



MOVING OUT

The Cotswolds

Stunning chocolate box market towns and villages, golden honey-coloured houses, dry stone walls and beautiful rolling countryside that even looks lovely in the rain, this is quintessential English country living. And it is relatively accessible from London both by train and car, even commutable if you're feeling brave. By **Jill Forbes**
Illustrations by **Meg Niven**

Where to live

The Cotswolds cover a huge area, towards Stratford-upon-Avon in the north, Bath in the south, almost as far as Oxford in the east and to Stroud in the west. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the size, the North and South Cotswolds have two quite distinct personalities.

The Northern Cotswolds Reached by the M40 and trains from Paddington to **Charlbury**, **Kingham** and **Moreton-in-Marsh** (from 1 hour 20mins with trains every hour at peak times) are the 'Cosmopolitan

Cotswolds'. A plethora of celebrities call this area home, the Camerons, Jeremy Clarkson and the Beckhams hide away from the prying eyes of London life, and it is now home to the wonders of **Soho Farmhouse** and **Daylesford**. Not exactly the nitty gritty of hardy country living but if you want the magic and mud of the countryside with a twist of urban luxury, it is here in abundance. It's hard to pinpoint 'the best' village as there are so many; for those needing to be close to the train, **Bledington** and **Chadlington** and the villages around **Chipping Norton** (Chippy if you're a local) are great starting points but if commuting

isn't relevant then further west to **Stow-on-the-Wold**, **Lower Swell**, **Snowhill** and **Naunton** (west of here, towards **Winchcombe**, there is stunning country but your nearest station is Cheltenham) or south to **Northleach** and villages surrounding **Bourton-on-the-Water** will immerse you in full Cotswold life.

The South West Cotswolds Towards and beyond the ancient Roman town of **Cirencester** and you get a slightly different vibe. It is no less accessible to London, with the M4 and M5 on both sides. In fact, the train commute is a little less (the fastest train is 1hr 12mins from Paddington to Kemble and on to Stroud) and getting



Stow on the Wold



shorter due to the electrification of the Cheltenham line in 2018, but villages close to the station are limited so journey times to the station can be as much as 25 minutes which adds a chunk of time to your commute. This area has got a slightly more old school, grown-up feeling, less celebrities, just Royalty! Not as trendy as its northern neighbour, it still has plenty of urban creature comforts. **Cirencester** is a lovely market town and lots of lovely boutiques are popping up next to antique shops in **Tetbury**. All around the Cirencester and Tetbury area are small villages with genuine communities. **Cherington, Sherston** and **Luckington** are all popular.

The unsung hero of the Cotswolds is the area around **Stroud**, less well known to the weekender market, so you get more for your money and Stroud's reputation of being arty and quirky is well deserved. Tiny narrow lanes lead to pretty villages perched on the side of the beautiful Slad valley. **Minchinhampton, Bisley, Nailsworth** and **Painswick** are brimming with charm and hidden gems. Down one of the narrow lanes in **Painswick** is the lovely **Painswick Hotel**, voted Sunday Times Hotel of the Year last year.

The only problem is that these picturesque villages attract tourists by the bus load. Watch out for the tourist hotspots in the high season, **Bourton-on-the-Water, Burford, Bibury, Tetbury** and **Castle Combe** get especially busy – be aware if they are your local town as you'll need to choose your times to do your weekly shop!

Schools

Both state and independent options are extensive. There is so much on offer for nursery and pre-prep especially as more London families are relocating here; the popular **Willow Nursery** from Clapham has even opened its doors in Oxfordshire with **Willow on the Farm**. There are some excellent village schools. **Leighterton, Sapperton, Kemble, Cold Aston** and **Great Tew** primaries seem to get it just right.

PREP SCHOOLS

Cheltenham area

Berkhamstead School *Pittville Circus Road, Cheltenham, GL52 2QA* ☎ 01242 523 263
 ☑ berkhampsteadschool.co.uk Ages 3–13, co-ed, day. Lovely school: small classes, happy kids.



There has been a marked change in property prices in the North. The Daylesford/Soho House effect has meant that prices have gone up by up to 10-20% – a rural family farmhouse with garaging and an acre of garden could set you back up to £2m in a pretty commutable village. Further from the station and further south and you get more for your money. You can still get change from £700,000 for a three-bed village house in the south Cotswolds. *Luke Morgan, Strutt & Parker* ☑ struttandparker.com

Cheltenham College Prep *Thirlestaine Road, Cheltenham, GL53 7AB* ☎ 01242 522 697

☑ cheltenhamcollege.org Ages 3–13 (to 18 at Cheltenham Coll), co-ed, boarding and day. Action-packed, strong academic drive whilst also a focus on sport. Many pupils transfer to Cheltenham College but it is not automatic.

Dean Close *Shelburne Road, Cheltenham, GL51 6HE* ☎ 01242 258 000 ☑ deanclose.org.uk Ages 3–13/18, co-ed, boarding and day. Small yet supportive and enthusiastic school in 50 acres with a strong Christian ethos.

King's School, *Pitt Street, Gloucester GL1 2BG* ☎ 01452 337 337 ☑ thekingschool.co.uk Ages 3–18, co-ed, day. In stunning Gloucester Cathedral, this school used to be a choir school. Great academic drive, strong community spirit, outstanding pastoral care.

St Edwards School *252 London Road, Cheltenham GL52 6NR* ☎ 01242 388 550
 ☑ stedwards.co.uk Ages 1–11, co-ed, day. School motto 'Believe. Strive. Achieve' says it all.

Cirencester/Tetbury/Stroud

Baudeisert Park School *Minchinhampton, Stroud GL6 9AF* ☎ 01453 832 072 ☑ baudeisert.gloucs.sch.uk Ages 3–13, co-ed, boarding and day. Happy, genuine, nurturing school with old-fashioned values and good academic results. Fab facilities on the edge of the Minchinhampton Common.

Hatherop Castle *Hatherop, Cirencester GL7 3NB* ☎ 01285 750 206 ☑ hatheropcastle.co.uk Ages 3–13, co-ed, boarding and day. Lovely cosy, traditional school with a Hogwarts feel to it.

Hopelands *38/40 Regent St, Stonehouse GL10 2AD* ☎ 01453 822 164 ☑ hopelands.org.uk Ages 3–11, co-ed, day. Small but happy

school with a nurturing environment.

Rendcomb College *Rendcomb, Cirencester, GL7 7HA* ☑ rendcombcollege.org.uk Ages 3–18, co-ed, day. A small school, with a family feel and good facilities.

Westonbirt School *Tetbury GL8 8QG* ☑ westonbirt.org Ages 3–18, girls, day and boarding. Things are changing here with an injection of energy and modernism. A very close, caring environment nurtures the girls, leaving them confident and enthusiastic.

Wycliffe School Prep School *Ryeford Hall, Ebley Road, Stonehouse, Glos GL10 2LD* ☎ 01453 822 432 ☑ wycliffe.co.uk Ages 3–13 (to 18 in Wycliffe Senior), co-ed, boarding and day. Non-selective but gets excellent results. Encourages individualism; art block is great.

Northern Cotswolds

Dormer House School *High Street, Moreton-in-Marsh GL56 0AD* ☎ 01608 650 758
 ☑ dormerhouseschool.co.uk Ages 2–11, co-ed, day. Lovely small classes: a school that develops individual strengths of each pupil.

Kitebrook House School *Little Compton, Moreton-in-Marsh GL56 0RP* ☎ 01608 674 350



Fun at Hatherop



☐ kitebrookhouse.com

Ages 3–13, co-ed, boarding and day. A wonderful school for the outdoorsy type in grounds that children explore and roam with freedom. Academic focus whilst letting children develop at their own pace. Now part of The Cothill Trust, they offer a term in France in Year 7.

Central/East

Cokethorpe *Witney, Oxon*

OX29 7PU ☎ 01993 703921

☐ cokethorpe.org.uk Ages 4–18, co-ed, day. Strong Christian ethos.

Cricklade Manor Prep (formerly *Prior Park Prep*) *The Manor House, Cricklade, Wilts SN6 6BB* ☎ 01793 750 275 ☐ cricklademanager.com

Ages 3–13, co-ed, day. Lots of changes here, new Head, new name. Broad academic curriculum with an enthusiastic and inclusive vibe.

Pinewood *Bourton, Shrivenham,*

Wilts, SN6 8HZ ☎ 01793 782205

☐ pinewoodschool.co.uk

Ages 3–13, Co-ed, day and boarding. Academically strong but not a hothouse and full of happy, confident kids.

St Hughes *Carswell Manor,*

Faringdon, Oxon SN7 8PT

☎ 01367 870 700 ☐ st-hughs.co.uk

Ages 3–13, co-ed, day. A bit far east, but it's too good to miss! A truly fantastic and happy school.

SENIOR SCHOOLS

There are some excellent state secondary schools including **Cotswold School**, **Farmor's School** and **Chipping Campden** in the North and **Cirencester Deer Park**, **Stroud High** and **Balcarras Cheltenham** in the South.

Independent Secondaries

Of the independent preps listed above **Cheltenham College**, **Cokethorpe**, **Dean Close**, **King's**

School Gloucester, **St Edwards**, **Rendcomb**, **Westonbirt** and **Wycliffe** all have thriving secondary schools. In addition:

Cheltenham Ladies School

Bayshill Road, Cheltenham, Glos

GL50 3EP ☐ cheltladiescollege.org

Ages 11–18, girls, boarding and day. Stunning buildings, academic excellence is a given, the girls are confident and driven to succeed. Sports and music are strong too. No wonder this is one of the top schools in the country.



Pony Club smiles

an annual pilgrimage for locals, the **RSC in Stratford** isn't far away and they run a range of family programmes. **The Theatre Royal Bath** and their dedicated children's theatre **The Egg** also have some good productions.

The Romans left their mark on the Cotswolds. Their gloriously straight **Fosse Way** goes right through the middle. **Chedworth Roman Villa** has the remains of one of the grandest Roman villas in Britain. **The Corinium Museum in Cirencester** is filled with Roman artefacts and hands-on activities to inspire the most reluctant learner.

FESTIVALS

There seems to be one a month!

Daylesford Summer Festival

19 May Artisan food stalls, dog shows and farm tours.

Chipping Norton Literary Festival 26–29 April

Cornbury Music Festival

1–15 July

Wilderness Festival 2–5 Aug

Big Feastival 24–26 Aug

Cheltenham Literary Festival 6–15 Oct

EATING OUT

You won't be short of places to eat here, this is gastro pub-land with a capital G. Have a look at our online version of this article for our full round up of our favourites. Suffice it to say for here that we reckon the bacon and egg bap from **Jolly Nice** outside Cirencester is the best in England!

Things to do

If your child has an interest in ponies then the Cotswolds does Pony Club better than anyone. Falling into Area 9 of The Pony Club, there are a range of local branches to join. **The Heythrop, Cotswold, VWH** and **Beaufort Pony Clubs** are local hunt clubs whilst **Stroud** and **Minchinhampton Pony Clubs** are also great fun.

Cotswold Farm Park west of Stow has rare breeds and farm animals (we go back time after time just to hold the baby chicks); nearby Bourton-on-the-Water is home to the **Model Village** and **Birdland**. Towards Burford is the **Cotswold Wildlife Park** – who doesn't love real rhinos and giraffes?

There are **National Trust** gardens a-plenty, **Batsford** and **Westonbirt Arboretums** are stunning at all times of year, even if you aren't a tree hugger! Close to Cirencester is the **Cotswold Country Park and Beach** which will keep everyone happy. You can learn to sail, use the pedalos, swim or take some bikes and ride around the grounds. The beach in the summer is surprisingly nice, busy, but if you can't get to the sea, it's the next best thing! You will also find **Head4Heights** here, a high rope adventure park.

While the panto in 'Chippy' is



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