

Cotswolds Discoverer – just the ticket!

From just £10 a day, you can enjoy unlimited travel throughout the Cotswolds by bus and train with the Cotswolds Discoverer ticket. Freelance journalist Alison Hughes and her friend Ruth Edy took a return day trip from Oxford to explore the Fosse Way

Having decided to visit three towns along the Fosse Way – Moreton-in-Marsh, Stow-on-the-Wold and Bourton-on-the-Water – we began our journey on the 8.58am train from Oxford, arriving in Moreton just in time for a quick coffee before visiting the Wellington Aviation Museum.

Gerry Tyack, a former RAF engineer and founder of the museum, was on hand to point out fascinating artefacts such as a canvas bath used for washing in the desert and a table made from bits of a Concorde jet engine. More poignant were the photos and paintings of wartime Moreton and surrounding area: German POWs digging out the snow at Little Rissington, Polish refugee children grouped together outside a school and a painting of American tanks lined up in the main square.

Gerry has created a museum with soul, bringing to life these dramatic times. Twenty years ago, he founded the RAF Moreton-in-Marsh Association and chose for its motif the Cotswold Lion. A Moreton

man through-and-through he has dedicated his life to preserving this little bit of social history.

Next we took the bus to Stow, a quintessential Cotswold town that has a few surprises too. Well known for its role in the English Civil War – there are reminders in the names of local hostleries, The King's Arms and The Royalist Hotel (reputedly the oldest inn in England...no really!) – Stow is also now home to the Cotswold Cricket Museum, which is proving to be a great attraction.

Even for cricket novices like me the museum is impressive – the array of blazers, signed bats and other memorabilia is quite extraordinary. A photo from 1859 shows a team setting off from Liverpool, on the very first overseas tour, in flat caps, spotted shirts and bow ties – a far cry from modern-day 'pyjamas'. There is a corner where you can watch TV-footage of great events and listen to radio interviews with cricketing icons such as Fred Trueman and Don Bradman; there is a quiz for children and a shop with cricket-related items

(Ruth purchased a rather nice bag), and a café.

There is no shortage of eateries in Stow, from hotels like the Grapevine to Huffkins tea-rooms. But as it was a beautifully hot summer day we opted for a flowery courtyard of a tea-room, Sheep Street, for lunch.

Stow is a place to potter around – take one of the little alleyways, formerly used to herd sheep into the main square, and you will discover one-off shops selling vintage clothes, jewellery and pottery. The church with its peal of eight bells offers a respite from the busy shops.

Our lunch break over, it was time to hop on another bus to our next destination – Bourton-on-the-Water. It is almost an obligation to dangle your feet in the gentle River Windrush on such a hot day – ice-cream is also required, good thing there is no shortage of that here!

Plenty of things to see, too. We selected the Model Village [see page 6], then intrigued by the name 'Dragonfly Maze' we crossed the road and made our way to the

entrance. Designed by Kit Williams of 'Masquerade' fame, this is no ordinary maze. Fourteen flagstones hold 14 clues that, when you find the centre, will help you to discover the dragonfly.

We had just enough energy and time for a cream tea before hopping on our bus back to Moreton in order to catch the 18.07 train to Oxford. To quote another pair of day-trippers, we had both had "a grand day out"!

Ticket to ride

Alison and Ruth travelled with a one-day Cotswolds Discoverer ticket (£10 for adults, £8.50 concessionary, £5 for a child) along the Fosse Way, using the Great Western Oxford to Moreton train and the 801 Pulhams Coaches (hourly service) between Moreton and Bourton. Their timetable was:

8.58	train departed Oxford	14.37	arrived in Bourton for 3hr visit
9.35	arrived in Moreton	17.35	bus to Moreton
10.00	Wellington Aviation Museum opened	18.00	arrived Moreton
11.10	bus to Stow	18.07	train to Oxford
11.25	arrived in Stow for 3hr visit	18.55	arrived in Oxford
14.25	bus to Bourton		

Alison says: "You do need to plan ahead to make the most of your day – check bus and attraction opening times, and estimate how long you want to spend in each place."

One-day and three-day Cotswolds Discoverer bus/rail tickets are available through all UK rail stations and participating bus companies. For further details and itinerary suggestions, go to www.escapetothecotswolds.org.uk/discoverer



All images: Alison Hughes