

‘our rich and varied Landscape’

Anne Bartlett is a specialist Blue Badge Tourist Guide for the Cotswolds and feels proud to share the region’s rich heritage and stunning landscape with visitors from around the world. Here, she chats to Eve Holmes.
Photograph Mike Charity

Anne Bartlett feels privileged to be able to share the beauty and history of the Cotswolds with enthusiastic visitors from all over the world. As a specialist Blue Badge Tourist Guide, Anne relishes in revealing historic facts about the region’s hotspots and seeing the delight that it brings.

“The Cotswolds is such a fascinating region and I want to give as much information to visitors so they go away having enjoyed their time here. It adds value to their holiday and it is very important to me,” says Anne.

Previously working for the Visitor Centre at Severn Trent Water, Anne was responsible for taking visitors on a guided tour behind the scenes of the works.

“It became very popular and soon we expanded the tour to the reservoirs in the Heart of England, which was a great day out for the family.”

Hearing about a Blue Badge training course to become a tourist guide for the whole region Anne signed up to the nine month intensive course which included lectures, practical work and guided tours. After completing the final exams Anne was then a qualified Blue Badge Tourist Guide, meaning that she has been trained and tested to meet the highest standard of guiding required by the Institute of Tourist Guides.

“The area is so rich in history and varied and I enjoy sharing the Cotswolds with visitors. No two tours are the same and you never know what might happen - there have been a few unexpected moments!

“On a tour of Cheltenham Ladies College I was talking to my group about famous former pupils and behind me a voice piped up adding herself to the list. It was Fiona Mactaggart, Labour MP, and she stopped to talk to the group which made their day.

“On another occasion I was taking a coach of visitors through Stanton and Sue Barker cycled past and gave a wave. It is these unexpected moments that make each tour different and exciting.”

Visitors also delight in the chance to meet the guardians of the region’s stately homes and historic places.

“The owners of our estates are delighted to welcome visitors. The Earl of Wemyss has always been very charming when we visit Stanway Manor, taking time out to show visitors around his estate. It is also a privilege to meet Lady Ashcombe at Sudeley Castle and on a visit to The Laskett Gardens, the owner Sir Roy Strong was delighted to chat to my group in detail before exploring the gardens. It really enhances the tour,” says Anne.

Living next to one of Cheltenham’s most prestigious landmarks, The Pittville Pump Room, Anne is passionate about the beauty of the Cotswolds and spends time conducting extra research before a tour to enhance her visitors’ experience. The themes of her tours can be as diverse as exploring the region’s hotspots, film locations, famous gardens and many more. Anne’s knowledge of the area is abundant and spending even a few minutes in her company is fascinating as she reels off historic facts and interesting nuggets of



information about the Cotswolds.

“People love the history of the area. The Cotswolds were once prosperous from the wool trade but with competition from Europe it crashed. The Cotswolds then became an important centre for the Arts and Crafts Movement in the early 20th century which brought about a revival. Today the area is thriving and its honey gold cottages and rolling hills attracts top name celebrities keen to own a getaway pad and enjoy the quintessential Cotswolds.”

When asked for interesting facts about the area Anne is quick to share a couple.

“Our rich cloth making history is still very much alive and not many people realise that the yellow cloth used for tennis balls is made here in the Cotswolds. Also, Stroud inventor Edward Budding invented the lawn mower in 1827 after watching the machines that cut the nap on cloth. He realised that the same process could be used to cut grass.”

Anne’s passion for the Cotswolds is

infectious and it is clear to see why visitors from around the world choose her to be their personal tour guide around our glorious region.

“Having the Blue Badge accreditation is enormously satisfying and the studying is ongoing. I strive to create a unique experience for each visitor. It is very important to me that they have an amazing experience here.”

To contact Anne please visit her website www.tourandexplore.com or follow her on twitter @GuideU