

Inspirational Oxfordshire Gardens Trail - a 2 day self-drive tour

South Oxfordshire is a lovely countryside area of pretty villages and ancient market towns. The gardens and parklands, some natural, some nurtured, offer a chance to experience rural England and to talk to the gardeners themselves.

Choose to stay in one of the coaching inns or farm houses and sample locally produced food in the pubs and restaurants. An overnight stay ranges on average, from £70-£140 (B&B) or £60-£250 (hotel). Located just south of the city of Oxford, South Oxfordshire is easily accessed from London.

We begin our tour near the market town of Thame, just 7 miles from Oxford at [Waterperry Gardens](#). Run as a Ladies Horticultural School for more than forty years in the 1900's, these wonderful gardens now include formal knot, rose and alpine gardens, a wild-flower meadow, riverside walk and one of the finest purely herbaceous borders in the country. Enjoy apple juice and fruit grown in the 5 acre orchards or a home baked lunch or tea in the Teashop. There's also a calendar of events throughout the year including Art in Action in July.



[Waterperry Gardens](#)

Next stop is a delightful little nursery off the A329 at Newington, run by a Chelsea Flower Show winner who specialises in orchids. If you want to meet real garden enthusiasts, drop in at [Newington Nurseries](#) where owners Anne and Steve will be more than happy to chat.

The trail meanders past a number of pubs and restaurants – perhaps a light lunch with a glass of wine at Newington Nurseries, sample Thai or English cuisine at the quirky [Crazy Bear](#) in Stadhampton, or treat yourself to Raymond Blanc's 2 Michelin star restaurant at [Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons](#) – a classic Oxfordshire manor house where hotel guests and diners are invited to enjoy the idyllic garden setting (dress code applies).

If you are a fan of Bach's herbal remedies, then this detour (via Wittenham Clumps) is a must-do. [Mount Vernon](#) in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell is the home and workplace of Dr. Edward Bach, famous for his flower remedies and natural tinctures. A visit will take in Dr. Bach's consulting room, lots of information about the remedies and the chance to join visitors from all over the world and wander in the gardens where the herbs grow naturally and where the remedies are made. If it's lunchtime, try [The Red Lion](#) pub nearby.



[Harcourt Arboretum](#)

We finish the day with a walk through [Harcourt Arboretum](#), enjoying nature at its best. Begun in 1835 by the Harcourt family, the Arboretum continues to expand under the stewardship of the University of Oxford Botanic Garden.

We suggest either heading back to Thame overnight to enjoy local produce in a number of pubs and restaurants, or moving on towards Henley ready for day two.

We begin our second day at [Stonor House and Gardens](#), a magnificent estate full of history; and sporting one of the finest views of the Chiltern Hills you will ever see. A walled Italianate garden, the old kitchen garden stunningly restored in the 80s with ornamental plants, shrubs and trees and the chance to experience a traditional country estate are among the treats in store for gardens enthusiasts.

If you are travelling during the summer, we suggest a detour into Buckinghamshire and the gardens of the famous children's writer, Enid Blyton, owned today by garden designer Jacky Hawthorne. We promise you an English cottage garden in the truest sense of roses, lavender and foxgloves. [The thatched cottage](#) was referred to as a 'Fairy Tale House' by Enid Blyton and, although it can only be viewed from the outside, we think you'll see why. Home-made cakes are served in the tea room.



With a stop back in Henley to choose a place for lunch at any of its cafes, pubs and restaurants, you will be ready to take on the afternoon. Beginning at the recently re-opened National Trust property, [Greys Court](#), you will find yourself walking through a series of walled gardens set amid medieval ruins or taking the opportunity to explore the wider estate grounds. The Gardens Team organise a number of gardening events through the year so, with a bit of planning, you can find out first-hand how they do it.

[Greys Court garden](#) Our next stop is [The Herb Farm](#), a gem for anyone interested in the plants, products and peculiars associated with healthy living and alternative medicine. Wander through gardens where different varieties grow and enjoy herb-related gifts and food in the shop and tearooms - a fabulously fragrant place to visit.

We finish our day in a relaxed manner at the [Warburg Nature Reserve](#) just outside Henley. It has a mixture of nature's finest woodland, scrub and grasslands, shown off to its best within this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the Chiltern Hills. A haven for birds and butterflies, this is one place you are almost guaranteed to see the [spectacular red kites](#), soaring majestically overhead.



[Warburg nature reserve](#)

Between Thame and Henley, and near Wallingford, is a place everyone falls in love with, but you would never find unless somebody told you about it. Ewelme is a beautiful village which thrived on the production of watercress – [the watercress beds](#) can be seen today and watercress continues to be grown by volunteers, though unfortunately not for sale. Easily a half day visit if you take in the wildlife reserve, join one of the guided tours, help on one of their workdays, take tea in the [village store](#) or enjoy an overnight stay in one of the B&Bs.

No surprise Ewelme has been filmed so many times for the world renowned detective series, Midsomer Murders. In fact, around half of the film locations for Midsomer Murders occur in South Oxfordshire. Well, that's another trail in itself!