



Uffington White Horse & The Ridgeway

Walk the high Ridgeway on bridleways and byways of soft grass and chalk tracks, through an ancient area steeped in fascinating folklore

Essential Facts

- Route distance: 13.4 km (8.4 miles)
- Approximate time: 3 hours 30 mins
- Approx. total ascent: 160 metres
- Start point Grid Ref: SU 293 865
- GPS Ref: SU 29314 86594
- Recommended O.S. Map: Explorer 170
- Toughness Rating: Wiltshire 3

Please see the notes on Toughness Ratings at the end of this report

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CHALLENGE ?**

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Full Info from the Great Walks web site

THE ROUTE

Travel a few miles over the Wiltshire border into Oxfordshire for this walk, which begins at the National Trust car park, **S**, signposted Uffington Castle from the B4507 east of Swindon.

From **S** there are way-marked routes to explore over Uffington Castle on open access land should you wish, but our walk begins at the exit without steps at the top end of the car park.

Leave the car park and turn left at the road. In 350 metres turn left again and cross a cattle grid. Continue along the road for 1 km keeping the open views to your left, passing between The Manger, a dry coomb formed during the Ice Age on your left, and the ancient hill figure of Uffington Horse – or Dragon – on your right. Views of the chalk figure are restricted from the ground, but glimpses do occur.

Once level with Dragon Hill, you reach a strange flat-topped hillock where legend says St George slew the dragon. Turn right at the crossroads of footpaths, **A**, and climb the steps.

Continue up this fairly steep incline by following the line of the fence on your left, veering right at the top to cut off the end corner, before continuing across grazing land with the fence, marked with yellow arrows, again close to your left. A distant view of Didcot Power Station is visible to your left. A stile brings you to The Ridgeway, **B**.

Turn right and in 400 metres leave The Ridgeway by turning left at a bridleway. This is Lambourn Valley Way. Proceed straight for 700 metres, turn left and then immediately right, and continue straight for another 400 metres. When you reach the start of the Racehorse Gallops, proceed straight again crossing the middle of the area as directed by post markers, soon passing a tumulus on your right. Enjoy the soft, spongy turf reaching **C** after 1.4 km.

At **C**, turn right by the boulder after the fence. Proceed steadily down for 1.3 km to the plantation. Turn left, then right, soon reaching a crossroads of byways. Proceed straight, and in 400 metres turn right at a triangle of shrubs, ascending a further 400 metres to **D**.

Turn right and follow the track alongside the crop field for 1.5 km to Tower Hill. Keep to the track beside the trees for a further 400 metres to a T-junction, **E**. Turn right. Proceed for another 400 metres, turning left at the first opportunity. Soon after passing Odstone Barn, turn right to rejoin The Ridgeway, **F**.

Proceed for 350 metres and explore Wayland's Smithy long barrow. Return to The Ridgeway and proceed in the same direction as before for 1.5 km to the car park sign, **G**. Turn left to reach **S** in 650 metres.

Refreshment

White Horse Inn
Public House
Woolstone,
Near Faringdon
Tel: 01367 820726
Meals and bar snacks

Fox and Hounds
Public House
High Street, Uffington
Tel: 01367 820680
Home-cooked food, real
ales, gardens



Bouldered Track



Dragon Hill



Wayland's Smithy



White Horse Inn

LOCAL INFO

The White Horse of Uffington is thought to be Britain's oldest hill figure, and one of only four in the country that face to the right. It dates back as far as 1000 BC and is shrouded in folklore. The horse is unique in its features, being a very long, sleek, disjointed figure, leading some to believe it represents the dragon killed by St George, an event thought to have taken place on nearby Dragon Hill. Others believe it represents a Celtic horse goddess Epona, known to represent fertility, healing and death. Similar horses feature in Celtic jewellery and have been found on Iron Age coins. Others believe it commemorates Alfred's victory over the Danes in 861 AD or that Hengist created it in the seventh century in the image of a horse on his standard. However, recent scientific research upon its age seems to discount these more modern theories.

Dragon Hill is a low flat-topped mound situated in the valley below the White Horse. In legend it is the place where St George slew the dragon, its blood spilling on the hilltop and leaving for ever a bare white patch where grass cannot grow.

The Manger is a strangely shaped valley and folklore suggests it is the supernatural feeding place for the White Horse, which would travel from its vantage point on the crest of the hill on moonlit nights to feed at The Manger.

Uffington Castle is an impressive Iron Age hill fort, once protected by timber walls on top of the surviving banks and ditches, and faced with sarsen stones. It is likely that the tribe who created the White Horse once lived within this hill fort. The castle was excavated in 1850 when evidence of the wooden structure was found, along with an Iron Age coin of the Dobunni tribe.

Wayland's Smithy, beautifully situated in a clump of beech trees, is one of the finest chambered long barrows in Britain. Excavations in 1919 unearthed eight skeletons, including one of a child, from within. Further excavations in 1962–3 proved that it had been built in two different periods, around 3700 and 3400 BC. Wayland's Smithy got its name some 4000 years after its construction. When Saxon settlers came across the tomb, they imagined it was the work of one of their gods, Wayland the Smith, and a legend grew that Wayland would re-shoe any passing traveller's horse left beside the tomb, along with a silver penny.

UFFINGTON WHITE HORSE & THE RIDGEWAY G.P.S. WAYPOINTS

WAYPOINT NAME	MAP REF		CO-ORDINATES		ELEVATION: Metres
UFF S	S	SU	29314	86594	199
UFF A	A	SU	30089	86772	189
UFF B	B	SU	30315	86337	253
UFF C	C	SU	30800	83822	211
UFF D	D	SU	29182	82314	210
UFF E	E	SU	28179	83978	180
UFF F	F	SU	27995	85159	205
UFF G	G	SU	29475	85961	218

MAP LEGEND					
	Great Walks route		Church with tower		Spot height - metres
	M6 Motorway		Church with spire		Information centre
	A23 Main road		Other place of worship		Parking
	B2116 Secondary road		Cathedral / Abbey		Public convenience
	Minor road		Building		Public house
	Other road		Built up area		Picnic site
	Track		Woodland		Camp site
	Footpath		Sand, shingle or mud		Major tourist feature
	Bridleway		Water feature		Other tourist feature
	National trail				
	Railway				

Safety First

Safety should always be your first priority in planning and undertaking a walk, whether on your own or leading a group. Please read these Safety First and Walking Our Routes notes.

Lead a group of other walkers only if you have leadership and navigational experience adequate for the 'worst case' conditions which may be encountered on the particular walk, bearing in mind the terrain, possible weather and navigational demands.

Weigh up the capabilities of your party, in terms of fitness and walking speed. Adjust your time expectations accordingly.

Ensure all your party are adequately clothed for the weather and conditions. Footwear is particularly important. Clothing must protect against cold, wet or strong sun according to the time of year.

Emergencies are quite rare, but it is essential to think ahead about what to do if someone in your party sustains an injury. Will you have a First Aid kit? Is there a qualified First Aider in the party? How could help be summoned in a serious eventuality?

Refreshment, particularly water, can be vital. Dehydration in hot summer conditions can be rapid, and frequent intake of fluids is essential.

On tougher walks it is a good idea to tell someone where you are planning to go – and when you expect to be back. Remember - mobile phones often lose reception in mountainous or isolated areas.

All our walks use legitimate routes: Public Rights of Way, Public Footpaths, Bridleways, Permissive Paths, Access Land, Byways and Roads.

Road walking calls for particular care. When there is no defined footpath or verge wide enough for safe walking it is usually best to walk on the right – facing oncoming traffic. An exception may be a tight bend, where walkers would be more visible on the left.

Occasionally you may find a public footpath blocked or unuseable. It is perfectly in order to take the shortest available diversion without damaging crops, perhaps around a field margin.

It is courteous to close gates after passing through, sometimes even if the gate was open when you arrived – particularly if it is obvious livestock may escape.

Mutual respect for farm animals is to be encouraged! Don't frighten or annoy them, but equally don't put your party members in danger or discomfort. You certainly wouldn't be the first walkers to go round the outside of a field of frisky bullocks.

Dogs should always be kept on a lead anywhere near farm animals, and under close supervision elsewhere in the countryside.

Walking Our Routes

Our walks are designed to be negotiated using the route directions in conjunction with the map section provided. We suggest walkers also take the Ordnance Survey Explorer or Outdoor Leisure map recommended for each walk.

On mountain, moorland and open heathland walks it is **ESSENTIAL** to have navigational expertise and tools, including the recommended Ordnance Survey map(s).

Take care to observe any cautions in the route description; exposed paths, areas liable to flooding etc.

Consider conditions before setting off. Will heavy rain have made a water meadow impassable? Will frost or snow make a path slippery?

When navigating the route look for clues to confirm you are in the right place. Are map features where you would expect on the ground? Are features mentioned in the text where expected? If you suspect you may have taken a wrong turn, take action sooner rather than later. It is better to re-trace to a known point rather than carry on regardless with the possibility of becoming increasingly confused.

All our routes are carefully checked before publication, but features can change on the ground – sometimes surprisingly quickly. Footpaths may be re-routed, buildings can appear or change significantly and these days pub names seem to change frequently.

The approximate time given for each walk is based on an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour (4 km/hour), plus an allowance for ascent, descent and any difficult terrain.

Total ascent is the approximate total ascent over the whole walk.

GPS users can enter in the waypoints provided in each of our walk reports. It is important to read our guide **Introducing GPS for Walkers**, available as a PDF file from the Great Walks in Britain web site.

Remember that GPS is a great navigational tool, but only one of those available to the navigator. Never dispense with conventional map and compass – and the training and skills to use them, especially on mountain, moorland or open heathland walks.

TOUGHNESS RATINGS

Most of our **Wiltshire & North Wessex** routes can be undertaken by reasonably fit walkers able to utilise the map segments and our recommended Ordnance Survey maps, together with the route guidance notes.

The toughest walks should be undertaken or led only by experienced walkers with navigational expertise. Always consider recent and forecast weather.

Each walk has been allocated a **Toughness Rating**:

1. Easier walks with modest ascent and generally on well defined paths. There may be stiles or narrow gateways to negotiate.
2. Routes which are more demanding. They may include more ascent and possibly paths which are looser or more difficult underfoot.
3. More strenuous walks. There may be prolonged steep ascents, and perhaps several ascents over the whole walk. Conditions may be challenging underfoot.
4. The toughest walks, requiring considerable fitness and navigational experience. There may be prolonged steep ascents. The ability to navigate by compass may be essential.

Toughness Ratings are allocated in the context of the terrain in the edition area. For example a walk rated as demanding in Cambridgeshire may be equivalent to a moderate route in Wiltshire & North Wessex.