



The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



Newsletter

WINTER 2018

News for everyone who enjoys and cares for The Ridgeway

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Looking for the best Trail pubs



Great pubs on The Ridgeway

In October, The Sunday Times '100 best places to stay' included The Greyhound in Letcombe Regis, near Wantage, in Oxfordshire. 'After a day in the hills, it's the hospitality equivalent of a warm hug', they reported. This is great news for Ridgeway visitors as The Greyhound is near the Trail.

Also nearby are the Royal Oak in Wantage and Fleur de Lys in East Hagbourne, both of which were awarded Pub of the Year by CAMRA (Campaign for Real Ale).

There are over a hundred pubs near The Ridgeway. All are listed on our interactive map - www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/plan - click Food and Drink below the map. Have you tried them all?!

#BestTrailPub social media event, 16th Nov - Sun 2nd Dec

Nominate your favourite pub(s) near The Ridgeway and other National Trails on Twitter and Facebook under the hashtag #BestTrailPub between Friday 16th November and Sunday 2nd December. All 15 National Trails in England and Wales are taking part, plus some trails in Scotland. Let's find out which Trail pubs are great for food, dogs, log fires, muddy boots, history and more.

Follow us on Twitter @TheRidgeway1972 or Facebook National Trails to take part and see which pubs and Trails come out on top!

Vikings on The Ridgeway

Ancient Ridgeway

Treasure - genuine treasure - was unearthed near Watlington back in 2015 and is now on display at Oxford's Ashmolean museum. It was an amazing discovery; a mixed 'hoard' of Viking and Anglo-Saxon objects comprising around 200 silver coins, 15 ingots (lumps of silver bullion) and jewellery. A very rare and small piece of hackgold was included. It was the first major Viking hoard ever found in Oxfordshire and the Thames Valley.

Conservators have since carefully cleaned off the encrusted mud and, after being on display in London and Nottingham, the hoard has become a permanent display in Gallery 41 at the Ashmolean.

The hoard tells the story of the 9th and 10th centuries. Amongst the coins, there are 'Two Emperor' coins showing Alfred the Great (871-99) of Wessex and Ceolwulf II of Mercia (874-9?). These two Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were the only kingdoms not under Viking control. One face shows the two emperors facing each other, suggesting a formal allegiance. This is somewhat surprising as historic documents have indicated Ceolwulf was a 'puppet king' of the Vikings. There is also an object that may prove to be the earliest Anglo-Saxon halfpenny ever found. Another coin dating to around 879-880, a 'two line' type, is the most recent to be made and so indicates that the hoard was buried no earlier than this period.



Emperor coins from the Watlington hoard

The coin at top left shows King Alfred, with his name and 'Rex' (meaning King) displayed around the edge. The lower coin reads Ceolwulf Rex. On the reverse, both coins have the same design which is thought to show the two seated Kings facing each other, with a winged angel above them.

It is likely that the Viking army left the hoard in the late 870's as they retreated following their defeat against Alfred at the Battle of Edington in Wiltshire. This was a defining moment in British history, when England was divided into Anglo-Saxon Wessex in the south and the *Danelaw* in northern and eastern England. The Vikings drew back along the Icknield Way (part of which is now The Ridgeway), passing Watlington.

There are various theories as to why the hoard was left behind near Watlington, per-

haps for retrieval later or to mark a claim on land, as a ritual offering or payment, or simply it was lost in battle!

Visit the Ashmolean museum to see the hoard and buy the book by Dr Naylor:
www.ashmolean.org/watlington-hoard

ASHMOLEAN

MUSEUM OF ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Vikings on The Ridgeway



Hacksilver: a silver bracelet would gradually reduce to a piece, as shown

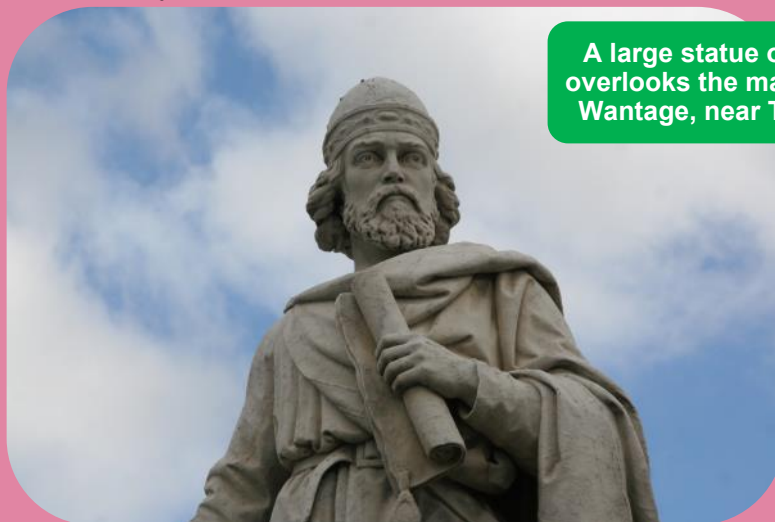
Wealth on the move

Ingots were a way to store and carry wealth, with different weights having different values or currency. The gold or silver would have been cast in sand or ceramic moulds, probably made in Scandinavia. Necklaces and bracelets were a means of displaying, as well as carrying, wealth. Such bands of precious metals could be used as 'hacksilver' or 'hackgold', so-called because parts would literally be hacked off to make payments. Gold was not readily available in the 8th/9th centuries, so the presence of a small piece of hackgold in the Watlington hoard is significant.

Ancient Ridgeway

Ridgeway history volunteers needed

The Watlington Hoard is just one of many interesting stories to discover along The Ridgeway. The Trail offers a way for visitors to literally step back in time, but unfortunately visitor interpretation about the Trail's history is lacking. We need to inspire visitors to discover its history.



A large statue of King Alfred overlooks the market square of Wantage, near The Ridgeway

The Ridgeway Officer is now looking for four history-loving volunteers to work as a team to produce a Ridgeway timeline from prehistory to the modern day. This timeline will form the basis for future projects. If you are interested and have at least one day a week free to volunteer, please go to www.do-it.org.ukxxxxx to apply to be a 'Ridgeway history volunteer' starting January 2019.

Natural healing on The Ridgeway

Story of a stroke survivor, Roger Unsworth



I have my own deep and personal relationship with The Ridgeway and I want to tell you about it here. I'll keep it brief....

The Ridgeway evokes in me a deep sense of ancient history, a spiritual connection with nature and a place of security to wander, to travel! That's what The Ridgeway is, a place where travellers have journeyed, embraced nature, traded, lived and wor-

shipped for thousands of years. At dusk and at dawn it takes on a mystical quality, a sense of still, peace and life, as shadows move and dance with the changing light.

In March 2015 at the age of 58 I suffered a stroke, was paralysed in my right arm and right leg and my life changed in an instant! I was planning a trek across Europe but now I couldn't even make it to the bathroom without assistance. I became downbeat, deflated and confused about what the future held.

The hospital worked hard, the physios worked hard and I worked hard, to such an extent that my physio said I was the most stubborn patient she had worked with. I was lucky, other than a few small emotional glitches my mind was functioning okay.



Photo credits: Roger Unsworth

It took me approximately 6 months to start to get some good mobility out of my limbs. The distances I was walking around my local area were getting longer and my stride was becoming more secure and even. It wasn't easy, but it was working. I was driving again and it was time to hit The Ridgeway.

Small treks at first, increasing the distance gradually and as often as I could. Carrying a light backpack became the next stage and the distances increased; Whitehorse Hill to Wayland Smithy, Whitehorse Hill to Foxhill (one way), Foxhill to Whitehorse Hill and back.

I moved on to a larger backpack with more weight; Barbury Castle to Avebury and return, Avebury to Whitehorse Hill, overnight campsite and return the next day, Sparsholt Firs, Streatley. Longer treks out and back, alone or with a colleague. I knew I had it in my legs and I knew I was improving. For the first time I could smell the flowers and hear the birds and insects instead of my deep laboured breathing. I became more conscious of my surroundings and looked around more frequently at the stunning landscape.

The Ridgeway has a beauty of its own; it's atmospheric, it's cosy, it's safe and it's a fantastic training ground for improving health or for preparing for long treks. It's great for family walks, walks with friends, exercising the dog or an adventurous cycle.

I have walked several National Trails in the UK but The Ridgeway is convenient for me as I live nearby in Swindon. It has good walking surfaces and caters for all abilities. I use it as a means of relaxation but also as a natural gym.

In June 2017, just over two years after my stroke, I walked the Camino de Santiago (the French Way). It is a 500 mile trek from St John Pied de Port in France,

over the Pyrenees and across the North of Spain, to the Cathedral City of Santiago de Compostela. It took me 32 days and I'd do it again in a heartbeat.

This September I went to Northern Spain trekking once again and I put in my final preparation on the mystical Ridgeway.



My three top tips about using The Ridgeway:

Take sufficient water with you for your journey's length, the water in standpipes is fine but the standpipes are infrequent.

Take a small picnic or snack. A good place to stop is Wayland Smithy or on a bench at Whitehorse Hill overlooking Oxfordshire and beyond.

Talk to other people on the trail, it's fascinating and they don't bite. You'll meet people from every walk of life and various nations from around the globe.

The Ridgeway; Listen to it, breath it in but above all else...enjoy!

Feeling free and easy....

It may seem boring news to hear that the new British Standard for Gaps, Gates and Stiles has been recently published but it will have a real impact on how you experience the countryside. This is particularly true for those of us with stiff joints, pushchairs, wheelchairs, horses and dogs that struggle over stiles! You can now hope to come across fewer awkward latches, tight kissing gates and clumsy stiles...and especially so on The Ridgeway.

Over 20% of England's population cannot use public rights of way, either because they cannot use stiles or kissing gates themselves, or they are accompanying someone who can't.

Source: Natural England

Obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 apply to public rights of way, but the 'least restrictive option' is particularly relevant to National Trails since they are intended to provide some of the best walking, cycling and horse riding experiences in the country. Numerous new gates have been installed along The Ridgeway over the past year thanks to our volunteers and the Chiltern Society Path Maintenance volunteers. Four of the gates were purchased by the Trail Running Association – they organise the UK Ultra Distance Trail Running Championship on the Ridgeway every year. These new gates meet British Standards, replacing kissing gates from the 1980s that were deteriorating. Funnily enough, these '80s gates were at the cutting edge of gate design at the time!



Horse and rider gain in confidence testing different gates at the new National Land Access Centre near The Ridgeway



In fact, the opening of a new facility called the National Land Access Centre at Aston Rowant in September has made The Ridgeway a great place to discover what 'easy access' feels like. A range of gates, gaps and stiles have been installed at the nature reserve managed by Natural England, to allow comparison and hands-on assessment of different models. Councils, landowners, contractors and others can make use of the site and it also provides an opportunity for horse riders to practise using different gates.

NATURAL
ENGLAND

Find out about Aston Rowant here: www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/attractions/aston-rowant-nature-reserve. To book a visit to see the gates, email NLAC@naturalengland.org.uk

Volunteer Task Diary

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Living Ridgeway

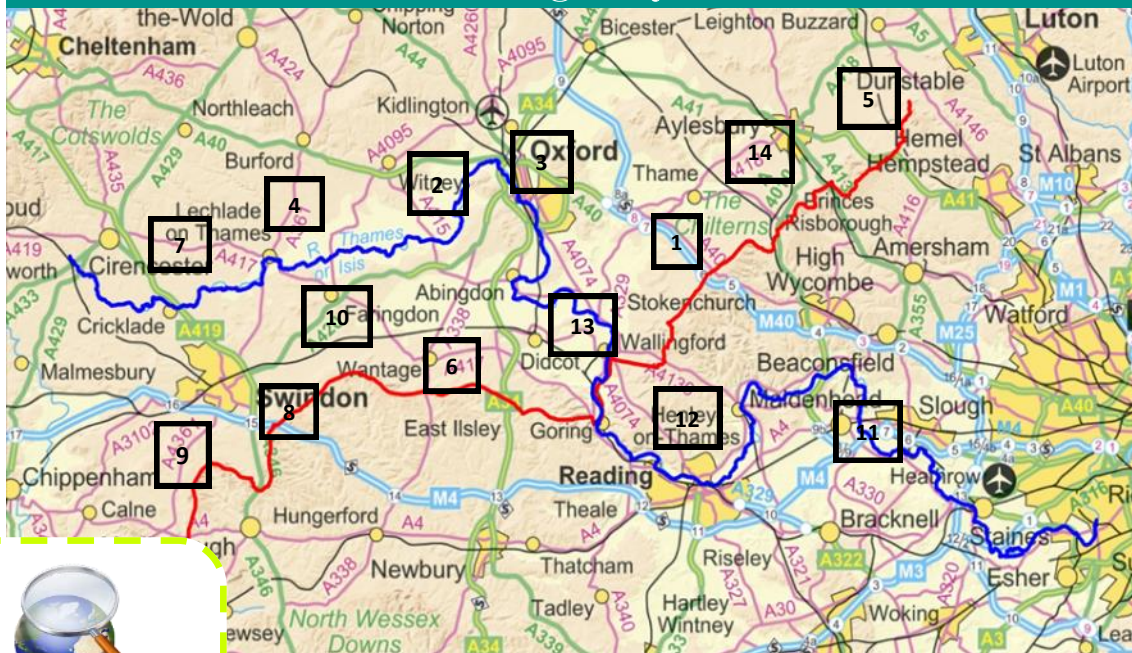
Practical work is carried out along The Thames Path and The Ridgeway to ensure walkers enjoy using it. Work is carried out by the National Trail Team, volunteers, local highway authorities, landowners and contractors. Volunteers are welcome to help maintain the Thames Path by joining the task team led by the National Trail Team. The location and activities for the next few months are shown below. Please ensure that you book early as the practical tasks are popular. **Locations for tasks may change and volunteer numbers can be limited due to type of task.**

Volunteer to help with a task by contacting the National Trail Team.

Book in advance and as soon as possible.

E: nt.volunteers@oxfordshire.gov.uk **T:** 01865 810211

Task Locations for Ridgeway and Thames Path



*Check the map
for a task location
near to you.*

KEY

RW = Ridgeway
TP = Thames Path
HVC = Hard Vegetation Clearance (hedge cutting, mulching, pole sawing etc)
FI = Fingerpost Installation
GI = Gate Installation
S = Signage
WS = Workshop
DBI Display board installation

Task Dates

November

5th - TP Cricklade - **FI 7**
6th - RW Lewknor + Chinnor - **DBI 1**
8th - TP Marlow **HVC 12**
12th - RW Lodge Hill **GI 14**
13th - TP Reading/Tilehurst **HVC 12**
14th - TP Workshop **S 2**
19th - TP - Chimney Clearance + **SI 2**
20th - TP Workshop **S 2**
21 - RW Compton + Bury Down **FI + small jobs 6**

December

3rd - RW - Lodge Hill **HVC 14**
4th - TP - Marlow Rugby Club **HVC 12**
5th - RW Signage Workshop **2**
5th - TP Central **HVC**
10th - RW Signage Workshop **2**
10th - TP Shillingford **HVC 2**
11th - RW Lodge Hill **HVC 14**
12th - TP Cerney Wick **FI 4**
17th - TP Moulsoford **HVC 13**
19th - Eynsham Workshop Planning **2**

The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL



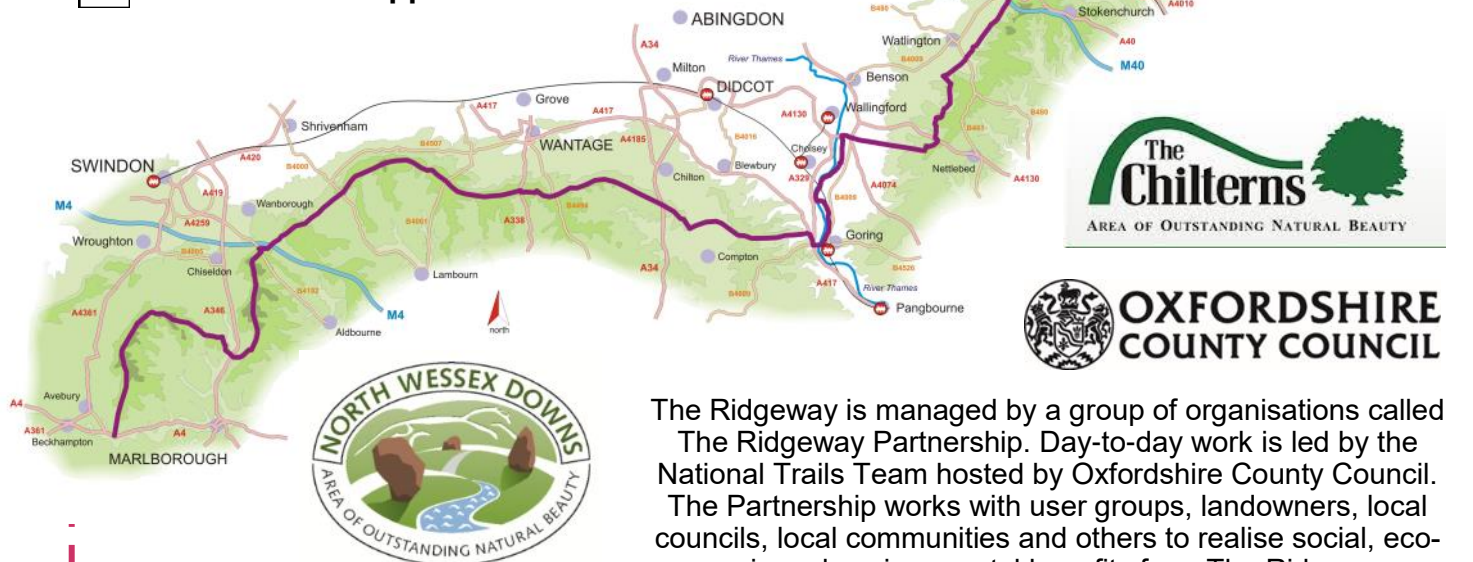
Living Ridgeway

The Ridgeway is an 87 mile (139km) signed trail open to the public to enjoy walking, cycling, horseriding and events in attractive countryside. The route lies to the west of London, passing over the chalk hills of the Chilterns AONB and North Wessex Downs AONB, taking in rural villages and market towns. Visitors come from near and far, including tourists from the United States and Europe, and are served by numerous local accommodation providers, shops, eating places and visitor attractions.

The Ridgeway is popularly known as Britain's oldest road - parts of the Trail follow tracks used by travellers, herdsmen and soldiers over the centuries. The landscape is dotted with historic features and chalk grassland flowers, butterflies and farmland wildlife are a highlight too.



The Ridgeway is one of 15 National Trails in England and Wales. It is also part of an international network of trails called the International Appalachian Trail.



The Ridgeway is managed by a group of organisations called The Ridgeway Partnership. Day-to-day work is led by the National Trails Team hosted by Oxfordshire County Council. The Partnership works with user groups, landowners, local councils, local communities and others to realise social, economic and environmental benefits from The Ridgeway.

Plan your Visit

Find out about events, car parks, pubs, places to stay overnight and more using our online interactive map: www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway

Guidebooks and maps are available from our online shop: <http://shop.nationaltrail.co.uk>

Download free leaflets from our website to take out on the Trail.



Follow the acorn along the Trail!

Celebrate your Visit

Souvenirs are available on our online shop: <http://shop.nationaltrail.co.uk>

Certificates await those people who take on the challenge of walking or running every mile of the Trail from Overton to Ivinghoe or riding all the miles open to cyclists and horse riders from Overton to Streatley: www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/completion-certificate

Share your great experiences

TripAdvisor 'The Ridgeway National Trail'
Twitter @TheRidgeway1972.

Martin's Race to the Stones

One of our very own volunteers, Martin Beecher, took on the challenge of the 100km Dixons Carphone Race to the Stones in July 2018. He set off on a blazingly hot Saturday morning, continuing through the night and finishing Sunday morning. Here's his account.....



The weather was not on my side. It was extremely hot with little shade or breeze to cool me down. I saw many competitors suffering because of it and they failed to finish. It was not until 11pm when it felt cool but by then I was stumbling along in the dark with a head-torch. As the sun rose, it got surprisingly hot and still I had 20km to go.

It was very much a test of my endurance. There are a lot of hills and, over time, I found walking downhill harder than uphill. The last few miles to Overton Hill are deeply rutted which made it even more difficult to reach the finish. It was such a relief to stop walking at the finish line!

In the days after, my feet felt crushed and my back ached. My gait was a shuffle due to badly bruised feet and toes. The spring in my step has returned though!

You might wonder why I did it. My main reason was to raise money for charity but also to put The Ridgeway into perspective. I have done volunteer work at so many locations along the Trail but didn't know how it all linked up. Crazy way of doing it I know, and I'm still not certain about those bits I did in the dark! But I did it—in 25 hours—and Race to the Stones proved a very well organised event to support me through it all. It's an achievement I can be proud of, that's for sure.

Well done Martin! Fundraising for Wheel Power: www.justgiving.com/Martin-Beecher-RTTS
For more details about Race to the Stones 2019, go to: www.racetothestones.com

Living Ridgeway

Adventure starts here!

A key place to start exploring is the crossroad of The Ridgeway and National Cycle Network route 482, just south of Ogbourne St George in Wiltshire. NCN 482 is a cycle path running along the old Swindon-Marlborough-Andover railway line, open to walkers, cyclists and horse riders. A new sign has been made to inspire people to explore the miles and miles of off-road tracks spreading out from this crossroad.

Follow signs south to Marlborough and on to Savernake Forest and the Kennett and Avon Canal, or north to Swindon to visit the Richard Jefferies museum or Coate Water Park. Or head west to Barbury Castle and Avebury or east to Wayland Smithy and the Uffington White Horse....whichever direction, adventure awaits!



Events along The Ridgeway

Enjoy events on
The Ridgeway.
Visit our website
for more details
and more events.
Many events
require booking
in advance.



Join an event or seek solitude

There's something for everyone along The Ridgeway. Check out what's on and plan to either join in or find a quiet spot! Many event organisers work with us to keep local communities informed and our website is a good place to start to find information about events on the Trail.

5th Nov—31st Jan 2019 Illuminated woodland walk

Basildon Park, nr Reading, Berks

(National Trust)

Enjoy the autumn colours and twinkling lights in the parkland. Hundreds more lights added this year.

Fri 9th—Sun 11th Nov: Druid's Challenge

Starts from Ivinghoe Beacon, Bucks

Multi-day 84 mile ultra-marathon celebrating its 10th anniversary.



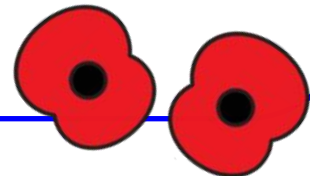
World War I commemorative events along The Ridgeway Sunday 11th November

Bell ringing along The Ridgeway at *West Hanney, Ardington, East Hagbourne and Blewbury.*

A lone piper will play a lament by the war memorial in St Thomas of Canterbury Church, *Goring*, at 6am.

Battles Over: WW1 Beacons of Light events at National Trust sites along the Trail - *Uffington White Horse Hill, Oxfordshire and Ivinghoe Beacon, Buckinghamshire.* Over a thousand beacons will be lit across the country as symbols of an end to the darkness of war and a return to the light of peace.

See <https://armistice100.org.uk>



Sun 11 Nov: Winter wildfowl walk

College Lake, nr Tring, Herts

(Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust)

Many different ducks and geese come to visit in the winter, often in large numbers. Beginner birdwatchers welcome.

Fri 16th Nov - Sun 10th March 2019:

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2018

Natural History Museum, Tring, Herts

34 images displaying the beauty and drama of the natural world, from tiny insects to massive mammals.

Sun 18th Nov: Nature and Outdoor photography

College Lake, nr Tring, Herts

(Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust)

One day course to provide insights into the techniques & methods of capturing more creative images of nature & outdoors.

Events along The Ridgeway

Wed 5th Dec: White Horse Hill Sky Tour

White Horse Hill, Uffington, Oxfordshire (National Trust)

A perfect stargazing location to learn about the stars, planets, the deeper cosmos and also the mythology and stories of our ancestors who knew this ancient site.

Fri 7th and 14th Dec: Winter Warmer Walks

Avebury, Wiltshire (National Trust)

Walk around the Avebury stones with archaeologist Nick Snashall, followed by Christmas liqueur, mince pies and 10% discount in the shop!

Christmas along The Ridgeway

Things to do

Drop by a National Trust property along the Trail to enjoy festive activities, from Avebury (Wilts) to Ashridge (Herts).

Christmas gifts

Find inspiration in independent gift shops selling local products in towns near to the Trail. Don't forget a Ridgeway mug and other merchandise is available from the National Trail online shop!

Fri 16th Nov - Dec: Artist and maker festival, A Little Bird Told Me gallery, Wendover, Bucks

Fri 23rd Nov: Christmas Fair, Loyd Lindsay Rooms, Ardington, Oxfordshire

Sun 30th Nov: Tring Together Christmas Festival, Tring, Herts

Christmas trees grown near The Ridgeway

Buy your tree from the same supplier as Number 10, Downing Street!

Sat 3rd Nov—Christmas Eve: The Tree Barn, Christmas Common

Christmas turkey farmed near The Ridgeway

If you haven't already, try a Walters Turkey from Bower Farm near the Trail at Aldworth, Berks.

Wed 20th Feb 2019: Wild at Heart: Love Amphibians

College Lake, nr Tring, Herts (Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust)

Join us to discover the secret life of amphibians with indoor and outdoor children's activities.

Sun 24th Feb 2019: Small is beautiful moss walk

Dancers End, nr Wendover, Bucks (Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust)

Search for and learn about mosses with Peter Creed at this nature reserve.

It is estimated that around 400,000 people live within 5 miles of The Ridgeway.

Imagine if each person donated £1 to the charity dedicated to its preservation....



Friends of The Ridgeway

For as little as £8 per year for an individual, members know they are helping to preserve The Ridgeway year after year – go to www.ridgewayfriends.org.uk/join-us

Produced by the National Trails Team on behalf of The Ridgeway Partnership.
www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway

Volunteers needed to adopt a stretch of The Ridgeway

We have vacancies for keen walkers, cyclists or horse riders living near these stretches :

Lodge Hill to Princes Risborough (Buckinghamshire) - walking only,

Scutchamer Knob to Bury Down (West Berkshire),

Foxhill to Ashbury (Oxfordshire),

Aldbourne Road to Upham (Wiltshire),

Roman Road, Ogbourne St George to Aldbourne Road (Wiltshire).

If you are interested in keeping an eye out for problems and changes along one of the above stretches and reporting what you see to us four times a year, please get in touch.

We provide training and reimburse travel expenses. You will join a friendly bunch of volunteers and you will be helping us improve The Ridgeway!

THANK YOU

The following event organisers recently donated towards Trail repair funds.

Dixons Carphone
Race to the Stones

SENSE Ridgewalk

U3A Kennet Monday walking group enjoying a stroll



Latest News



Follow us on Twitter
@TheRidgeway1972

Download this newsletter and see other news updates on our website

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/news

There's so much going on!

Join our mailing list to hear all about it..

Receive this free newsletter by email
four times a year. Email us to subscribe:

ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If you would like to advertise or suggest articles for future newsletters, please get in touch.



The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL

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Email: ridgeway@oxfordshire.gov.uk

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Twitter @TheRidgeway1972

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway/



follow the acorn

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