

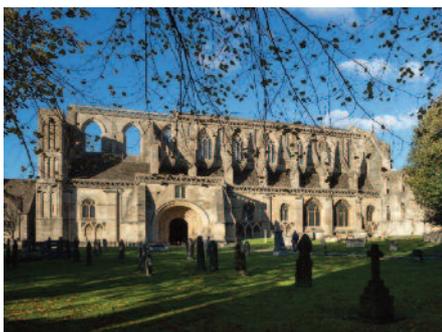


## UNCOVER MALMESBURY

Do not be fooled by the peaceful appearance of this ancient borough. Tales of a flying monk and a young girl killed by a tiger are all part of its rich history. Spend a day or two exploring this historic and fascinating town.

### DAY 1

The jewel in the crown of Malmesbury is its **12th century abbey**, whose silhouette can be seen for miles around. The great porch with its intricate carving has been compared with that of Chartres Cathedral. The abbey suffered during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries and again during the civil war, but it still impresses by its scale and beauty. The ornate medieval **market cross** with its eight pillars is also remarkable. Learn all about these and more of the town's history at the **Athelstan Museum**. History apart, the town has much to offer: from individual shops and a great selection of cafés and restaurants to a busy calendar of cultural festivals.



Malmesbury has many a tale to tell. The most famous one involves **Eilmar, the flying monk**. Fascinated by the idea of flight, he made wings for his hands and feet and jumped off the top of the abbey. Miraculously he survived but the abbot banned him from further attempts. A young lady who got too close to a tiger from a visiting menagerie was not so fortunate – as her tombstone describes!

### WHERE TO STAY

Stay in reputedly England's oldest hotel, **The Old Bell**, next door to the abbey. This family-owned hotel is a mix of elegance and old-world charm. Or opt for **Whatley Manor Hotel and Spa** set in 12 acres of gardens just outside the town. Fine dining and its very own cinema are just two of the manor's attractions.

### HIDDEN GEMS

The **Abbey Gardens** are a quiet haven in the centre of the town. The garden walks and yew hedging have been laid out to replicate the missing parts of the original abbey. There are unique views of the abbey ruins and beautiful walks along the River Avon. On the opposite bank is the **Congyre Nature Reserve** where woodpeckers and other wildlife and flora thrive.

### TOP TIP

Discover more about years gone by as you explore **Malmesbury** on foot. This was where the first king of England, Athelstan lived, and where numerous battles of the civil war played out. Don't miss one of the **twice-weekly markets** – pick up local produce at the farmers' market or a unique gift at one of the craft stalls.



## HIDDEN GEMS

A few miles from Malmesbury, just outside the village of **Kemble**, is a gem that is truly hidden! The source of the **River Thames** is marked by a stone, but you will have to follow its path for a while before seeing any water, as it is mainly underground. Kemble also has a listed railway station.



## TOP TIP

**Malmesbury** is a great place to base yourself for a day trip to the Georgian town of **Bath** – its famous crescent and Jane Austen connections need no introduction. En route, take in one of the prettiest villages in England – Castle Combe – which has often been used as a film set in period dramas.

## DAY 2

After a day discovering the treasures of **Malmesbury**, head just a few miles north to the National Arboretum of **Westonbirt**. This is a lovely place in any season, but is especially renowned for its colourful maples in the autumn. A treetop walk gives you a bird's-eye view of the 600-acre wood. A little further along the road is **Highgrove**, HRH Prince Charles's home – book a ticket for a garden tour, perhaps followed by a delicious tea. The stylish town of **Tetbury**, a shopper's delight, is just round the corner.



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