

# CAR@FREE in The Chilterns

## North Chilterns Villages by Bicycle

ONE OF A SET OF  
CAR FREE ITINERARIES  
IN THE EAST OF  
ENGLAND'S SPECIAL  
LANDSCAPES



- Quiet back roads, picturesque villages & woodlands
- Berkhamsted Castle, Ashridge Estate & Aldbury
- Detours to Whipsnade and Dunstable Downs
- Stunning views across the chalky Chilterns
- One day cycle easily reached by train

The rolling chalk hills, quiet woodlands and picturesque northern villages of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are best explored by bicycle. Starting in Berkhamsted and travelling north this itinerary passes through some breathtaking scenery including Berkhamsted Common, the Ashridge Estate and the stunning views from the top of the Chilterns escarpment at Whipsnade. Returning south the route takes you through the quintessential English village of Aldbury with its duck pond and ancient stocks, eventually passing over the Grand Union Canal back to Berkhamsted.



*Aldbury (Source: The Greyhound Inn), rolling hills (Source Chilterns AONB) and Duke of Bridgewater Monument, Ashridge Estate (Source National Trust)*

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# THE ITINERARY:

Cycling is an excellent way to explore the rolling chalk hills of the Chilterns and provides an opportunity to visit some of the most picturesque villages in the area.

Starting in Berkhamsted this cycle route is based on the circular Berkhamsted Route Number 6 ride, with some additional detours. The route passes through Berkhamsted Common, the Ashridge Estate and the villages of Little Gaddesden, Ringshall and Aldbury, all of which are well worth a pit stop. Detours include Whipsnade Zoo and Dunstable Downs in the North as well as the Grand Union Canal across the southern part of the route.

The map of Route 6 can be downloaded from the Chilterns AONB website or call for a free leaflet from Herts Countryside Management Service 01727 848168 or local information centres and use in conjunction with OS Explorer Map 181: Chiltern Hills North, Aylesbury, Berkhamsted and Chesham.

## Cycle Route Number 6 – 13 miles

We recommend starting this cycle route from the railway station in Berkhamsted and following Route 6 under the railway bridge and following Brownlow Road around Berkhamsted Castle. At the T-junction with New Road turn left and follow the road through Berkhamsted Common and the Ashridge Estate. There is a toll on this road but it is free for bicycles.

### Ashridge Estate

Managed by the National Trust, the Ashridge Estate comprises over 4,000 acres of woods and open commons and runs along the main ridge of the Chiltern Hills across the borders of Bucks and Herts. The woodlands, commons and chalk downlands support a rich and varied selection of wildlife, offering an outstanding backdrop to your cycle ride. The main focal point of the Estate is the Bridgewater Monument which stands at 130 ft. high and commemorates the Duke of Bridgewater's pioneering work for British Canals. The Estate, which is free, is open all year round; however the shop, visitor centre, tea room and Monument are more seasonal – check with National Trust for details. There is a £1.30 charge for the monument. There is a short-stretch of permitted cycle path on the Estate as well as nine miles of bridleways giving cyclists shared access.

After the Ashridge Estate, Route 6 joins the road at Little Gaddesden. Turning left towards Ringshall. **The Bridgewater Arms** is just up on your right and is a popular traditional village pub with open fires, oak beams and serves food. It was the Greene King Kitchen of Excellence Award Winner 04/05. Once at the T-junction of the B4506 at Ringshall you can either turn left to continue Route 6 or turn right to make a detour towards Whipsnade and Dunstable Downs.

### Alternate Route A: Ringshall to Whipsnade via Dunstable Downs (7 ¼ mile round trip)

At the T-junction in Ringshall turn right onto the B4506 heading towards Whipsnade. Pass through Dagnall and continue until you reach the B4540 turning right to Whipsnade. Climbing the steep Chiltern Ridge is worth the effort as there is a stunning view at the top from Bison Hill car park. The Dunstable Downs are also accessible from the car park via a shared public bridleway (part of the Icknield Trail). However, the visitor centre which houses a shop and kiosk can be found a further mile up the Trail alongside the B4541. If you carry along the B4540 you will arrive at the Whipsnade Wild Animal Park on your right after a half a mile.



# THE ITINERARY:

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## Whipsnade Wild Animal Park

Set in 600 acres of beautiful parkland, Whipsnade is home to over 2,500 of the world's most incredible animals. As one of the largest wildlife conservation centres in Europe, the collection has many rare and endangered species, including elephants, tigers, penguins, chimpanzees, rhinos amongst other. Many of the animals are free-roaming and with spacious paddocks the animals enjoy near-natural environments. There are many animal displays including feeding times as well as the scenic Great Whipsnade Railway ride or the free Safari Tour Bus.

The Park is open every day of the year except from Christmas Day and while cycling is not permitted in the park, bicycles can be left at the undercover bike racks just inside the entrance.

Further up the B4540 and set on the edge of Whipsnade Common, the **Old Hunters Lodge** restaurant and bar is one of the oldest houses in the village, dating back to the 15th century and thatched with reed in the Norfolk style. The bar serves hot and cold snacks while the restaurant serves a wide range of a la carte dishes.

## Route 6 continued, Ringshall, Aldbury back to Berkhamsted

Turning left at the T-junction in Ringshall Route 6 follows the B4506 towards Berkhamsted passing the Ashridge Estate visitor centre and monument on the right. The route then takes a right turning on to Toms Hill Road down to Aldbury, one of Hertfordshire's prettiest villages. The village is the setting of many films with its green, duck pond with ancient stocks, whipping post and a backdrop of timber framed cottages. The 14th century church is surrounded by monuments to the past owners of the three big village houses - Pendley, the Manor and Stocks.

**The Greyhound Inn** overlooks the duck pond and is a family run establishment with a friendly bar and top restaurant. Open all year round the log fires are particularly a welcoming in the winter. At Aldbury green, follow the route south (signposted the Valiant Trooper Public House) towards Tring. The **Valiant Trooper** is a bicycle friendly family-run freehouse dating back to the 18th Century. The traditional English menu has won many accolades and features in the Good Cycling Guide and the Michelin Guide amongst others.

Route 6 continues south along New Ground Road crossing the Grand Union Canal at Bridge 136. Cross straight over the A4251 and take the first turning on the left along Bottom House Lane, under the A41 turning right on to Rossway Lane heading back towards Berkhamsted via the pretty village of Northchurch which hosts a church dating back to Saxon times and several 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century half timbered cottages.

## Alternate Route B: Grand Union Canal – Bridge 136 to Berkhamsted

Alternatively, at Bridge 136 follow the tow path along the Grand Union Canal back to Berkhamsted via Cow Roast and Northchurch and enjoy the serenity of the once busy waterway. The **Cow Roast Inn** makes a perfect pit stop just off the canal at Cow Roast and houses bike racks around the back. Once known as the "Cow Rest" it had large cattle pens used to rest the animals on the way to the London markets. The pub has an In-House Thai restaurant which gets very busy, particularly at weekends when it is advisable to book a table.

A permit must be obtained to cycle the tow path but these can be downloaded free from British Waterways at [www.waterscape.com](http://www.waterscape.com).

# THE ITINERARY:

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## Grand Union Canal:

Constructed in the late 18th century, the Grand Junction Canal, as it was originally called, provided a valuable short cut from the Oxford Canal at Braunston to the Thames at Brentford. Built to a new, wide standard, it quickly became a busy and profitable trunk route, linking London with the industrial Midlands and remained busy until the coming of the railways.

The highest point of the Canal is at Tring Summit, just east of Bridge 136. For those on the water, crossing the three mile summit involves going up one set of locks and venturing down another.

## Off-road biking: Aston Hill Mountain Bike Area

Aston Hill boasts 100 acres of woodland leased from the Forestry Commission exclusively for mountain biking. There are trails for all levels of riders in the three main MTB disciplines; cross country, 4X and downhill. The centre also operates a programme of courses for riders to help you get more out of your MTB experience.

The centre is open all year round and to ride at Aston Hills you must become a member or a day member – a day pass costs £5 and in the summer evening passes cost £3.

The centre is 6 miles from Tring station (20-30 minute cycle) and 3 miles from Wendover (15-25 minutes). Hot and cold food is available at weekends with light refreshments only during the week.

## Shop, eat and stay in Berkhamsted

Berkhamsted is a lively and historic market town established in the area by the development of the Grand Union Canal. The Saxon fort which later became Berkhamsted Castle was where William the Conqueror was handed the throne in 1066. The beautifully kept remains are run by English Heritage and can be visited for free every day. Today the town boasts a variety of shops and restaurants as well as a lively Saturday market and a monthly farmers market.

The **Kings Arms Hotel** on the High Street dates back to 1656 when it was first licensed as a wine tavern and was the setting for a romance between Louis XVIII of France and the Innkeeper's daughter. Today the historic building offers a comfortable place to stay as well as fine dining. Alternatively, stay on a working farm at the **Broadway Bed and Breakfast**, just a 1 1/2 from the centre of town. The farm offers self-catering accommodation with Continental breakfast. In the evenings you can catch a movie at the art-deco **Rex Cinema** which was built in 1938 and re-opened in 2004 following restoration works.

# ITINERARY LISTINGS

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## Things to do and see:

**Aston Hill Mountain Biking**, off road mountain biking centre  
01296 489729, [info@firecrestmtb.com](mailto:info@firecrestmtb.com), [www.astonhill.com](http://www.astonhill.com)

**Berkhamsted Castle**, English Heritage  
0870 3331181, [customers@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:customers@english-heritage.org.uk), [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)

**The Rex Cinema**, Art Deco cinema  
The High Street (Three Corners Lane), Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 2FG  
01442 877759, [www.therexcinema.com](http://www.therexcinema.com)

**Whipsnade Wild Animal Park**  
Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 2LF  
01582 872 171, [www.zsl.org/whipsnade/](http://www.zsl.org/whipsnade/)

## Where to stay:

**Broadway Farm Bed and Breakfast** (4 diamonds)  
Broadway Farm, Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 2RR  
01442 866541, [aknowles@broadway.nildram.co.uk](mailto:aknowles@broadway.nildram.co.uk)

**Kings Arms Hotel and Restaurant**, \*\* RAC  
Historic Inn with restaurant, room only  
147 High Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 3HL  
01442 866595, [info@kingsarmshotel.com](mailto:info@kingsarmshotel.com), [www.kingsarmshotel.com](http://www.kingsarmshotel.com)

## Where to eat and drink:

**The Bridgwater Arms**, traditional pub with good food  
Little Gaddesden, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire, HP4 1PD  
01442 842408, [6417@greeneking.co.uk](mailto:6417@greeneking.co.uk)

**The Greyhound Inn**  
19 Stocks Road, Aldbury nr. Tring, Herts HP23 5RT  
01442 851228, [www.greyhoundaldbury.co.uk](http://www.greyhoundaldbury.co.uk)

**Old Hunters Lodge**  
Hotel and Restaurant  
The Cross Roads, Whipsnade, Bedfordshire, LU6 2LN  
01582 872228, [old\\_hunters@compuserve.com](mailto:old_hunters@compuserve.com), [www.old-hunters.com/lodge.htm](http://www.old-hunters.com/lodge.htm)

**Valiant Trooper**, dining pub  
Trooper Road, Aldbury, Herts, HP23 5RW  
01442 851203, [www.valianttrooper.co.uk](http://www.valianttrooper.co.uk)

# ITINERARY LISTINGS

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## How to get around:

As an alternative to cycling, the **Chilterns Rambler 327** bus visits many of the local attractions. It runs three times on Sundays and Public Holidays from May – September along a circular (figure of eight) route from Hemel Hempstead up to Dunstable via Northchurch, Ashridge, Dagnall and Whipsnade and then back down south to Tring via Ivinghoe, Pitstone and Marsworth and back to Hemel Hempstead via Aldbury and Little and Great Gaddesden.

Tring, Marsworth and Pitstone are on the 61 bus route between Aylesbury and Luton while Whipsnade Wild Animal Park can be reached from Tring, Marsworth and Pitstone on the 161 route. Other local buses can be found at [www.intalink.org.uk](http://www.intalink.org.uk).

## ADDITIONAL LISTINGS:

**Tring Accommodation Guide**, accommodation in Tring and the surrounding area. 01442 823347, [www.tring.gov.uk](http://www.tring.gov.uk)

**Premier Travel Inn**, 0870 242 8000, [www.premiertravelinn.com](http://www.premiertravelinn.com)

## OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

**British Waterways**, manage the Reservoirs and Canal  
01908 302500, [enquires.southeast@britishwaterways.co.uk](mailto:enquires.southeast@britishwaterways.co.uk), [www.britishwaterways.co.uk](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk)

**Buckinghamshire County Council**, various leaflets for routes across the county  
01296 383028, [www.buckscc.gov.uk](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk)

**Chilterns AONB**, walking, cycling and attractions in the Chilterns  
01844 355500, [www.chilternsaonb.org/](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/)

**Chilterns Conservation Board**  
01844 355500, [office@chilternsaonb.org](mailto:office@chilternsaonb.org), [www.chilternsaonb.org/](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/)

**Dacorum Information Centre**, for local tourist information. 01442 234222, [www.dacorum.gov.uk](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk)

**National Trust**, visiting hours and handbook  
PO Box 39, Warrington, WA5 7WD, 0870 458 4000 (minicom 0870 240 3207), [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

**Waterscape**: for cycling and days out by the water. (British Waterways) [www.waterscape.com](http://www.waterscape.com)

## HOW TO GET THERE:

Served by the West coast line Berkhamsted and Tring stations connect London (Euston) in under 40 minutes three times an hour and Birmingham to the north, with connections for long-distance express services further north at Watford or Milton Keynes.

Tring Station is two miles from Tring itself. There are only infrequent buses to the station, and none on Sundays. However, the Aylesbury to Hemel Hempstead and Watford bus route (numbers 500 and 501) has a good service, including Sundays, stopping a mile from the station. Get off at the junction of Station Road and Cow Lane.

**Traveline** for train and bus information. 0870 6082608 (code 820), [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)

**Intalink**, Herts and Southeast train and bus information. [www.intalink.org.uk](http://www.intalink.org.uk)

24 hours a day, 7 days a week – 08457 484950. [www.nationalrailenquires.co.uk](http://www.nationalrailenquires.co.uk)

# THE CAR@FREE PROJECT:

The *CAReFREE* itineraries are designed to encourage visitors to explore and enjoy the special landscapes of the East of England with minimal impact on the environment, while generating positive benefits for local people. The itineraries give visitors exciting ideas about what to do in the area, by leaving their car at home or at their accommodation, and exploring the area by bike, boat, bus, horse or train.



The itineraries for each area can be found at the following websites:

## The Brecks

[www.brecks.org](http://www.brecks.org)

- Enjoy living on a working farm
- Horse riding breaks in and around Thetford Forest
- Biking and Brewing in Thetford Forest

## The Broads

[www.broads-authority.gov.uk](http://www.broads-authority.gov.uk)

- Canoe Safaris
- Great ideas for discovering the best of the Broads by cycle
- Walks and sights of the Broads by train and bus

## The Chilterns AONB

[www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)

- Grand Union Canal and Tring Reservoirs
- North Chilterns Villages by Bicycle
- Walking and Cycling in the Northern Chilterns and Hitchin

## Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley

[www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org](http://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org)

- A day walking through Constable Country
- Days out cycling on the Painters' Trail
- Exploring the Stour Valley on foot

## Norfolk Coast AONB

[www.norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk](http://www.norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk)

- Exploring the Norfolk Coast Cycleway
- See the wildlife wonders of North Norfolk by bus
- Great ideas for making the most of the area by bus and train

## Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB

[www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org](http://www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org)

- A car free break in Southwold
- Exploring the Stour Estuary
- Woodbridge, Sutton Hoo and the Deben Estuary

**BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY:** If you are business in the one of these areas and would like to write your own itinerary to show visitors how to enjoy the area near you without using their car to get around, you will find a blank itinerary template (a Word document) together with a toolkit explaining how to complete the itinerary, at the websites listed above.



For further information contact:

Chilterns Conservation Board

The Lodge

Station Road

Chinnor

Oxon OX39 4HA

Tel: 01844 355521

Fax: 01844 355501

[www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)

The *CAReFREE* itineraries are funded by

