

Enjoy the River Thames at Lechlade



How long do I need? One day
Where is it? Lechlade

Highlights

The upper River Thames around Lechlade is an excellent choice for a getaway. Here on the edge of the Cotswolds, on the Oxfordshire / Gloucestershire border, the river feels fresh and youthful and the untouched countryside reveals some delightful rural gems.

Start your day on the River Thames at St John's Lock

Meet up with the river at St John's Lock, just outside Lechlade, where a statue of Old Father Thames keeps a watchful eye on pleasure craft congregating near the top of the navigable river. Hire a rowing boat, electric boat or cruiser to spend the morning exploring the area's irresistible vistas. A half-hour trip downstream will take you through open meadows to Buscot Lock and Weir. You can moor here for the ten minute walk to stone-built Buscot village, which is largely owned by the National Trust. The tearooms at Buscot are open for lunch, as well as tea.

The lovely view upstream from St John's Lock is of the pleasant market town of Lechlade, visible beyond picturesque water meadows. The return trip by boat takes two hours, including time to get through the lock. Add extra time to moor in the town and see Ha'penny Bridge, with its old toll house, which marks the highest point on the Thames reached by powered boats. The Church of St Lawrence, in the market square, is noted for inspiring Shelley's *Stanzas in a Summer Evening Churchyard* - the path through the churchyard is still known as Shelley's Walk. [Cotswold Boat Hire](#) offer rowing boats and electric boats for hire by the hour and cruisers by the day or half day and have all the information you will need to make these trips.

Cotswold Boat Hire

The Trout Inn, St John's Lock, Lechlade, Gloucestershire, GL7 3HA

Opening hours: April - October

Costs: Ticket costs vary – see website or call for details

Tel: +44 (0)1793 727083

Web: www.cotswoldboat.co.uk

Have some lunch by the river

When Lechlade's priory was dissolved in the 15th century, the almshouses continued as an inn known as "Ye Sygne of St. John Baptist Head", later becoming known as The Trout Inn. Enjoy lunch here beside the river and test your skills at the old Oxfordshire game of Aunt Sally on the lawn reaching to the Trout Weir Pool.

The Trout Inn

St John's Bridge, Lechlade, Gloucestershire, GL7 3HA

Opening hours: 7 days a week

Costs: Various costs – check website or call for menus

Tel: +44 (0)1367 252313

Web: www.thetroutinn.com

Art, Craft and gardens

William Morris, famous founder of the Arts & Crafts movement, discovered his "heaven on earth" at Kelmscott Manor when he and his family rowed up the River Thames from London in a houseboat described by his daughter as "a sort of insane gondola". Lord Faringdon and his descendants have made their home in Buscot Park, now a treasure trove of beautiful things owned by the National Trust. Both the park and manor are perfect for an afternoon visit. If Kelmscott is your destination, you can walk there from The Trout, following [The Thames Path National Trail](#), allow up to an hour for the two-mile walk. The manor is signposted, 200 metres along a track from the Path, and Buscot Park is just a ten minute journey from The Trout by road.

Kelmscott Manor

This Tudor farmhouse on a willowy stretch of the River Thames is the idyllic summer home which William Morris shared with his wife Jane and her lover, the pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Morris saw in the mellow stone building a work of true craftsmanship in perfect harmony with its beautiful setting. The house and countryside fired Morris's imagination and the flowers, birds and trees of Kelmscott and the river wove themselves into some of his best-loved designs. The house retains a wonderful collection of the possessions and works of Morris and his famous associates, including furniture, original textiles, pictures, carpets, ceramics and metalwork. The garden has been recreated using many of the plants which Morris loved and featured in his work. A ten minute walk from the Manor car park (situated close to the church) allows you to explore the village of Kelmscott, which includes the Plough Inn and St George's Church, where Morris, Jane and their daughters Jenny and May are buried.

Kelmscott Manor

Kelmscott, Lechlade, Gloucestershire, GL7 3HJ

Opening hours: Every Wednesday and Saturday, 11am-5pm, April-October

Costs: Adults £9.00, children (8-16yrs) £4.50, students in f/t education with valid student card, £4.50

Tel: +44 (0)1367 252486

Web: www.kelmscottmanor.co.uk

Buscot Park and The Faringdon Collection

The house at Buscot was built in the 18th century in dignified, Italianate country-house style and the land was later turned into a model agricultural estate at great expense. Buscot was then sold to the first Lord Farindon in 1889 and his descendants live here still, administering the house and grounds on behalf of the National Trust. The house is home to the Faringdon Collection which contains a vast array of paintings, furniture and objets d'art, collected by the family over the years, particularly its Pre-Raphaelite paintings. The gardens at Buscot are also exquisite, including the spectacular Water Garden designed by Harold Peto and the Four Seasons Walled Garden created by the present Lord Faringdon.

Buscot Park

Faringdon, Oxfordshire, SN7 8BU

Opening hours: Either the house or grounds (or both) are open on most afternoons, from April to September, with the exception of some weekends. The Tea Room is open on house open days.

Costs: House and Grounds £8.00, Grounds only £5.00. Children half price, National Trust members free

Tel: +44 (0)1367 240932

Web: www.buscot-park.com

Round off the day on White Horse Hill

High above the villages of Uffington and Woolstone, the dramatic figure of the Uffington White Horse prances across the downs. This wonderful hill carving is the oldest of its kind in Britain, created 3000 years ago from trenches filled with chalk blocks. Quite how it was marked out remains a mystery, for the full extent of the 374ft figure can only be seen from the air. This is an exhilarating spot, pacing the stylised outline of the horse and sharing its stunning views across the vale. A unique complex of ancient remains spreads out around the figure of the horse including Dragon Hill, where St. George is said to have killed the dragon and Uffington Castle, the Iron Age hillfort that crowns the hill. Britain's most ancient path, The Ridgeway National Trail, also crosses the crest of downs here. Follow it for 2km to reach 5,000 year old Wayland Smithy, the atmospheric burial chamber believed to have been the home of Wayland, the Saxon smith-god. Ordnance Survey maps for walkers are Landranger 174 and Explorer 170. White Horse Hill is a 30 minute journey from The Trout by road.

Uffington White Horse

Faringdon, Oxfordshire, SN7 8BU

Opening hours: Open all year round. The pay-and-display White Horse / Woolstone Hill Road car park (NT members free) which serves the complex is signposted off the A420 Swindon to Oxford road, next to the B4507 between Ashbury and Wantage.

Costs: Free admission

Tel: +44 (0)1793 762209

Web: www.nationaltrust.org.uk