

How to get to The Ridgeway Link

Public Transport:

There is a regular bus service (no.61 Luton to Aylesbury) from Dunstable town centre to West Street, at the edge of Dunstable Downs and the start of the Ridgeway Link (see map). This bus service continues to Ivinghoe Village. There is then a 2 mile walk along footpaths from here to Ivinghoe Beacon and the start of the Ridgeway Link. Further details from Traveline tel 0871 200 22 33 www.traveline.info

By cycle: there is cycle parking at the Chilterns Gateway Centre.

Parking: there is car parking at the Chilterns Gateway Centre (there is a car park charge), and at the National Trust car park near Ivinghoe Beacon.

Refreshments

- Old Hunters Lodge on the edge of Whipsnade Green, tel 01582 872228 www.old-hunters.com
- The Chilterns Gateway Centre, tel 01582 500920 www.nationaltrust.org.uk



Photo: © Architypes Architects



Countryside Code

Please be considerate in the countryside: Keep to public rights of way, and leave farm gates as you find them. Please keep dogs under close control and on leads where animals are grazing.

Further Information

If you have enjoyed this walk there are many other wonderful walks in the Chilterns area. Visit www.chilternsaonb.org or call 01844 355500.

The Chiltern Hills were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965. This is in recognition that the Chiltern countryside is amongst the finest in England and Wales. The Chilterns Conservation Board is the body charged with protecting the AONB. www.chilternsaonb.org.

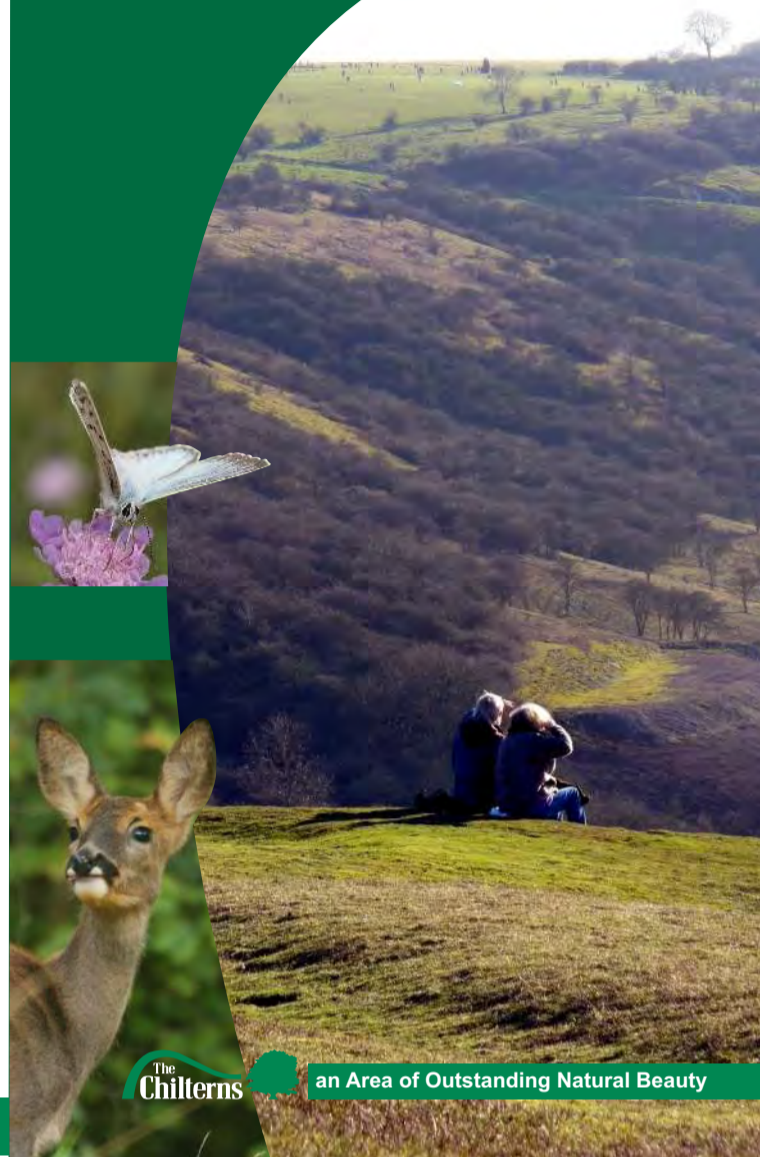
This leaflet has been produced by Chilterns Conservation Board 2012, with the support of:



The Icknield Way Ridgeway Link

Connecting the Chilterns Gateway Centre at Dunstable Downs to Ivinghoe Beacon

A 7.5 mile linear walk in the Chilterns



The Chilterns

an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Icknield Way Ridgeway Link

Connecting the Chilterns Gateway Centre at Dunstable Downs to Ivinghoe Beacon in Bucks.

The Ridgeway Link is a 7.5 mile linear walking route linking two spectacular landmarks in the Chilterns landscape, the Chilterns Gateway Centre and Ivinghoe Beacon, the start/end point of The Ridgeway National Trail and the Icknield Way long distance path.

About the route

The route follows the ancient Icknield Way and passes through rolling chalk hills and woodlands, enjoying some of the finest scenery in the Chilterns. There are lots of things to see on the way, from grazing bison at the edge of Whipsnade Wild Animal Park to the Whipsnade Tree cathedral and pretty villages with pubs where you can stop for refreshments. The Ridgeway Link and the Icknield Way are waymarked. (follow this sign)



The Icknield Way

The Icknield Way is thought to be the oldest road in Britain, extending 110 miles from Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire to Knettishall Heath on the Suffolk/Norfolk boundary. It consists of prehistoric pathways thousands of years old which follow the chalk 'spine' of England and are dotted with archaeological remains.

Further details and a guidebook are available at www.icknieldway.co.uk

Access Information

The route is stile-free, mainly on unmade paths with soft surfaces which can get muddy in winter. The route is undulating, with a few steep sections.

Dunstable Downs and the Chilterns Gateway Centre

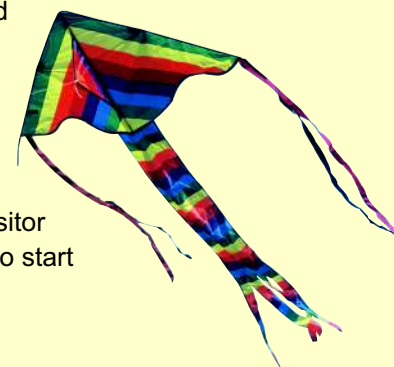
This is one of the best-known viewpoints on the Chilterns ridge. The Chilterns Gateway Visitor Centre at Dunstable Downs is situated 253 metres above sea level at Bedfordshire's highest point and offers breathtaking views across five counties.

Built with a greener environment in mind, the Chilterns Gateway Visitor Centre features many new technologies to enable the centre to run in a more sustainable way. The Visitor Centre is run by the National Trust and contains a cafe, shop and free exhibition. It is open 7 days a week. Visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk or call 01582 500920

There is a surfaced path linking Dunstable to the Visitor Centre, making it much easier for people to leave the car behind and walk or cycle. The route is suitable for wheelchairs and buggies.



There is plenty to keep you occupied on Dunstable Downs. You can see 5000 year old burial mounds and the site of a medieval rabbit warren and if you look up you may spot gliders and paragliders making full use of the updrafts. The chalk grasslands of the Downs have miles of footpaths and circular walks and the visitor centre is an ideal place to start exploring.



The Icknield Way

Ridgeway Link

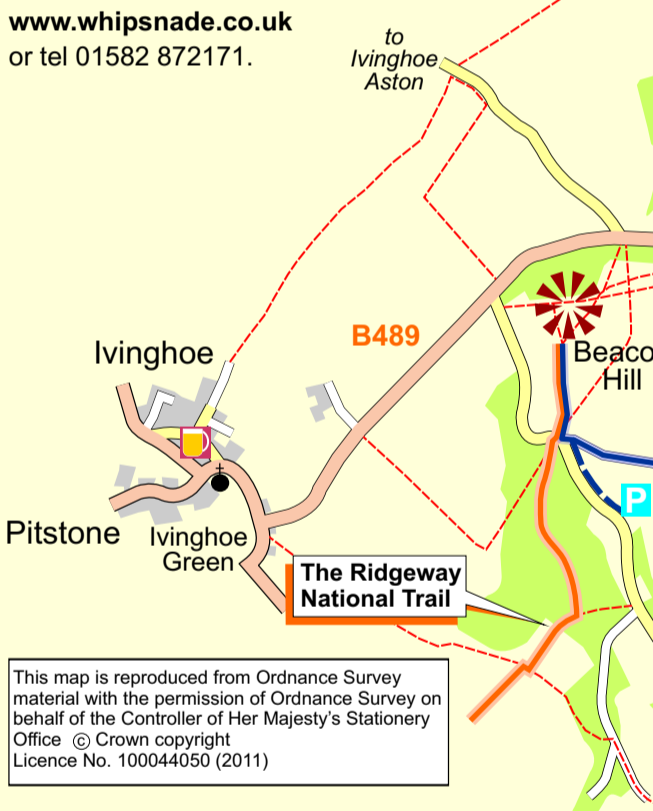
Sites and landmarks along the route...



Spot a Wallaby!

The Ridgeway Link follows the perimeter fence of the Whipsnade Wild Animal Park for a few hundred metres. Look out for wallabies and bison grazing the chalk grassland and helping to keep it in good shape!

The Whipsnade Wild Animal Park is well worth a visit, you can easily spend half a day here. It is the countryside arm of London Zoo and has acres of enclosures with everything from tigers and rhinos to monkeys, hippos and sealions. Set on a hilltop there are far-reaching views over the Vale of Aylesbury. Whipsnade has daily animal events, a mini railway, cafes and a shop. Find out more at www.whipsnade.co.uk or tel 01582 872171.



The Whipsnade White Lion

The Whipsnade White Lion is a huge 147 metre long carving in the Chiltern hillside which can be seen for miles across the Downs. It was intended not just as an advert for the zoo at Whipsnade but also as a warning to low-flying pilots to keep away and not frighten the animals. During the war they covered it up to prevent German pilots working out exactly where they were.

This now famous landmark was completed in 1933 after 18 months of back-breaking cutting and digging of the chalk. It was necessary to make frequent visits across to Ivinghoe Beacon to check the accuracy of the shape.



Connecting the Chilterns Gateway Centre at Dunstable Downs to Ivinghoe Beacon

The Whipsnade Tree Cathedral

The Ridgeway Link skirts the edge of this unusual 'cathedral of trees'. Planted in the shape of a medieval cathedral, this site was created in the 1930s as an expression of the love of nature and the spirit of service that had sustained the founder and his comrades during the First World War.



Many varieties of tree and shrub can be found as well as a dewpond. It is situated on the edge of Whipsnade village green and entry is free. It is owned by the National Trust, and managed by the Trustees of the Whipsnade Tree Cathedral Fund

www.nationaltrust.org.uk



The Ridgeway National Trail

Following the ancient chalk ridge used since prehistoric times, the 87 mile Ridgeway offers the opportunity to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life, www.nationaltrail.co.uk tel 01865 810224

Ivinghoe Beacon

The Beacon is the site of an Iron age hill-fort and commands spectacular views across the Vale of Aylesbury and into Oxfordshire. The chalk grassland here is exceptionally rich in plant and insect life and during the summer it is possible to see a wide variety of butterflies and wildflowers, including orchids.

This is part of the Ashridge Estate, a vast area of woodlands, commons and fine chalk downlands run by the National Trust. For further information see www.nationaltrust.org.uk Tel 01494 755557



Common blue butterflies