

A guide to spending time  
in the Chilterns Area  
of Outstanding Natural Beauty



# DISCOVER THE CHILTERNS

A guide to spending time in the  
Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

**T**he Chilterns Conservation Board is a statutory body set up to promote the conservation, understanding and enjoyment of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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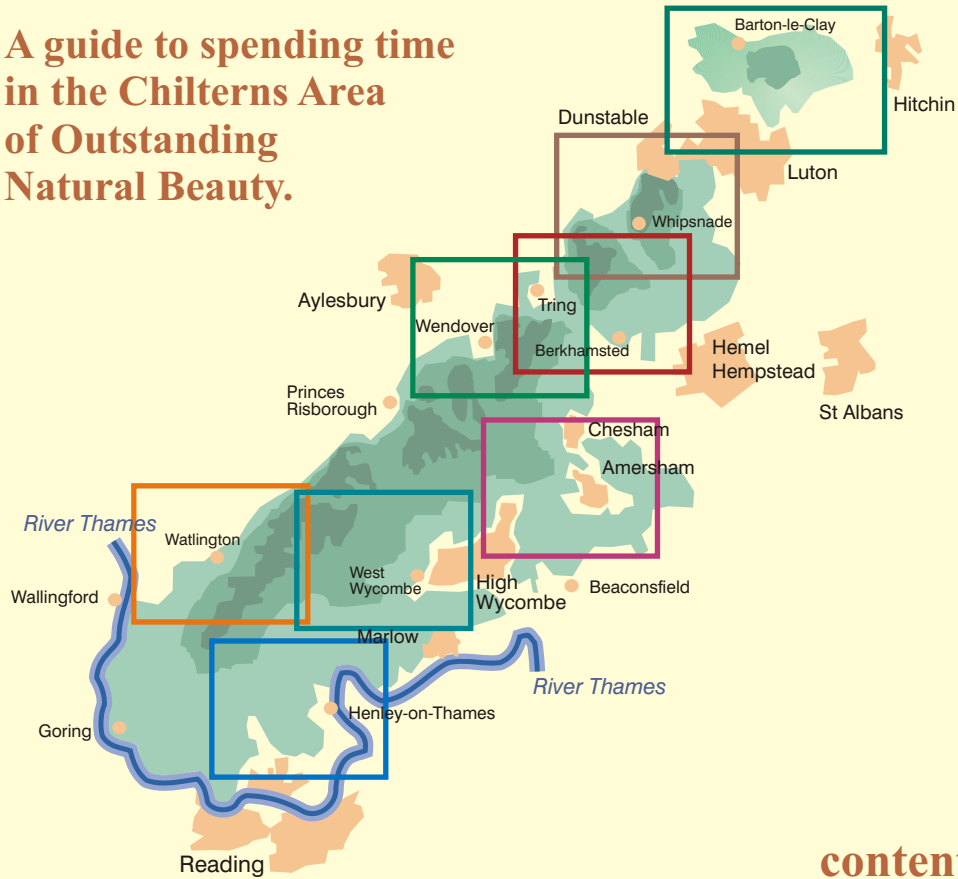


an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



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## contents

Introduction	page 1	Wendover and Tring	14
Henley and the River Thames	4	Ashridge and Berkhamsted	16
Watlington and Ewelme	6	Dunstable and Whipsnade	18
Hughenden and West Wycombe	8	Pegsdon and Barton Hills	20
Amersham and Missenden	10	Walking, cycling & horseriding	22
Chilterns Map	12	Further information	24



Key to Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps

# WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT THE CHILTERN

## Introducing the Chilterns

The Chilterns is a beautiful area of unspoilt countryside right on London and Oxford's doorsteps, just waiting to be discovered. This booklet gives you ideas of places to visit and things to do, with something for everyone.

The Chilterns stretches from the River Thames in south Oxfordshire through Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire to Hitchin in Hertfordshire. It contains some of the finest countryside in the UK, which is recognised by its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). From quiet valleys with medieval villages to dramatic viewpoints on the hilltops, leafy green woodlands to flower-covered meadows, the Chilterns is full of treasures that are there to be enjoyed.

## On the doorstep

The Chilterns is one of the most accessible areas of countryside in the UK. Just 20 miles from Oxford and 35 miles from the centre of London it offers a great day out at the end of a short journey. With 4 railways lines, one Underground line and 20 stations, plus plenty of buses, the Chilterns is very easy to reach and to travel around. Many of its attractions are close to regular bus and rail services. In addition, London Heathrow, Luton and Stansted airports are all within one hour's travel. **i** Find out more about getting here on page 24.







## Wildlife and landscapes

The ridge of chalk hills running south west to north east forms the backbone of the Chilterns and provides far-reaching views. Behind the ridge is a more intimate landscape of valleys and hills. Beech woodlands are the natural cathedrals of the Chilterns, carpeted by bluebells in spring and turning burnished gold and red in autumn. Red kites, the spectacular bird of prey re-introduced in the 1990s, are a familiar sight as they soar overhead. In some valleys you will find clear, sparkling chalk streams which are home to trout and in places the rare water vole, otherwise known as Ratty from Wind in the Willows.

## History and culture

For thousands of years the Chilterns has provided a home, or a bolthole, to people of all kinds. In medieval times its countryside was known as the hangout of

robbers, highwaymen and fugitives who hid from the law in its dense woods. Over time the growing wealth of nearby London improved the respectability of the area as people built great houses and parks in the country. The tranquillity and beauty of the Chilterns has attracted



famous writers and artists and in more recent times popstars and actors to make their home here.

## Lots to see

The rich natural and cultural heritage of the Chilterns means there

are lots of attractions to suit all interests. From steam railways to grand houses, fascinating nature reserves, charming villages and interactive museums there is something for everyone. As this booklet shows you don't have to go far to find plenty to visit.



## Lots to do

Criss-crossed by a dense network of footpaths and the Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails, the Chilterns is a haven for all types of walkers. This is one of the best places in the UK to follow a circular walk in beautiful countryside well away from busy roads, with plenty of refreshment on offer in local country pubs. If you enjoy cycling you can get away from it all on bridleways and quiet lanes. Why not see the countryside from a different perspective and take a boat trip on the Thames or the Grand Union Canal.

**i** Further information on walking and cycling can be found on pages 22-23.



## Good eating and sleeping

Whatever your budget and taste buds you will find a good meal in the Chilterns. There is a wide range of eating opportunities from high quality restaurants to tasty pub grub and ethnic cuisine. In particular, the Chilterns is well-blessed with characterful country pubs serving imaginative food and a good

selection of wines and beers. Some of these establishments also offer accommodation. If you plan to stay in the area there are also comfortable B & Bs, smart hotels, self-catering properties, caravan parks and campsites. The choice is yours whether you stay in one of the local towns or villages or in the depths of the countryside. **i** Further sources of information on food and accommodation are given on page 24.

## The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

In 1965, 833 square kilometres of the Chilterns countryside were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are 41 AONBs in England and Wales and they belong to the same family as National Parks. AONBs and National Parks together represent the finest countryside to be found in the UK. The Chilterns is nationally protected for us all to enjoy, but at the same time we all have a responsibility to look after it and minimise our impact so that it remains unspoiled for future generations.



**i** For more information visit [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)

If you would like to help conserve the Chilterns you can join The Chiltern Society [www.chilternsociety.org.uk](http://www.chilternsociety.org.uk)  
Tel 01494 771250



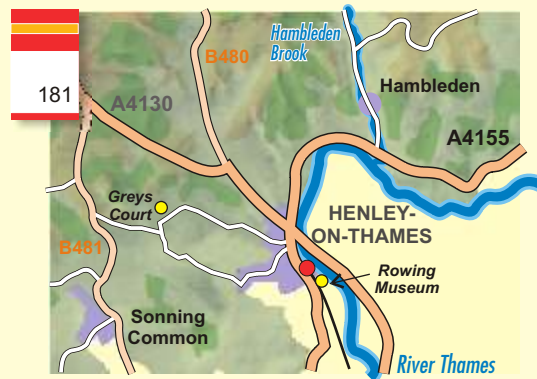
# HENLEY AND THE RIVER THAMES

**T**he historic River Thames forms the southern boundary of the Chilterns as it slips past green meadows and flows through a gap in the chalk ridge at Goring. The picturesque historic town of Henley sits on its banks. Famed for its Royal Regatta in July, Henley has lots of attractions to explore all year round and forms a great base for visiting the Chilterns countryside and enjoying the river.

## Henley-on-Thames

Henley has a charming centre full of shops, galleries, restaurants and cafes. From the centre you can stroll along the banks of the Thames and admire the many pleasure craft or relax with a picnic in Mill Meadows. Henley has a wide range of accommodation from B&Bs to smart hotels.

**i** [www.visit-henley.org.uk](http://www.visit-henley.org.uk)



## River & Rowing Museum, Henley

This award-winning museum in the meadows beside the Thames has three main galleries devoted to the River Thames, the sport of rowing and the town of Henley. It also has a spectacular walk-through attraction on the Wind in the Willows, written by Kenneth Grahame who was inspired by the nearby river. The Museum has regular special exhibitions and events.

**i** [www.rrm.co.uk](http://www.rrm.co.uk) Tel 01491 415600

## Boat trips

You can enjoy the Chilterns from a different perspective by taking a boat trip on the Thames. Daily scheduled river cruises leave from the centre of Henley during April-September inclusive. You can also hire motor cruisers and rowing boats in Henley and do your own thing.

**i** Scheduled river cruises: Hobbs of Henley, [www.hobbs-of-henley.com](http://www.hobbs-of-henley.com) Tel 01491 572035

Salter's Steamers [www.salterbros.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.salterbros.fsnet.co.uk) Tel 01865 243421

Boat hire: Hobbs of Henley (see above)



## Walking

The Thames Path National Trail provides gentle walking for all abilities along the edge of the Thames from the centre of Henley into beautiful countryside. There are also a number of promoted circular walks from Henley that enable you to enjoy the woods and valleys of the Chilterns at first hand.

**i** Thames Path National Trail: [www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk) Tel 01865 810224

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

## Hambleton Valley

A classic Chilterns valley, the beautiful Hambleton Valley is 3 miles from Henley. You can reach it on foot via the Chilterns Country 'Thames and Chilterns Walk' from Henley, or during the summer you can take a boat down the Thames to Hambleton Lock. You can see red kites soaring overhead and walk alongside the sparkling Hambleton Brook. The village of Hambleton has attractive brick and flint cottages, a medieval church and a thriving pub and shop.

**i** Thames and Chilterns Walk: [www.chilternsaonb.org/henleywalk](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/henleywalk)



## Greys Court

This Tudor House is owned by the National Trust and was the scene of Jacobean court intrigues in the 17th century. It has beautiful restored gardens and a maze.

**i** [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk) Tel 01491 628529

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



# WATLINGTON AND EWELME

**R**olling countryside dotted with farms, hidden valleys, attractive market towns and medieval hamlets. There are many footpaths and promoted trails including the Ridgeway National Trail. Climb up the wooded Watlington Hill or other viewpoints on the ridge for magnificent views over the Vale, the perfect place to watch red kites soaring overhead.



## NO CAR? NO PROBLEM!

You can catch the Oxford Tube bus from the heart of London or Oxford and disembark at Lewknor, providing immediate access to this beautiful area. There are B&Bs and an 18th century pub in Lewknor. Further leisure/tourism information from

[www.visitsouthoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.visitsouthoxfordshire.co.uk)

## Watlington

Lying at the foot of the Chiltern Hills, Watlington is an attractive rural market

town. It was first recorded as a Saxon settlement in the 8th century and has many historic buildings. The town is skirted by the Ridgeway Trail making it a popular stop-off for walkers, naturalists, cyclists and horse riders. There are several pubs in the town and a number of speciality shops offering a mouth-watering selection of cheeses, olives, wine and other goodies... why not pick up a picnic. Watlington Hill provides panoramic views over the Vale and is a good place to see red kites.

## Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve

This is one of English Nature's flagship National Nature Reserves. It is special for its chalk downland, beech woodland and carpets of scented wildflowers in the summer. There are rare and beautiful plants, including Chiltern gentian, attracting many species of butterflies. It is one of the best places to see red kites and offers dramatic views. You can join a ranger-led guided walk or simply enjoy discovering it on your own. There are several trails through the Reserve, including one suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs.

[www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)  
Tel 01844 351833

## Ewelme

The name Ewelme is derived from the Old English meaning 'spring'. Chaucer's granddaughter Alice, wife of the Duke of Suffolk, lived and entertained royalty here. The 15th century church, almshouses and school at the centre of the village were a charitable gift from her. The churchyard

contains the grave of Jerome K Jerome, author of Three Men in a Boat. Ewelme's 100 year old watercress beds fed by the clear waters of Ewelme Brook have been restored by The Chiltern Society.

[www.ewelme.info](http://www.ewelme.info)

Ewelme School Cream Teas - 2nd Sunday of every month in Spring and Summer (not August). Call to book

Tel 01491 839240

## The Ridgeway National Trail - Britain's oldest road

Following the ancient chalk ridge used by prehistoric man, the 85-mile Ridgeway offers the opportunity to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life. There are opportunities for walking, cycling and horse-riding along many stretches of this trail.

[www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk)  
Tel 01865 810224

## Swyncombe Church

Swyncombe Church is tucked away in a secluded valley a couple of miles from Ewelme. The church is dedicated to St. Botolph who lived in the 7th century; it is thought that Swyncombe was a resting place for the Saint's remains in their three caskets on their journeys to the Abbeys of Ely, Thorney and Westminster.

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

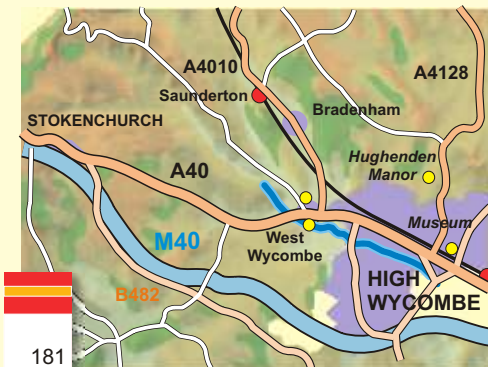


# HUGHENDEN AND WEST WYCOMBE

**T**here are many cultural highlights in this part of the Chilterns. You can step back in time to the elegance of the Victorian era and the life of Chilterns resident Benjamin Disraeli, or get a glimpse into the fascinating lives of the bodgers who worked in the woods. There's also a taste of scandal 18th century fashion at the Hellfire Caves. There are some wonderful designed landscapes to enjoy and beechwoods to wander in. For an enjoyable circular walk in this area go to the AONB website and search for 'West Wycombe and Bradenham Walks'.

## Hughenden Manor & Estate

The home of Victorian statesman Benjamin Disraeli, this house has been restored by the National Trust and contains the life and times of one of Queen Victoria's favourite prime ministers. There are beautiful walks



through the surrounding parkland and woodland and the colourful formal gardens. There are regular events and guided walks, a restaurant and shop.

**i** [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
Tel 01494 755573

## West Wycombe Village

This village is owned by the National Trust and contains many historic 16th-18th century buildings. There are a

number of shops and pubs. At the top of West Wycombe Hill is the church and mausoleum of the Dashwood family of West Wycombe House. There are fine views from the hilltop.

**i** [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
Tel 01494 755573

## West Wycombe House and Gardens

The Italianate house and classically-designed landscape gardens were the inspiration of Sir Francis Dashwood, 18th century founder of the Dilettante Society and the Hellfire Club. The estate is now run by the National Trust which opens the house and gardens on a limited basis during the spring and summer.

**i** [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
Tel 01494 755573

## Hellfire Caves

In the 18th century Sir Francis Dashwood had the Caves excavated out of West Wycombe Hill to provide work for unemployed farm labourers. The notorious Hellfire Club held its meetings in the Caves and gave rise to

numerous legends. Today you can walk through nearly a mile of underground passages and caverns and hear all these fascinating stories by audio commentary. There is a café and shop.

**i** [www.hellfirecaves.co.uk](http://www.hellfirecaves.co.uk)  
Tel 01494 533739

## Wycombe Museum

Set in beautiful grounds in High Wycombe, the Museum has lots of hands-on activities and displays about the local area including the history of Wycombe's furniture industry and a children's Discovery zone. There is a programme of temporary exhibitions and events, a café and picnic area. Admission is free and the ground floor is fully accessible.

**i** [www.wycombe.gov.uk/museum](http://www.wycombe.gov.uk/museum)  
Tel 01494 421895

## Bradenham Village & Woods

Another picturesque village owned by the National Trust, with wonderful views along the Bradenham Valley from the top of the cricket pitch. The Manor House (not open) was once the home of Isaac D'Israeli, father of Benjamin Disraeli. From near the Manor there are footpaths and bridleways to the beechwoods and surrounding countryside.

**i** [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
Tel 01494 528051





# AMERSHAM AND GREAT MISSENDEN

**T**wo of the Chilterns' famous chalk streams, the Misbourne and the Chess, flow through scenic valleys in this area and provide lovely settings for a walk or a picnic. They have given inspiration to artists, writers and craftsmen over the centuries, all of which is celebrated in a number of fascinating local museums and visitor attractions. There are several charming towns and villages in the valleys which provide good locations to find refreshments, transport links and accommodation.

## Old Amersham

The historic Old Town of Amersham dates back to pre Saxon times and retains a great deal of character. Fine old houses, coaching inns, little courtyards, almshouses and modest cottages can be found along the High Street, in the middle of which stands the centuries-old Market Hall. There are pubs, cafes and restaurants as well as interesting shops. The rail and underground station is



about half a mile from the High Street.

**i** [www.amersham.org.uk](http://www.amersham.org.uk)

## Amersham Museum

The Museum is located in a 500 year-old house in Amersham's historic High Street. It reveals stories about the town from Roman times to the 20th century and has displays on old local crafts such as lace-making, straw plaiting and chair-making. There is also a herb garden where you can sit on sunny days. **i** For details of opening times and access information visit [www.amersham.org.uk/museum](http://www.amersham.org.uk/museum) Tel 01494 723700/725754

## Chess Valley

One of the most beautiful valleys in the Chilterns, the Chess Valley runs from Chesham south east to Rickmansworth. The River Chess running through the Valley is a clear, sparkling chalk stream which is home to many plant and animal species. The Chess Valley Walk follows the river for 10 miles through the Valley, past well-known landmarks such as Latimer House and Chenies Manor, and is well signposted. **i** You can pick up a leaflet about it in local information centres or download one from the AONB website.



**i** Find more information on 'Walks in the Misbourne Valley' on the AONB website.

## Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre

This visitor attraction in Great Missenden celebrates the life of one of the town's most famous residents, Roald Dahl, who wrote many of his books here. You can see a re-creation of his writing hut and meet many of his well-loved characters. The Story Centre provides lots of inspiration for children and adults interested in creative writing. The site is fully accessible.

**i** For opening times and to book tickets [www.roalddahlmuseum.org](http://www.roalddahlmuseum.org) Tel 01494 892192

## Chiltern Open Air Museum

The Museum has a collection of over 30 historic buildings which have been rescued and re-erected. Everything from an Iron Age house to traditional barns, a wartime prefab and a working Victorian farm. The activities and artefacts associated with the buildings provide a real sense of past lives in the Chilterns. There is also a woodland walk and plenty of picnic places.









**i** [www.coam.org.uk](http://www.coam.org.uk) Tel 01494 871117

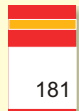
## Great Missenden and the Misbourne Valley

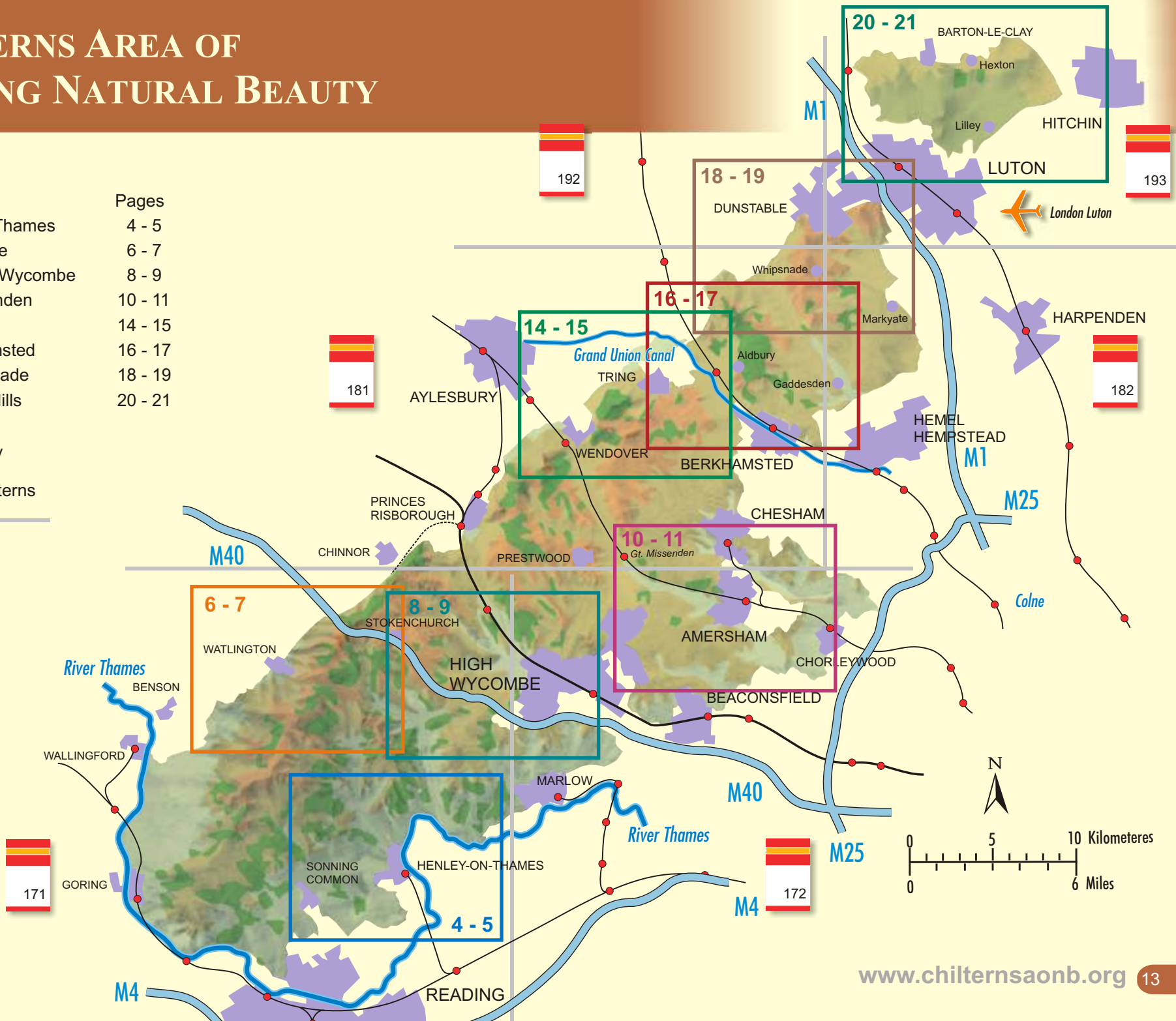
The charming small town of Great Missenden is on the Chiltern Railways line from Marylebone station in London and is a good base from which to explore the lovely Misbourne Valley. On a 3 mile circular walk from the town centre you can glimpse the 900 year-old Missenden Abbey (not open to the public), walk through meadows next to the Misbourne chalk stream and enjoy vistas of rolling chalk hills, beech woodland and farmland.



# THE CHILTERNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

	Henley and the River Thames	4 - 5
	Watlington and Ewelme	6 - 7
	Hughenden and West Wycombe	8 - 9
	Amersham and Missenden	10 - 11
	Wendover and Tring	14 - 15
	Ashridge and Berkhamsted	16 - 17
	Dunstable and Whipsnade	18 - 19
	Pegsdon and Barton Hills	20 - 21

 Ordnance Survey  
Explorer Maps  
covering the Chilterns





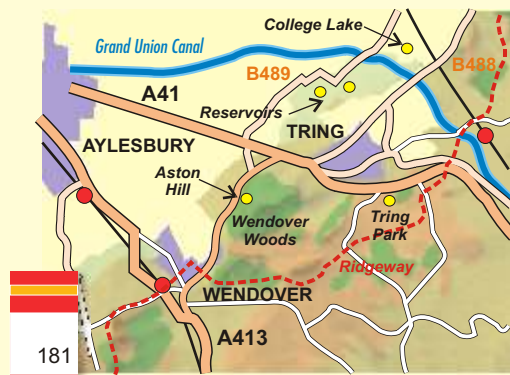
# WENDOVER AND TRING

**J**ust a short train ride from London, Wendover and Tring are attractive market towns, offering an excellent base for a day trip or weekend break. They allow easy access to the extensive woods and historic waterways nearby. And there are lots of attractions on the doorstep, from the Rothschild Zoological Museum to speciality shopping.

## Wendover

Wendover is a picturesque market town nestled into the edge of the Chiltern Hills and surrounded by woodland. The 16th century Red Lion Hotel on the High Street has hosted many famous names including Oliver Cromwell and Sir Robert Louis Stevenson. You can enjoy a good selection of restaurants and speciality shops, in particular antique and craft shops. There are a number of promoted circular walks from Wendover.

**i** Promoted walks:  
[www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)  
[www.aylesburyvale.net/wendover](http://www.aylesburyvale.net/wendover) or  
[www.chilternweb.co.uk/wendover](http://www.chilternweb.co.uk/wendover)



## Wendover Woods

Wendover Woods, owned by the Forestry Commission, has an extensive network of trails for walking, cycling, keep fit and orienteering. The woods are the highest point in the Chilterns with spectacular views across Aylesbury Vale. There are toilets, children's play area, sculptures, picnic areas and a trail suitable for wheelchair users. Open all year from 8am to dusk. Access to Wendover Woods is free but there is a £2 car-parking fee.

**i** [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)  
Tel 01420 520212

## Tring

Tring has been a market town since 1315 and is one of the most attractive towns in the Chilterns, with a fine selection of shops, pubs and restaurants. It is home to the Walter Rothschild Zoological Museum which has exhibits of birds, mammals and reptiles. The museum also has a café, gift shop, discovery room and picnic area. The Museum is open all year and is free of charge. Call for opening hours.

**i** [www.nhm.ac.uk/museum/tring](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/museum/tring)  
Tel 020 7942 6171

## Tring Park

The former estate of Sir Walter Rothschild is now managed by the Woodland Trust. The Park extends from the edge of Tring to the top of the Chiltern ridge from where there are outstanding views. The Park is a mixture of chalk downland meadows and woodland - ideal for walking, flying a kite or enjoying a picnic. Tring Park is open all year and is free of charge.

**i** Tring website [www.tring.gov.uk](http://www.tring.gov.uk) has downloadable maps of walks.

## Tring Reservoirs

Tring Reservoirs were built at the start of the 19th century to supply water for the Grand Union Canal. Today the reservoirs are a popular visitor attraction; one of the best places in the area for birdwatching, fishing or simply enjoying a stroll or a



picnic. You can also walk or cycle along the Grand Union Canal which links many towns and places of interest. There are a number of walking routes including a trail suitable for people with wheelchairs or pushchairs.

**i** [www.britishwaterways.org](http://www.britishwaterways.org)  
Tel 01442 825938

## College Lake Wildlife Centre

A nature reserve with interesting wildlife and spectacular views. The reserve, managed by the local wildlife trust, is especially good for birds, orchids and butterflies. There is a farm museum, geology centre and wildlife garden. Other facilities include a visitor centre, toilets, bird hides, nature trails, picnic area and guided tours. The reserve has a path and hides suitable for wheelchair users. Open all year, call for opening hours. Free admission.

**i** [www.bbowt.org.uk](http://www.bbowt.org.uk)  
Tel 01865 775476

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



# ASHRIDGE AND THE GRAND UNION CANAL



**T**his area of the Chilterns contains some real gems - acres of woodland and commonland open to all to enjoy, magnificent views from Ivinghoe Beacon and Pitstone Hill and some attractive towns and villages to visit. It is an area steeped in history. The 5000 year old Ridgeway route ends at Ivinghoe Beacon where there are the remains of an Iron Age fort. A stretch of the Grand Union Canal, which has carried boats for 200 years between London and Birmingham, crosses the area.



hired. The Visitor Centre is open from March to December and has a tearoom, shop, interactive displays and activity

## Ashridge Estate

5000 acres of woodlands, commons and fine chalk downland running along the main ridge of the Chiltern Hills. It is run by the National Trust and entry is free. There are plenty of trails for walking and cycling and a good chance of seeing a rich variety of wildlife. There is an easy access trail and mobility scooters can be



packs for children. The Bridgewater Monument commemorates the Duke of Bridgewater who was responsible for the Grand Union Canal. For those who don't mind plenty of steps there are great views from the top.

**i** Find out more about the Estate at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
Tel **01494 755557**

## Ivinghoe Beacon and Pitstone Hill

The distinctive shape of Ivinghoe Beacon has been a landmark for travellers on the Ridgeway for centuries. The National Trail now crosses Pitstone Hill



and ends at the Beacon, from where you get stunning views west across the Vale of Aylesbury and along the Chilterns ridge. In spring and summer the chalk downland is carpeted in wildflowers. There is a car park near the Beacon or you can walk there from the Ashridge Estate.

## Grand Union Canal

The Canal runs past Berkhamsted and Tring and is a great place to go for a gentle stroll. The Grand Union Canal Walk follows the edge of the canal providing good views of colourful narrowboats negotiating the locks as well as lovely Chilterns scenery. You can also take a cruise on the Canal from Pitstone Wharf near Pitstone to Marsworth and back between Easter and September.

**i** Contact Grebe Canal Cruises at [www.grebecanalcruises.co.uk](http://www.grebecanalcruises.co.uk)  
Tel **01296 661920**

## Aldbury

The village of Aldbury is about 2 miles from Tring Station, next to the Ashridge Estate. Charming traditional cottages nestle around the village pond and there are some good pubs and a village shop. There is little room for cars in the village so why not make your visit part of a walk or a cycle ride.



## Berkhamsted

Berkhamsted has a history going back to at least 1066, when William the Conqueror was handed the crown of England here. You can still see the remains of the Norman Castle that was subsequently built. In more recent times Berkhamsted was home to the author Graham Greene. The attractive high street has many interesting shops, cafes and restaurants.

**i** [www.berkhamsted.gov.uk](http://www.berkhamsted.gov.uk)



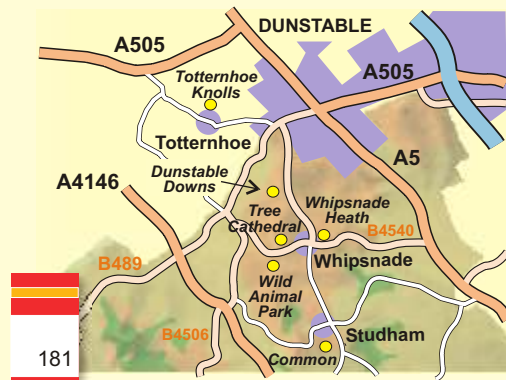


# DUNSTABLE AND WHIPSNADE

**T**he high chalky downs of Dunstable and Whipsnade are the location of some of the Chilterns' most popular visitor attractions, as well as some of its less well-known historic features. You can easily spend a whole day at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park where wallabies and bison help to keep the chalk grassland in good shape! There are plenty of circular walks in this area with far-reaching views and quiet tranquil corners full of natural treasures.

## Dunstable Downs

This is one of the best-known viewpoints on the Chilterns ridge. The chalk grasslands of the Downs have miles of footpaths and circular walks. 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. Why not bring a kite to fly and have a picnic on the grass. There is a shop, refreshment kiosk and toilets.

**i** [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)  
Tel 01582 608489



## Whipsnade Wild Animal Park

The countryside arm of London Zoo has acres of enclosures with everything from tigers and rhinos to monkeys, hippos and sealions. Set on a hilltop there are also far-reaching views over the Vale of Aylesbury. Whipsnade has daily animal events, a mini railway, cafes and a shop. You can bring your car in for an extra charge (waived if you have a disabled badge).

**i** [www.whipsnade.co.uk](http://www.whipsnade.co.uk)  
Tel 01582 872171



## Whipsnade Tree Cathedral

Planted to copy the layout of a medieval cathedral, this site was created in the 1930s to promote peace and reconciliation following 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 is run by the National Trust.

**i** [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

## Whipsnade Heath

Whipsnade Heath contains areas of scrub and woodland which have overgrown the former commonland. There is a circular route starting from the car park on the B4540 which takes you past the remains of chalk and flint quarries. Many different species of bird can be seen and the site is good for butterflies in the summer. There is a picnic glade near the car park.

## Totternhoe Knolls

Totternhoe Knolls Nature Reserve contains the remains of a Norman motte and bailey castle built in the early 12th century and a medieval stone quarry. Nature has taken over now and swathes of wildflowers carpet parts of the site in summer, accompanied by many butterflies. There is a car park and picnic area.

## Studham Common

This ancient common has been used by villagers for centuries and today is cared for by the community as a haven for wildlife and a place for locals and visitors to enjoy. The grassland is covered with flowers in summer and the areas of scrub and woodland are home to plenty of birds. The Common is a great place to go for a gentle stroll - there are no gates, stiles or steps and no steep slopes. Studham has a couple of pubs and a farm shop.

**i** Studham Common Walk:

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





# PEGSDON AND BARTON HILLS

**A** land of gently rolling downland with wide open views and beautiful chalk meadows at the very northern end of the Chiltern Hills. The perfect place for a rural retreat, with its sleepy villages, interesting churches and traditional country pubs.

## Hitchin

Hitchin is a charming medieval market town with many fine Tudor and Georgian buildings, particularly around the market square. There are lots of tempting shops and a Saturday street market by the Church. This is an excellent base for exploring the surrounding countryside, with plenty of visitor accommodation in the town.

 [www.e-hitchin.co.uk](http://www.e-hitchin.co.uk)

## Pegsdon Hills

With stunning views from the top of the hills this is one of the most spectacular reserves owned by the Bedfordshire



Wildlife Trust. If you stand on the top of Deacon Hill on a fine day, you can see amazing views over much of Bedfordshire and parts of Cambridgeshire. It is said you can even make out Ely Cathedral on a perfectly clear day. The valley slopes and chalk grasslands are home to many rare and beautiful wildflowers. Thyme, marjoram and basil scent the air on sunny days, while bees visit the candytuft, rock rose, harebell and other flowers which colour the hillside. Look out for skylarks nesting in the long grasses.

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

## Barton Hills

The chalk meadows of the Barton Hills National Nature Reserve are amongst the finest in the country, famous for their spring display of pasque flowers and home to many butterflies. At one time the Hills were heavily used by local graziers and Barton Brook was known as 'Washbrook' - it was used for washing sheep before they went to market in nearby towns. There is a circular trail to follow, visitor leaflets and information panels.

 [www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)

## Sharpenhoe Clappers

This area of ancient woodland and chalk grassland is owned by the National Trust. Some historians believe that 2000 years ago it was the site of an Iron Age hill fort. A beech wood now covers the plateau that might have been the interior of the fort. The name 'Clappers' derives from the medieval Latin term 'claperius', meaning a rabbit hole. Rabbit warrens provided a consistent supply of meat and skins and were a large part of the economy of the time.



## Sundon Hills Country Park

Situated at one of the highest points in Bedfordshire, Sundon Hills offers stunning views towards Sharpenhoe Clappers and the surrounding countryside. There are waymarked walks taking in woods, chalk hillsides, grassland and picnic facilities. The flowers and butterflies provide a riot of colour in spring and early summer. Open all year. Admission free.

## Harlington

Harlington originally had the Viking name of Herlingdone and is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The village is noted for its half-timbered houses dating from the 15th -18th centuries. The Christian writer John Bunyan was interrogated at Harlington House in 1660 resulting in his arrest for illegal preaching. Some of the stained glass windows in St. Mary's Church depict scenes from Bunyan's book Pilgrim's Progress. There are some scenic circular walks starting from Harlington and passing through Sharpenhoe Clappers.

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

**Did you know?** During the London to Birmingham Air Race in 1937 a plane crashed on Barton Hills. The pilot escaped unhurt and was invited to breakfast at the Rectory where he stayed for a week whilst the village carpenter repaired his machine.

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



# WALKING, CYCLING AND HORSE-RIDING

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**T**he Chilterns AONB is one of the best places in the UK to go for a walk or bike ride. With 2000km of well-signposted footpaths and bridleways you can explore every part of this beautiful area on foot, by bicycle or on horseback. With easy access to paths from most of the local railway stations it's simple to enjoy a day out without the car. Walk through bluebell woods in spring or the blaze of leaves which carpet the beechwoods in the autumn. Enjoy open hillsides covered in spring and summer flowers and watch out for red kites overhead.

## Walking

Exploring the Chilterns by foot allows you to fully appreciate the sights, smells and sounds of the countryside. There are dozens of promoted walks in the area from long distance routes such as The Ridgeway National Trail, Icknield Way Path and Grand Union Canal Walk to short circular walks. The Chilterns Conservation Board produces a range of 20 short circular walks leaflets, ranging from 2 - 6 miles. These Chiltern Country Walks include pub walks, family walks and walks from railway stations. They are downloadable from the Chilterns AONB website, along with a number of other walks.

## Walks for All

There is a range of walks in the Chilterns suitable for people with impaired mobility and users of wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs. You can download these from the Chilterns AONB website, or call for a pack of Accessible Walks.



## Cycling

Cycling is a great way to get around the area and the Chilterns offers a wide variety of biking from gentle cycling suitable for families to mountain biking and road racing. Wendover Woods is ideal for family cycling with its way-marked trails through the woods, or the Phoenix Trail linking the market towns of Thame and Princes Risborough. For hard core mountain bikers the Aston Hill Mountain Bike Centre is one of the best in Southern England. You can use your own bike or hire one.



These two leaflets can be downloaded from the Chilterns AONB website or picked up at tourist information centres where you will find lots more local cycling guides and publications.

**Cycling in the Chilterns:** a guide to all the promoted cycle routes in the Chilterns, plus information on bike hire, repairs, tourist information centres, cycling groups and more.

## Cycle, Ride or Walk in the

**Central Chilterns:** Information about routes for cycling, horse riding, mountain biking and walking in the central Chilterns between Chesham, Wendover and Tring. Also contains details of attractions and refreshments stops en route, helping you to plan a day out in the countryside.

## Horse-riding

There are many opportunities for horse-riding in the Chilterns, with its extensive network of bridleways. There are several promoted routes ranging from short, surfaced way-marked trails (for example, in Wendover Woods) to long distance routes such as the 65 mile Swan Way. A number of local stables offer hacking though you may have to complete an assessment lesson first.

**i** [www.bhs.org.uk/where\\_to\\_ride/southern.htm](http://www.bhs.org.uk/where_to_ride/southern.htm) for more information on riding schools.

## Events and Activities

There are many organised guided walks and events to entice you out and about throughout the year, many of them free of charge. Glow-worm walks, Red kite family fun days, family bug hunts, farm walks, pond dipping, boat trips....this is just a taste of what's on offer. For a full listing see our website or call for details.

## Other ideas for getting out in the countryside

For an alternative way of seeing the Chilterns why not try a leisurely boat trip on the Thames or a horse and cart ride stopping off at country pubs along the way.

Horse and Cart Rides. Enjoy a peaceful cart ride near Henley-on-Thames through beautiful Chiltern beechwoods and countryside. Traditional Suffolk Punch horses will transport you along quiet country lanes and bridleways. Try a 'Pint to Pint' tour of up to four traditional country pubs or a trip to a nature reserve.

**i** For further details call Country Ways, Tel **01491 641324**

Look out for wildlife as you cruise along the Thames from Henley-on-Thames on a pleasure craft. **i** To book call Hobbs Boats Tel **01491 572035**

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[www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)  
Tel **01844 355508**



# FURTHER INFORMATION



## Transport information

It is easy to reach the Chilterns and to travel around by public transport. Main rail lines from London (Euston, Kings Cross and Marylebone) and Birmingham serve 20 stations across the area. Journey times are 35-50 minutes from London and 90 minutes from Birmingham. There are regular bus services from London and Oxford, and local buses serve many of the attractions listed in here.

For further information:

(train times) [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)  
Tel **08457 484950**

(bus times) [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)  
Tel **0870 6082608**

In addition, the London Underground Metropolitan Line reaches Amersham, Chesham and Little Chalfont.

## Oxford and London

Both cities are within easy reach of the Chilterns for a day or an evening out. Find out more at:

[www.oxfordcity.co.uk](http://www.oxfordcity.co.uk)  
[www.visitoxford.org](http://www.visitoxford.org)  
Oxford Information Centre  
Tel **01865 726871**

[www.visitlondon.com](http://www.visitlondon.com)  
[www.virtual-london.co.uk](http://www.virtual-london.co.uk)  
London Information Centre  
Tel **020 729 22333**

## Further information on the Chilterns

The AONB website

[www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org) is a comprehensive source of information on attractions, walking and cycling routes, events and local products to be found in the Chilterns.

For further information on events and activities on the Thames:  
[www.visitthames.co.uk](http://www.visitthames.co.uk)

For accommodation and food, visit the websites listed here or contact the relevant tourist information centre.

[www.visitbuckinghamshire.org](http://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org)  
[www.visitsouthoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.visitsouthoxfordshire.co.uk)  
[www.visitbedfordshire.org](http://www.visitbedfordshire.org)  
[www.herts.co.uk](http://www.herts.co.uk)  
[www.visiteastofengland.com](http://www.visiteastofengland.com) - Herts and Beds  
[www.visitsoutheastengland.com](http://www.visitsoutheastengland.com) - Bucks and Oxon  
[www.goodguides.com/pubs/search.asp](http://www.goodguides.com/pubs/search.asp)

## Tourist information centres

Marlow, 31 High St,  
**01628 483597**  
Aylesbury, 8 Bourbon St,  
**01296 330559**  
Milton Keynes, 411 Secklow Gate East,  
**0870 1201269**  
Wendover, The Clock Tower,  
**01296 696759**  
High Wycombe, Pauls Row,  
**01494 421892**  
Princes Risborough, Horns Lane,  
**01844 274795**  
Henley-on-Thames, Kings Arms Barn,  
**01491 578034**  
Thame, The Market House,  
**01844 212834**  
Maidenhead, The Library,  
**01628 796502**  
Wallingford, The Town Hall,  
**01491 826972**  
Hemel Hempstead, Dacorum Information Centre, **01442 234222**  
Tring, 99 Akeman St,  
**01442 823347**  
St Albans, The Town Hall,  
**01727 864511**  
Luton, Luton Central Library,  
**01582 401579**  
Dunstable, The Library,  
**01582 471012**



## Ordnance Survey maps covering the Chilterns

Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps show all footpaths, bridleways and National Trails as well as pubs and tourist facilities. The following cover the Chilterns area:  
Explorer Map 171 (Chiltern Hills West, Henley-On-Thames & Wallingford)  
Explorer Map 172 (Chiltern Hills East, High Wycombe, Maidenhead)  
Explorer Map 181 (Chiltern Hills North, Aylesbury)  
Explorer Map 182 (St Albans & Hatfield)  
Explorer Map 193 (Luton & Stevenage)

For more information or to purchase these maps online visit  
[www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk](http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk)  
Tel **08456 050505**

