

# Chipping Norton in The Cotswolds

The Cotswolds is a vast area located in the South-West of England amongst the rolling Cotswold hills and stunning English heritage countryside. The area covers several counties including Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Oxfordshire and has been noted as the second largest outstanding area of natural beauty in England. Chipping Norton is a market town in Oxfordshire and the highest known town in the area. It was originally built on the site of a Norman castle and the market has existed in the market square since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

Chipping Norton market town was one of the largest wool towns in the Cotswolds during the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, and the Cotswold area was one of the biggest outputs for wool in Europe during this time. Since the cloth trade moved to the North of England, The Cotswolds has remained unspoilt and untouched in all its beauty, a distant memory to what was once a productively active area. Local residents David Cameron, Jeremy Clarkson, Amanda Holden and Alex James are regularly seen around the town.

## **St. Mary's Church**

The 'wool' church of St Mary in Chipping Norton is believed to have one of the finest interiors of all the churches in The Cotswolds. It has an incredible feeling of light and height from its perpendicular style and clerestory stained glass windows. The church also has a beautiful hexagonal porch with vaulted ceiling, an unusually shaped welcome area for such a majestic building. The church lies hidden away at the bottom of Church Street, just a minutes' walk from one of the oldest and most famous inns in Chipping Norton called The Chequers.

The Chipping Norton Theatre is also just a stone's throw away, one of the smallest and most beautiful theatres in The Cotswolds where many famous shows have taken the stage throughout the years.



### **Chipping Norton Recording Studios**

Perhaps something of a secret or not often mentioned is the recording studios of Chipping Norton, which were open in New Street from 1971 until closure in 1999. The studios entertained some of the most famous UK artists and bands throughout its history. The famous faces that graced the location included; Barbara Dickson, Alison Moyet, Fairground Attraction, Status Quo, Duran Duran, Cutting Crew, Level 42, The Proclaimers, Gerry Rafferty and Jim Diamond. After the studios closed, the building was converted to residences and is now partly owned by Chipping Norton Dental Practice.

## The Town Square

Chipping Norton is still very much a working market town. Many of the locals are born and bred here, and for a pretty town in the Cotswolds, it is somewhat wonderfully unpretentious. Despite its popularity, it has not yet been deemed a particularly vibrant tourist town, so it gives a good example of typical life in The Cotswolds. The town has several cafes and pubs, with pretty gift shops and antique centres, alongside usual amenities of banks, supermarkets and essential shopping. Locals agree that although their town 'Chippy' is not packed with commercial retailers, there's certainly everything you need when you get snowed in. Chipping Norton town hall dominates the heart of the town square, overlooking the market and the high street. The town hall has transformed over the years from a building that was originally built on arches with 4 locking cells for prisoners, as well as space for a fire engine and weighbridge.



**Bliss Mill**

Bliss Mill was and still is a famous landmark of Chipping Norton. This was the industrial base for tweed and wood production, located just outside the town centre and originally known as Bliss Tweed Mill. The building was originally designed by George Woodhouse and was once a late 19<sup>th</sup> Century factory with a dome based chimney. Now it is a beautiful landmark that looks like an oversized mansion, standing grandly at the bottom of the hill and overlooked by the town. The owner was called William Bliss and high quality tweed was produced at the mill for many years. William was extremely influential in bringing the railway line to Chipping Norton, where coal was transported to supply the mill's steam engines. Production ended in 1980 when the mill closed, and since it has been restored and converted in to high-quality luxury apartments with communal sports facilities including an indoor swimming pool. Chipping Norton's railway eventually closed its station in the 1960's.

### **The Cotswolds Mystery Tour**

Chipping Norton is one of the many towns which is just a glimpse of beautiful Cotswold life. If you're staying in London and would like to explore more of the English countryside, then it's only 1hr 40 minutes from London Paddington Station to Moreton-in-Marsh train station. The Cotswold Mystery Tour pick you up directly from the train station in their luxury 7-seater minibus and take you on a magical 6-hour tour of The Cotswolds. You will visit all the best places, including chocolate box villages with thatched cottages, grand stately homes, pretty Cotswold hamlets and stunning market towns. There's no need to bring a picnic as you will stop for lunch in a delightful 16<sup>th</sup> Century inn, and also visit a village café in the morning for a hot drink and pastry. After the tour, you will be dropped back to the train station to get your train back to London in time for the evening. Don't miss out – Book your Cotswold Mystery Tour today!

