

Ancient Market Towns and Beautiful Villages

Wiltshire is blessed with a fantastic variety of historic market towns and stunning picturesque villages, each one with something to offer. Here are a sample of Wiltshire's beautiful market towns and villages.

Amesbury



Nestling within a loop of the River Avon alongside the A303, just 1½ miles from Stonehenge, historic [Amesbury](#) is a destination not to be missed. With recent evidence of a large settlement from 8820BC and a breath-taking Mesolithic collection, Amesbury History Centre will amaze visitors with its story of the town where history began.

Bradford on Avon

The unspoilt market town of [Bradford on Avon](#) offers a mix of delightful shops, restaurants, hotels and bed and breakfasts lining the narrow streets, not to mention a weekly market on Thursdays (8am-4pm). Still a natural focus at the centre of the town, the ancient bridge retains two of its 13th century arches and offers a fabulous view of the hillside above the town - dotted with the old weavers' cottages – and the river bank flanked by 19th century former cloth mills.



Calne



[Calne](#) evolved during the 18th and 19th centuries with the wool industry. Blending the old with the new, much of the original Calne is located along the River Marden where some of the historic buildings still remain. There is also the recently restored Castlefields Park with nature trails and cycle path easily accessible from the town centre.

Castle Combe

Set within the stunning Wiltshire Cotswolds, [Castle Combe](#) is a classically quaint English village. Often referred to as the 'prettiest village in England', it has even been featured regularly on the big screen – most recently in Hollywood blockbuster 'The Wolfman' and Stephen Spielberg's 'War Horse'. Visitors can also stop by the Corsham market on Tuesdays (8am-3pm) which is nearby.



Chippenham

[Chippenham](#) prospered thanks to its location on the Wilts & Berks Canal, the London to Bristol stage coach route, and the Great Western Railway. This historic riverside market town houses a wealth of period buildings, the Museum & Heritage Centre, the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre and a variety of shops and restaurants. A little over an hour's journey from central London, Chippenham offers an ideal centre for relaxation and exploration of rural Wiltshire and the Cotswolds.



Corsham



[Corsham](#) is a quiet, unspoilt town where peacocks wander freely around the streets! Thanks to the wool trade and the quarrying of golden Bath stone, Corsham developed from its Saxon origins into a prosperous town. The historic High Street consists mainly of properties from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, including old inns, an elegant town hall and the stately Corsham Court. The town also has a weekly market, held on Tuesdays.

Cricklade

[Cricklade](#) is the only Wiltshire town on the young River Thames. The wide high street has some interesting specialty shops and many places to eat. In 2011 the town was awarded RH Champion of Champions in the Britain in Bloom competition, while North Meadow National Nature Reserve is renowned for its wild Snakeshead Fritillaries.



Devizes



This historic market town has a colourful medieval past and a rich Georgian heritage. [Devizes](#) has kept its character, with many small, family-run businesses and a good old-fashioned market bustling with fresh food, crafts and curios. The town stands on the Kennet & Avon Canal and is home to both the Wiltshire Museum and Wadworth Brewery.

Lacock



[Lacock](#) is one of Wiltshire's real gems, with its winding streets, beautiful abbey and houses dating back to the 13th century, all combining to create a stunning backdrop which has starred in a number of film classics – from Harry Potter to Pride and Prejudice. With quality accommodation, atmospheric dining options, the stunning abbey and Fox Talbot Museum, once the home of the pioneer of photography William Fox Talbot, Lacock is the idea base to spend a few days exploring the area.

Malmesbury

Known as the "Queen of Hilltop Towns", [Malmesbury](#) is England's oldest borough with a rich history over 1000 years. And, with a skyline dominated by the imposing Norman Abbey, many of the town's highlights – from the 15th century Market Cross and the Old Courtroom and Almshouses, to the narrow medieval streets, quaint alleyways and the riverwalk – can be easily discovered on foot. Browse the charming streets and thriving high street with an array of independent retailers and a weekly farmers and artisan market.



Marlborough



The handsome old staging post of [Marlborough](#) has evolved into a stylish and cosmopolitan town with its own chic café culture, offering the discerning visitor a unique blend of attractions and facilities. The High Street is one of the widest in Europe, lined on both sides with characterful old buildings housing an array of high quality shops.

Melksham

The town of [Melksham](#) evolved at a ford across the River Avon and was once part of a vast royal forest that stretched as far as Chippenham and was a favourite hunting ground of Tudor Kings. In the 19th century, the town boasted the discovery of Saline and Chalybeate springs, and an attempt was made in 1815 to develop the town as a spa that would rival nearby Bath.



Pewsey

Archaeological digs around the village of [Pewsey](#) indicate that there has been a settlement here since the 6th century, but it was the opening of the Kennet and Avon Canal in 1810, and the railway in 1862 that transformed Pewsey into a bustling community. A quaint village that retains its charming character, Pewsey is a hotspot for crop circle enthusiasts. The Pewsey Vale is recognised as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is extremely popular with outdoor enthusiasts.



Royal Wootton Bassett



[Royal Wootton Bassett](#) offers a wide range of independent shops including a greengrocer, award-winning butcher, a deli, plus items for the home from the ironmonger and Shabby Chic shops. Since being granted the 'Royal' prefix in November 2011 the town has continued to build on its strong traditional values with a welcoming, friendly atmosphere.

Salisbury

Superbly situated in southern England's rural heartland, medieval [Salisbury](#) is the perfect fusion of ancient and modern. Salisbury lies at the confluence of five rivers and the awe-inspiring sight of the Cathedral described as 'Britain's best view'. Salisbury is bursting with things on offer for visitors, from first class arts venues such as the Salisbury Playhouse and great shopping to museums, stunning gardens and a huge range of eating options; not to mention a market on Tuesdays and Saturdays (8am-4pm).



Swindon



Thanks to the arrival of the Great Western Railway in the mid-19th century, [Swindon](#) developed from a sleepy market town into a hive of industry. Today, visitors can enjoy the quiet courtyards, traditional shops and pubs of the Old Town alongside the excellent shopping on offer in the new town centre, not to mention two of Swindon's main attractions: STEAM Museum and the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet.

Tisbury



The largest village in the Nadder Valley, [Tisbury](#) has been a settlement for over 2,000 years and offers an excellent choice of independent shops. It is a great base from which to explore picturesque villages such as Hindon and the Donheads, local towns such as Wilton and Shaftesbury, and attractions such as Longleat, Stourhead and Old Wardour Castle.

Trowbridge

[Trowbridge](#) is Wiltshire's county town, with a Market Charter dating back to the year 1200. Situated in the heart of west Wiltshire, the town has ancient roots, having been first mentioned in the Domesday Book as 'Straburg', and was once the centre of West of England woollen cloth production - Trowbridge Museum's collections focus on this fascinating heritage. The town has a rich array of independent retailers, national chains and high quality markets.



Warminster



[Warminster](#) is a warm and welcoming historic town with lots to do for all the family. The town boasts many historic attractions as well as nature trails, meadows and grassy marshlands, all of which provide plenty of opportunities for cycling and walking activities, as well as water sports at the nearby Shearwater Lake. It is also the nearest town to Longleat - home of the UK's first ever Safari Park and one of Britain's most impressive examples of high Elizabethan architecture.

Westbury

Set within a striking landscape nestling below Salisbury Plain and overlooked by the famous Westbury White Horse, [Westbury](#) offers access to Wiltshire's glorious countryside and opportunities for walking, cycling, pony trekking, kite flying, hang gliding and paragliding. Westbury is exceptionally well positioned for all UK major road and railway connections with the mainline railway station offering links to London, Wales and the whole of the south west of England.



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