

THE Ridgeway

53 maps and guides to 24 towns and villages
with large-scale walking maps (1:20,000)

PLANNING – PLACES TO STAY – PLACES TO EAT

**TWO-WAY GUIDE: AVEBURY TO IIVINGHOE BEACON &
IVINGHOE BEACON TO AVEBURY**

NICK HILL





NICK HILL lives in Devizes, not far from the Ridgeway which he's walked from end to end numerous times. He is also often to be found on the other tracks and footpaths around Wiltshire.

When times allow and the opportunity arises, Nick travels widely, not just in Britain and Europe but also in Asia, a continent he's crossed overland four times. He settled temporarily in Thailand, his four years in Bangkok punctuated by periods in Siberia, China, India and Pakistan.

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The Ridgeway

First edition: 2006; this fifth edition: 2021

Publisher: Trailblazer Publications

The Old Manse, Tower Rd, Hindhead, Surrey GU26 6SU, UK
trailblazer-guides.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-912716-20-3

© **Trailblazer** 2006, 2009, 2012, 2017, 2021: Text and maps

Editor and layout: Anna Jacomb-Hood **Proof-reading:** Jane Thomas

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Photographs (flora): © Bryn Thomas

All other photographs: © Nick Hill unless otherwise indicated

Index: Anna Jacomb-Hood

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Acknowledgements

FROM NICK: I'd like to thank my parents for dropping me off and picking me up at various points along the trail. Lots of other people helped me along the way too, whether it was answering a simple question I had, or taking the time to explain something more in depth. I'm grateful to all the people who work hard to keep the Ridgeway in such good condition for the benefit and enjoyment of so many others and to those Ridgeway walkers who I talked to along the way, or who emailed their helpful comments and updates to Trailblazer including Janine, Jonathan Billings, Nigel Black, Martin Cox, Bob Crockford, Nick Goodyer, Thomas Hope, Nigel Kemp, Trevor & Joan Lipscombe, Sarah Morgan, Matthew Pires, Keith Rogers, Bob Royalty and Frances Shelley. Thanks also to the Trailblazer team.

A request

The author and publisher have tried to ensure that this guide is as accurate as possible. Nevertheless things change even on these well-worn routes. If you notice any changes or omissions please write to Trailblazer (address as above) or email us at info@trailblazer-guides.com. A free copy of the next edition will be sent to persons making a significant contribution.

Warning: long-distance walking can be dangerous

Please read the notes on when to go (pp14-16) and health and safety (pp58-60). Every effort has been made by the author and publisher to ensure that the information contained herein is as accurate and up to date as possible. However, they are unable to accept responsibility for any inconvenience, loss or injury sustained by anyone as a result of the advice and information given in this guide.

PHOTOS – Front cover and this page: Taking in the view from Uffington White Horse on a summer afternoon (see p116).

Previous page: Weathered Ridgeway signpost near Blowingstone Hill.

Overleaf: On Liddington Hill, looking north-east along the Ridgeway (p109).

Updated information will be available on: www.trailblazer-guides.com

Printed in China; print production by D'Print (☎ +65-6581 3832), Singapore

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This guidebook contains all the information you need. The hard work has been done for you so you can plan your trip without having to consult numerous websites and other books and maps.

When you're all packed and ready to go, there's comprehensive public transport information to get you to and from the trail and detailed maps (1:20,000) and town plans to help you find your way along it. The guide includes:

- Where to stay: from campsites to luxurious hotels
- Details of walking companies if you'd prefer an organised holiday and luggage-transfer services if you just want your luggage carried
- Itineraries for all levels of walkers
- Answers to all your questions: when to go, how challenging it is, what to pack and the approximate cost of the whole walking holiday.
- Walking times and GPS waypoints
- Details of cafés, pubs, teashops, takeaways and restaurants as well as shops and supermarkets for supplies
- Rail, bus and taxi information for all places along the path
- Street plans of the main towns and villages
- Historical, cultural and geographical background information

MINIMUM IMPACT FOR MAXIMUM INSIGHT

Nature's peace will flow into you as the sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their freshness into you and storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves. **John Muir** (one of the world's earliest and most influential environmentalists, born in 1838)

It is no surprise that, since the time of John Muir, walkers and adventurers have been concerned about the natural environment; this book seeks to continue that tradition. By developing a deeper ecological awareness through a better understanding of nature and by supporting rural economies, local businesses, sensitive forms of transport and low-impact methods of farming and land-use we can all do our bit for a brighter future.

As we work harder and live our lives at an ever faster pace a walking holiday is a chance to escape from the daily grind and the natural pace gives us time to think and relax. This can have a positive impact not only on our own well-being but also on that of the area we pass through. There can be few activities as 'environmentally friendly' as walking.

INTRODUCTION

The Ridgeway stretches for **87 miles (139km)** across the very heart of England, on a meandering journey through no fewer than five counties – Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire (see back of the book for overview map). Though now one of the 15 National Trails of England and Wales, the path actually started life around 5000 years ago – a thoroughfare for prehistoric man to make his way across the country on higher (and thus drier) ground. It's no surprise, therefore, you'll often see it described in promotional literature as the oldest road in the country – and there may well be some truth to that.

The Ridgeway stretches for 87 miles (139km) across the very heart of England

Perhaps the main joy of the Ridgeway is that so much evidence of its extensive history is still visible. The highlight is magical **Avebury** at the western end of the trail – a UNESCO World Heritage Site thanks to the concentric **stone circles** that ring the village, including the largest stone circle in the whole of Western Europe – but there are many more prehistoric sites both in this area and further east. On the edge of the village is **West Kennet Avenue**, originally



Pausing for a breather near Pitstone Hill (see p192).

The eastern half of the trail is dominated by the **Chiltern Hills** with luxuriant woodland bearding the trail's many ascents and descents. But scattered amongst the trees are several small, picturesque villages, such as **Wigginton** and **Aldbury**, as well as a number of market towns – **Princes Risborough**, **Wendover** and **Tring** – all of which lie either on the trail or within easy walking distance of it. Plus there's also the rare opportunity to walk through the Chequers Estate, the traditional country home of the prime minister!

Towards the eastern end of the trail there is the butterfly mecca of Aldbury Nowers, home to over 30 species of butterfly. But it's **Ivinghoe Beacon** that marks the eastern extremity of the Ridgeway and offers some quite spectacular, panoramic views of the countryside below.

Whether you decide to walk the trail eastwards from Overton Hill to Ivinghoe Beacon, or vice versa, you are guaranteed some excellent walking punctuated by a wide variety of interesting distractions, plus the warm feeling that comes with having completed one of the country's great walks.

Prehistoric sites, gorgeous rolling countryside and exquisite little villages huddled around cosy, half-timbered pubs. And, if that's not enough, it should also be pointed out that walking the Ridgeway is *not* difficult. It can be done in five days but this won't leave much time for relaxation, or for enjoying the

Below: Wayland's Smithy (see p115) is a Neolithic long barrow. Legend tells that the shoes for the Uffington White Horse were forged here.



countryside you are walking through. So allow time to explore, to dally, to soak in the sun and smell the flowers. The Ridgeway, after all, is a path to savour, not hurry through; so allow six or, even better, seven days for your hike along this most ancient of trails – you'll be mightily glad that you did.

History

The Ridgeway is very ancient. It's often described as '**the oldest road in Britain**' and it's clear that parts of the route were in use 5000 years ago or more. The Ridgeway, as we know it today, is in fact the middle section of the **Greater Ridgeway** (see pp198-9), an ancient system of tracks that stretches from Lyme

It's often described as the 'oldest road in Britain' ... parts were in use 5000 years ago or more

Regis on the Dorset coast up to Hunstanton on the Norfolk coast. These tracks evolved over centuries as people chose the driest and most suitable paths across the

countryside, for themselves and their animals – which usually meant following the higher ground.

During your walk you will still be able to see and touch stone structures dating back to the **prehistoric days** of the Ridgeway; the burial mound known as Wayland's Smithy (see box on p115) dates back to around 3590BC. Bronze Age (2500BC to 800BC) stone structures still stand, with the Avebury stone circle (see box pp88-9) and West Kennet Avenue (see box on p90) being by far the most famous and accessible of these. Additionally, you can see numerous Bronze Age burial mounds dotted along the Ridgeway.

From the **Iron Age** (beginning about 800BC) there are several important hill forts to investigate including Barbury Castle (see pp102-4) and Uffington Castle (see p117) plus earthworks such as Grim's ditch (see box on p154) also

dating from this time. During the **Dark Ages** the Ridgeway was used as a major transport route for invading Danish Viking armies. By the late **9th century** they had conquered most of Saxon England and had turned their attention to the kingdom of Wessex. In 871 they marched west along the Ridgeway from their base by the Thames at Reading only to be defeated by King Alfred at the Battle of Ashdown, which some think took place in the area around White



Avebury Stone Circle (see p88), near the western end of the walk.

Horse Hill (see box on p118).

Up until the **18th century** the Ridgeway still consisted of a collection of routes broadly heading in approximately the same direction across the country but then the Enclosures Acts were passed by parliament and these initiated the division of previously communal open land into privately owned fields. These fields were then hedged in to protect them from passing livestock and as a result the Ridgeway was forced to follow a single, defined route.

As **coaching routes** to London developed they avoided the actual course of the Ridgeway so it was left largely neglected – although several towns on the path, such as Marlborough and Wendover, were important rest stops. For several hundred years, therefore, the main users of the path were **drovers** transporting their sheep from the West Country, and even Wales, to the large sheep fairs at East Ilsley (see p132). The width of the Ridgeway in this area, sometimes up to 20 metres, gives an idea of just how much livestock was transported on this route. At their peak the fairs held auctions for up to 80,000 sheep a day though by the early 20th century these fairs were in decline: the last one was held in 1934. From then on the path was used mainly by farmers for access to their land.

This was especially the case during **World War II** when many of the hill-sides around the Ridgeway saw a change in use from sheep-grazed areas to cultivated fields. This was the result of a government-initiated effort to provide sufficient food for the population as imports were threatened owing to the fighting. This not only changed the visual landscape of many areas of the Ridgeway but also damaged the indigenous wildlife as powerful chemical fertilisers were used to improve the poor soil.

The first calls for the Ridgeway to be recognised as a long-distance walking trail were made in 1947 by the National Parks Committee and in the 1950s the Ramblers' Association (now Ramblers; see box on p43) joined the appeal. However, it wasn't until 1973 that it was officially opened as a **National Trail**, since when the most common use for the path has been for recreation. Only minor alterations have



At North Stoke (see p146) the Ridgeway runs through the churchyard of St Mary's. The church dates back to the 14th century.



The Ridgeway was once used mainly by drovers taking their sheep to the sheep fairs at East Ilsley. You'll see far fewer sheep now.

been made to its course since then which enable everyone to make their way along the 87-mile (139km) trail in the footsteps of the first Ridgeway pioneers from thousands of years ago.

How difficult is the Ridgeway?

If you are reasonably fit you won't encounter any problems walking the Ridgeway. There are no sections that are technically difficult and despite having a couple of steep climbs during each day's walking, it's nothing like as demanding as many other National Trails. The most important thing to do is plan your

It's nothing like as demanding as many other National Trails

walking based on your own abilities.

If you try to walk too far in one day, not only will you lose the chance to really enjoy the countryside you are walking through but you will end up exhausted and won't feel much like walking the next day.

If anything, the half of the Ridgeway west of the Thames could be considered more difficult than the half east of it owing to its remote and exposed con-



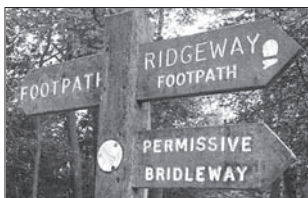


PLANNING YOUR WALK

1

Practical information for the walker

ROUTE FINDING



You shouldn't have any problems staying on the Ridgeway. At nearly all the junctions there are special 'Ridgeway' signposts showing the direction of the trail and these are usually also marked with the National Trail **acorn symbol**. For many stretches you

barely even need these signposts as the path is clear and well-trodden. Other branching paths are also shown.

In some places the standard system of chevrons and identifying colours is used. An acorn and a **yellow** chevron or yellow writing indicates that this route is a footpath, ie exclusively for pedestrians. **Blue** indicates that the trail is a bridleway and can therefore also be used by horses and cyclists. **Purple/plum** quaintly adds a pony and trap. The word '**Byway**' in either **red** or **white** warns that the route can also be used by motorists.

Since other footpaths may be indicated on the waymark posts you won't go wrong if you just **follow the acorn**. All path junctions are included on the maps in this book along with relevant notes.

GPS

GPS technology is an inexpensive, well-established if non-essential, navigational aid. Within a minute of being turned on and with a clear view of the sky, **GPS receivers** will establish your position and elevation anywhere on earth to an accuracy of within a few metres. Most **smartphones** also have a GPS receiver built in and mapping software available to run on it (see box on p42). Don't treat a GPS as a replacement for maps, a compass and common sense. Every electronic device is susceptible to battery failure or some electronic malfunction that might leave you in the dark. GPS should be used merely as a backup to more traditional route-finding techniques and is best used in conjunction with a paper map.

(Opposite): The superb view from the Uffington White Horse. The flat-topped Dragon Hill below was where St George is said to have slain the dragon, its blood poisoning the grass and leaving a bare area of chalk on the hill.



Using GPS with this book – waypoints

Though a GPS system is not essential on the Ridgeway, for those who have one, GPS waypoints for the route are provided. **Waypoints** are single points like cairns. This book identifies key waypoints on the route maps. The book's waypoints correlate to the list on pp200-2 which gives the grid reference and a description. You can download the complete list as a GPS-readable .gpx file of grid references (but with no descriptions) from [trailblazer-guides.com](https://www.trailblazer-guides.com). It's anticipated that you won't tramp along day after day, ticking off the book's waypoints, transfixed by the screen on your GPS or smartphone; the route description and maps should be more than adequate most of the time.

It's worth repeating that 98% of people who've ever walked the Ridgeway did so without GPS so there's no need to rush out and buy one – or a new GPS-enabled smartphone for that matter. Your spending priorities ought to be on good waterproofs and above all, footwear.

ACCOMMODATION

Although there is plenty of accommodation along the Ridgeway, nearly all of it falls into the B&B category. There are some campsites, but only one hostel and one bunkhouse on/near the path, both of which were closed at the time of writing.

On the western section, up to Sreatley, there is virtually no accommodation on the Ridgeway itself and the nearest place to stay might be a mile or two off the path: for this reason, you really should book ahead otherwise you might find yourself very tired and without a bed for the night.

Camping

Wild camping (see also p55) is not strictly allowed on the Ridgeway: it's private land and although it's a public right of way this does not entitle you to stop and camp. However, if you pitch your tent on the path and move on the next morning leaving no trace of yourself, you shouldn't have any problems. In many places the path is wide enough to pitch a tent and leave room for anyone else passing by. Unless you have personally asked permission from the landowner, do not pitch your tent in fields, or woods, next to the Ridgeway.

There are some official campsites with basic facilities such as toilets and showers with prices around £5-10 per person (pp) which makes this the cheapest accommodation option. The campsites aren't usually open in winter (Oct-Mar), which is a strong hint that camping at this time of year really isn't much fun.

There simply aren't enough official campsites along the Ridgeway for you to stay at one every night of your walk so sometimes you'll have to engage in a spot of wild camping, splash out on a B&B, or book an Airbnb unless the (YHA) hostel and bunkhouse on the route are open again.

Hostels and bunkhouses

There is only one (YHA) hostel actually on the Ridgeway – at Sreatley – and one independent bunkhouse, at Court Hill. At the time of writing both were closed due to COVID-19 but to check the latest contact the YHA (**Youth**

walking distance. Some proprietors will make a **packed lunch** as long as you request it by the night before.

B&B owners may also provide a **pick-up service** from the Ridgeway and take you back the next morning, which can be a great help; offering to pay something towards the petrol would be appreciated (but see box below). Some also provide a **luggage-transfer** service for which a charge would be made; see p55.

Guesthouses, pubs, inns and hotels

Guesthouses are usually more sophisticated than B&Bs and offer evening meals and a lounge for guests. Some **pubs** and **inns** offer accommodation; these have the added advantage of food and drink within staggering distance of your bed. However, the noise from tipsy punters might prove a nuisance if you want an early night. **Hotels** are usually aimed more at the motoring tourist than the muddy walker and the tariff is likely to put off the budget traveller. You'll probably arrive there in the late afternoon and leave fairly early the next morning so it's hard to justify the price. However, if you want a few more luxuries in your room, or room service, it may be worth considering a hotel.

Airbnb

The rise and rise of Airbnb ([📧 airbnb.co.uk](https://www.airbnb.co.uk)) has seen private homes and apartments opened up to overnight travellers on an informal basis. Originally based in cities, the concept has spread to tourist hotspots in more rural areas, but do check thoroughly what you are getting and the precise location.

❑ HOW COVID-19 COULD AFFECT RIDGEWAY WALKERS

COVID-19 has had a major impact on life in Britain (and the rest of the world). At the time of writing, many businesses were open again and during research it was encouraging to see plenty of walkers on the Ridgeway, but we don't know what the situation will be when you are reading this. For most of your trip you're going to be out in the countryside with almost no one else around. However, in towns and villages that won't apply; it's always been a good idea to ring ahead to double-check that somewhere is open, or a place will be serving food when you plan to arrive, but this makes even more sense in the current times. Things to bear in mind are:

Accommodation Most accommodation along the Ridgeway was back open in the summer of 2020, albeit with some changes. The exceptions being the YHA hostel at Streatley and the bunkhouse at Court Hill.

Buffet-style breakfasts are not available anymore and even though some places are still serving 'the full English' at a dining room table, many others were opting for continental-style only, and others still providing a 'breakfast-in-a-bag' delivered to your room. Where social distancing is problematic, some places might have reduced the number of rooms that they are letting out at any one time. At the time of research some places with rooms which share facilities were only offering those rooms to families because of the problems of cleaning between each person.

Some B&B owners offer to pick you up and drop you off on the Ridgeway when you're staying with them. Depending on the situation at the time you book, this offer might, or might not, be available – this is worth checking when booking somewhere.

Many places to stay can also provide you with a packed **lunch** for an additional cost. Alternatively, packed lunches (and indeed breakfast) can be bought and made yourself. In most towns and villages you should be able to find at least one shop selling sandwiches and usually a café. If you are lucky you may be in town when there is a (farmers') market – if you come across one do have a look as local produce is likely to be on sale.

Remember that certain stretches of the walk are devoid of anywhere to eat so look at the town and village facilities table (p33 and p35) and check the information in Part 5 to make sure you don't go hungry.

Evening meals

There are some lovely **pubs** and **inns** on the Ridgeway but none directly on the path before Streatley. Although there are fewer freehouses than there used to be you can still sample some excellent beers (see box opposite) during or after a day's walking. Most pubs also serve food (at lunchtime and in the evenings, though not always daily) and this ranges from standard 'pub grub' to restaurant quality fare. There will usually be at least one vegetarian choice and sometimes also vegan/gluten-free options.

There are some quality **restaurants** in the larger towns. Additionally, most towns and some of the larger villages are riddled with cheap **takeaway** joints offering kebabs, pizzas, Chinese, Indian and fish 'n' chips; they can come in handy if you finish your walk late in the day, since they usually stay open until at least 11pm.

Buying camping supplies

If you are camping, fuel for your stove, outdoor equipment and food supplies are important considerations. Plan your journey carefully as, particularly on the western half of the Ridgeway, there aren't many opportunities to stock up without embarking on a fair trek to the nearest shop and back.

Drinking water

Depending on the weather you will need to drink as much as two to four litres of water a day. If you're feeling lethargic it may well be that you haven't drunk enough, even if you're not particularly thirsty.

Drinking directly from streams and rivers is tempting, but is not a good idea. Streams that cross the path tend to have flowed across farmland where you can be pretty sure any number of farm animals have relieved themselves. Combined with the probable presence of farm pesticides and other delights it is best to avoid drinking from these streams.

There are drinking **water taps** at some points along the Ridgeway and these are marked on the maps. Where these are thin on the ground you can usually ask a friendly shopkeeper or pub staff to fill your bottle or pouch for you – from a tap, of course. When you are filling your bottle have a good drink from it then fill it again so you leave the tap with a full bottle and don't feel like drinking half of it 100 metres down the path. When you reach a water tap, remember to check that it is working before you drink your remaining water.

B&B-STYLE ACCOMMODATION

Rates can be as little as £25pp per night assuming two people are sharing a room but are more often £30-35pp, particularly for guesthouses and hotels, and can even be £50pp or more for the most luxurious places. If wanting sole occupancy of a room there is likely to be a supplement; this is usually about £10-15 less than the room rate, in some cases you may have to pay the full rate.

Add on the price of lunch (though if you have had a cooked breakfast you may not want much), an evening meal, beer and other expenses and you can expect to need at least £60-80pp per day. However, rates can be substantially less if you are planning to stay in one place for three or more nights and are also usually lower during the winter months. If you are on a budget you could always ask to go without breakfast which will probably result in a reduction.

Itineraries

Part 5 of this book (the Route Guide) has been re-written for this edition so that it can be used by hikers walking the Ridgeway in either an eastward or westward direction, following a colour coding: **E** → and **W** ← . For more details see below.

This route has been divided into stages but these are not rigid daily stages. It's structured to make it easy for you to plan your own itinerary. If you have a week to spare you can walk the Ridgeway in one go. However, many people decide to walk it in sections over a longer period.

To help you plan your walk the **colour maps** at the back of the book have profile charts; there is also a **planning map** (see opposite inside back cover). The **table of town & village facilities**, see p33 and p35, gives a rundown on the essential information you need regarding accommodation possibilities and services. Alternatively, you could follow one of the suggested **itineraries**, see opposite, that are based on walking speed.

There is also a list of recommended linear **day and two-day (weekend) walks** (see opposite) that cover the highlights of the Ridgeway as well as some suggested side trips (see box on pp36-7).

The **public transport map** and the table of **bus services** are on pp48-51.

Once you have an idea of your approach turn to **Part 5** for detailed information on accommodation, places to eat and drink, as well as other services in each town and village on the route. Also in Part 5 you will find summaries of the route to accompany the detailed trail maps.

WHICH DIRECTION?

The generally accepted way to walk the Ridgeway is from west to east though it really doesn't matter. As the two halves are very different you might base your decision on what type of scenery and terrain you'd like to tackle first. Neither

What to take

Deciding how much to take with you can be difficult. Experienced walkers know that you really should take only the bare essentials but at the same time you need to ensure you have all the equipment necessary to make the trip safe and comfortable.

KEEP YOUR LUGGAGE LIGHT

Carrying a heavy rucksack really can ruin your enjoyment of a good walk and can also slow you down, turning an easy 7-mile day into an interminable slog. Be ruthless when you pack and leave behind all those little home comforts that you tell yourself don't weigh that much really. This advice is even more pertinent to campers who have added weight to carry.

HOW TO CARRY IT

The size of your **rucksack** will depend on where you are planning to stay and how you are planning to eat. If you are camping and cooking for yourself you will probably need a minimum 70-litre rucksack which can hold the tent, sleeping bag, cooking equipment and food. Make sure your rucksack has a stiffened back and can be adjusted to fit your own back comfortably. This will make carrying the weight much easier. If you plan to stay in B&B-style accommodation a 30- to 40-litre pack should be more than enough to carry everything you need.

When packing your rucksack (and if you are not using a luggage-transfer service) make sure you have all the things you are likely to need during the day near the top or in the side pockets. This includes map, water bottle or pouch, packed lunch, waterproofs and this guidebook, of course. Make sure the hip belt and chest strap (if there is one) are fastened tightly as this helps distribute the weight with most of it being carried on your hips. Rucksacks are decorated with seemingly pointless straps, but if you adjust them correctly it can make a big difference to your personal comfort while walking.

If using a luggage-transfer service you will need a **day pack** or small **bum bag** for the essentials listed above and also for when you go sightseeing or for a day walk.

It's also a good idea to keep everything in **canoe bags**, **waterproof rucksack liners** or strong plastic bags. If you don't, it's bound to rain.

FOOTWEAR

Your **boots** are the single most important item of gear that can affect the enjoyment of your trek. In the summer you can use a light pair of trail shoes if you're only carrying a small pack. Make sure they have a Gore-Tex lining otherwise

The extensive but pocket-sized *Wild Flowers* (Martin Walters; 2012), published by Collins as part of their 'Gem' series, is well worth £5.99; Collins Gem also publishes *Butterflies* (Michael Chinnery; 2012) for £5.99. The Field Studies Council (field-studies-council.org) publishes a series of inexpensive *Identification Guides* (fold out charts; £2.50-5) which are also practical.

There are also numerous **fieldguide apps** for both iPhone and Android, for identifying flowers, butterflies and birds by their song as well as by their appearance. One to consider for birds is: merlin.allaboutbirds.org.

Getting to and from the Ridgeway

Both ends of the Ridgeway can be reached by public transport (though less conveniently so at the eastern end) and its location in the centre of southern England means that it's one of the most accessible long-distance trails in the country.

□ GETTING TO BRITAIN

● **By air** Most airlines serve London Heathrow (heathrow.com) or London Gatwick (gatwickairport.com). In addition a number of budget companies fly from Europe's major cities to the other London terminals at Stansted (stanstedairport.com) and Luton (london-luton.co.uk); the latter is the most convenient airport for the end of the walk (or the start if you choose to walk east to west). There are also flights to Bristol (bristolairport.co.uk), which is far closer to the official start of the Ridgeway than London Heathrow.

For details of the airlines using these airports and the destinations served visit the relevant airport's website.

● **From Europe by train** The Eurostar (eurostar.com) terminal in London is St Pancras International at St Pancras station; there are connections from King's Cross St Pancras station on the London Underground to Paddington, the main station for trains to/from Swindon, and to Euston for services to/from Tring (see box on p46).

For more information about rail services from Europe contact your rail service provider or Railteam (railteam.eu).

● **From Europe by coach** Eurolines (eurolines.com) have a huge network of long-distance coach services, connecting over 600 destinations in 36 European countries, as well as Morocco, to London. Check carefully, as once expenses, such as food for the journey, are taken into consideration it often does not work out much cheaper than flying, particularly when compared to the prices of some of the budget airlines.

● **From Europe by car** Ferries operate between various ports from mainland Europe and ports on Britain's southern and eastern coasts as well as from Ireland to Britain's western coast. Look at ferrysavers.com or directferries.com for a full list of operating companies, routes and services.

Eurotunnel (eurotunnel.com) operates a shuttle (**Le shuttle**) train service for vehicles via the Channel Tunnel between Calais and Folkestone taking just 35 minutes.

MINIMUM IMPACT & OUTDOOR SAFETY

2

Minimum impact walking

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Support local businesses

Rural businesses and communities in Britain have been hit hard in recent years by a seemingly endless series of crises (most recently COVID-19). In light of the economic pressures that many businesses are under there is something you can do to help: buy local.

Look and ask for local produce to buy and eat. Not only does this cut down on the amount of pollution and congestion that the transportation of food creates (the so-called ‘food miles’), but also ensures that you are supporting local farmers and producers; the very people who have moulded the countryside you have come to see and who are in the best position to protect it. If you can find local food which is also organic so much the better.

It’s a fact of life that money spent at local level – perhaps in a market, or at the greengrocer, or in an independent pub – has a far greater impact for good on that community than the equivalent spent in a branch of a national chain store or restaurant. While no-one would advocate that walkers should boycott the larger supermarkets, which after all do provide local employment, it’s worth remembering that businesses in rural communities rely heavily on visitors for their very existence. For these shops and post offices to stay in business they must be used.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

A walking holiday in itself is an environmentally friendly approach to tourism. The following are some ideas on how you can go a few steps further in helping to minimise your impact on the natural environment while walking the Ridgeway.

Use public transport whenever possible

By using local bus services you will help to keep them operating. Although bus routes along the Ridgeway aren’t always convenient for walkers, if fewer people use them they are more likely to disappear altogether. Public transport is always preferable to using private cars as it benefits everyone: visitors, locals and the environment.



Right to roam

The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), or ‘Right to Roam’ as dubbed by walkers, gives the public access to areas of countryside, deemed to be uncultivated open country, in England and Wales – this essentially means moorland, heathland, downland and upland areas. Some land is covered by restrictions (ie high-impact activities such as driving a vehicle, cycling and horse-riding are not permitted) and some land is excluded (such as gardens, parks and cultivated land). Full details are given on the Natural England website (see box on p62).

With more freedom in the countryside comes a need for more responsibility from the walker. Remember that wild open country is still the workplace of farmers and home to all sorts of wildlife. Have respect for both and avoid disturbing domestic and wild animals.

Outdoor safety

AVOIDANCE OF HAZARDS

With good planning and preparation most hazards can be avoided. This information is just as important for those out on a day walk as for those walking the entire Ridgeway.

Ensure you have **suitable clothes** (see pp39-40) to keep you warm and dry whatever the conditions, and a spare change of inner clothes. A compass, whistle, torch and first-aid kit should be carried and are discussed further on p40. The **emergency signal** is six blasts on a whistle or six flashes with a torch.

Remember to take your **mobile phone** (and ensure it is fully charged); you can get a decent signal on nearly all the Ridgeway and not only will you be able to contact someone in an emergency, but the signal from your phone can be traced to pinpoint your location (see box below).

Take plenty of **food** with you for the day and at least one litre of **water** although more would be better, especially on the long western stretches. It is a good idea to fill up your bottle whenever you pass a water tap as they aren’t very common. You will eat far more walking than you do normally so make sure you have enough for the day, as well as some high-energy snacks (chocolate, dried fruit, biscuits) in the bottom of your pack for an emergency.

❑ DEALING WITH AN ACCIDENT

- Use basic first aid to treat the injury to the best of your ability.
- Work out exactly where you are. The What3Words **app** (📱 what3words.com) can pinpoint your location to a 3 sq m area – familiarise yourself with it before you go walking. If possible leave someone with the casualty while others go to get help. If there are only two people, you have a dilemma.
- If you decide to get help leave all spare clothing and food with the casualty.
- Telephone ☎ 999 and ask for the ambulance service.

THE ENVIRONMENT & NATURE

3

At first glance, the Ridgeway path doesn't seem to be very distinctive. But when you look closer you see a wide variety of terrains and habitats from one end of the path to the other: grasslands, chalk downs, beech woodlands and a section along the banks of the River Thames. These varied environments are home to an equally diverse collection of animals, birds and plants. This book is not designed to be a comprehensive guide to all the wildlife you may encounter, but serves as an introduction to the flora and fauna the walker is likely to find along the Ridgeway.

Making that special effort to look out for wildlife and appreciating what you are seeing will enhance your enjoyment of the walk. To take it a step further is to understand a little more about the species you may encounter, appreciating how they interact with each other and learning a little about the conservation issues that are so pertinent today.

Conservation of the Ridgeway

NATURAL ENGLAND

The official responsibilities of Natural England are to 'enhance biodiversity and our landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas; promote access, recreation and public well-being, and contribute to the way natural resources are managed, so they can be enjoyed now and for future generations'. Essentially this organisation: gives advice and information; designates **National Parks**, **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)** and **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)**; manages **National Nature Reserves (NNRs)** and enforces existing regulations. Natural England also manages England's **National Trails**: they provide most of the funding and resources for path maintenance and promote the conservation of wildlife, geology and wild places in England see also box on p63.

Although no part of the Ridgeway is inside a National Park, the route does lie within two pieces of land designated **AONBs** which are administered by the relevant local authorities. The western part of the path is in the 1730 sq km **North Wessex Downs AONB** that was





Rowan (tree)
Sorbus aucuparia



Dog Rose
Rosa canina



Forget-me-not
Myosotis arvensis



Scarlet Pimpernel
Anagallis arvensis



Self-heal
Prunella vulgaris



Germander Speedwell
Veronica chamaedrys



Ramsons (Wild Garlic)
Allium ursinum



Bluebell
Hyacinthoides non-scripta



Ox-eye Daisy
Leucanthemum vulgare



Foxglove
Digitalis purpurea



Rosebay Willowherb
Epilobium angustifolium



Viper's Bugloss
Echium vulgare

C4 Butterflies

Peacock
Inachis io



Small Tortoiseshell



Common Blue
Polyommatus icarus



Small Garden/Cabbage White
Pieris rapae



Chalkhill Blue
Lysandra coridon

Painted Lady
Cynthia cadui



Large Garden/
Cabbage White
Pieris brassicae



Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*



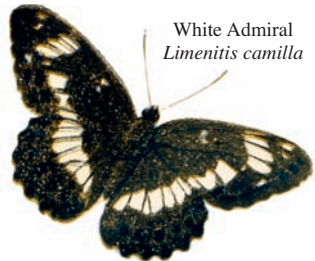
Small
Copper
*Lycaena
phlaeas*



Small
Heath
*Coenonympha
pamphilus*



Meadow
Brown
*Maniola
jurtina*



White Admiral
Limenitis camilla

lose poultry to them. Weasels and stoats are by nature very inquisitive so just because they dart for cover as you approach doesn't mean they might not poke their head out for another look just after you have passed.

The **grey squirrel** (*Sciurus carolinensis*) was introduced to Britain from North America in the late 19th century and its outstanding success in colonising the country is very much to the detriment of other native species including songbirds and, most famously, the red squirrel. Grey squirrels inhabit woodlands, parks and gardens and are a common sight from January to June during their breeding season. You might also see them during the autumn on the woodland floor, burying nuts to keep themselves supplied throughout the winter.

At dusk during the summer months **bats** can be seen hunting for moths and flying insects along hedgerows, over rivers and around street lamps. As the weather gets colder they will hibernate though can sometimes still be seen on warmer evenings. Bats have had a bad press thanks to Dracula and countless other horror stories but anyone who has seen one up close knows them to be harmless and delightful little creatures. As for their blood-sucking fame, the matchbox-sized species in Britain would not even be able to break your skin with their teeth let alone suck your blood. Their reputation is improving all the time thanks to the work of the many bat conservation groups around the country and all fourteen species found in Britain are protected by law. The most numerous species is the **common pipistrelle bat** (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*).

Some other small but fairly common species which can be found in the grassland and hedgerows on the Ridgeway include the **hedgehog** (*Erinaceus europaeus*) and a variety of **voles**, **mice** and **shrews**.

BIRDS

The two halves of the Ridgeway provide distinctly different environments for birds. On the whole the western half, up to Streatley, is exposed with few trees while the eastern half is mostly wooded. Both sections provide ample opportunity for bird spotting with the western section providing the most variety. Early mornings and early evenings are generally the best times for spotting birds.

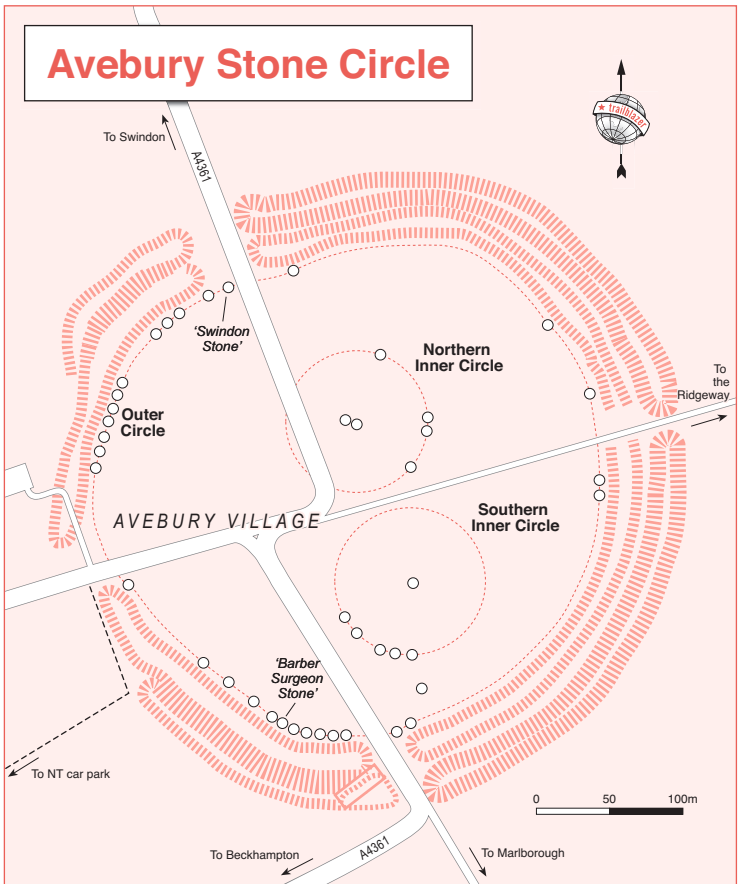
The western half

One of the most common birds on the open downs is the **skylark** (*Alda arvensis*). Its dull brown plumage with a darker stripe doesn't make it the most distinctive of birds but when in flight you can recognise it by the white edges of the outer tail feathers. It nests on the ground in a hollow and makes little attempt to conceal its eggs.

The **corn bunting** (*Emberiza calandra*) can often be heard singing its sharp jangly song along the path. It doesn't look dissimilar to the skylark though it has no white edging on its tail feathers and its beak is shorter and more rounded. You are also likely



SKYLARK
L: 185MM/7.25"



to interpret the remains of the stone circle. Aubrey was the first person to study Avebury in detail and record what he found. His main findings were written up in 1690 and proved an invaluable resource for William Stukeley who, in the 18th century, drew maps of the entire complex of stones and also wrote extensively about his findings. As the period following Aubrey's and Stukeley's work was one of the most destructive in Avebury's history, had it not been for their surviving records much of Keiller's work, and indeed even modern archaeology in the Avebury area, would have proved an impossible task.

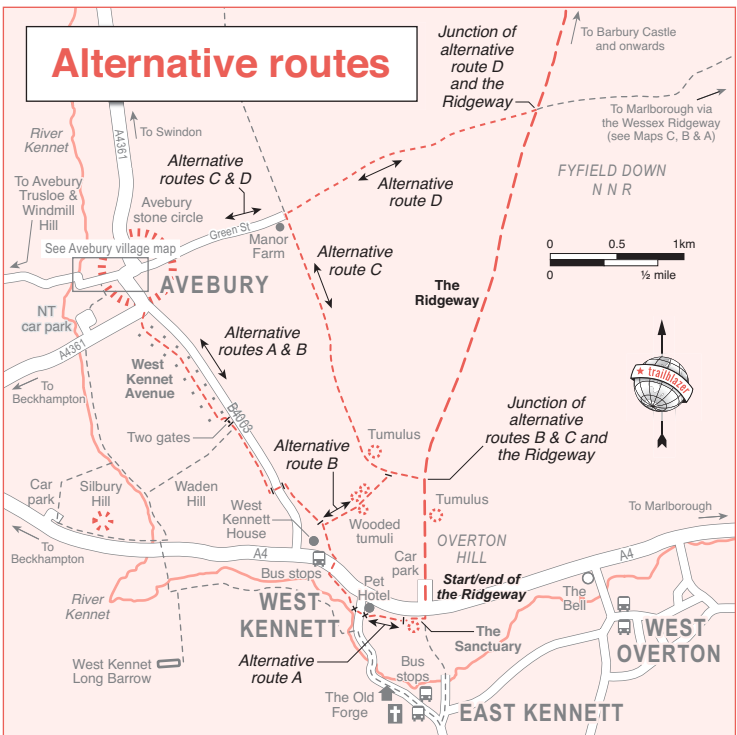
There is no entrance fee to the circle, mainly because it would be impractical to enforce such a scheme; hence it is open for visitors all day, every day.

GETTING TO AND FROM OVERTON HILL

[See map below]

Anyone who has walked the Ridgeway will agree that even though it is a national trail the official start at Overton Hill, by the side of the A4 road, is rather lacking in atmosphere. Avebury is, of course, the obvious place to which it should be relocated. So, until it is changed, here are four routes that link Avebury and the Ridgeway. **Route A** goes via the stones of West Kennet Avenue, so you still get to experience the Ridgeway in its entirety. Thanks to a couple of permissive paths, you don't need to walk along any pavement-less roads either. **Routes B and C** connect with the Ridgeway at the same point, 700m from the car park at Overton Hill, but they follow different paths. Route B goes via West Kennet Avenue and four intriguing tree-covered tumuli; this is my favourite route. Route C uses Green Street/Herepath, turning at Manor Farm. **Route D** goes straight up Green Street/Herepath; by taking this route you actually miss out 1.8 miles/2.7km of the Ridgeway.

E → Route A ((1.7 miles/2.75km, 35-50 mins; see also Map C, pp82-3) This is the longest route. Walk out of the village along West Kennet Avenue and when



Using this guide

This route guide has been divided according to logical start and stop points. However, these are not intended to be strict daily stages since people walk at different speeds and have different interests. The maps can be used to plan how far to walk each day. The route summaries describe the trail between significant places and are written as if walking the path both from west to east and east to west.

To enable you to plan your own itinerary practical information is presented clearly on the trail maps. This includes walking times for both directions, all places to stay, camp and eat, as well as shops where you can buy supplies. Further service details are given in the text under the entry for each place.


For a condensed overview of this information see **Itineraries** on p32 & p34 and the **town and village facilities tables** on p33 & p35.


For **overview maps** and **altitude profiles** see the colour pages at the end of the book.

TRAIL MAPS

[see map key p199]

Direction

(See pp30-1 for the pros and cons of walking **west to east** or **east to west**.) In the text and maps that follow look for the  **E →** symbol which indicates information for those walking **east from Avebury and Overton Hill to Ivinghoe Beacon**

and the  **← W** symbol with shaded text (also on the maps) for those walking **west from Ivinghoe Beacon to Overton Hill and Avebury**.

Scale and walking times

The trail maps are to a scale of 1:20,000 (1cm = 200m; 3¹/₈ inches = one mile). Walking times are given along the side of each map and the arrow shows the direction to which the time refers. Black triangles indicate the points between which the times have been taken. **See box on p96 about walking times.**

The time-bars are a tool and are not there to judge your walking ability. There are so many variables that affect walking speed, from the weather conditions to how many beers you drank the previous evening. After the first hour or two of walking you will be able to see how your speed relates to the timings on the maps.



❏ IMPORTANT NOTE – WALKING TIMES

Unless otherwise specified, **all times in this book refer only to the time spent walking**. You should add 20-30% to allow for rests, photos, checking the map, drinking water etc, not to mention time simply to stop and stare. When planning the day's hike count on 5-7 hours' actual walking.

Up or down?

Other than when on a track or bridleway the trail is shown as a red dotted line. An arrow across the trail indicates the slope; two arrows show that it is steep. Note that the arrow points towards the higher part of the trail. If, for example, you are walking from A (at 80m) to B (at 200m) and the trail between the two is short and steep it would be shown thus: A— — — >> — — — B. Reversed arrow heads indicate a downward gradient.

Other features

Other features are marked on the map only when they are pertinent to navigation. To avoid clutter, not all features are marked all the time.

ACCOMMODATION

[See also box on pp20-1] Apart from in large towns where some selection of places has been necessary, almost everywhere to stay that is within easy reach of the trail is marked. Details of each place are given in the accompanying text. The number and type of rooms is given after each entry: **S** = Single, **T** = Twin room, **D** = Double room, **Tr** = Triple room and **Qd** = Quad. Note that most of the triple/quad rooms have a double bed and one/two single beds (or bunk beds); thus for a group of three or four, two people would have to share the double bed, but it also means that the room can be used as a double or twin. See also pp18-21.

Rates quoted for B&B-style accommodation are **per person (pp) based on two people sharing a room** for a one-night stay; rates may well be discounted for longer stays. Where a **single room (sgl)** is available, the rate for that is quoted if different from the rate per person. The rate for **single occupancy (sgl occ)** of a double/twin may be higher and the per person rate for three/four sharing a triple/quad may be lower.

Unless specified, rates are for bed and breakfast. At some places the only option is a **room rate**; this will be the same whether one or two people (or more if permissible) use the room. In tourist towns, particularly, you can expect to pay extra at weekends (whereas in the few places on this route that cater to business people the rate is likely to be higher during the week). Note that a few places accept only a two-night stay, particularly at weekends and in the main season.

Rooms either have **en suite** (bath or shower) facilities, or a **private** or **shared** bathroom or shower room, often just outside the bedroom. The text notes if a bath (♫) is available for those who prefer a relaxed soak at the end of the day.

The text also indicates whether the premises have: **wi-fi** (WI-FI); if a **packed lunch** (🍱) can be prepared, subject to prior arrangement; and if **dogs** (🐕 – see also p29 and pp196-7) are welcome, again subject to prior arrangement, either in at least one room (many places have only one room suitable for dogs), or at campsites. The policy on charging for dogs varies; some places make an additional charge per day or per stay, while others may require a refundable deposit against any potential damage or mess.

The Ridgeway route guide



If you're doing this walk in an **easterly direction** (from west to east starting in Overton Hill to Ivinghoe Beacon) follow the maps in an ascending order (from 1 to 39) and the text as below, looking for the **E→ symbol** on overview text and on map borders.



If you're walking in a **westerly direction** (Ivinghoe Beacon to Overton Hill) follow the maps in a descending order (from 39 to 1) and the text with a **red background**, looking for the **←W symbol** on overview text and on map borders. **Turn to p194 to start your walk in this direction.**

E→ OVERTON HILL TO FOXHILL

[MAPS 1-8]

This first **16½-mile/26.5km (6¾-8½hrs)** stage of the Ridgeway includes many interesting sights but most of them are before Ogbourne St George. By comparison, thereafter, it can seem a bit of a slog in parts, especially the last section from Liddington Hill to Foxhill.

The full length of this stage will leave you tired after your first day but you'll have to push on to Bishopstone to find accommodation (a further 1.2 miles/2km). Alternatively you could stay at Ogbourne St George which is only 9 miles/14.5km from the start of the Ridgeway. It would make an easy first day's walking and would also allow time to investigate Fyfield Down National Nature Reserve and take a long break at Barbury Castle.

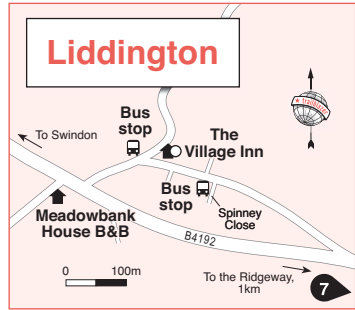
📄 TUMULI

Especially on the western half of the Ridgeway, and in particular on the first 15 miles of it, you will see many tumuli – burial mounds dating from around 4500 to 4000 years ago which now just look like raised grassy humps. In fact there are three right next to the start/end of the Ridgeway (see Map 1, p99) and you'll see a couple more around 10 minutes along the path. Sometimes they are planted over with trees, so if you see an isolated bunch of trees in the middle of a field, this could suggest a tumulus underneath.

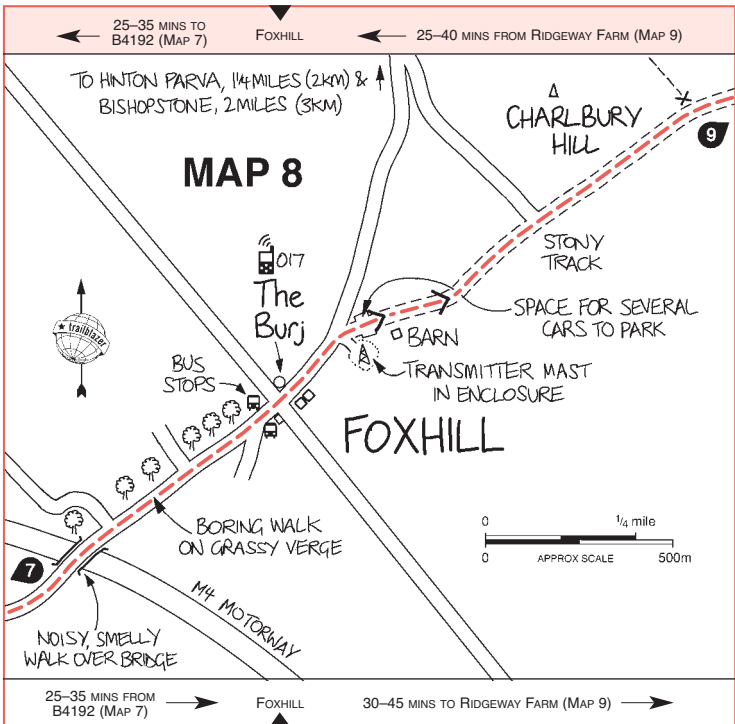
They are generally marked on Ordnance Survey maps, though not all features marked as tumuli are necessarily burial mounds. They could be just, as yet, unidentified humps on the landscape.

suite/2D share bathroom; ♣; WI-FI; (L); it is a supremely comfy place with B&B for £42.50-47.50pp (sgl occ from £60); guests have access to a sitting room and a drying room. The doubles that share a bathroom are only both let if booked by a family/group. The house lies less than a mile from the path on Medbourne Lane, near the B4192. They are happy to pick up from the B4192 (and drop off the next day) if arranged in advance – they will also take guests to a local pub if the Village Inn is closed, and if a two-night stay is booked they will take you to where you want to start walking.

There are two bus stops in the village. Stagecoach's Nos 46A & 48A services stop by The Village Inn and their Nos X46 & X48 (Swindon to Hungerford & Swindon to Marlborough) call at Spinney Close.



The No 46 services operate between Swindon and Hungerford & the No 48 between Swindon and Marlborough. See pp48-51 for further details of these bus services.



which has options for visiting **Sparsholt** (off Map 12) and two nearby accommodation options.

Apart from a couple of road crossings, the walking is uninterrupted and the views are fantastic. You're not going to meet many other people along here, until you reach **Uffington Castle** and **White Horse** (Map 11). From here you can leave the Ridgeway to visit **Uffington** (map p119) while the path ahead becomes less exposed and, on the whole, fairly level. There's a turn for **Woolstone** (off Map 11) shortly before you reach the path to **Wayland's Smithy** (Map 10). Take some time to investigate this place before continuing the easy walking to the B4000 road crossing where you can leave the Ridgeway to visit **Ashbury** (Map 10).

At the crossroads on **Idstone Hill** (Map 10) there is an intermittent water tap and at the next crossroads is a turn for **Bishopstone** (map p113). After here it's an easy walk down to the end of the stage at **Foxhill** (Map 10).

[Next route overview on p111]

WANTAGE

Despite the lengthy walk from the Ridgeway and limited accommodation options, Wantage is a good place to stop and recharge your batteries. The town is famous as the birthplace of King Alfred the Great (849-99), the only Anglo-Saxon ruler who was not defeated by the Vikings. You can see his statue in the centre of Market Place.

Wantage has a compact centre with most of the shops, restaurants and pubs within a minute's walk of Market Place.

Vale & Downland Museum (☎ 01235 771447, 🌐 valeanddownlandmuseum.org.uk; Mon-Sat 9.30am-4pm, Sun 1.30-4pm; free but donations appreciated) is well worth a visit if you have some free time. There is a permanent historical exhibition and art gallery; the exhibition concentrates on the history of the town and features plenty of artefacts from King Alfred's time to the present. Part of the museum is housed in an 18th-century barn that was moved from a nearby village and rebuilt here; there is also a gift shop, visitor information point (see below) and a **café** (see Where to eat and drink).

Services

The **visitor information point** (☎ 01235 760176; same hours as museum) at the museum (see above) has lots of free information about local attractions.

For online information about Wantage visit 🌐 wantage.com.

There are branches of plenty of **banks** (such as TSB, Barclays & Nationwide), all with **ATMs**, around Market Place. You'll also find a **Boots chemist** (☎ 01235 765227, 🌐 boots.com; Mon-Sat 9am-5.30pm, Sun 10am-4pm) and a **McColl's convenience store** (☎ 01235 769164, 🌐 mccolls.co.uk; Mon-Sat 6am-9pm, Sun from 7am) on Market Place and a large **Waitrose supermarket** (☎ 01235 772313, 🌐 waitrose.com; Mon-Thur & Sat 8am-8pm, Fri to 9pm, Sun 10am-4pm) just a few steps away. There's a market every Wednesday and Saturday on Market Place and a **farmers' market** joins it on the last Saturday of the month.

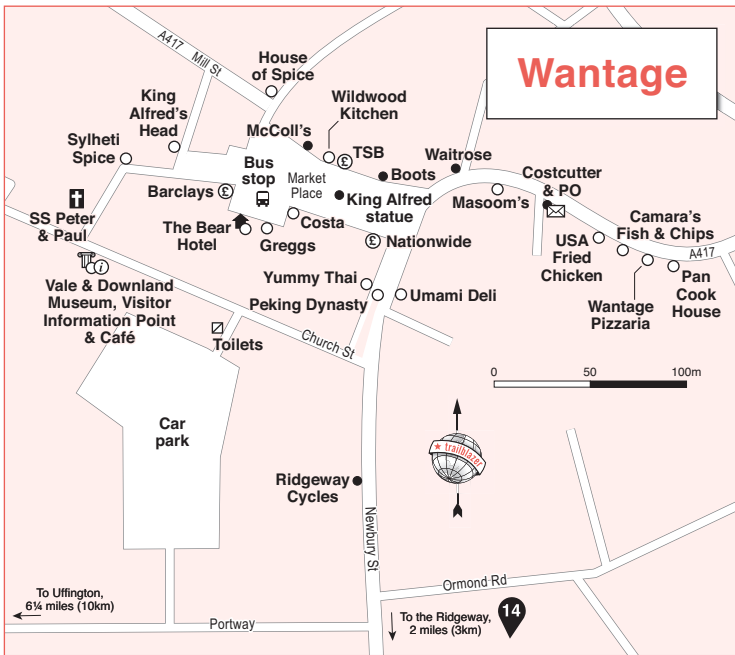
The **post office** (Mon-Sat 9am-5.30pm) is in the Costcutter shop (☎ 01235 763134; Mon-Sat 5am-11pm, Sun 6am-11pm).

If you need **bike repairs** you should head to Ridgeway Cycles (☎ 01235 764445, 🌐 ridgewaycycles.com; Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm, Sat to 5pm), on Newbury St.

There are free public **toilets** at the entrance to the pay and display car park (Mon-Fri 8am-6.30pm, Sun 10am-4pm).

Transport

Buses stop on Market Place and include services to: Oxford (Stagecoach's S8, S9 & Thames Travel's X32); Abingdon/Didcot (Thames Travel's No 33/X33 &



Stagecoach's S8); see pp48-51 for further details.

Go Green Taxis (☎ 01235 811100, 🌐 www.gogreentaxisltd.co.uk) offers a taxi service in the Wantage area and will go to villages such as Uffington, Woolstone, Sparsholt and Letcombe Regis but may make an additional charge to cover the petrol for the return journey (or vice versa).

Where to stay

If you are walking from the Ridgeway to Wantage, the chances are you'll be intending to stay overnight here, too.

Right on Market Place is the 500-year-old *The Bear Hotel* (☎ 01235 766366, 🌐 thebearwantage.co.uk; 9S/16D/6T/2Tr/1Qd, all en suite; 🛁; wi-fi). B&B costs from £42.50pp (sgl/sgl occ £65).

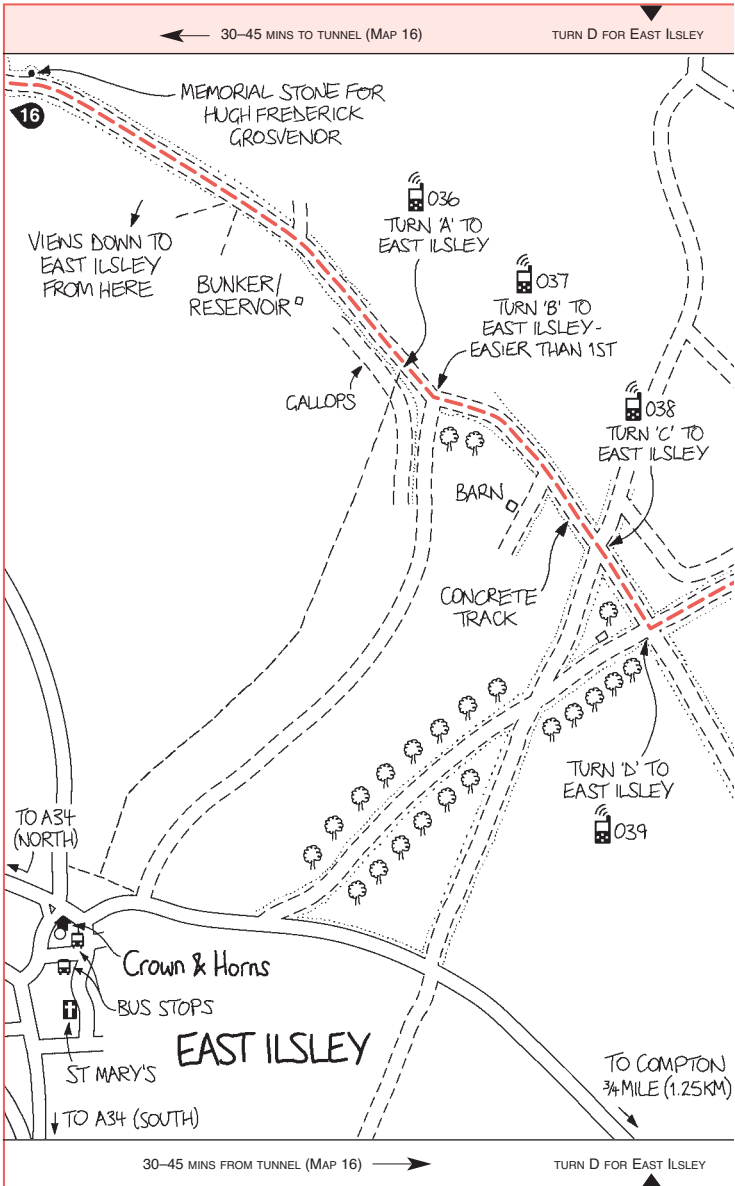
Apart from this you could check the dozen or so options listed on Airbnb (see pp20-1).

Where to eat and drink

There are two very good upmarket eateries open during the day. *Umami Deli* (☎ 01235 766245, 🌐 umami-deli.co.uk; wi-fi; 🐕; Mon-Sat 9.30am-3pm), on Newbury St,

SYMBOLS USED IN TEXT

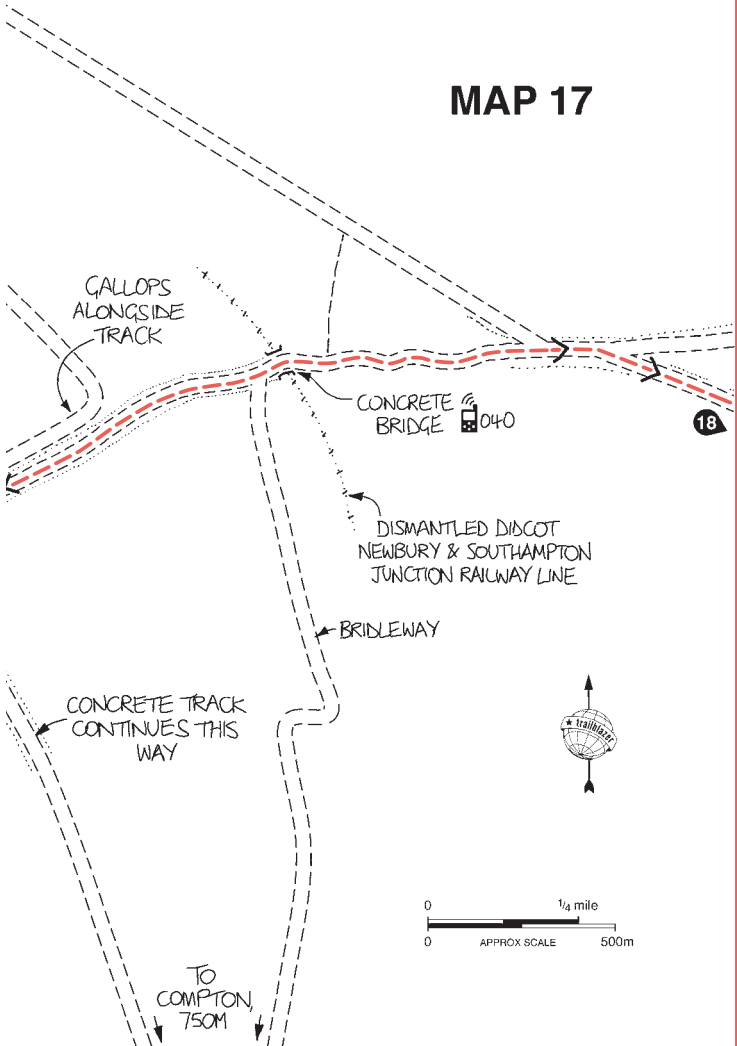
- 🛁 Bathtub in, or for, at least one room
- wi-fi means wi-fi is available
- 🍱 packed lunch available if requested in advance
- 🐕 Dogs allowed but subject to prior arrangement for accommodation (see p197)
- fb signifies places that have a Facebook page (for latest opening hours)



← 45-60 MINS FROM WARREN FARM (MAP 18)



MAP 17



45-60 MINS TO WARREN FARM (MAP 18) →

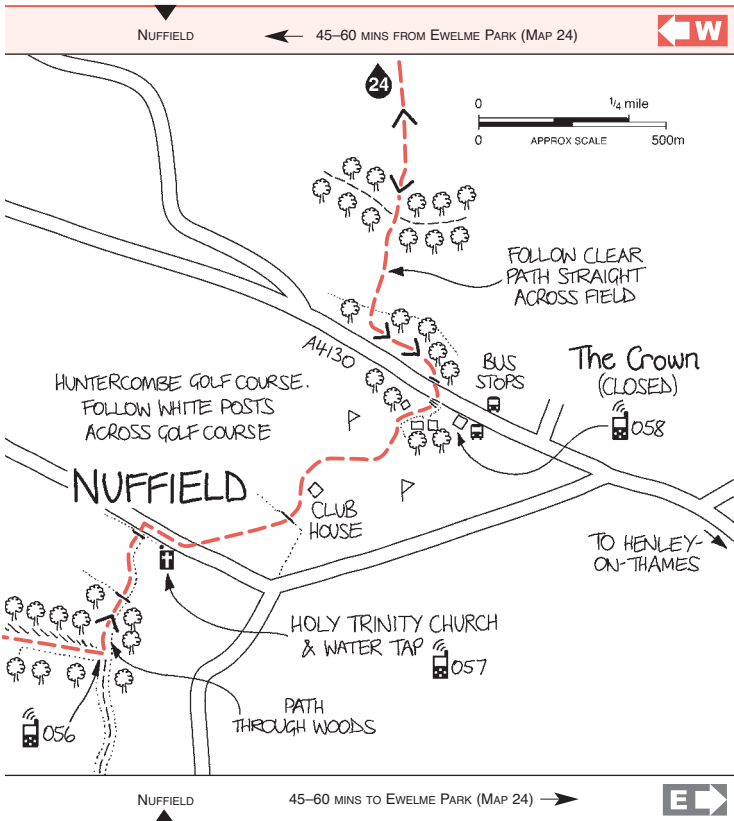


woodland. There are plenty of tree roots sticking through the surface of the path in places so be careful you don't trip. This is a popular stretch for day walkers and dog walkers.

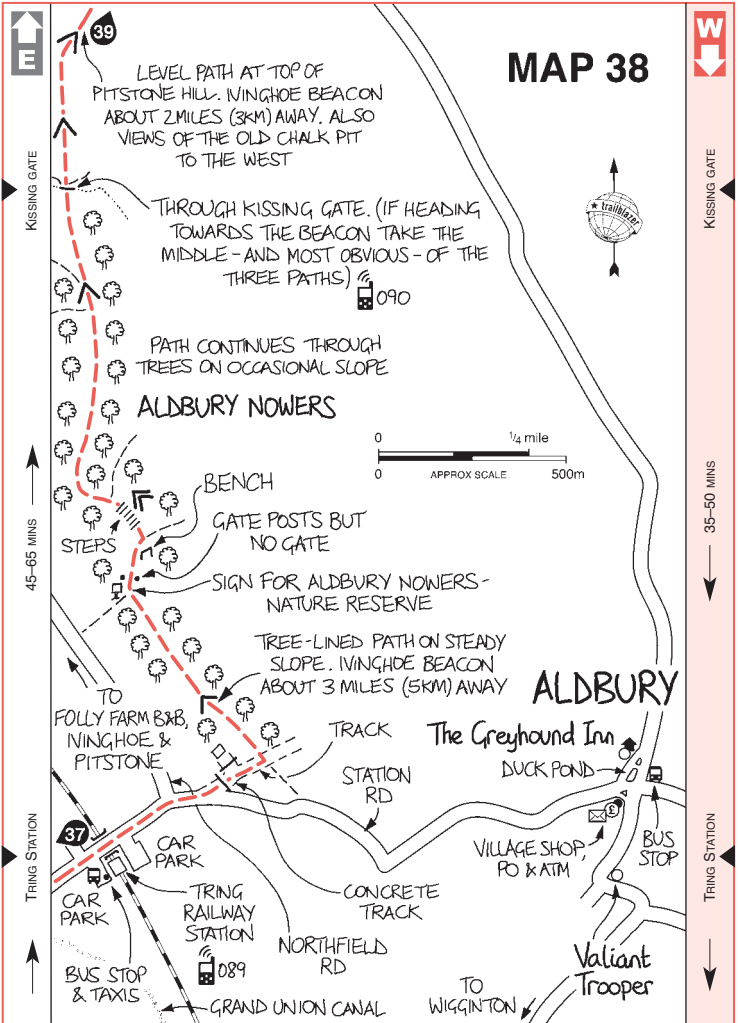
Several areas of woodland along this section (for example 'Oaken Copse', Map 22) are carpeted with bluebells in the late spring and make for a much-visited and very colourful sight. There's a **water tap** by 'Woodlands' (Map 23).

Golf course crossing Rather than skirting discreetly around it, you will be directed across several fairways (watch out for the bunkers!) of **Huntercombe Golf Course** (Map 23) at Nuffield.

You'll need to follow the strategically placed wooden posts to make your way from one side of the course to the other while always taking into account what the golfers are up to.



Aldbury Nowers With either the end of the trail nearly in sight, or having only recently embarked on it, 99.99% of trekkers on the Ridgeway undoubtedly march through these woods (Map 38) with little thought as to what they're actually walking through. It's forgivable, of course, but it's also a bit of a shame, for this scrumptious little corner of Hertfordshire countryside is actually one of the main butterfly habitats in the UK (see box on p192).



Most paths finish near the B489 from where it's a boring walk into Ivinghoe (see opposite). This road is not particularly wide yet people drive very fast along it so be careful. If you get on with it the 1¼-mile/2km walk from the top of Ivinghoe Beacon to **Ivinghoe village** shouldn't take more than 20-30 minutes.

Starting from Ivinghoe Beacon

Start here if you're walking in a **westerly direction** (Ivinghoe Beacon to Overton Hill and Avebury) and follow the maps in a descending order (from 39 to 1) and the text with a **red background**, looking for the **←W symbol** on overview text and on map borders, working back through the book.

For **map profiles** see the colour pages and **overview maps** at the end of the book. For an overview of this information see the **Itineraries** on p32 & p34 and the **town and village facilities tables** on p33 & p35.

W ← IVINGHOE BEACON TO WIGGINTON (& TRING) [MAPS 39-37]

[Route section begins on Map 39, p193] This first **5-mile/8km (1¼-2¾hrs)** section of the Ridgeway is easy to walk and straightforward to navigate. It's pretty much all downhill on a good path. But before you can enjoy all that, how are you going to get to Ivinghoe Beacon in the first place?

Someone with a car, or a taxi (see p186), could drop you off near the Beacon. This could be at either of the car parks, but the National Trust car park is closer to the Beacon than the Pitstone Hill car park (both on Map 39). Closer still, you could be dropped off by the cattle grid on Beacon Rd (Map 39), shortly after you've turned off the B489. From there you'll see a very steep signposted path off left up to the Beacon.

You could also walk **from Ivinghoe village** (see opposite) to the Beacon. Walk out of the village and turn left onto the B489. Follow this fast, but not particularly wide road and turn off onto Beacon Rd (Map 39). About 80m along the road is a cattle grid, after which is a very steep signposted path up to the Beacon. Of course, you could get public transport to Tring Railway Station then walk up to the Beacon and back down again, before continuing westwards on the Ridgeway, but that's a tough start to your Ridgeway walk.

Starting your walk at **Ivinghoe Beacon** you first need to descend the steep slope of **Beacon Hill** before enjoying some excellent open walking to the road crossing and car park at **Pitstone Hill** (all on Map 39). Once over the hill you descend for the next couple of miles, passing through **Aldbury Nowers** before reaching Station Rd where you can turn left for **Aldbury** (both on Map 38), or continue on the Ridgeway past a right turn for **Folly Farm B&B** (off Map 38) and then past **Tring Railway Station** (Map 38). Shortly afterwards you cross the **Grand Union Canal** and then the A41 via a long **pedestrian bridge** (both on Map 37). Not long after this you will reach the turn for **Wigginton** (Map 37).

[Next route overview on 183]

IVINGHOE

Given its name you'd be right in presuming that this village is the closest to the end of the Ridgeway at Ivinghoe Beacon. This means that most Ridgeway walkers will pass through, or stay here, at some point.

Services

The village **post office** and **shop** (☎ 01296 660325; opening times for both: Mon-Sat 8am-8pm, Sun 9am-2pm) are in the Old Town Hall. If this doesn't have what you want there is a larger shop (and with longer opening hours) in Pitstone (see below).

If you're in urgent need of plasters, there's a **chemist**, Windmill Pharmacy (☎ 01296 706280; Mon-Fri 8.30am-1pm & 2-6pm), 50m down from the post office.

Red Eagle's No 61 **bus** and Redline's Nos 50 & 164 stop here; see pp48-51 for further details.

Where to stay

If you want to **camp**, head for **Town Farm Camping & Caravanning** (Map 39; book online only at townfarmcamping.co.uk; 50 pitches; w1-F1; 🐾; Apr-end Sep) which charges from £10pp (£12pp in high season, generally half price for children under 16) including use of toilet and shower facilities. They also have six 4-person tents, set up with single sleeping mats and a lantern; from £30 per night (£40 high season) plus their usual tariff per person.

There may also be a couple of options on **Airbnb** (see pp20-1).

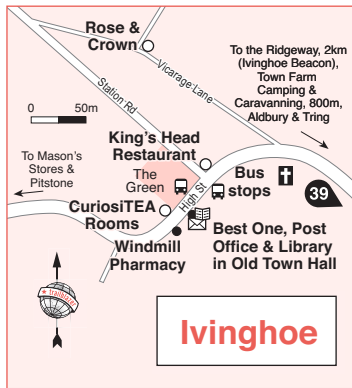
Where to eat and drink

There's a great eatery, **CuriosiTEA Rooms** (☎ 07775 831153; fb; w1-F1; 🐾; Mon, Tue, Thur, Fri & Sun 10am-3pm, Wed to 2pm, Sat to 4pm), just below The Green in the centre of the village. Lots of outdoor seating, biscuits for dogs, friendly staff and a decent array of cakes, sandwiches, toasties, jacket potatoes and other lunchtime options. It's a pleasant place to relax those

PITSTONE

[off map above]

Mason's Stores (☎ 01296 660052; Mon-Fri 6.30am-8pm, Sat 7am-8pm, Sun 8am-5.30pm) is on Marsworth Rd about 10



aching muscles while waiting for the bus. For dinner, the 17th-century **King's Head Restaurant** (☎ 01296 668388, kingsheadivinghoe.co.uk; Tue-Sun noon-2.15pm, Tue-Sat 7-9.15pm), right in the centre of the village, is known for its high-quality cuisine. It's not really the place for muddy walkers – the dress code is smart, particularly in the evening – and with their à la carte menu costing £48.95 (though this includes an appetiser, entrée, dessert and coffee), you'll probably not find many walkers in there anyway. However, they do offer a Bon Appetit luncheon menu Tuesday to Saturday (three courses for £26.95, or à la carte) which might be worth considering for a celebratory meal.

The alternative, is the cosy **Rose & Crown** (☎ 01296 668472, roseandcrownivinghoe.co.uk; bar Mon-Sat noon-11pm, Sun to 10.30pm; food Tue-Sat noon-2pm & 6-9pm, Sun noon-3pm), down Vicarage Lane. Lunchtime food includes sandwiches with soup or chips (£7.50) while mains are from £12 and choices may include ham, egg & chips, or gnocchis with butternut squash, walnuts & goat's cheese. They sometimes serve beer from Tring Brewery (see box on p22).

minutes' walk from Ivinghoe. It's also an **off-licence** and **newsagent**.

APPENDIX D: GPS WAYPOINTS

Each GPS waypoint below was taken on the route at the reference number marked on the map as below. This list of GPS waypoints is also available to download from the Trailblazer website – trailblazer-guides.com.

MAP	REF	GPS WAYPOINT	DESCRIPTION
Marlborough to Avebury walk			
Map A	AA	N51° 25.113' W01° 44.031'	Southern end of Marlborough High St
Map A	BB	N51° 25.565' W01° 44.213'	Gate into cemetery
Map A	CC	N51° 25.957' W01° 44.954'	Road crossing
Map A	DD	N51° 26.384' W01° 46.326'	Track to Manton House
Map B	EE	N51° 26.597' W01° 47.109'	Junction in path
Map B	FF	N51° 26.517' W01° 47.638'	Underground reservoir
Map B	GG	N51° 26.234' W01° 48.851'	Cross track
Map C	HH	N51° 26.191' W01° 51.236'	Junction with Green Street
Map C	II	N51° 25.712' W01° 51.236'	Red Lion, Avebury
A walk around Avebury			
Map C	II	N51° 25.712' W01° 51.236'	Red Lion, Avebury
Map C	JJ	N51° 25.246' W01° 50.749'	Gates to Waden Hill
Silbury Hill option			
Map C	KK	N51° 25.041' W01° 51.188'	Through gate and follow river
Map C	LL	N51° 25.130' W01° 51.336'	Left turn after gate
Map C	MM	N51° 24.967' W01° 51.705'	Silbury Hill car park
Map C	NN	N51° 24.851' W01° 51.110'	Gate from A4 road up to the Long Barrow
Long Barrow option			
Map C	OO	N51° 24.732' W01° 51.045'	Turn right for the Long Barrow
Map C	PP	N51° 24.516' W01° 51.017'	West Kennet Long Barrow
Map C	QQ	N51° 24.496' W01° 50.096'	Join road into East Kennett
Map C	RR	N51° 24.711' W01° 49.834'	Start/end of the Ridgeway
Map C	SS	N51° 25.065' W01° 49.816'	Turn left for quickest route to Avebury
The Ridgeway			
Map 1	001	N51° 24.711' W01° 49.834'	Car park; start of the Ridgeway
Map 1	002	N51° 25.065' W01° 49.816'	Turn to Avebury
Map 1	003	N51° 26.191' W01° 51.236'	Junction with Green Street
Map 2	004	N51° 27.312' W01° 49.245'	Kink in path
Map 3	005	N51° 28.294' W01° 48.913'	Hackpen Hill car park
Map 4	006	N51° 29.115' W01° 47.178'	Barbury Castle
Map 4	007	N51° 29.004' W01° 46.469'	Upper Herdswick Farm
Map 4	008	N51° 28.325' W01° 44.461'	Gate
Map 5	009	N51° 27.752' W01° 43.303'	Turn to Hallam
Map 5	010	N51° 27.746' W01° 41.822'	Track crossroads
Map 6	011	N51° 28.618' W01° 41.520'	Cross quiet B4192 road
Map 6	012	N51° 29.224' W01° 41.694'	Track crossroads by reservoir
Map 6	013	N51° 29.688' W01° 41.640'	Lower/Upper Upham junction at dog's leg in path

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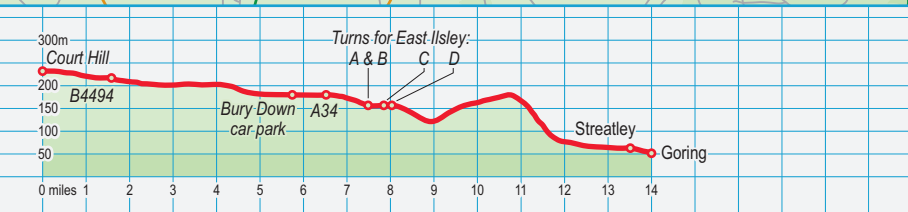
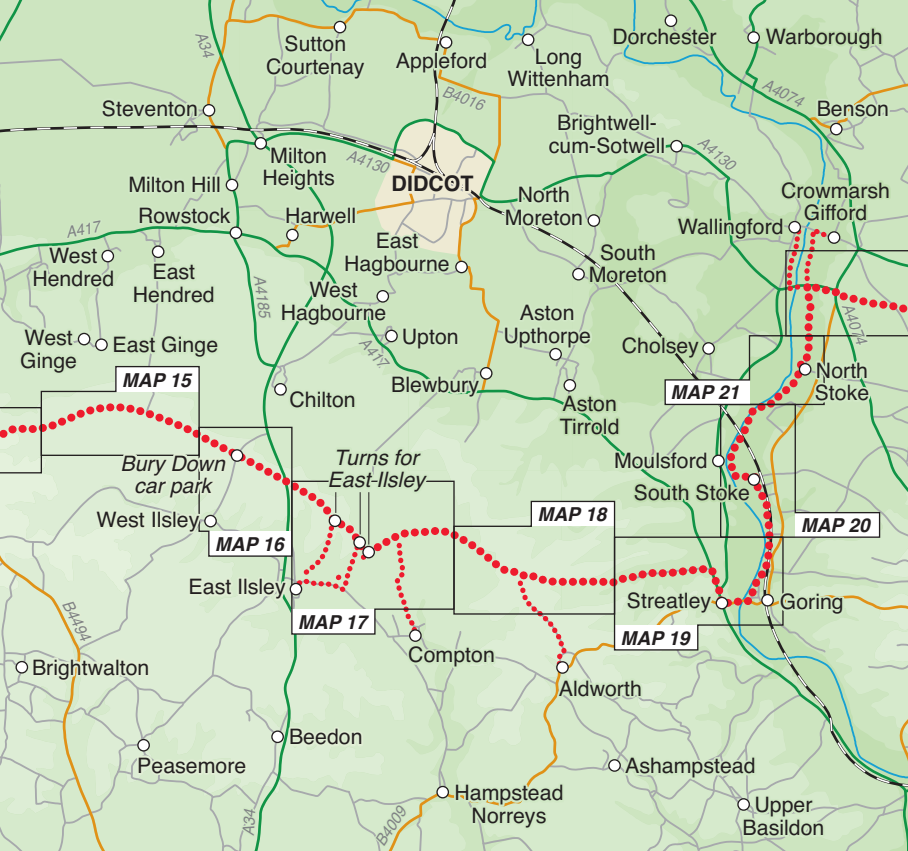
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Maps 13-19, Court Hill to Goring

14 miles/22.5km – 4¼-6hrs

Ivinghoe Beacon

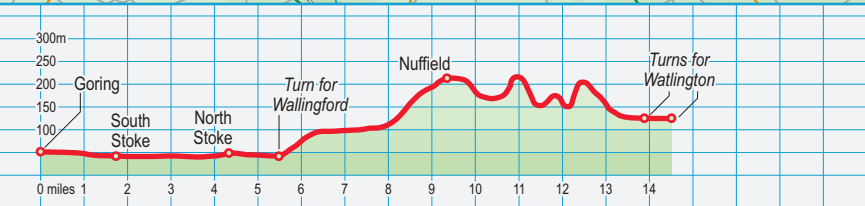
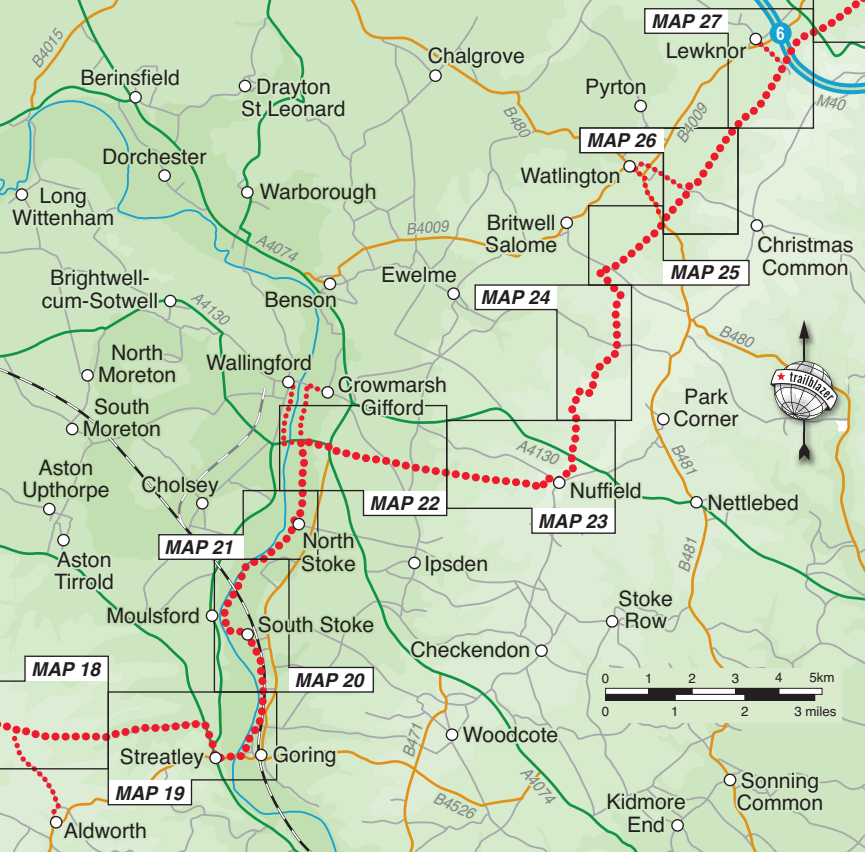


Maps 19-13, Goring to Court Hill

14 miles/22.5km – 4¼-6¼hrs

NOTE: Add 20-30% to these times to allow for stops





Maps 19-26, Goring to Watlington

14½ miles/23km – 6½-9hrs

Ivinghoe Beacon



Maps 26-19, Watlington to Goring

14½ miles/23km – 5-7½hrs

NOTE: Add 20-30% to these times to allow for stops



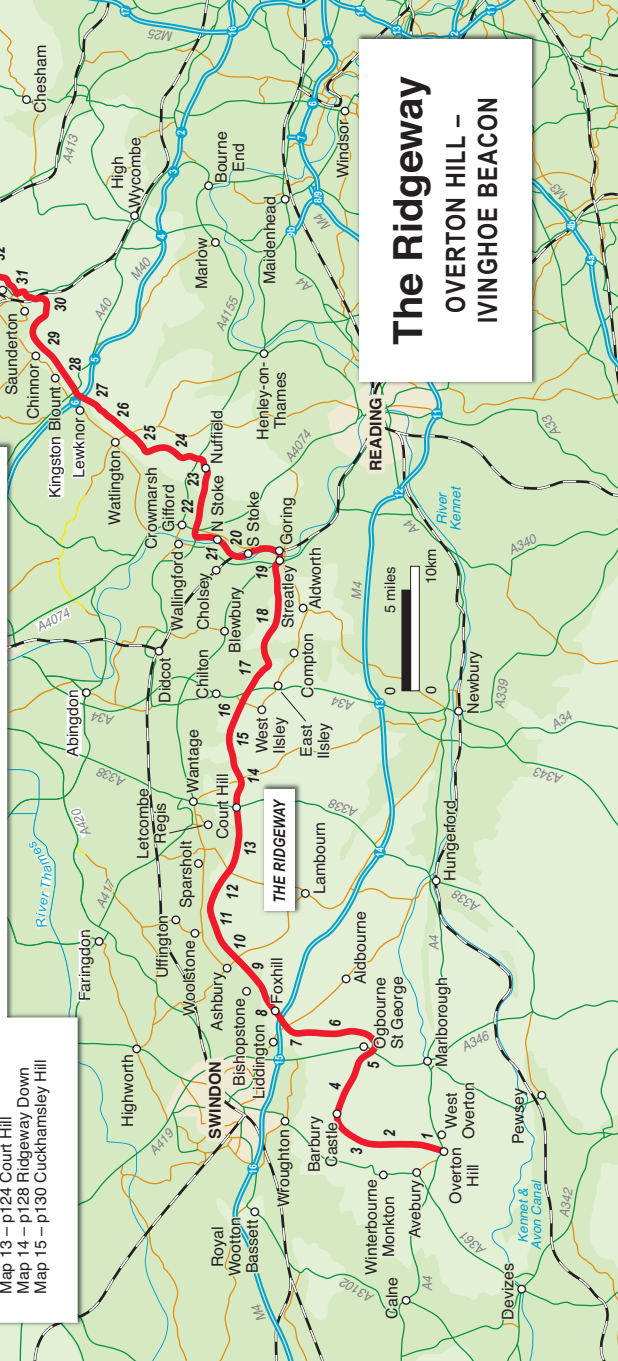
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The Ridgeway OVERTON HILL - IVINGHOE BEACON





5
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