



Pictured:
Making a toast
at The Newbury,
Berkshire over
cocktails and
homemade pizzas.

GOURMET GUIDE

FOOD & DRINK

Discover a wealth of hidden culinary delights and epicurean experiences on the Great West Way

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Sure, you could travel the Great West Way from London to Bristol in an afternoon, but epicureans know the reward is in the discovery, and we've got 500 miles of delicious detours for you! Linger as long as you can, because this stretch of English countryside needs to be savoured, and slow travel is the best way to experience it.

This slice of quintessential England is home to some of the country's best agricultural land, and with that comes excellent local produce, from fresh fruits and vegetables to fine wines. Farms rear animals and nurture crops, breweries experiment with craft beers, and kitchen gardens cultivate seasonal veggies. While pubs, hotels and restaurants select the best of it all for their menus, and family-run tea rooms whip up fresh cakes daily. All of this adds up to one very tasty journey along the Great West Way.

From thatched pubs to beamed tearooms, farm shops to Michelin starred restaurants, and food tours to cookery schools – we hope you enjoy our pick of the best places to visit along the route from east to west.

Starting the route from London and heading towards Windsor, thoughts may immediately turn to stately matters. Apart from admiring Windsor Castle, it's only proper to take an elegant afternoon tea here.

Push the boat out (or watch the Windsor Duck Tours and French Brothers boat cruises) from the terrace overlooking the Thames River at Sir Christopher Wren Hotel & Spa, with warm scones, jam and Cornish clotted cream. Or you could nibble your Highland oak smoked salmon and cream cheese finger sandwiches by the roaring fire in their Drawing Room.

For hearty pub food, The Bird in Hand at Knowl Hill beckons. Renowned for its 28-day dry-aged-on-the-bone steaks, this is the kind of place that reverentially namechecks all its local suppliers; the Great British Sunday Roast is definitely worth booking. If you fancy climbing the gastronomic echelons, Bray-on-Thames is a must – truly the most exciting 'foodie' village to visit in the UK, home to The Fat Duck (yes, of Heston Blumenthal fame) The Waterside Inn, and other Michelin starred gems you will want to add to your special-night-out list. (see page 48).

Cap it off with a reservation at Monkey Island Estate, a luxury hotel on a private island in Bray, perhaps with a nightcap in the Whisky Snug accessed via a secret staircase.

In the counties of Buckinghamshire and North Hampshire, head for The Five Arrows restaurant, located at the gates of the grand Waddesdon Manor →



Pictured left-right:
The Red Lion
Freehouse,
Pewsey; The
Carpenters
Arms, Windsor;
Wadworth
Brewery Shires.

in Aylesbury for a taste of beef from the estate, its very own ale, and seasonal vegetables from the kitchen garden. If you're still in the mood for luxury, then the Grade-II listed Langley Hotel in Iver is the place to retire to its Churchill bar for cosy Cognacs.

Gin fans will want to deviate to the **Bombay Sapphire Distillery** in Whitchurch, where there has been a mill since AD903. Here you can drink the likes of Vespear Martinis alongside the River Test, or take a masterclass to expand your cocktail repertoire. Finish up with a Hampshire Charcuterie and Cheese platter at the **Mill Café** for a tasty introduction to local produce.

Next county stop along the route is Wiltshire. If your ambition is to eat ham in the village of Ham, then consider it done. Perhaps pressed ham hock and pigeon terrine at the stylishly refurbished **Crown & Anchor** pub with rooms, a traditional inn dating back to the 1840s. Or a Michelin-starred version of ham, egg and chips from the **Red Lion Freehouse** (a thatched country pub with a boutique guest house) in Pewsey. Extend yourself to ham in Chippenham, with a sandwich from the tea room at **Dyrham Park** before strolling 270-acre ancient parkland around the baroque beauty of its mansion house at the western edge of the Cotswolds. Don't miss picking up some of 'the Wiltshire cure' at **Buttle Farm** in Compton Bassett: a traditional technique for curing their free-range rare-breed pork and ham.

Farm shops are not only a highlight of the Great West Way, but your source of excellent edible souvenirs. At **Roves Farm** in Sevenhampton, you can indulge in farm-raised fare at the **Woolly Sheep Café** and also take home free-range eggs, sausages, pies and other treats. True gourmands should head straight to the butchery for the highest quality home-reared meats.



DID YOU KNOW? IN THEIR HEYDAY, MORE THAN 40 SHIRES WERE USED BY WADWORTH BREWERY TO DELIVER THEIR ALREADY FAMOUS BEERS TO LOCAL INNS AND HOSTELRIES? A TRADITION AT WADWORTH – AND THEIR GENTLE GIANTS ARE AS MUCH A PART OF THE WADWORTH HERITAGE AS THE CLOSELY GUARDED REAL ALE RECIPES!

VISIT SAFELY

Protect yourself and others

Businesses have been working hard to make sure everything is safe for both staff and visitors. Things may look slightly different, so please be patient as we all get used to new ways of doing things.

Websites and businesses will be displaying new certification, including the Nationally-recognised "We're Good to Go" mark to demonstrate the measures they have in place to protect us all from COVID-19.

Renowned for its apples and magnificent dairy produce, Somerset is where you simply must eat cheese in the village of Cheddar, either before or after (or both!) exploring the famous **Cheddar Gorge & Caves**. The city of Bath will easily enchant with its Roman and Georgian charms, but set aside plenty of time for gastronomic exploration too. One of the youngest chefs to win a Michelin star, **Rob Clayton** of **Clayton's Kitchen**, prepares delicate Mediterranean-influenced dishes, with some good-value set menus. You can also dine in style in the neo-classical salon of the **Roman Baths' Pump Room Restaurant** or in the opulent surrounds of **The Gainsborough Bath Spa**, the only hotel in the country where you can experience Bath's thermal waters.

Pack an extra stomach for Bristol: the city has had quite the renaissance in the food world, with its many multicultural influences, and an especially thriving street food scene. Pick up a coffee at **Prince Street Social** or head to **Bristol Lido**, where you could really kickstart your day with breakfast at the poolside restaurant, enjoying hot smoked salmon and soft-boiled eggs, served with a Mimosa of Prosecco and Chase marmalade vodka (best not to swim afterwards!).

If you need a relaxing afternoon tea, you can glide down the River Avon on **Bristol Packet Boat Tours' two-hour Cream Tea Cruise**. But to ensure your trip is truly ship-shape and Bristol fashion, try to time your visit for a Wednesday, Thursday or weekend, when the **Harbourside Street Food Market** is in full swing. →

