



Walks in Berkshire

Ashdown House & Wayland's Smithy Circular

This is a delightful walk full of historical interest with intriguing views of the unique 17th Century hunting lodge Ashdown House, a visit to the mystical neolithic barrow at Wayland's Smithy and includes a stretch along the ancient Ridgeway. Stunning views across the downs and wildlife-rich woodland and meadow add to the enjoyment, particularly in warmer months.

Useful Information

- 5 miles / 8km circular
- Start point and parking: Ashdown House National Trust Car Park, Upper Lambourn Road, Lambourn, Hungerford, RG17 8RE
- W3W: ///strikers.slogged.panting
- OS Explorer Maps: 170
- Grid Ref: SU 283 823
- Buses: on the Swindon to Lambourn route, bus stop at entrance
- Hilly in parts, mostly rough ground
- Refreshments: The George, Lambourn (4.3 miles); The Rose and Crown Ashbury (2.5 miles)
- GPX: file available to download from our website

Route Directions

1. From the car park follow the sign for "The Estate" (heading west), past the 'no overnight camping' sign, and follow the track through trees.
2. As you reach a broad grass avenue you will have an excellent view of Ashdown House on your left. Turn right onto the avenue and after about 100 metres take the path on your left which will take you to a gate and stile (with dog slot).
3. Cross over the style. If you wish to visit the ancient settlement of Alfred's Castle, head straight across to the fence opposite and over another style. If not, turn right (north) to follow the obvious path through the centre of the field. As the field narrows keep the fence to your left and at the end of this field go through a kissing gate.
4. Ignore the immediate path to your right and continue about 10 metres to where the path splits. Turn right here and follow the track. Halfway along, on the right, you will pass the end of the Ashdown House grass avenue with the house visible in the distance. Continue on this track until you come to the road (B4000).
5. Cross the B4000 and past the gates following the restricted byway sign. Follow the track, veering slightly left, keeping the trees to your right. The path climbs gently until you reach a T junction.
6. Turn left at the T junction on to the grass track. Continue along this path until you reach another T junction. This is the Ridgeway National Trail.
7. Turn right onto the Ridgeway and keep straight on. Wayland's Smithy - a long barrow and ancient burial site - is situated approximately 500 metres along this track on the left. There

is a sign and narrow path but it can be easily missed! After visiting Wayland's Smithy continue along the Ridgeway.

8. You will come to a concrete track at a crossroads. (At this point, if you wish, you can carry straight on to visit the Uffington White Horse. It will take you about 40 minutes there and 30 minutes back.) Turn right at this crossroads and follow the restricted byway sign past a metal gate and continue on this farm track which takes you past a white house. The track climbs very gently uphill passing trees first on your right and then on your left.
9. At a gap in the trees, the ground dips down and you will come to a fingerpost indicating the Ridgeway circular route and directing you diagonally across a field to your right. Follow this obvious path up through the field. On reaching another fingerpost cross over to join a second field, over an irrigation ditch and continue to the top of the hill, all the time continuing in the same direction, until you eventually come to a kissing gate at a fence corner.
10. Go through the kissing gate and keeping the fence close to your right walk down the hill with views of Ashdown House in front of you. Go through the kissing gate at the bottom of the hill, cross the road and head straight on to return to the car park.

Points of Interest

- Ashdown House is an extraordinary building built by an Earl, William Craven in 1662, for the queen he loved, Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia, the daughter of King James I of England. Ashdown House is tenanted but opens for limited access. See the National Trust website for details and mandatory pre-booking. [National Trust website](#)
- Alfred's Castle is a small iron-age fort originating from around 6th Century BC. In the late 1st Century a Romano-British farmhouse was built within the abandoned prehistoric enclosure. It was named much later after King Alfred who won a victory against the Danes at the Battle of Ashdown in AD871 (exact site unknown).
- Wayland's Smithy is a Neolithic long barrow and chamber tomb, built around 3700 BC. The site at Ashbury, has been associated with a Germanic smith-god called Wayland since Saxon times. According to legend, a traveller whose horse has lost a shoe, can leave it with a silver coin at the smithy and return the next day to find it re-shod. [English Heritage website](#)
- Chalk forms the underlying geology of this landscape creating the rolling downland and distinctive landscape features and giving rise to globally-rare chalk streams. The chalk geology is a significant reason why this landscape is designated as an AONB and protected for the nation in law. More information on landscape: northwessexdowns.org.uk
- Chalk grassland – resulting for these poor chalk soils – is an important habitat for chalk-loving wildlife including flowers, butterflies and birds. In the summer, chalk grassland supports populations of marbled white butterfly, six-spotted burnet moth and birds such as the skylark, corn bunting and yellowhammer. Look out for wildflower species including orchids, scabious and vetch. Further information here: northwessexdowns.org.uk



Map

