

Ivinghoe Beacon Ridgeway Circular Walk

About the Walk

A 10 mile circuit passing through the National Trust Ashridge Estate. Starts from picturesque Aldbury along The Ridgeway National Trail to Ivinghoe Beacon, returning via the Ashridge boundary trail and the Chiltern Way. You can enjoy the contrasts between the two long distance footpaths: airy ridges on The Ridgeway and the patchwork of woods and fields on the Chiltern Way.

Features of Interest

The Ridgeway National Trail is described as Britain's oldest road, following a route used for at least 5,000 years by travellers, herdsmen and soldiers. It starts in the World Heritage Site of Avebury and crosses the chalk ridges of the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns AONBs, a total of 87 miles. The Chilterns section travels through woodlands, nature reserves and quiet valleys and also passes several magnificent viewpoints.

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway

The Chiltern Way was set up as a millennium project by volunteers from Chiltern Society. It's a circular walking route of 134 miles with two optional extensions and an additional loop taking the total route to a maximum of 220 miles.

www.chilternsociety.org.uk/about-ChltnWay.php



Ivinghoe Beacon (Chris Smith)



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A Aldbury Village: A picturesque old village with a large green at the centre complete with pond and stocks. If the village green looks familiar that may be because it has often been used for Film and TV (Midsomer Murders, James Bond, Avengers).

B Aldbury Nowers Nature Reserve: An SSSI managed by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. In the warm south facing slopes you will find many of the flower species typical of unimproved chalk grassland (milkwort, rock rose, clustered bellflower, lady's bedstraw) and if you are lucky see one of the rare butterfly species (Duke of Burgundy, green hairstreak, Essex, dingy and grizzled Skippers). If you walk this way on a warm summer evening you may even see glow worms!

C Ivinghoe Beacon: The Beacon stands at the end of a ridge so there is a great view. Clockwise from south west you see the hills above Tring, the vale of Aylesbury, Leighton Buzzard, the grand church of Edlesborough on its mound with the hills above Totternhoe beyond, Dunstable Downs with the gliding club below and finally, to the east the white lion of Whipsnade cut into the hillside. You will often see people flying model gliders from the Beacon. These days they are joined by red kites who easily outperform the best pilots.

D Ashridge Estate: The Ashridge Estate dates back over 700 years to when a monastery was founded by Edmund, Earl of Cornwall. The monastic order was known as the College of Bonhommes because of the colour of their robes. It continued to flourish until Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries in 1539. He bequeathed the estate to the future Queen Elizabeth I. She lived there for eight years before being arrested by her half-sister Mary and taken to the Tower of London. After Elizabeth's death the estate was bought by Thomas Egerton, whose son bought the title the Earl of Bridgewater. In 1720 the fourth Earl became the first Duke of Bridgewater. The most famous member of the family was the 'Canal Duke', who commissioned the building of The Bridgewater Canal which opened in 1761, and is regarded as the first true canal in Britain. In 1853 the estate passed to Lord Brownlow, whose family held on to it until 1925 when it was split up, with much of the parkland and surrounding area passing to The National Trust. The parkland is a haven for wildlife and is famous for its herds of fallow deer.



Bridgewater Monument

Visitor Information

Refreshments

There are two pubs in Aldbury and one in Little Gaddesden: Valiant Trooper, Trooper Rd, Aldbury HP23 5RW - 01442 851203
Greyhound Inn, Stocks Rd, Aldbury HP23 5RT - 01442 851228
Bridgewater Arms, Little Gaddesden HP4 1PD - 01442 842408

Accommodation

Greyhound Inn, Stocks Rd, Aldbury HP23 5RT - 01442 851228
Hill View B&B, 45 Stocks Road, Aldbury, HP23 5RT - 01442 851617
Folly Farm B&B, Northfield Road, Aldbury, HP23 5QJ - 01442 851645

How to get to the start

Maps: OS Explorer 181, Chiltern Society 19

Parking: Aldbury car park in Stocks Road HP23 5RU GR SP965127

Local transport: Bus 387 runs between Wiggington and Tring on Mondays to Saturdays and calls at Aldbury and Tring Station. The walk can be started at Tring Station by turning right out of the station and following the Ridgeway signs to join the route at Point 1

The walk

Distance: 10 miles

Access information: A moderate walk on good, well waymarked footpaths, bridleways and lanes. Total ascent 310m/1000ft

Route Description

From the village green near the stocks take the road past the church signposted for Tring Station. Just beyond the churchyard take the footpath to the right across the fields signed for the Hertfordshire Way. After some stables, pass through the gate on the left and walk past a barn. When you come to a path crossroads take the bridleway to the left for 450m to the junction with the Ridgeway path.

1 Turn right on the Ridgeway which you follow for the next 3 miles. It turns right on to a footpath climbing to the right of the Aldbury Nowers nature reserve then left up some steps. Bear immediately left and continue to climb steadily through the beech woods for some way before passing through a gate on to the grassy hillside of Pitstone Hill. Follow the broad path climbing up the side of the hill to the top of the ridge. After 500m along the top of the ridge, the path curves right and descends steeply to pass right of a rounded hill. Don't miss the chance of climbing to the top of such a nice little hill so aim for the summit. Rejoin the Ridgeway at the car park below.

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2 Cross the road and continue straight ahead. The Ridgeway climbs steeply up the south side of Incombe Hole then swings northward around its head. Do not go through the gate at the head of the valley but keep to the left of the fence. Pass through the middle of a patch of scrub then descend to pass through a gate in the fence on the right. Follow the path down to a road. Cross and take the broad path on the opposite side to the summit where you will find a trig point and Ridgeway information board.

3 When you have finished looking at the view, head due east (right) on the obvious ridge towards Whipsnade. Pass through the first gate and out on to an open ridge. Where you meet a fence, turn right downhill along the fence. After a gate, continue straight across between fields and after 100m turn right, heading back towards Ashridge on a broad track across open fields. At the base of the hill, by some trees, you come to a gate. Turn left through the gate, following the Boundary Trail along the bottom of the slope. After 200m pass through a gate into woodland, deciduous at first and then a closely planted conifer plantation. You emerge to the right of an open field before climbing steps up a steep sided ridge.

4 When you emerge from the trees at the top, keep straight ahead through two gates and a farmyard, over a concrete road and through another gate into a field. Continue in the same direction across several fields until the path meets the edge of the wood. Follow the edge of the wood, go through a gate and continue on an enclosed path until you pass behind a grassy mound covering a reservoir. Turn right past the reservoir and, after passing a house, look out for a gate in the hedge on your left. Pass through the gate and head half right across the field aiming for kissing gate in the hedge about 50m to the left of the exit gate in the far corner. Turn right along the pavement by the B road. Where the pavement ends, just before Beacon Road, cross and continue along the verge on the other side. Take the footpath on the left signposted for Little Gaddesden. Keep straight ahead where you meet a gravelled then tarmacked road and after 400m you reach the point where the Chiltern Way crosses. To visit the pub in Little Gaddesden, turn left up the steps and you reach the Bridgewater Arms in 200m.

5 Our route continues to the right downhill to follow the Chiltern Way to Aldbury. After passing between high hedges, keep straight ahead across the golf course, into the trees and between more hedges to a road junction. Stay in the same direction along the road and where it bends to the left, keep straight ahead on a footpath. Walk down past the front of the clubhouse and cross the valley aiming left of the broad track visible in the trees ahead of you. At the top of the slope pass to the left of barns and houses in the wood to join a road. Follow this road for 400m, crossing the broad avenue of Prince's Riding. Where the tarmac road curves right towards the B road, keep straight ahead on a broad track. After 100m bear left following a smaller footpath heading south and gradually approaching the edge of the wood. Descend through the wood along the side of an open field.

6 At the bottom of the slope turn right on the crossing bridleway to join the Icknield Way. Cross over the B-road and continue straight ahead on this path for 800m to pass a cottage and meet a confusion of crossing tracks.

7 Keep straight ahead ignoring paths to the left and right. The bridleway starts to descend steeply at first then curves to the left, descending more gently down to Tom's Hill Road. Cross the road and take the Chiltern Way to your left. You soon reach the edge of Aldbury village. Head down the road ahead of you and take the first footpath right between gardens. This brings you out at the top of a field of allotments. Go through the gate, turn right, walk along the top and turn left down the centre of the allotments. Continue ahead and along the narrow street to emerge on Trooper Road. Turn right to return to the village green.

Caring for the Chilterns

The Chiltern Hills were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965. This is in recognition that the Chilterns countryside is amongst the finest in England and Wales.

This walk is one of a series jointly produced by the Chiltern Society, Chilterns Conservation Board and National Trails Team, members of the Ridgeway Partnership, a group tasked with maintaining and developing The Ridgeway National Trail. It is one of a series being produced as a cooperative venture to promote both the Ridgeway and the Chiltern Way.

For further information about walks, events, volunteering, membership, donations and more, please visit:

www.chilternsociety.org.uk

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/ridgeway

www.chilternsaonb.org



The Ridgeway NATIONAL TRAIL 