which was mostly shot (stabbed, drowned, poisoned and bludgeoned) in the county. The many idyllic settings that enthrall viewers can be discovered as a self-guided tour or booked as part of an organised tour.

Since his untimely death, **David Bowie** has become synonymous with the Buckinghamshire town of Aylesbury. He performed the world debut of two of the most iconic albums of the 20th Century, 'Hunky Dory' and 'The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders from Mars' at Friars Aylesbury.

March 2018 saw the unveiling of the world's first David Bowie Statue in Aylesbury's Market Square. The statue includes two main figures, featuring Bowie as Ziggy Stardust and then Bowie in his 2002 blue suit period, in addition to a number of characters that he portrayed in his long career.



Inspiration: Midsomer Murders Tour

1. Come and discover a Midsomer trail through Marlow and the Hambleden village. Covering only 17 miles, you will very quickly find yourself immersed in scenes from Midsomer Murders. This self-guided tour will not only let you walk in the footsteps of Inspector Barnaby himself but, get a real taste for what Buckinghamshire and the surrounding local areas have to offer. Following the trail you will also have the chance to taste wine, sample local food and beer, spend the night in a filming location and walk the beautiful Chiltern Hills of Midsomer. The trail starts and ends in Marlow and takes in the surrounding villages of Frieth, Lane End, Bolter End, Fingest and the Hambleden valley.



For more information visit W: www.visitbuckinghamshire.org/midsomer

2. Take a Midsomer walking tour of Thame followed by a steam train trip from Chinnor with classic cream tea on board! Thame is one of the most frequently used filming locations in the globally popular ITV series, Midsomer Murders, featuring either as Causton or as one of the villages in the fictional Midsomer County. Many Thame landmarks such as the Town Hall, Market House, Rumsey's Chocolaterie, Black Horse pub & brasserie, and the historic Swan and Spread Eagle hotels have featured in various episodes over time. The Midsomer Tours of Thame are led by specially trained Midsomer tour guides. Starting at Thame Museum, one of the filming locations the tour takes in all the other filming locations in town. Continuing the Midsomer theme, Chinnor has appeared in Midsomer Murders on several occasions. Chinnor's railway station became Holm Lane Junction for Death in a Chocolate Box, first shown on 11 May 2008. Station signs were changed, buffers were installed, and the station platform and train were drenched, all to create the Midsomer illusion.



The journey from Chinnor is by steam train and your reserved seat in the afternoon tea car includes passing over the level crossing at Wainhill, which featured in the The Made to Measure Murders. During the return journey of around 60 minutes, each adult will be served two locally baked scones, fresh butter and jam, Rhodda's cream, and your choice of tea, coffee, or cold squashes.

To book this day trip:

E: group.travel@chinnorrailway.co.uk

T: **07718 003133**

Landscape

Covered by the **Chiltern Hills**, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns are characterised by chocolate box villages, historic market towns, ancient woodlands, stunning countryside, glorious gardens, and meandering pathways by the **River Thames**, which cuts through the heart of the Chilterns. One of its most attractive stretches flows past Marlow, where you can experience the rigours of rowing to the peace and tranquillity of the tow path. Explore the 11 mile network of locks, towpaths and trails of the 200 year old **Grand Union Canal** and discover boating bliss and historical engineering.

Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns boast an abundance of glorious gardens, including the world famous Capability Brown-designed **Stowe Landscapes Gardens**, and the formal gardens at **Waddesdon Manor** created by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in the 1880's. Equally charming are the sunken gardens at **Chenies Manor**, and **Ascott House and Gardens** in Wing. You can also book a tour of the gardens at **Hartwell House**.

Marlow is often referred to as the jewel in Buckinghamshire's crown, but we are blessed with an abundance of **market towns**, including **Aylesbury, Buckingham, Amersham, Beaconsfield, High Wycombe** and **Wendover**. Each has its own distinct character and architecture but it's the boutique and independent shops, and antique, craft and art galleries that add so much character to the market towns throughout the county.



Thanks to a successful re-introduction project between 1989 and 1994, the Chilterns is one of the best places in the UK to see red kites.

Spectacular Sports & Outdoors

Buckinghamshire has achieved a huge Olympic legacy over the years, with **Dorney Lake** attracting 30,000 spectators a day in 2012 to see Team GB bag 12 medals. Today the lake is a world-class rowing and kayak training facility and open water swimming club. **Stoke Mandeville Stadium is the birthplace of the Paralympic games** and is the national centre for disability sport.

For the ultimate thrill, emulate your F1 hero from the cockpit of a race car on one of **Silverstone's Motor Sport** experiences, or attend one of the weekly race meetings. **Wycombe Wanderers at Adams Park** is our local link to professional football. **Experience the Country** is an outdoor/indoor pursuits and 4x4 off-road driving centre set on an 800 acre country estate, complete with activity lakes, off-road courses, woodlands, and a large indoor arena. Buckinghamshire is also the perfect spot for **golfing weekends** as it has the highest concentration of courses in the UK, including the famous 27-hole course at **Stoke Park**.

If you are looking for a casual stroll with scenic views of red kites soaring above rolling hills, or you're an experienced **walker** wanting a challenging hike – with over a third of the county covered by the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, our range of itineraries cater for everyone. We have a number of long distance walks ideal for weekend breaks, including the historic **Ridgeway National Trail**, **The Chiltern Way** and the **Thames National Path**.

Cyclists are well catered for in Buckinghamshire, including **The Chilterns Cycleway**, a 173-mile circular route taking in the finest Chiltern landscapes in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. The route is mainly on-road and is signposted throughout, with highlights including superb views, market towns and villages, country pubs and National Trust properties. It lends itself to a leisurely one-week tour, or to a choice of three, two-day breaks on the Northern, Central and Southern Loops.

Stoke Mandeville in Buckinghamshire is the birthplace of the Paralympics. The first Stoke Mandeville Games, precursor to the Paralympic Games were held here in 1948.





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