

Explore the River Thames at Henley



How long do I need? One day

Where is it? Henley

Highlights

For rowing enthusiasts – and everyone who loves the river – Henley-on-Thames is the classic choice for a day out. Henley Royal Regatta has made the town the international home of rowing, bringing together top oarsmen and women from around the world for three days in June / July that form a highlight of the English social calendar. Sir Steve Redgrave, Britain's greatest Olympian, was an outstanding competitor at the regatta over 20 years. The Henley Festival follows the regatta with a magical mix of music, cabaret, food and fireworks, with live entertainment on its famous floating stage. The river here is broad and beautiful - a scenic setting for passenger boats and hire craft, the River & Rowing Museum and for lovely waterside walks along grassy banks on the Thames Path National Trail. The town is rightly popular as a relaxed and interesting place to eat and to shop and the surrounding villages in the [Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#) add their own enticing country pubs.

Start your day in the gardens of [Grey's Court](#)

Just 12 minutes from Henley by road, the gardens of Greys Court are as big a draw as the picturesque house itself. With their spectacular wisteria, old-fashioned roses, beds of peonies, a White Garden and ornamental vegetable garden, these timeless gardens create a picture of peace and tranquillity. The whole colourful patchwork is presented in a series of walled gardens, set amongst medieval ruins in the grounds of the 16th century mansion. One outstanding survival is the Tudor donkey wheel, used until 1914 to draw water for the house. More contemporary additions include The Archbishop's Maze, inspired by the enthronement speech of Archbishop Runcie in 1980.

Greys Court

Rotherfield Greys, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 4PG

Opening hours: The gardens and Tea Room are open 11.00 - 17.00 (Tea Room 16.30), Wednesdays - Sundays, April - September inclusive. The house, which has recently undergone extensive conservation, is open 14.00 - 17.00.

Costs: Free to National Trust members. House and garden: adult £7.85 (£7.10), child £5.15 (£4.65), family £20.85 (£18.85). Garden only: adult £5.75 (£5.20), child £3.05 (£2.75), family £14.55 (£13.15). Free cup of tea for those arriving by public transport, cycle or on foot

Tel: +44 (0)1494 755564

Web: <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-greycourt>

Visit the [River & Rowing Museum](#)

A statue of Sir Steve Redgrave greets visitors to this dynamic museum, which follows the story of rowing and the River Thames from Olympic heights to life on the willowy river banks. The largest of the museum's permanent galleries explores the river from source to sea, explaining intriguing aspects of its life from art and poetry, to locks and weirs, boatbuilding, birds and bugs. The International Rowing Gallery shows just what it takes to be a champion and gives us a taste of how it must feel to compete on the water. Thrilling film footage, memorabilia and interactive exhibits re-live Olympic and other famous race triumphs, profile the great stars of the sport and introduce the coaches and boat builders whose expertise is part of the winning formula. Sir Steve Redgrave's personal selection of his favourite items provides a special introduction to these galleries.

The *Wind in the Willows* exhibition depicts the adventures of Mr Toad, Ratty, Mole and friends with 3-D models of E.H. Shepard's endearing figures. Theatrical lighting and sound help recreate the idyllic picnic, the terrors of the Wild Wood, the battle for Toad Hall and other scenes from this much loved story. You can view Ratty's Refuge garden which won a medal at the Chelsea Flower Show from the Terrace Café and Thames Gallery and take a guided tour of the garden during the summer months. Before leaving the museum, visit the Henley Gallery for an excellent introduction to Henley past and present with a touch-screen virtual tour of the town.

The River & Rowing Museum

Mill Meadows, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire RG9 1BF

Opening hours: 1 September - 30 April, 10.00 -17.00, seven days a week. 1 May - 31 August, 10.00 -17.30, seven days a week

Costs: Adult £7.50, child (4-16) £5.50, Senior Citizen (60+) £5.50

Tel: +44 (0)1491 415600

Web: www.rrm.co.uk

A bite to eat

Round off the visit to the River & Rowing Museum with a light lunch in its Terrace Café, overlooking the willow trees of Marsh Meadows. All food is freshly prepared onsite using local ingredients wherever possible.

As an alternative - take a picnic on the river. Hire a rowing boat or a small motorboat from [Hobbs of Henley](#) - their boathouse is in Station Road, just

100 yards from the museum. Boats seating three to five people can be hired by the hour., you can even make up the picnic at Henley Tea Rooms in Station Road, just yards from the boathouse.

Take a river trip

Enjoy a relaxed trip along the beautiful Henley Royal Regatta stretch in one of Hobbs of Henley's elegant passenger boats. The 60-minute river trips covers the one mile, 550 yards of the Regatta Course, from its finishing point by the bridge to the starting point at Temple Island, turning further downstream at Hambleton Lock. A recorded commentary points out all the highlights of this very scenic route. Just turn up or make your booking in advance on the day.

Hobbs of Henley

Station Road, Henley-on-Thames RG9 1AZ

Opening hours: Easter - December

Costs: Costs vary – see website for details

Tel: +44 (0)1491 572 035

Web: www.hobbs-of-henley.com

Time to shop

Start your shopping expedition in Hart Street, leading from the bridge to the Market Place. A Farmers' Market is held here every fourth Thursday, and every fifth Sunday morning, with other visiting markets on an Italian, Old French or other themes. Call in to [Lovibonds Brewery](#) shop at the rear of 19–21 Market Place to talk to the brewer and sample and buy local craft beers. Follow the main line of shops along Duke Street and Bell Street, to complete the loop back down to the bridge via New Street. Cross the bridge to buy rowing memorabilia, jewellery and casual clothing in the [Pink Hippo Shop](#), part of the Leander Rowing Club - home to heroes like Sir Steve Redgrave, Sir Matthew Pinsent, James Cracknell, Debbie Flood, Steve Williams and the champions of tomorrow!

A gentle riverside walk

Enjoy wonderful views of the river as it winds through green meadows, on the gentle two and a half mile walk along the Thames Path from Henley to Lower Shiplake. The walk takes approximately one and a half hours and is marked throughout with signs for the [Thames Path National Trail](#). To begin, join the river path at the River & Rowing Museum, with the river on your left. Pass first through Mill Meadows then over the footbridge to Marsh Lock, enjoying spectacular views over the River Thames and the rushing weirs. From here the walk becomes more rural, with wide open views of water meadows and steep wooded hills. Reaching the end of the meadow, the path swings away from the river and over a footbridge, passing Bolney Court and along Bolney Road to a surfaced lane. Continue along this road, turning right after 'Rivermead House' for Shiplake station.

To return to Henley: First Great Western run frequent train services on the [Regatta Line](#), which links Reading and Oxford with Henley. Trains from Lower Shiplake to Henley run approximately every half hour, with a journey time of five to seven minutes. [National Rail Enquiries](#) (+44 (0)8457 484950) have the details.

Time for dinner

For supper by the river, [The Angel on the Bridge](#) (+44 (0)1491 410678) by the main river bridge is a popular choice, with a riverside terrace for summer evenings and a welcoming fire in winter months. To push the boat out, [Hotel Du Vin & Bistro](#) (tel: +44 (0)1491 848400) in New Street offers fine dining in the converted premises of the former Brakspears Brewery, just 50 yards from the river.

Time to spare?

Head for Hambleden, in the Hamble Valley, signposted off the A4155 Marlow road just two miles outside Henley. This pretty little village, with the [Stag & Huntsman](#) pub, has provided the perfect location for numerous period film and TV productions. Continue further along the winding valley to find [The Frog at Skirmett](#), 2010 Good Pub Guide County Dining Pub of the Year, then branch off for tiny Turville – home of *The Vicar of Dibley* and [The Bull & Butcher](#) pub.

Getting to Henley

By Car: Henley lies between the M4 and M40, on the Oxfordshire / Buckinghamshire border. For this itinerary, park at the pay and display long-stay car park at Mill Meadows, in front of the River & Rowing Museum or at the station itself, which is five minutes' walk from the Museum.

By Train: [First Great Western](#) run hourly services from London (Paddington), Reading and Maidenhead to Henley on Thames, via Twyford. [National Rail Enquires](#) (tel: +44 (0)8457 48 49 50) have the details.

By Bus: regular 328/329 bus services between Reading and High Wycombe stop at Henley-on-Thames. There is also an hourly X39 service from Oxford. [Reading Buses](#) and [Arriva Buses](#) have the details.

By Boat: [Salter Steamers](#) operate seasonal passenger boat service from Reading and Marlow, setting down at the museum jetty.

More information

Visit www.visitsouthoxfordshire.co.uk. Call in at Henley Visitor Information Centre, Town Hall, Market Place, Henley-on-Thames RG9 2AQ. Tel: +44 (0)1491 578034. Open: Monday – Saturday 10.00 – 16.00 (15.00 in winter).