

Sustainability Champions



Tom Benjamin

Go Cotswolds

Tom Benjamin, Director

A family-run tour company, Go Cotswolds has showcased the area to over 20,000 people in the last decade. Director, Tom Benjamin, tells us why they place the protection of the Cotswolds at the heart of their business.

How do you make it possible for visitors to join your tours without driving?

"A significant proportion of the carbon footprint of any tourism business is the way in which visitors arrive at the venue or destination. Here in the rural Cotswolds, where public transport is not always frequent, convenient or available, a significant proportion of visitors use their cars to get around. We want to change that.

"As members of Good Journey (a non-profit organisation which promotes car-free tourism), we actively encourage our visitors to join our tours without using a car. In the information we provide on our website, we list public transport information before car/taxi directions. We have two pick up points (one in Stratford-upon-Avon and one in Moreton-in-Marsh), which are within easy walking distance of many accommodation providers and ideally located for access to public

transport. Our pickup point in Moreton-in-Marsh is right outside the rail station, allowing easy and direct access to our tours by train from London, Reading, Oxford and other places. Local buses also stop right outside the station, and there is a large bike rack too."

What else are you doing to reduce your impact and help protect the Cotswolds?

"We are upgrading our fleet of minibuses to the cleanest, low-emissions vehicles available – three out of four of our minibuses are now Euro-6 compliant, and the fourth will be replaced in March 2025.

"We support the 'Caring for the Cotswolds' visitor giving scheme, so we can contribute to the conservation and preservation of the Cotswolds. We also donate to The Rollright Trust, because as frequent visitors to The Rollright Stones, a fascinating, ancient Cotswold monument, we believe it's important

to contribute to its upkeep. Similarly, we are members of the Cotswold Way Association, because as users of the Cotswold Way and other footpaths in the area, we are proud to support the amazing work of the Cotswolds Voluntary Wardens.

"We also champion small, independent, local businesses who share our ethics and values.

For example, when our guests enjoy free time in the towns and villages on our tours, we give them a map which points out our recommended things to see and do, and places to eat and drink. All the places we recommend are small, independent businesses (like us!), which we genuinely love. We don't get commission or backhanders, we just love sharing great businesses where our guests will get a warm welcome, great service and products, and a fun, authentic experience."

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Tours without cars



Explore quieter parts of the Cotswolds



Euro-6 compliant minibuses



Pickup from local railway stations



Car-free tours

Go Cotswolds continued

What are you hoping to do next?

"We are looking to develop new tours to encourage visitors to explore the quieter parts of the Cotswolds which, we hope, will help alleviate the congestion at the more popular tourist destinations.

"We are also working towards a Green Tourism certification; it's a priority for 2025. This accreditation is a symbol to our guests that we are striving to do the right thing for people and the planet."

What advice would you give businesses who are starting on their journey?

"Ask yourself, 'what will it look like when we are done?' and 'what are the steps we need to get there?' Then, start with one thing."

What 'quick win' would you suggest to other businesses?

"If you have a 'how to find us' page on your website, describe how to get there by public transport over and above car transport."

Is there anything you'd wish you'd known from the start?

"They say, 'it's not about the destination, it's about the journey' and that is true of our sustainability journey. Being 'sustainable' isn't about being perfect (though that's a great goal to have!), but it's about making small changes which amount to big differences over time."

gocotswolds.co.uk

"We are fully aware of the issues in the Cotswolds with over-tourism, and the congestion, environmental and economic issues this causes. As a responsible tour company, we want to be part of the solution, not part of the problem."