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Price in UK UK£11.99

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☎ 1-800-462-6420 www.nbnbooks.com

Price in USA US\$19.95

ISBN 978-1-905864-79-9 9 781905 864799



The Ridgeway

AVEBURY TO IVINGHOE BEACON



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THE Ridgeway

53 large-scale maps & guides to 24 towns and villages

PLANNING – PLACES TO STAY – PLACES TO EAT

AVEBURY TO IVINGHOE BEACON

NICK HILL & HENRY STEDMAN





NICK HILL lives in Devizes, not far from the Ridgeway which he's walked from end to end several times. He is also often to be found on the paths around Avebury.

Nick's fascination with more far-flung places began with a short trip to Asia; several enthralling years later he'd crossed the continent overland four times. He settled temporarily in Thailand, his four years in Bangkok punctuated by periods in Siberia, China, India and Pakistan.

As part of the Trailblazer team he is author, illustrator and cartographer, drawing many of the maps for the guides. He has also researched and updated the *Trans-Siberian Handbook* and *South Downs Way*.



This fourth edition was updated by **HENRY STEDMAN**, who has been writing guide-books for almost 20 years now. He's the author of Trailblazer's guides to *Kilimanjaro* and *Coast to Coast*, *Hadrian's Wall*, and several other British walking guides. **DAISY** is Henry's dog, though any assumption that ownership equates with control can be dismissed in this instance. An experienced walker, Daisy has already completed the Dales Way, Hadrian's Wall Path, Coast to Coast, Offa's Dyke and the entire South-West

Coast Path with Henry. In fact, given the amount of running around she does, for every ten miles that Henry completes, Daisy does about thirty. Daisy's ambition is to walk all 15 National Trails.

The Ridgeway

First edition: 2006; this fourth edition: 2017

Publisher: Trailblazer Publications

The Old Manse, Tower Rd, Hindhead, Surrey GU26 6SU, UK

www.trailblazer-guides.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

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

ISBN 978-1-905864-79-9

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

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

Cartography: Nick Hill **Illustrations:** © Nick Hill (pp68-72);

Photographs (flora): C1, Row 1, middle & right; C3, Row 1 left: © Tricia Hayne
all other flora photographs © Bryn Thomas

All other photographs: © Henry Stedman unless otherwise indicated

Index: Anna Jacomb-Hood

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Acknowledgements

FROM HENRY: Thanks to Zoe for all her help with the research, as well as for organising all the accommodation en route; and to Henry Jr for guaranteeing that the whole trip would be both memorable and fun! Thanks also to all those readers who've emailed with comments and suggestions, in particular Nigel Black, Jonathan Billings, Richard Butler, Bob Crockford, Timothy Cook, Tom Hope, Nick Houghton, Nigel Kemp, Trevor & Joan Lipscombe, Alex Matthews, William O'Neill and Keith Rogers.

At Trailblazer, many thanks to Anna Jacomb-Hood for editing, to Jane Thomas for proof-reading, and also to Bryn for finally giving me the opportunity to walk and work on this book!

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 (pp57-9). 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: Experienced long-distance walker and cover girl Daisy on the Ridgeway between Wayland's Smithy and Uffington Castle.

Previous page: The view of the Whipsnade White Lion, on the hills two miles to the east of the trail, is a good indication that you're almost at Ivinghoe Beacon. **Overleaf:** Views across the fields along Smeathe's Ridge, between Barbury Castle and Foxhill.

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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PLANNING – PLACES TO STAY – PLACES TO EAT

AVEBURY TO IVINGHOE BEACON

**NICK HILL &
HENRY STEDMAN**

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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 the usual pile of assorted books, maps and guides. When you're all packed and ready to go, there's comprehensive public transport information to get you to and from the Ridgeway and 53 detailed walking maps (1:20,000) and 21 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 baggage-carrying services if you just want your luggage carried
- Suggested itineraries for all types 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 in both directions; route descriptions are written from west to east
- GPS waypoints (downloadable from www.trailblazer-guides.com)
- 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, a journey that encompasses no fewer than five counties, beginning in Wiltshire, at Avebury, and passing through Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Hertfordshire before finally ending its meandering way at Ivinghoe Beacon in Buck-

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

inghamshire (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 on promotional literature as the oldest road in the country – and there may well be some truth to that.

Perhaps the main joy of the Ridgeway is that so much evidence of its extensive history is still visible. From the moment you arrive in magical **Avebury** – 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 – the prehistoric sites



Avebury Stone Circle (see p86) at the very start at the walk.



The Thames between Goring and Streatley where another national trail, the Thames Path, crosses the Ridgeway.

Indeed, before your first day on the trail is over you will have encountered the huge Iron Age forts of **Barbury Castle** and **Liddington Castle** and the wonderfully preserved **Neolithic long barrow at Wayland's Smithy** – at around 5500 years old it's as old as the trail itself! And just a little further on you come upon the most striking ancient landmark of them all, the magnificent **Uffington White Horse**: lines of trenches filled with crushed chalk that, together, form a highly stylised outline of a 100m-long white horse. So striking and enigmatic is it that it is said to have influenced not only all the other white horses that adorn many a hillside round these parts, but it has also even been described as a forerunner of much of modern-day's minimalist art!

But the Ridgeway's charms are not merely confined to remnants of its distant past, as fascinating as these may be. There are the landscapes through which it passes and the panoramas you can enjoy from it too. From the moment you take your first steps on the trail you are immediately taken up onto high ground; thereafter the views of the countryside change endlessly with the light and reach endlessly to the horizon. The first half of the trail is open to the elements but it is exhilarating. On sunny days the air is wonderful, filling you with energy and physical well-being. It is also one of the most enjoyable sections of the Ridgeway; in blissful solitude you can look down at the towns and vil-

come thick and fast. Between the village and the actual start of the trail is **West Kennet Avenue**, originally lined with about 100 pairs (give or take a few) of giant sarsen stones in parallel lines; only some of which now remain. And no sooner do you set off from the start of the trail proper, at **Overton Hill**, than your gaze is diverted towards to a set of three tumuli to the right of the path – ancient barrows (burial mounds) that are almost as old as the road itself.



lages far below, with only the occasional friendly dog-walker or fellow Ridgeway trekker to break the isolation every once in a while.

Then, at about the halfway point, the Ridgeway changes character. Dropping down to the **Thames** at the pretty Siamese twin villages of **Streatley** and **Goring**, the path leaves the voluptuous Wessex Downs in favour of the **Chiltern Hills**. From here on woodlands become the dominant theme, 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!

Eventually, of course, trees finally relent and thin out and, climbing above the butterfly Mecca of Albury Nowers, you catch your first glimpse of your ultimate destination, **Ivinghoe Beacon**, up ahead in the distance. It's a fairly punishing way to end a trek, but you'll be rewarded by some spectacular, panoramic views of the countryside below; plus, of course, 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

(Below) Looking back to Silbury Hill from West Kennet Long Barrow (see p90), Avebury.



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 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

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

stretches from Lyme 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 p114) dates back to around 3590BC. Bronze Age (2500BC to 800BC) stone structures still stand, with the Avebury stone circle (see box pp86-7) and West Kennet Avenue (see box p89) 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 p97) and Uffington Castle

(see p116) plus earthworks such as Grim's ditch (see box p152) 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



Wayland's Smithy (see p114) is a Neolithic long barrow. Legend tells that the shoes for the Uffington White Horse were forged here.

Ashdown, which some think took place in the area around White Horse Hill (see box p117).

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 p42) joined the appeal. However, it



A lovely row of thatched cottages in Ashbury, north of Wayland's Smithy.



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.

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 been made to its course since then which enables 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 hav-

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

ing 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 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 western section of the Ridgeway, up to Streatley, could be considered more difficult than the eastern section owing to its remote and exposed conditions that become very apparent during bad weather. From Streatley onwards the Ridgeway is often in woodland, or passing through fields, and goes through, or near to, numerous towns and villages.

How long do you need?

This depends on your fitness and experience. Do not try to do too much in one day if you are new to long-distance walking. Most people find that eight days

Most people find that eight days is enough to complete the walk and have time to look around the villages ... but it can be done in five days

(Below) Ivinghoe Beacon – journey's end.



is enough to complete the walk and still have time to look around the villages and enjoy the views along the way. Alternatively, the entire path can be done in five days if you are fit enough, but you won't see much of the surrounding countryside.

If you're camping don't underestimate how much a heavy pack laden with camping gear will slow you down. It is also worth bearing in mind that those who take it easy on the Ridgeway see a lot more than those who sweat out long days and tend to only ever see the path in front of them. If you are walking on your own you can dictate the pace, but when walking with someone else you need to take their abilities into account and take time to enjoy their company – this may slow you down. If you don't take time to do this, you might as well be walking separately and simply meet up at the end of the day.

On all sections, but particularly the western section, you'll also need to consider how far off the path your accommodation is and build that distance into your daily total. Although some B&Bs will collect you from the Ridgeway and drop you back the next morning, not all offer this service so you do need to check when reserving

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

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

CAMPING & BUNKHOUSE/HOSTEL

Relaxed pace		Medium pace		Fast pace	
Place	Approx Distance	Place	Approx Distance	Place	Approx Distance
Night	miles/km	miles/km		miles/km	
0	Overton Hill	Overton Hill		Overton Hill	
1	Ogbourne St G* 9.6/15.5	Ogbourne St G* 9.6/15.5		Ogbourne St G* 9.6/15.5	
2	Sparsholt Firs 14.5/23	Sparsholt Firs 14.5/23		Court Hill 19/30.5	
3	Court Hill 4.5/7	Court Hill 4.5/7		Streatley§ 14/22.5	
4	Streatley§ 14/22.5	Streatley§ 14/22.5		Watlington 15/24	
5	Crowmarsh G 7.3/12	Crowmarsh G 7.3/12		Princes Risboro'* 11.2/18	
6	Watlington 9.6/15	Watlington 9.6/15		Ivinghoe 17.5/28	
7	Princes Risboro'* 11.2/18	Princes Risboro'* 11.2/18		Beacon	
8	Wigginton* 12.4/20	Ivinghoe 17.5/28			
9	Ivinghoe 5.1/8	Beacon			

§No campsite but hostel accommodation is available

*No campsites or hostels but alternative accommodation is available

STAYING IN B&B-STYLE ACCOMMODATION

Relaxed pace		Medium pace		Fast pace	
Place	Approx Distance	Place	Approx Distance	Place	Approx Distance
Night	miles/km	miles/km		miles/km	
0	Overton Hill	Overton Hill		Overton Hill	
1	Ogbourne St G 9.6/15.5	Bishopstone 17.7/28.5		Bishopstone 17.7/28.5	
2	Bishopstone 8.7/14	Letcombe Rgs 9.9/15.5		East Ilsley 18.7/30	
3	Letcombe Rgs 9.9/15.5	Goring 14.8/23.5		Watlington 20.7/33	
4	East Ilsley 8.8/14	Watlington 14.7/23.5		Wendover 17.2/26.5	
5	Wallingford 11.2/18.5	Princes Risboro' 11/18		Ivinghoe 11.3/18	
6	Watlington 9.5/15.5	Wigginton 12.4/20		Beacon	
7	Princes Risboro' 11/18	Ivinghoe 5.1/8			
8	Wigginton 12.4/20	Beacon			
9	Ivinghoe 5.1/8.5				

Note: Airbnb options are not included in the above

decision on what type of scenery and terrain you'd like to tackle first. Neither section is particularly demanding but the western section is far more isolated and really isn't much fun in bad weather. The eastern section, being in woodlands for much of the time, is far more sheltered and relaxing.

Availability of public transport heading in either direction along the Ridgeway is similar so this shouldn't have much bearing on which direction you choose to walk in.

Although the maps in Part 4 of this book follow the Ridgeway from west to east, there are timings on all the maps for walking in either direction.

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

The itineraries in the box opposite are based on different accommodation types: one is for those who prefer to camp or stay in hostels/bunkhouses where possible; the other is for those who choose to stay in B&B-style accommodation. Each is divided into three options based on walking speeds. They are only suggestions so feel free to adapt them to your needs. **Don't forget** to add your travelling time before and after the walk.

SIDE TRIPS

There are plenty of good circular and linear walks from the Ridgeway. Information about all these routes can be obtained from local tourist information centres/points (see box p42), the National Trails website, or from the relevant county/district councils (see box p62).

● **Aldbourn Circular Route** This is a 12-mile (19.5km) route which for several miles uses the Ridgeway. It takes in Aldbourn village, several Bronze Age burial mounds, the deserted village of Snap (see p105), Liddington Castle (see p108) and Sugar Hill. The trail is waymarked and it's also marked on OS Explorer map Nos 157 and 170.

● **Ashbury Circular Walk** This 10-mile (16km) walk from the village of Ashbury (see p114) takes the walker through some beautiful countryside once the initial steep climb has been completed. The path crosses the Ridgeway and heads to Alfred's Castle, an Iron Age hillfort, before reaching Ashdown House, a 17th-century Dutch-style property owned by the National Trust. From here it returns to the Ridgeway via a different route and takes in Wayland's Smithy (see box p114), before heading back down the hill to Ashbury. The trail is waymarked and although the paths are marked on OS Explorer map No 170, they aren't labelled.

● **Lambourn Valley Way** This 20-mile (32km) route starts at Uffington White Horse and leads down into the valley to reach the village of Lambourn. It then broadly follows the River Lambourn along the valley to its end in Newbury.

This is a very peaceful walk passing through several small villages with only the crossing of the M4 to spoil the atmosphere. The route is waymarked and is also marked on OS Explorer map Nos 170 and 158.

- **Salisbury Reds** (☎ 01202 338420, 🌐 www.salisburyreds.co.uk)
X5 Swindon to Salisbury via **Marlborough** & Pewsey, Mon-Sat 1/hr
- **Stagecoach** (🌐 www.stagecoachbus.com)
80 Swindon to **Marlborough** via Chiseldon & **Ogbourne St George**,
Mon-Sat 6/day
70A/72A Swindon to **Marlborough** via **Ogbourne St George**,
Mon-Sat 3/day evening only (also operated by Thamesdown)
49 Swindon to Trowbridge (The Trans Wilts Express) via Broad Hinton,
Winterbourne Bassett, **Avebury**, Beckhampton & Devizes, Mon-Sat 1/hr,
Swindon to Devizes via Broad Hinton, Winterbourne Bassett, **Avebury**,
Beckhampton, Sun 6/day
31 Oxford to **Wantage** via Abingdon, daily 1/hr
X30 Oxford to **Wantage**, Mon-Sat 2/hr, Sun 1/hr
- **Thamesdown Transport** (☎ 01793 428428, 🌐 www.thamesdown-transport.co.uk)
Rural 20 Hungerford to Marlborough, Mon-Fri 5/day
42 Calne to **Marlborough** via Compton Bassett, Cherhill,
Beckhampton, **Avebury**, **West Kennett**, **East Kennett**, **West
Overton**, Mon-Fri 7/day, Sat 6/day (note: stops are request only)
46/46A Swindon to Hungerford via **Liddington**, **Foxhill**, Aldbourne & Ramsbury,
Mon-Sat 3/day but the 46 (1/day) doesn't stop at Foxhill
X47 **Wantage** to Swindon via **Letcombe Regis**, Letcombe Bassett, **Sparsholt**,
Kingston Lisle, **Uffington**, **Woolstone**, **Ashbury**, **Idstone**, **Bishopstone**,
Hinton Parva, **Foxhill** & **Liddington**, Sat 3/day
48/48A Swindon to **Marlborough** via **Liddington**, **Foxhill**, Aldbourne & Ramsbury,
Mon-Sat 5-6/day
70A Swindon to **Marlborough** via Chiseldon & **Ogbourne St George**,
Mon-Sat 2/day (also operated by Stagecoach)
72A Swindon to **Marlborough** via Wroughton, Chiseldon & **Ogbourne St
George**, Mon-Sat 1/day
X22 Hungerford to **Marlborough**, Mon-Fri 2/day, Sat 1/day
- **Thames Travel/Go Ahead** (☎ 01865 785400, 🌐 www.thames-travel.co.uk)
32A Abingdon to **Wantage** via Didcot Parkway, Mon-Fri 1/hr, Sat 12/day
136 Cholsey to Benson via **Wallingford**, **Crowmarsh Gifford** & Benson,
Mon-Fri 1-2/hr, Sun Cholsey to **Wallingford** 4/day
139 Henley-on-Thames to **Wallingford** via **Nuffield** & **Crowmarsh Gifford**,
Mon-Sat approx 1/hr
139B Henley-on-Thames to **Wallingford** via Benson, **Nuffield** & **Crowmarsh
Gifford**, Sun 5/day
T1 **Watlington** to **Lewknor** & **Chinnor**, Mon-Sat 10/day, Sat 8/day
(additional services start in Oxford/Cowley)
X2 Oxford to **Wallingford** via Abingdon & Didcot, Mon-Sat 2/hr, Sun 1/hr
X32 Oxford to **Wantage**, Mon-Fri 1/hr, Sat 11/day
X39 Reading to Oxford via **Wallingford** & **Crowmarsh Gifford**,
Mon-Sat approx 1/hr
X40 Reading to Oxford via Woodcote, **Wallingford** & **Crowmarsh Gifford**,
daily approx 1/hr

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 from west to east.

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 pp30-6 and the **towns and villages facilities table** on pp32-3.

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

TRAIL MAPS

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 below 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 will need to add 20-30% to allow for rests, photography, checking the map, drinking water etc. 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 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 downward gradient.

Accommodation

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 pp18-20.

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 pp191-2) 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.

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.

346785,  georgeanddragonrisborough.co.uk; 2D/1T, all en suite,  WI-FI;  £20 deposit). The rooms were refurbished in 2015 and are both smart and swish (and the bathrooms are huge!); rates are from £42.50pp (sgl occ £75).

Where to eat and drink

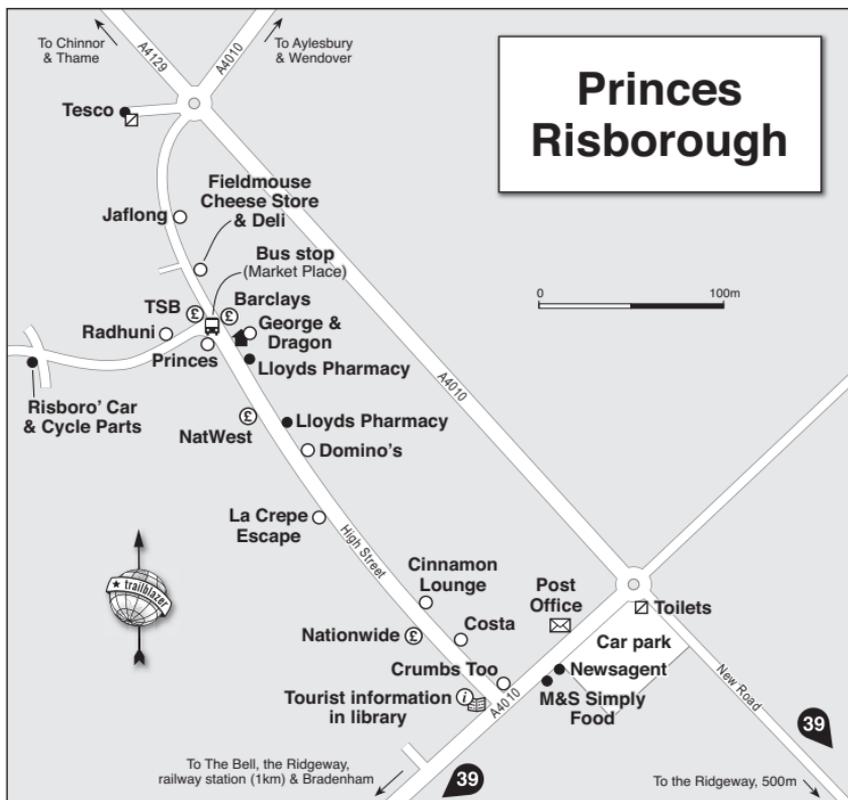
Crumbs Too (☎ 01844 344462; Mon-Sat 8am-5pm) is located at the top of the High St and continues to be a popular stop for coffee, cakes and lunchtime bites. There is a branch of **Costa** (Mon-Fri 6.30am-6.30pm, Sat & Sun 7.30am-6pm) serving the usual range of coffees, teas, cakes and savoury snacks.

At the other end of the street **Fieldmouse Cheese Store & Deli** (☎ 01844 344990; Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat 9am-4pm) has a delicious selection of quiches,

ploughman's and sandwiches to eat in or take away.

Also on the High St, **La Crepe Escape** (☎ 01844 275600,  www.lacrepeescape.co.uk; Mon-Fri 10am-5pm, Sat 9.15am-5pm, Sun 10.30am-2pm) is proving very popular, with their Nutella crepe (£3.10/4.10 small/regular) an enduring favourite; gluten and dairy free options are available.

There's a good choice of curry houses for such a small town. **Cinnamon Lounge** (☎ 01844 347003,  www.cinnamonlounge.co.uk; Mon-Sat noon-2.30pm & 5.30-11.30pm, Sun noon-10.30pm), on the High St, is usually busy, but for a quieter Indian meal try **Jaflong** (☎ 01844 274443,  www.jaflongbalti.co.uk; daily 5.30-11.30pm) further up the road; they don't serve alcohol here but you can bring



your own. There is also **Radhuni** (☎ 01844 273741, 🌐 www.radhunigroup.com/risborough; Mon-Sat 6-11pm, Sun to 10pm), on Church St, just off the High St.

Just down from the library, **The Bell** (☎ 01844 274702, 🌐 www.thebell-risborough.co.uk; bar Mon noon-11.30pm, Tue-Thur & Sun 11am-11.30pm, Fri & Sat 11am-1am), a lively bar with a decent line in cocktails; at the time of research they

were not serving food but they were planning to.

There is also a very busy fish & chip shop on the High St called **Princes** (☎ 01844 343751; Mon-Thur & Sat 11.30am-2pm & 4.30-9.30pm, Fri to 10pm). Finally, for late-night fodder there's a branch of the pizza joint **Domino's** (☎ 01844 344244, 🌐 www.dominos.co.uk/princes-risborough; daily 11am-11pm), for take away or delivery.

PRINCES RISBOROUGH TO WIGGINTON (& TRING) [MAPS 39-46]

Overview

This section is **12½ miles/20km (6½-8hrs)**, but be aware that there are many steep ups and downs to tire you out before the end is in sight. A great deal of the walking is through mature woodlands on good paths and there is plenty of variety. You'll pass by Chequers, the Prime Minister's country house, visit a Boer War monument on top of a hill with stunning views, and pass through the attractive and useful town of Wendover, amongst other things.

If you decide you want to walk right through to Ivinghoe Beacon in one day, be prepared for a tough time. On paper the 17½ miles/28km doesn't sound unreasonable but the steep up and down sections will leave you weary well before you get your first sight of the Beacon. From there it's a strenuous last few miles to the end. Then there is the matter of walking from the Beacon to accommodation or to transport – a walk into Ivinghoe village is entirely possible but that would add another couple of miles. For this reason, starting the last day from somewhere closer, such as Wendover or Wigginton, can make a lot of sense. It'll also mean you'll have some energy left at the end of the day to celebrate finishing the Ridgeway.

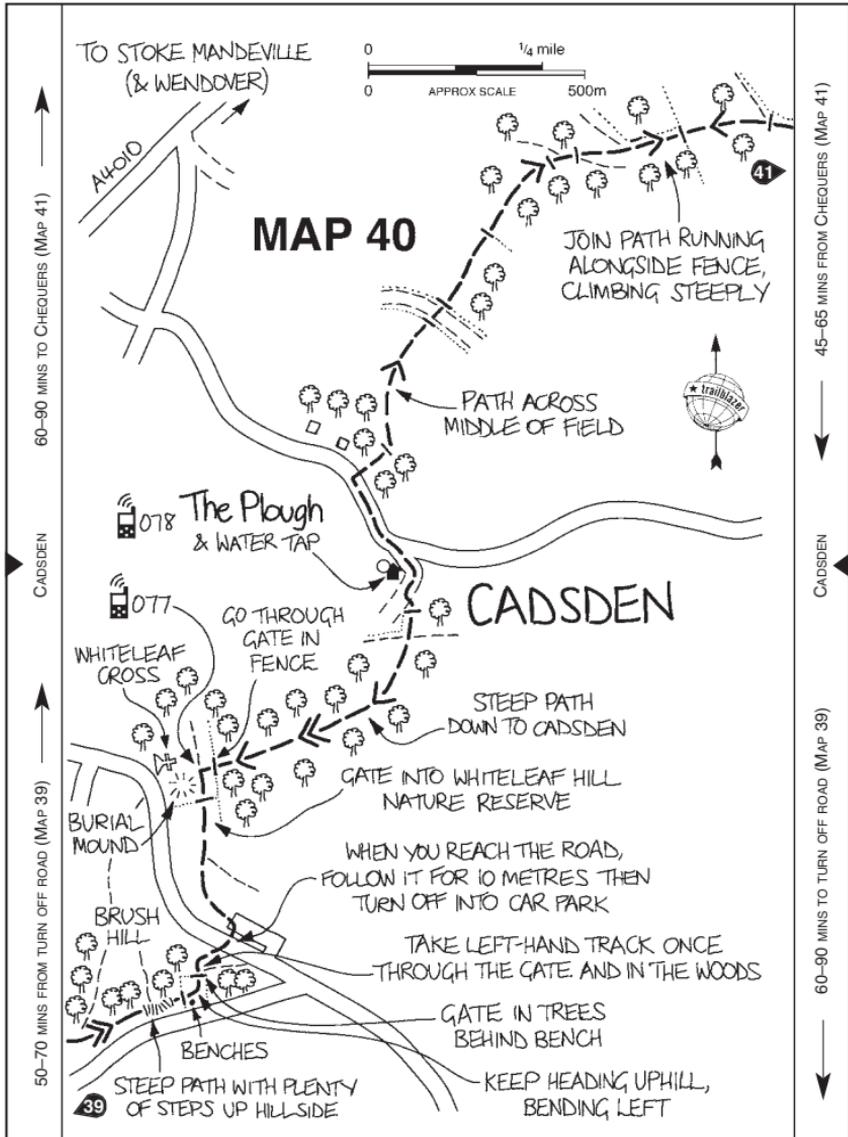
Route

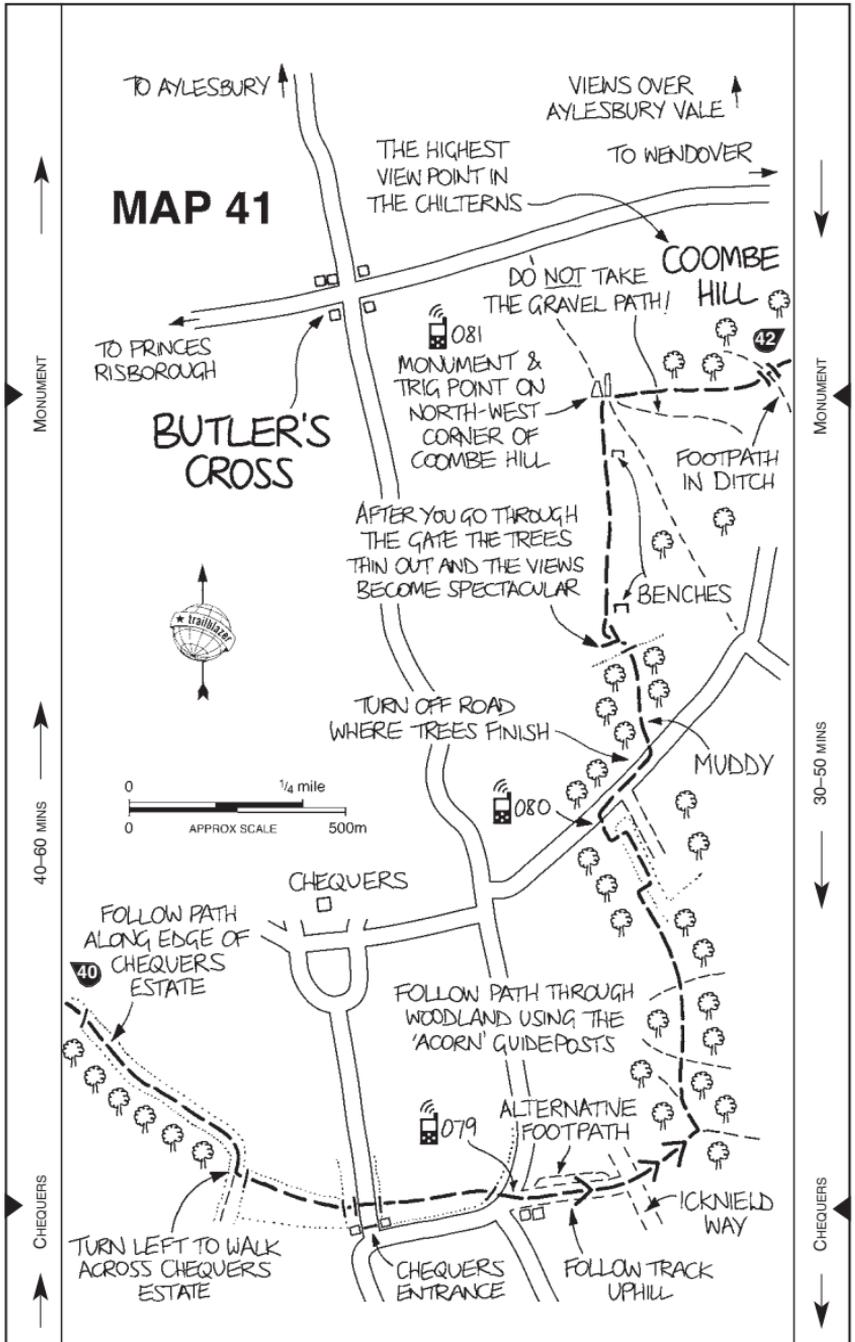
The section from Princes Risborough to Wendover is very popular with both day walkers and dog walkers. The Ridgeway and Icknield Way share the same path until they are out of Princes Risborough, then they separate. The Icknield Way continues on the main track and rejoins the Ridgeway later.

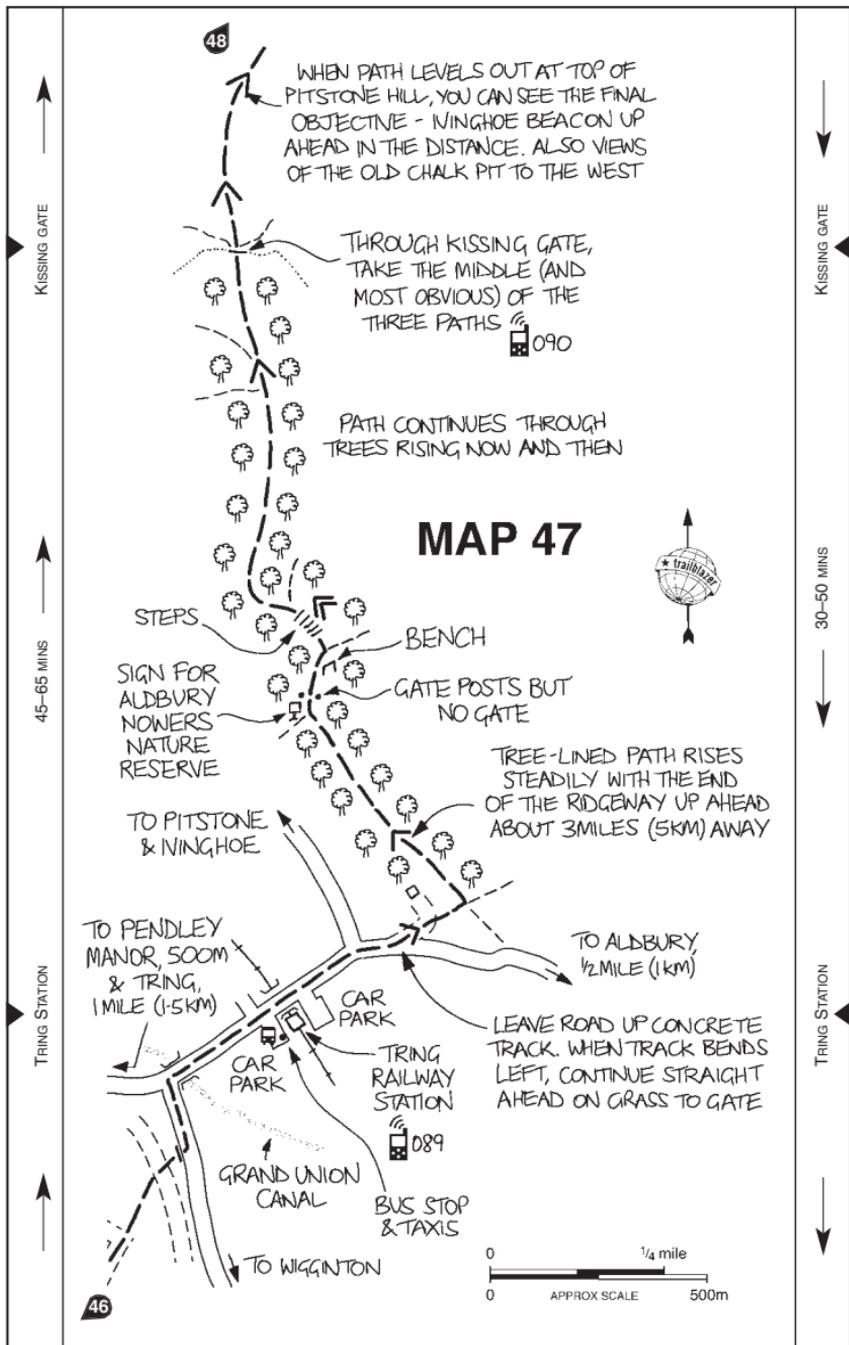
At the top of the first steep climb you'll enter **Whiteleaf Hill Nature Reserve** (Map 40; 🌐 www.buckscc.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/whiteleaf-hill-nature-reserve); this nature reserve is known for its variety of butterflies and wild flowers. Even if you're not looking specifically, you're bound to notice a chalkhill blue butterfly (see opp p65) or two and you'll probably also see the common blue. Flowers that grow well on this chalky soil have wonderful names, such as squinancy wort and viper's bugloss.

On the west side of the hill, facing Monks Risborough, there is a chalk cross on a triangular base cut into the hill – the **Whiteleaf Cross**. The history of this monument is hazy to say the least, but it was recorded as far back as the mid 1750s. It's probably been enlarged since then and now a concerted effort has been made to restore and maintain it.

After descending this hill, you come to **Cadسدن**, and more importantly a pub, **The Plough** (☎ 01844 343302, ☑ theplough.pub; 4D or T/1Tr, all en suite; ☪; Wi-Fi). It's a popular place and they charge £60-65pp (sgl occ from £75, three sharing from £150) for B&B. The menu (**food** Mon-Sat noon-2pm & 6.30-9.30pm, Sun noon-2.30pm & 6.30-8.30pm) features standard pub fare and main courses are served in small and large (£11.95/15.95) portions. For dogs







ALDBURY

Aldbury is a picture-perfect English village, complete with duck pond, church and pub. It would be a good alternative to Wigginton if the accommodation there is full. This idyllic village has been captured on film many times: *The Avengers*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *Inspector Morse*, *Midsomer Murders* (inevitably) and, more recently, *Bridget Jones's Diary: The Edge of Reason*.

You'll be surprised when you look inside the **village shop** (☎ 01442 851233; Mon, Tue, Thur, Fri 6am-5.30pm, Wed & Sat 6am-7.30pm, Sun 7.30am-4pm; in the winter months they close for an hour 1-2pm). Not only is it very well stocked and much larger than it looks from the outside, but there is a **post office** (Mon, Tue, Thur, Fri 9am-1pm & 2-5.30pm, Wed & Sat 9am-1pm) in here as well as an **ATM** (the charge per withdrawal is £1.50).

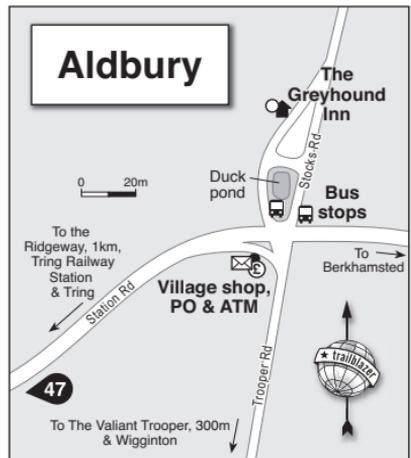
Red Rose Travel's No 387 **bus** service operates to Tring; see pp47-51 for further details.

Where to stay and eat

Near the duck pond is *The Greyhound Inn* (☎ 01442 851228, greyhoundaldbury.co.uk; 5D/2D or T/1Qd, all en suite, ♀; Wi-Fi; ♻), a much filmed and photographed place. **B&B** costs £40pp, £70 if you're on your own, £100/120 for three/four in a room. The **food** (food Mon-Fri noon-2.30pm & 6.30-9.30pm, Sat noon-9.30pm, Sun noon-7.30pm) is of a high standard and there is a varied menu: you could try a warm bacon, brie and red onion marmalade sandwich (£5.75) for lunch while the

evening menu may include pan-fried fillets of sea bass on braised fennel, kale, yellow peppers and roti potato with a spicy tomato coulis (£14.95).

Another good option for **food** is *The Valiant Trooper* (☎ 01442 851203, www.valianttrooper.co.uk; food Mon noon-3pm, Tue-Fri noon-3pm & 6-9pm, Sat noon-9pm, Sun noon-4pm; they also serve breakfast Sat & Sun 10am-noon). This pub is less than five minutes' walk from the centre of the village. The menu changes weekly but includes daily specials as well as smart twists on standard pub fare such as smoked haddock fishcakes served with wilted spinach and sorrel sauce (£5.25) and free range pork sausages with bubble & squeak and homemade baked beans (£10.95).



The path rises through woodland, sometimes level, but more often than not climbing. By now there are only a few miles left and you might think it will all be over soon. Then you'll get your first glimpse of Ivinghoe Beacon, up ahead in the far distance. The word 'far' is appropriate but at least the end is now always in sight. You can admire the increasingly stunning views from up here and plod on.

You can also see, down to your left a large, old **chalk pit**, now filled with water; this is a popular place for relaxing and swimming during the summer. The

□ The butterflies of Aldbury Nowers

Probably tired and, with the end almost in sight, 99.99% of trekkers on the Ridgeway undoubtedly march through the woods after Tring 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.

Nobody is quite sure why **Aldbury Nowers Nature Reserve** ( www.herts-wildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/aldbury-nowers; open all day all year but best Apr-Aug) is so popular with our colourfully winged friends but the truth is that the reserve plays host to over 30 species – out of the 59 species commonly accepted to live in the UK. Some of the Aldbury Nowers' residents, such as the meadow brown and the peacock, are commonplace enough. But several rarities also call the reserve home, including Essex skippers, marbled whites, green hairstreak, brown argus, and the scarce grizzled and dingy skippers.

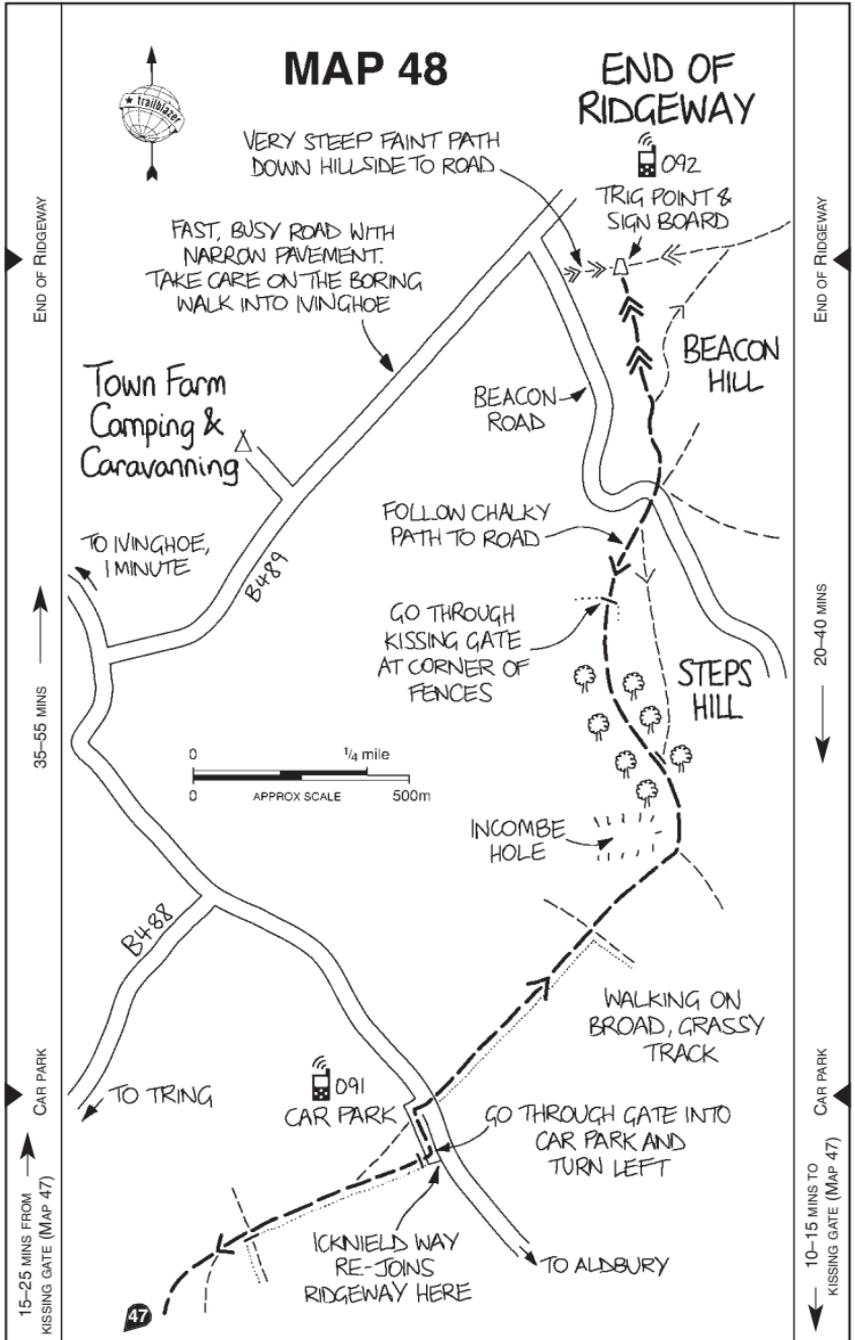
Of course, you can't just turn up and expect to see all 30-plus species in one go; some butterflies (such as the orange tip) appear early in the season and are rarely seen after June, while others appear late in the summer. But if you have the time and inclination, there are few more enjoyable ways to spend a warm afternoon than to take a decent butterfly guide, a little magnifying glass or similar (to spot the sometimes subtle differences between the species) and to sit on the slopes of Aldbury Nowers, ticking off the different species.

water takes on a turquoise colour, adding something almost tropical to the atmosphere of the place. If you are plodding your way up to the Beacon on a hot day, just the sight of it can make you want to run down there and dive right in.

When you reach the **road and car park** (Map 48) the Icknield Way puts in an appearance once more and stays with you all the way to the end of the Ridgeway. Gradually the Beacon gets closer until you are left with just one last climb to the end. This will just about finish you off if you started the day at Princes Risborough.

There is a **Ridgeway information board** and **trig point** at the end of the walk to go with the panoramic views. There are often other people up on **Ivinghoe Beacon** but not many who have been on the Ridgeway for the last 87 miles, for sure. Take plenty of time to relax, enjoy the views and reflect on the previous stages. When you are ready to leave the Beacon you have several choices. If you are lucky, someone might be waiting to pick you up from the car park you passed on your way up here. If not, you'll need to walk down to Ivinghoe village. The best way to do this is to follow one of the many paths down the hillside to the main road. Be careful as it's very steep and there are plenty of hidden holes in the ground.

Most paths finish near to the B489 from where it's a boring walk into Ivinghoe (see p190). 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 about 20-30 minutes.





Ivinghoe Beacon

Court Hill

Foxhill

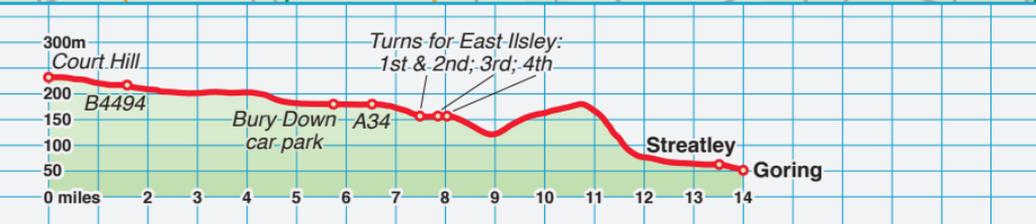
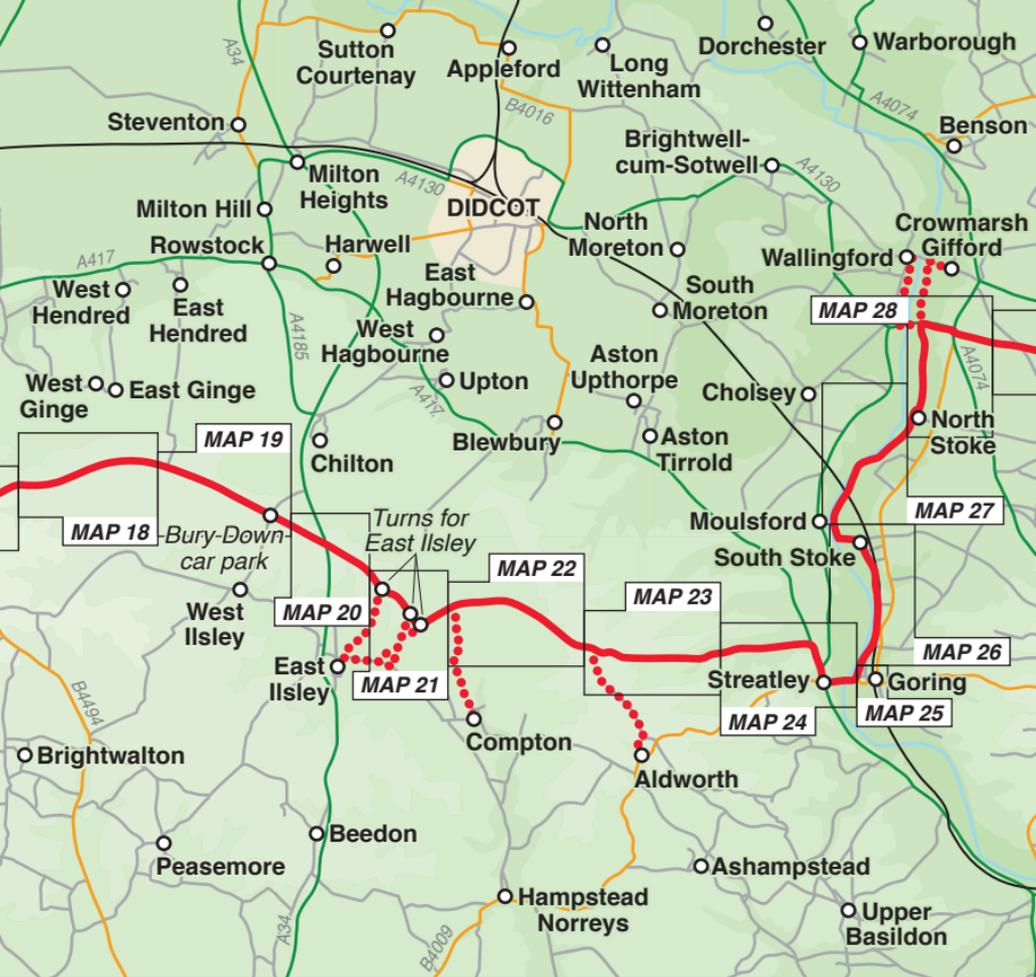
Overton Hill

Maps 10-16

Foxhill to Court Hill

11½ miles/18.5km – 3¾-5½hrs

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



Ivinghoe Beacon

Court Hill

Goring

Overton Hill

Maps 16-25

Court Hill to Goring

14 miles/22.5km – 4¼-6hrs

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

MAP KEY

- Map 1 – p98 Overton Hill
- Map 2 – p99 Fyfield Down NNR
- Map 3 – p100 Backpen Hill
- Map 4 – p101 Barbury Castle
- Map 5 – p102 Smeathe's Ridge
- Map 6 – p103 Ogbourne St George
- Map 7 – p106 Reservoir
- Map 8 – p107 Upper Upham turn
- Map 9 – p108 Liddington Castle
- Map 10 – p110 Foxhill
- Map 11 – p112 Ridgeway Farm
- Map 12 – p113 Wayland's Smithy
- Map 13 – p115 Uffington Castle
- Map 14 – p120 Kingston Hill
- Map 15 – p122 Devil's Punchbowl
- Map 16 – p123 Court Hill
- Map 17 – p129 Whitehouse Farm
- Map 18 – p130 Ardington Down
- Map 19 – p131 Bury Down
- Map 20 – p132 Tunnel under A34

- Map 21 – p133 East Ilsley turn-offs
- Map 22 – p135 Concrete bridge
- Map 23 – p136 Streatley Warren
- Map 24 – p139 Streatley
- Map 25 – p141 Goring
- Map 26 – p143 South Stoke
- Map 27 – p144 Railway viaducts
- Map 28 – p145 North Stoke
- Map 29 – p153 Bachelor's Hill
- Map 30 – p154 Nuffield
- Map 31 – p155 St Botolph's
- Map 32 – p156 Ridge Farm
- Map 33 – p157 Icknield House
- Map 34 – p161 Tunnel under M40

- Map 35 – p162 Beacon Cottage
- Map 36 – p163 Chalk pits
- Map 37 – p166 'Stepping Hill' House
- Map 38 – p167 Saunderton Tunnel
- Map 39 – p168 Princes Risborough
- Map 40 – p172 Cadسدن
- Map 41 – p173 Chequers
- Map 42 – p175 Wendover
- Map 43 – p178 Hale Wood
- Map 44 – p179 Hengrove Cottage
- Map 45 – p180 Hasloe
- Map 46 – p181 Wigginton
- Map 47 – p186 Tring Station
- Map 48 – p189 Ivinghoe Beacon



The Ridgeway

OVERTON HILL – IVINGHOE BEACON

