



Mystery, Myths and Legends

For five thousand years, ceremonial circles and avenues of great standing stones have kept their silent watch over Wiltshire's countryside. Raised by Neolithic man, these awesome examples of human endeavour tantalise us with their secrets. The pretty village of Avebury with its [Manor House](#) and [museum](#) is partly encompassed by its great stone circle, enclosed by a deep ditch and approached by an avenue of stones. [The World Heritage Site of Avebury](#), where The Ridgeway starts, also includes a series of other major archaeological sites, such as the towering man-made mound of Silbury Hill, the burial chamber of West Kennett Long Barrow and the ancient camp on Windmill Hill. There's plenty to explore here but including a visit to Marlborough, a gracious and elegant coaching town, can only enhance your stay.

Avebury World Heritage Site walk

Without a doubt the best way to start your Country Escape is to download and follow this [circular walk](#) which takes in most of the major prehistoric monuments within the World Heritage site.

Distance: 6¾ miles/3 hours

Avebury to Barbury Castle via Fyfield Down

Venturing further afield you can explore other prehistoric landscapes on foot. Start in Avebury and walk via Green Street (incredibly once part of the main London to Bath Road) to The Ridgeway which you cross taking the gate straight ahead into [Fyfield Down National Nature Reserve](#). This atmospheric chalk grassland landscape, little changed since prehistoric times, is strewn with sarsen stones known locally as 'grey wethers' as from a distance they look like sheep - a wether is a castrated ram. In summer you'll enjoy colourful wild flowers and a host of birds from corn buntings to linnets. Rejoining The Ridgeway turn right and follow the Trail north on a lovely, breezy walk across the open Marlborough Downs to [Barbury Castle Country Park](#) with its dramatic Iron Age fort. It was here in 556AD that Cynric the Saxon King of Wessex defeated the Britons. More practically, there are toilets, car park and an easy rendezvous with a taxi for a lift back to base.

Distance: 6¾ miles/3 hours



The Ridgeway © Mark Philpott

FACT FILE

Finding your way

The Ridgeway is way-marked throughout with the National Trail acorn symbol.

Maps

See map at end of document; also
OS Landranger 173
OS Explorer 157

Getting there

For details of buses and trains visit:
[Ridgeway Travel Planner](#)

Refreshments

Avebury: [Red lion](#)

Circles Café T: 01672 539514

Ogbourne St George: [Parklands Hotel](#)
T: 01672 841555

[Inn with the Well](#) T: 01672 841445

Marlborough: Various cafés and pubs

Devizes: Various cafés and pubs

Ogbourne St George to Barbury Castle

An alternative is to follow the [Barbury Castle circular walk](#), perhaps beginning with lunch at the [Inn with the Well](#) or [Parklands Hotel](#) in the village of Ogbourne St George. Then head northwest along The Ridgeway to Barbury Castle via the springy turf of Smeathe's Ridge. This is racehorse country with the ground falling away on each side of the ridge to give fantastic panoramic views. After exploring the Iron Age fort, either catch a taxi back or head north downhill along the minor access road to Barbury, turning right onto paths back to Ogbourne at the bottom of the scarp.

Distance: Ogbourne to Barbury Castle – 4½ miles/2 hours
Round trip - 8 miles/3½ hours



Smeathe's Ridge © Jos Joslin

While visiting the area

Take time to visit [Marlborough](#), in legend Merle Barrow meaning Merlin's Tomb, whose wide High Street of Tudor and Georgian buildings includes some excellent pubs and tea-shops. The [Merchant's House](#), a fine 17th century silk merchant's home is found here containing a wealth of period features, paintings and artefacts, and [St Peter's Church](#) has permanent arts and craft displays.

Further south is the leisurely market town of Devizes situated on the Kennet & Avon Canal. You can visit the canal's museum at Devizes Wharf, take a boat trip in the summer from there on the [Kenavon Venture](#) or enjoy a walk at any time of the year along the towpath. If you walk west (downstream) you soon come to the Caen Hill Locks; 29 locks within just a two-miles stretch of canal with a height rise of 237 feet.

For beer lovers, the renowned [Wadworth Brewery](#) which has been brewing in the same building in Devizes since 1885 runs regular tours. This includes a chance to admire the brewery's Shire horses that still deliver beer each morning to the local pubs.



Barbury Castle from The Ridgeway

Public Toilets

Avebury: High Street
Barbury Castle: Car Park
Marlborough: George Lane
Devizes: Three locations

Accommodation

Avebury: [Avebury Life](#)
[Avebury Lodge](#)
[Manor Farm](#)
Silbury Hill View T: 01672 539588
Ogbourne St George: [Sanctuary](#)
[Inn with the Well](#)
[Lavender House](#)
[Parklands Hotel](#)
Marlborough: [Various B&Bs, inns and hotels](#)
Devizes: [Various B&Bs, inns and hotels](#)

Other places to visit

[Merchant's House](#)
[St Peter's Church](#)
[Wadworth Brewery](#)
[Kennet & Avon Canal boat trip](#)

Tourist Information

[Visit Wiltshire](#)

Remember when out walking

- Wear appropriate clothing and strong, comfortable footwear.
- Carry water.
- Take a mobile phone if you have one, but coverage may be patchy in rural areas.
- If you are walking alone it's sensible, as a precaution, to let someone know where you are and when you expect to return.
- Please follow the [Countryside Code](#)

Mystery, Myths and Legends map

Key

★ Pubs and refreshments

- 1 Red Lion
Circles Cafe
- 2 Parkland Hotel
Inn with the Well

● Attractions

- 1 Avebury Manor
Avebury Museum
- 2 Fyfield Down NNR
- 3 Barbury Castle
- 4 Merchant's House
St Peter's Church

- Avebury World Heritage Site walk
- Avebury to Barbury Castle
- Ogbourne St George to Barbury

