

Country Escapes

Vale of White Horse

The mysterious prehistoric figure of the Uffington White Horse carved into the chalk on the edge of the Manger, a dramatic dry valley, next to The Ridgeway has intrigued and enchanted visitors for year. Now known to have been created in the Bronze Age, some 3,000 years ago, the horse is surrounded by other fascinating ancient sites - an Iron Age fort with its deep ditch immediately behind, Dragon Hill just below where St George allegedly slew the beast with its blood poisoning the ground forever so no grass grows there, and Wayland's Smithy, a rare Stone Age long barrow, a mile further west. All around is wonderful walking country with open rolling downland to the south, dramatic steep scarp slopes to the north and large skies above. Below, in the Vale, are several pretty villages together with the small market towns of Wantage and Faringdon providing welcoming pubs and accommodation.

White Horse Hill

The start to your Country Escape should surely be to explore the hill and its immediate monuments. This can be done whilst following the [White Horse Hill circular walk](#) which descends steeply from the hill into the Vale to the small village of Woolstone from where, properly fortified at the appropriately named [White Horse Inn](#), you'll have the energy for the climb back.

Distance: 4¼ miles/2 hours plus time to explore the monuments and for refreshments.

Wayland's Smithy and Ashdown House

A little to the west is the village of Ashbury nestling at the foot of the downs and the location for the [Ashbury circular walk](#). There's a choice of three walks here, with the two longer ones taking in both the 5,000-year old Wayland's Smithy long barrow and fantastic views of 17th-century [Ashdown House](#). If you're passing the house on a summer afternoon when it's open you're likely to be able to take part in a guided tour.

Distance: 7¾ miles/4 hours or 6 miles/3hours



White Horse © Natural England/Tina Stallard

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 174
OS Explorer 170

Getting there

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

Refreshments

Woolstone: [White Horse Inn](#)

T: 01367 820726

Uffington: [Fox & Hounds](#)

T: 01367 820680

Ashbury: [Rose & Crown](#)

T: 01793 710222

Letcombe Regis: [Greyhound](#)

T: 01235 771093

Wantage: Various cafés and pubs

Faringdon: Various cafés and pubs

Devil's Punchbowl & Segsbury Camp

A few miles east near to Wantage is another scenic dry valley, the Devil's Punchbowl, sculpted by the flow of water long ago. It's now valuable unimproved chalk grassland, rich in wild flowers, so much so that much of it is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The [circular walk](#) here includes another Iron Age fort, Segsbury Camp, sitting alongside The Ridgeway above the village of Letcombe Regis.

Distance: 7½ miles/3½ hours



The Ridgeway above the Devil's Punchbowl © Jos Joslin

While visiting the area

Take time to visit [Wantage](#), the birth place of King Alfred in 849AD when it was an important Saxon settlement. The town has literary connections to the Poet Laureate John Betjeman who lived here for many years and is Alfredston in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. The [Vale and Downland Museum](#) is a great place to learn more about the town and surrounding area.

Another pleasant town in the Vale is Faringdon with its [Folly](#), the last major one to be built in England, and the stunning 13th century [Tithe Barn](#) in nearby Great Coxwell.

Uffington, close to White Horse Hill, has its own small [museum](#) open at weekends in the summer in the 395-year old schoolroom that Thomas Hughes wrote about in *Tom Brown's School Days*.



Uffington Museum

Public Toilets

Wantage: Portway car park

Faringdon: Southampton Street car park

Accommodation

Woolstone: [White Horse Inn](#)

Uffington: [Fox & Hounds](#)

[Norton House](#)

[Britchcombe Countryside Holidays](#)

Ashbury: [Rose & Crown](#)

Sparsholt: [Hill Barn Farmhouse](#)

[The Star](#)

Letcombe Regis: [Quince Cottage](#)

[Court Hill Centre](#)

9 Croft End **T:** 01235 763694

Wantage: [The Bear](#)

[Alfred's Lodge](#)

[Regis Guest House](#)

Faringdon: [Sudbury House Hotel](#)

[Old Crown](#)

Other places to visit

[Vale and Downland Museum](#)

[Faringdon Folly](#)

[Great Coxwell Tithe Barn](#)

[Uffington Museum](#)

Tourist Information

[VisitSouthernOxfordshire](#)

Wantage: Church St **T:** 01235 760176

E: tourism@wantage-museum.com

Faringdon: Corn Exchange

T: 01367 242191

E: tic@faringdowntowncouncil.gov.uk

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](#)

