

Discover BRITAIN'S DELIGHTFUL TOWNS and local neighbourhoods



The Bridge Tea Rooms.

Bradford-on-Avon

PERCHED on the edge of the Cotswolds, the honey-coloured gem of **Bradford-upon-Avon** is packed with buildings from centuries past, many reflecting its textile heritage. Coach parking is available at the station car park and a greeting service can be booked. There's plenty for groups to do – with canal and river paths for walkers and cyclists to explore as well as the history of the town. Pre-bookable guided tours take in historic buildings such as the rare and unaltered **Saxon Church**, the ancient **Town Bridge** with the **Town Lock-up** and the outstanding 14th century **Tithe Barn** at **Barton Farm**. Groups can also browse the variety of shops and gently absorb Bradford-on-Avon's mellow charm. Leisurely boat trips can be booked on the **Kennet & Avon Canal** and garden enthusiasts can explore the stunning **Peto Garden** at nearby **Iford Manor**.

Throughout the year, regular events include the **Walking Festival** in September, and **Farmers Market** every Thursday and on the last Sunday of the month, and in July there will be a one-off event – a **Civil War Re-enactment**.

The town has a variety of cafes, restaurants and inns to cater for every taste, but the **Bridge Tea Rooms** is, for many groups, a 'must do' stop. Housed in a former blacksmith's cottage dating from 1502, the tea rooms can accommodate a coach party and serve up a first class cream tea, with home-made cakes. Another popular eating venue is **The Weaving Shed**, which overlooks the River Avon and serves a variety of food throughout the day.

There are local hotels for an overnight stop; the largest is one mile from town and is the 38-room **Best Western Leigh Park** – a Georgian country house hotel with walled and landscaped gardens.

Not far from Bath, Bradford-upon-Avon offers a gentler and less touristy opportunity to enjoy a delightful period atmosphere.

■ For further information telephone 01225 865797

For more information regarding Wiltshire towns, itinerary planning, guiding companies, coach parking, group accommodation and much more, visit www.visitwiltshire.co.uk/groups or contact **Florence Wallace, Travel Trade Manager, VisitWiltshire** on 01722 341309 or flowallace@visitwiltshire.co.uk

FOCUS on Wiltshire

This month, Val Baynton heads south west to explore some of Wiltshire's lesser known towns – Bradford-on-Avon, Malmesbury and Corsham – and discovers their intriguing histories and ideas for group visits.

Visit www.discoverbritaintowns.co.uk for more.

WILTSHIRE

Corsham

CORSHAM developed from Saxon origins into a prosperous town thanks to the wool trade and the quarrying of golden Bath stone. Home to a bustling Tuesday market, the historic **High Street** is rich with properties from the 16th, 17th and 18 centuries, which nestle between the 400-year-old **Lady Margaret Hungerford Almshouses** at one end of town and stately **Corsham Court** at the other.

Guided tours of the town can be booked and these can be in-depth, investigating the amazing architectural features that have survived on buildings such as the Flemish Weavers cottages and the Edwardian shop fronts, or more informal to suit the interests of your group. The town was transformed for the first series of *Poldark*, on BBC One, becoming Truro, and this and its appearance in other programmes including *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher* and *Larkrise to Candleford* makes a fascinating theme for a visit.

Corsham Court and its 'Capability' Brown landscaped gardens provides another focus for groups; it is open on 100 days each year and specialised art tours or more general tours can be booked. However, the Corsham parkland with its lake can be enjoyed all year round.

Free coach parking is available, by arrangement, and there are cafes and pubs providing a variety of refreshments throughout the town. The local **Methuen Arms** has 12 rooms so is suitable for smaller groups.

■ For further information telephone 01249 702130 or visit www.corsham.gov.uk/visit



Filming Poldark on location in Corsham.



Malmesbury Abbey.

Malmesbury

THIS vibrant hill-top market town is reported to be England's oldest borough and its highlights are a stunning 12th century abbey, a weekly market at the original **Market Cross** and pretty walks along the banks of the River Avon. Coach parking is available.

Malmesbury Abbey, in the centre of town, is free to visit (donations welcome with a £5 suggested gift) and there is a new audio tour taking in the history of the building and its transformation from

a 7th century monastery to a 21st century church. King Athelstan, the first King of England, was buried here in 935 before being removed to what is now the **Abbey House and Gardens**. The gardens span some five acres and groups of 12 or more can benefit from discounted entry with additional options of an introductory talk or a full house and garden tour.

Groups can also browse the narrow streets of the town, taking in its many unique shops and also enjoy a bite to eat in the cafes, restaurants, pubs and hotels. Accommodation includes the 12-room **Kings Arms Hotel**, the 23-room **Whatley Manor Hotel and Spa**, and the 28-room **Best Western Mayfield House** in the village of **Crudwell**, close to Malmesbury.

■ For further information telephone 01666 823748 or visit www.discovermalmesbury.life