



ENGLAND'S GREAT WEST WAY IS OFFICIALLY OPEN

The Great West Way, a new touring route from London to Bristol, is declared officially open

The Great West Way, a multi-modal route that can be travelled by bike, road, rail, canal or on foot, making it the first of its kind, is declared officially open today, 5 November.

The new touring route travels through six counties from London to Bristol and encompasses 500 miles of navigable routes along the Thames, Kennet & Avon Canal, the Great Western Railway, the A4 and numerous walking and cycling trails.

However, if explored, the Great West Way will take travellers through some of England's most picturesque countryside, thriving market towns and chocolate box villages. It covers three UNESCO sites (Kew Gardens, Stonehenge/Avebury and Bath), three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Chilterns, the Cotswolds and North Wessex Downs) and England's most iconic attractions, including Hampton Court Palace, Windsor Castle, Stonehenge and Bath's Roman Baths. Combined with a plethora of pubs, tearooms, breweries, vineyards and Michelin-starred restaurants, the Great West Way offers overseas and domestic visitors a quintessentially English experience.

Great West Way Director, David Andrews said:

"This new touring route, the first of its kind, joins-up many of England's most iconic attractions, but also enables and encourages visitors to venture off the beaten track, explore more of the region and discover a whole gamut of quintessentially English experiences, all within one trip."

Visitors can create their own itinerary by visiting GreatWestWay.co.uk, a new website which offers an interactive map, insider tips, an events calendar and a planning tool to generate bespoke tours. This includes the option to add day excursions to other places of interest that are accessible from the route, such as Salisbury, Stourhead and Cheddar Gorge. Bristol Airport and Great Western Railway are fully-fledged partners in the project and will ensure the route is as accessible as possible for those travelling by train or air.

There are also bookable itineraries offered by official Great West Way tour operators, such as a four-day guided cycling/walking tour with Active England, costing from \$1599 (£1209) for three nights' four-star accommodation, bike hire and coach transfers. The itinerary includes Windsor Castle, Avebury and Stonehenge, the Kennet and Avon Canal, Bath, Highgrove and The Cotswolds..

Find out more about the Great West Way at GreatWestWay.co.uk.

Follow and engage with us on our social channels Facebook [@GreatWestway](https://www.facebook.com/GreatWestway), Instagram [@GreatWestWay](https://www.instagram.com/GreatWestWay) and Twitter [@theGreatWestWay](https://twitter.com/theGreatWestWay)

Ends

For further information, imagery or to arrange a press visit please contact Rebecca Lowe, Head of PR, rebeccalowe@GreatWestWay.co.uk Tel: 07444 601421

Note to editors:

About the Great West Way

The Great West Way is one of a number of successful projects to receive funding from the UK Government's £40 million Discover England Fund, administered by VisitEngland. VisitWiltshire are the Destination Organisation leading the project. For further information go to discoverenglandfund.org Further information and link to The Story of the Great West Way booklet, a guide for businesses and destinations, is available at visitwiltshire.co.uk/GreatWestWay

The Great West Way Ambassador Network gives access to a wide range of additional Great West Way consumer, travel trade and media marketing activity; connecting businesses and destinations along the route

Great West Way and England's Great West Way are registered trademarks. Please always use the appropriate symbol (®) on the first reference to indicate that *GREAT WEST WAY*® is a registered trade mark.

For further information on or to join the Great West Way Ambassador Network please contact Claire Margetts, Head of Ambassador Network, ClaireMargetts@GreatWestWay.co.uk Tel: 07850 080679

For further information or to find out more about becoming an Official Tour Operator please contact Florence Wallace, Head of Travel Trade, FloWallace@GreatWestWay.co.uk Tel: 01722 341309 or 07436 588860

About the Discover England Fund

In November 2015, the Government announced a £40 million Discover England Fund; an unprecedented opportunity for English tourism. The Fund aims to deliver world-class bookable tourism products joined up across geographies and/or themes; including integrated transport solutions to provide an end-to-end customer experience.

The Fund supports the growth of one of England's most successful export industries, inbound tourism. Tourism is an industry that delivers jobs and economic growth across the English regions – contributing some £106bn each year to the economy and supporting 2.6 million jobs.

The Fund supported a number of pilot projects in year one (2016/17) that tested product development approaches. In years two and three, 2017-19, the fund will support:

- A number of large-scale collaborative projects to be delivered over the two year period 2017-2019 that will create a step-change in bookable English tourism product for international consumers,
- A smaller funding pot for new one-year pilot projects (in year two), and
- Continuation funding for existing year one projects that demonstrated early learnings (in year two).

About VisitBritain/VisitEngland

VisitBritain/VisitEngland is the national tourism agency – a non-departmental public body funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS).

Working with a wide range of partners in both the UK and overseas, our mission is to grow the volume and value of inbound tourism across the nations and regions of Britain and to develop world-class English tourism product to support our growth aspirations. For further information and to access the latest in-depth market intelligence and statistics visit visitbritain.org or visitbritain.com and visitengland.com for consumer information.