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Living in Oxfordshire

Insight into everyday life in Oxfordshire
and an overview of key settlements

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Oxfordshire Life

Oxfordshire is one of the UK's most desirable places to live and work with its vibrant city, market towns and villages offering a choice of urban and rural lifestyles in an area famed for its architectural and natural beauty.

Home to the [University of Oxford](#) and [Oxford Brookes University](#), the county is a global centre of excellence for academia and research, powering innovation in many of the businesses located close to campuses and science parks.

Its fantastic transport links ensure easy access to the key UK cities of London and Birmingham using fast train links and motorways.

Key Settlements



10 things you'll love about Oxfordshire

1. Communities steeped in history

The UNESCO World Heritage site at [Blenheim Palace](#), Oxford's dreaming spires, and Banbury Cross of nursery rhyme fame are just a few of the landmarks dotted around the county.

2. Beautiful outdoor spaces

Many towns and villages sit within the Cotswolds, North Wessex Downs and Chilterns Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and rivers and canals add to the landscape and host water-based activities.

3. Fast and convenient public transport

Fast trains to London or Birmingham are available from Oxford and many of the larger towns, and smaller communities often benefit from commuter services. A comprehensive bus network covers Oxford linking it with smaller nearby settlements.

4. A fusion of traditional and modern living

The historic streets of Oxford and thatched cottages in rural hamlets don't mean you have to live in the past - 97% of properties benefit from fibre broadband.

5. Museums and culture

A wide range of museums, galleries and theatres means you are never short of cultural opportunities to explore, including the [Ashmolean Museum](#) in Oxford, several [National Trust](#) properties and collections of cars and other transportation.



10 things you'll love about Oxfordshire

6. Retail therapy

The new [Westgate](#) shopping centre in the centre of Oxford and [Bicester Village](#) offer a wide range of global brands alongside exceptional dining and leisure facilities. Small independent traders can still be found on many high streets, offering boutique products manufactured locally and from further afield.

7. Excellent educational opportunities

In addition to the two universities, there are many fantastic schools in the state and private sector, ensuring choice for all.

8. Safe and welcoming communities

Newcomers are welcomed by communities with many people willing to offer help and advice, and the county also benefits from very low levels of crime.

9. Literary, TV and film connections

Home to filming locations for productions including; Inspector Morse, Harry Potter, His Dark Materials and Downton Abbey. The annual Oxford Literary Festival celebrates world-class writers in the city of Lewis Carroll, CS Lewis, JRR Tolkien and Phillip Pullman.

10. Gastronomical delights

From high end cuisine offered by [Michelin starred restaurants](#) to a pint of locally brewed [Hooky](#) poured in the village pub, there is no shortage of fantastic places to eat and drink.





Oxfordshire: A year-round adventure

Oxfordshire is full of places to explore and enjoy, providing a year-round adventure. It is popular with tourists who often return to the county again and again.

From the ancient [University of Oxford](#) to the rolling hills of the Cotswolds there is so much rich history and culture to explore. Whether you're looking to discover an ancient civilisation at a world famous museum, wander around some of the most famous landmarks in the UK or relax with an afternoon tea, there is something for all occasions and all members of the family.

For example;

- [Ashmolean Museum](#) – Leading art and archaeology museum founded in 1683
- [Bicester Village](#) – Popular luxury shopping outlet
- [Blenheim Palace](#) – UNESCO World Heritage Site and birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill
- [Cotswold Wildlife Park](#) – Discover more than 260 species of animal
- [Crocodiles of the World](#) – The UK's only crocodile zoo
- [Oxford City](#) – Explore the historic streets including backdrops from blockbuster films like Harry Potter
- [Oxford Castle and Prison](#) – 1,000 year old partly ruined medieval castle

Learn more: <https://www.experienceoxfordshire.org/>

Why Oxfordshire is great for young professionals

Eduard Georgiev
Software Engineer, OceanMind

I moved to the UK from Bulgaria in September 2017 to study at the University of Coventry and relocated to Oxfordshire after graduation due to the high demand for software engineers. In early 2019 I moved to Witney, just a short 15 minute drive from [Harwell Campus](#) where OceanMind is based. Witney offers great value for money and the young professionals who I share a house with also work in the local area. There are often events in the town and it's great to be close to affordable supermarkets and the world renowned Wychwood Brewery is the perfect place to enjoy a relaxing drink.

There are lots of networking and training opportunities available across Oxfordshire because of the large number of people working for companies focused on developing new technologies. I feel like I'm part of a community of innovators and I've attended several events in Oxford targeted at software developers which have been incredibly useful.

Oxford is an amazing place to shop and I regularly make use of the gym at the West Gate shopping centre. The traditional covered market place features lots of shops and stalls offering a fascinating array of products – I've yet to summon the courage to try the pigeons I saw the butcher preparing! Whenever I have visitors I love to take them to explore the tranquil grounds of the [University of Oxford's Magdalen College](#) to appreciate the architecture and the beautifully sculpted gardens. The 1,000 year old [Oxford Castle and Prison](#) is another place I hope to visit soon to learn more about the city's incredible history.

Oxfordshire is a fantastic place for young professionals with lots to do and I've always been made to feel welcome. I'm proud to call it home.



Why Oxfordshire is a fantastic place for my children to grow up

Manuel Ruiz
Project Manager at GMV

Abingdon has been a fantastic place for my family since we moved here from Spain in 2015. It's just a short drive from my work at [Harwell Campus](#) and it was really easy to get my children into good local schools – we had lots of options to choose from at pre-school age and beyond.

There's a good selection of shops and services in Abingdon and Oxford is so close we can easily go there for anything else we need. At the weekend we can enjoy a peaceful stroll alongside the river in Abingdon or the many nearby Cotswold towns are just a short drive away, each of which have their own character and exploring one of them can easily fill a day. We're never short of new places to discover and there are plenty of things to do as a family.

Oxfordshire has been an amazing place for my children to grow up and I'm delighted that there are so many opportunities for them here.



Why Oxfordshire is amazing for everyone

Rahman Momeni,
Earth Observation Engineer at GMV

I first moved to the UK to study in 2009 and after several years in academia I began working at GMV in 2018, based at their UK HQ at [Harwell Campus](#). Oxfordshire was the natural place to look for work given the high concentration of space industry in the area and the significant investment being made in the sector.

For the past year I've been doing a weekly commute, but now my wife and I are going to make the county our home and embrace the opportunities on offer to us here. I've really enjoyed living in Wantage where I've rented a room with a local family. The town has a fantastic history and it's been great to soak up the local culture. We're not natural city dwellers as we like having the countryside on our doorstep so it's great that we can also consider living in other small towns like Abingdon or Wallingford which still offer a short commute to Harwell.

My first year in Oxfordshire has been a blast and I can't wait to find out what will happen in year two!



Oxfordshire offers flexible housing options suitable for all

There are a wide range of properties available to buy or rent, from studio flats in the city centre to large countryside properties with land – there is something for everyone. Oxfordshire has grown rapidly in recent years and there are many new-build properties for purchase, but it remains the least densely populated county in the South East region.

Buying a property

- Most properties for sale are sold through local estate agent companies who will have a presence in or near to the area where you wish to live, and it is normal for an agent to have exclusivity over a listing. These listings are routinely placed online on the major property portals; [Right Move](#), [Zoopla](#), and [On The Market](#). These allow you to search by location, price and type of property, supplying you with the details of the relevant agent to contact to arrange a viewing.

Renting a property

- There is a mix of private and public rented property in Oxfordshire, however the vast majority of people moving to the area will not qualify for public housing which has stringent requirements and often a long waiting list.
- Private properties for rent are most often advertised through local lettings agent and estate agent companies who will have a presence in or near to the area where you wish to live, and it is normal for an agent to have exclusivity over a listing. These listings are routinely placed online on the major property portals; [Right Move](#), [Zoopla](#), and [On The Market](#). These allow you to search by location, price and type of property, supplying you with the details of the relevant agent to contact to arrange a viewing.
- Websites like [spareroom.co.uk](#) or social media platforms can be used to find spaces in shared houses.
- Many people emigrating to the UK rent a property before deciding whether they would like to buy a home. A letter from an employer confirming level of income and a deposit of one month's rent are standard requirements to rent a property.

Car travel times

	Oxford	Abingdon	Banbury	Bicester	Carterton	Didcot	Henley	Kidlington	Thame	Witney	Harwell	Culham	Cambridge	Reading	London
Oxford		15m	37m	23m	31m	21m	39m	16m	26m	28m	21m	20m	2h	44m	1h22m
Abingdon	15m		42m	26m	33m	13m	39m	20m	33m	29m	13m	6m	2h9m	41m	1h29m
Banbury	37m	42m		24m	48m	48m	1h3m	28m	42m	41m	46m	43m	1h50m	1h13m	1h34m
Bicester	23m	26m	24m		35m	33m	48m	16m	26m	28m	32m	29m	1h41m	58m	1h20m
Carterton	31m	33m	48m	35m		39m	1h4m	27m	44m	12m	39m	37m	2h17m	1h7m	1h41m
Didcot	21m	13m	48m	33m	39m		33m	26m	36m	35m	6m	13m	2h16m	33m	1h31m
Henley	39m	39m	1h3m	48m	1h4m	33m		46m	37m	58m	37m	33m	1h50m	20m	1h7m
Kidlington	16m	20m	28m	16m	27m	26m	46m		28m	22m	25m	23m	1h57m	49m	1h22m
Thame	26m	33m	42m	26m	44m	36m	37m	28m		38m	40m	30m	1h53m	48m	1h11m
Witney	28m	29m	41m	28m	12m	35m	58m	22m	38m		35m	34m	2h15m	1h2m	1h34m
Harwell	21m	13m	46m	32m	39m	6m	37m	25m	40m	35m		16m	2h15m	37m	1h37m
Culham	20m	6m	43m	29m	37m	13m	33m	23m	30m	34m	16m		2h9m	37m	1h25m
Cambridge	2h	2h9m	1h50m	1h41m	2h17m	2h16m	1h50m	1h57m	1h53m	2h15m	2h15m	2h9m			
Reading	44m	41m	1h13m	58m	1h7m	33m	20m	49m	48m	1h2m	37m	37m			
London	1h22m	1h29m	1h34m	1h20m	1h41m	1h31m	1h7m	1h22m	1h11m	1h34m	1h37m	1h25m			

Train travel times

	Oxford	Oxford Parkway	Banbury	Bicester (Any)	Didcot	Haddenham & Thame	Hanborough	Henley	Radley	Shipton	London	Birmingham	Reading	Heathrow
Oxford		0h5m	0h17m	0h14m	0h15m	0h27m	0h10m	1h8m	0h6m	1h17m	0h52m	1h9m	0h23m	1h35m
Oxford Parkway	0h5m		0h49m	0h8m	0h49m	0h21m	0h20m	1h20m	0h39m	1h34m	0h58m	1h41m	0h33m	1h57m
Banbury	0h17m	0h49m		0h11m	0h44m	0h26m	0h59m	2h17m	1h18m	1h43m	1h3m	0h46m	0h41m	2h6m
Bicester (Any)	0h14m	0h8m	0h11m		0h57m	0h11m	0h32m	1h29m	0h48m	1h43m	0h53m	1h07m	0h41m	1h48m
Didcot	0h15m	0h49m	0h44m	0h57m		1h33m	0h49m	0h56m	0h7m	0h40m	0h39m	1h43m	0h12m	1h18m
Haddenham & Thame	0h27m	0h21m	0h26m	0h11m	1h33m		1h13m	1h43m	1h32m	1h31m	0h41m	1h20m	0h58m	1h38m
Hanborough	0h10m	0h20m	0h59m	0h32m	0h49m	1h13m		1h16m	0h53m	0h13m	1h4m	1h28m	0h34m	1h47m
Henley	1h8m	1h20m	2h17m	1h29m	0h56m	1h43m	1h16m		1h44m	1h36m	0h57m	2h51m	0h44m	1h10m
Radley	0h6m	0h39m	1h18m	0h48m	0h7m	1h32m	0h53m	1h44m		1h3m	0h53m	1h33m	0h27m	1h33m
Shipton	1h17m	1h34m	1h43m	1h43m	0h40m	1h31m	0h13m	1h36m	1h3m		2h11m	1h32m	1h40m	2h45m
London	0h52m	0h58m	1h3m	0h53m	0h39m	0h41m	1h4m	0h57m	0h53m	2h11m				
Birmingham	1h9m	1h41m	0h46m	1h07m	1h43m	1h20m	1h28m	2h51m	1h33m	1h32m				
Reading	0h23m	0h33m	0h41m	0h41m	0h12m	0h58m	0h34m	0h44m	0h27m	1h40m				
Heathrow	1h35m	1h57m	2h6m	1h48m	1h18m	1h38m	1h47m	1h10m	1h33m	2h45m				

Oxford

Population: 105,200 (ONS, 2011 Census)

Railway Stations: Oxford, Oxford Parkway

Major Employers:

- [BMW Mini](#)
- [Unipart](#)
- [University of Oxford](#)
- [Oxford Brookes University](#)
- [Oxford Science Park](#)
- [Oxford Business Park](#)

A lively and cosmopolitan city at the heart of the county, offering a wide variety of housing stock from modern studio apartments to large detached period houses for families.

Oxford is the cultural hub of Oxfordshire and home to dozens of museums, galleries and theatres, located on historic streets, brimming with stunning architecture.

Housing	Purchase	Rent (per month)
Average	£524,000	£1,606
1 bed	£289,000	£627
2 bed	£389,000	£1,288
3 bed	£454,000	£1,595
4 bed	£708,000	£2,112

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Abingdon

Population: 33,130 (ONS, 2011 Census)

Railway Station: Radley (3 miles)

Major Employers:

- [Miele](#)
- [Tessella](#)
- [GKN Driveline](#)
- [Sophos](#)
- [Penlon](#)

A traditional market town in close proximity to many employers in the science and technology sectors offering homes ideal for families.

The town offers riverside walks and a lively events and festival calendar. It is famous for its Bun-Throwing, a unique tradition which dates back over 250 years and is our way of celebrating major royal occasions.

Housing	Purchase	Rent (per month)
Average	£441,000	£1,072
1 bed	£162,000	£657
2 bed	£256,000	£1,122
3 bed	£374,000	£1,224
4 bed	£562,000	£1,542

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Banbury

Population: 46,853 (ONS, 2011 Census)

Railway Station: Banbury

Major Employers:

- [Jacobs Douwe Egberts](#)
- [Norbar](#)
- [UTC Aerospace Systems](#)
- [Arrival](#)
- [Prodrive](#)

A traditional market town with a wide variety of housing to suit families or individuals, and home to a burgeoning industrial sector.

Known worldwide from its inclusion in the nursery rhyme 'Ride a Cock Horse', the town hosts several traditional events each year, including Canal Day to celebrate the role the waterways played in the history of Banbury.

Housing	Purchase	Rent (per month)
Average	£256,000	£784
1 bed	£154,000	£552
2 bed	£203,000	£858
3 bed	£258,000	£950
4 bed	£373,000	£1,972

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Bicester

Population: 36,642 (ONS, 2011 Census)

Railway Stations: Bicester North, Bicester Village

Major Employers:

- [Bicester Village](#)
- [BRITA](#)
- [E P Barrus](#)
- [British Bakels](#)

A rapidly growing modern town with fast travel links to London and large quantities of family housing.

The town is home to Bicester Village, a luxury shopping outlet centre and the 2nd most visited location in England by Chinese tourists, second only to Buckingham Palace.

Housing	Purchase	Rent (per month)
Average	£325,000	£1,065
1 bed	£184,000	£661
2 bed	£256,000	£963
3 bed	£301,000	£1,227
4 bed	£426,000	£1,499

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Carterton

Population: 15,769 (ONS, 2011 Census)

Railway Station: Shipton (8 miles)

Major Employers:

- [Royal Air Force](#)

A traditional market town with strong military tradition due its proximity to RAF Brize Norton, and the Royal Air Force is the largest employer in the area.

Carterton has a wide range of family housing available in modern and traditional styles.

Housing	Purchase	Rent (per month)
Average	£261,000	£878
1 bed	£158,000	£675
2 bed	£215,000	£879
3 bed	£279,000	£1,069
4 bed	£351,000	£1,122

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Didcot

Population: 25,140 (ONS, 2011 Census)

Railway Station: Didcot Parkway

Major Employers:

- [Milton Park](#)
- [Harwell Science and Innovation Campus](#)
- [Culham Science Centre](#)

A modern town near to many scientific and technology employers in Science Vale, with a proud railway heritage. Designated as a 'Garden Town' in 2015, Didcot is in receipt of funding to support sustainable and environmentally friendly town development.

[Didcot Railway Centre](#) is a museum home to many historic locomotives including working steam powered vehicles, and has been used as a location for a number of films featuring scenes with period trains.

Housing	Purchase	Rent (per month)
Average	£282,000	£965
1 bed	£164,000	£673
2 bed	£240,000	£923
3 bed	£321,000	£1,243
4 bed	£426,000	£1,374

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Henley-on-Thames

Population: 11,619 (ONS, 2011 Census)

Railway Station: Henley-on-Thames

Major Employers:

- [Invesco](#)
- [Pitney Bowes](#)
- [Johnson Matthey](#)
- [Stuart Turner](#)

A historic market town on the edge of the Chiltern Hills with the River Thames at its heart. In addition to Oxfordshire businesses it offers great access to the M4 corridor, home to many technology companies.

The town is a world-renowned centre for rowing and host to the annual [Henley Royal Regatta](#); a key event in the British social calendar which attracts thousands of visitors from across the globe.

Housing	Purchase	Rent (per month)
Average	£640,000	£1,684
1 bed	£350,000	£1,160
2 bed	£450,000	£1,438
3 bed	£702,000	£1,715
4 bed	£778,000	£1,908

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Kidlington

Population: 13,723 (ONS, 2011 Census)

Railway Station: Oxford Parkway (2 miles)

Major Employers:

- [Thames Valley Police](#)
- [Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue](#)
- [Elsevier](#)
- [London Oxford Airport](#)
- [Essentra](#)
- [Airbus Helicopters UK](#)
- [Guylian](#)

A village on outskirts of Oxford with large quantities of family housing and considered to be one of the largest villages in the UK or Europe.

Kidlington provides fast access to Oxford while maintaining a rural atmosphere and is home to London Oxford Airport.

Housing	Purchase	Rent (per month)
Average	£382,000	£1,082
1 bed	£106,000	£721
2 bed	£294,000	£1,050
3 bed	£368,000	£1,306
4 bed	£521,000	£1,554

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Thame

Population: 11,561 (ONS, 2011 Census)

Railway Station: Haddenham and Thame (3 miles)

Major Employers:

- [Kubota](#)
- [Booker Tate](#)
- [Lucy Electric](#)
- [CPM](#)
- [Unicarriers](#)

A traditional market town with fast travel links to Oxford and London and a great selection of family housing.

Thame was used as a location for filming Midsomer Murders on numerous occasions due to its quintessentially English setting.

Housing	Purchase	Rent (per month)
Average	£492,000	£1,022
1 bed	£247,000	£-
2 bed	£331,000	£913
3 bed	£447,000	£1,329
4 bed	£826,000	£-

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Witney

Population: 27,522 (ONS, 2011 Census)

Railway Station: Hanborough (5 miles)

Major Employers:

- [Abbott Diabetes Care](#)
- [JSP Safety](#)

A traditional market town set in the beautiful landscape of the Cotswolds with a blend of modern and period properties.

The bustling high street is set amongst picturesque 17th and 18th century properties and the town benefits from several open greens for recreation.

Housing	Purchase	Rent (per month)
Average	£310,000	£985
1 bed	£180,000	£429
2 bed	£235,000	£947
3 bed	£329,000	£1,204
4 bed	£449,000	£1,416

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Join the hotbed of talent in Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire has exceptionally low levels of unemployment, at 1.3% (ONS, 2019) it is more than 50% lower than the UK average, and the wide range of businesses mean that there are working opportunities for everyone, from school-leavers, graduates to post-graduates and researchers.

51% of the working-age population is educated to degree level or above (ONS, 2019). The high level of skill in the workforce means that companies working in some of the world's most innovative and fast-growing sectors have chosen to base their operations in Oxfordshire.

The focus on innovation has created a strong and resilient local economy, forming part of the Golden Triangle, encompassing the universities of London, Oxford and Cambridge, creating a halo effect for local businesses, including many spun-out from the universities.



How schooling works in Oxfordshire

All children in the UK aged 5 to 18 years old must receive a full-time education which is generally divided into three separate stages;

- Primary – between the ages of 5 and 11 years.
- Secondary – between the ages of 11 and 16
- Post 16 – between the ages of 16 and 18

In Oxfordshire most children go to free to use state schools, however some attend independent private schools where fees are paid by their parents. A small number of children are educated at home by their parents.

Travel to school is an important consideration and it is important to investigate nearby schools when selecting an area to live. Schools in Oxfordshire normally have a 'catchment area' which outline the areas that they would normally accept children from.

The school year in the UK begins in late August or early September and is split into either three or six terms. Each term is about seven or 13 weeks long. Schools close for at least two weeks at Christmas and for two weeks at Easter. There are short breaks of two to five days in the middle of each term, called a half-term. The school year ends during July, when schools close for about six weeks.

Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for schooling in the county and administers school admissions. Further information:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools>



An introduction to UK Bank Accounts

To open a UK bank account, you will need to prove your identity and address. This requirement also applies for online applications.

You will be asked to provide your passport or driving licence to prove your identity. The list of documents to provide proof of address varies by bank, however these often include;

- Recent electricity or gas bill (less than 3 months old)
- Recent council tax bill (less than 3 months old)
- Recent bank or credit card statement (less than 3 months old) – posted copies only.
- A tenancy agreement
- A mortgage statement

If you have recently arrived in the UK, banks may be more flexible as you will often not have immediate access to these documents. They may accept a letter from your employer or a letter confirming your National Insurance number.

Council Services and Council Tax

Oxfordshire has three different types of local authority which provide public services;

Oxfordshire County Council

- Education
- Transport
- Planning
- Fire and public safety
- Social care
- Libraries
- Waste management
- Trading standards

City/District Councils

- Rubbish collection
- Recycling
- Council Tax collections
- Housing
- Planning applications
- Leisure services

Town or Parish Councils

- Allotments
- Public clocks
- Bus shelters
- Community centres
- Play areas and play equipment
- Grants to help local organisations
- Consultation on neighbourhood planning

These services are partially funded by Council Tax. It is a legal requirement that people register to pay Council Tax when they move to a new house. The amount of Council Tax owed depends of the size and location of the property. It is possible to find out the cost of Council Tax before agreeing to rent or purchase a property.

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