

# The best way to see Britain is on Foot

There are many ways for us to travel in this modern day and age. Yet, a timelessness lives here in Britain, where the old ways and new ways collide.

Here in the United Kingdom modern modes of transport are a means of getting from A to B, these are not my preferred form of getting around. Driving is hectic, busy and stressful. Trains are expensive, overloaded and rarely on time. While buses are affordable, they also crawl through the countryside at a snail's pace and rarely connect through to, or stop at any worthy destination.

Biking is another option but needs to be undertaken at your own risk, health and accident insurance is advised. Yet, amongst all the pitfalls of modern travel, there seems to be an overwhelming trend during the weekend for walking/ hiking.

\*Disclaimer: I see hiking and walking as the same thing given there are not excessively large mountains, so I'm going to use the word walking to cover them both.



# People in England have The right to roam

England is ideal for walkers. Endless green valleys, sloping hills, roving rivers and pockets of forests beckon anyone ready for some greenery and fresh air. Walkers also benefit from the Rights of way act, that [‘The right to roam’](#).

This means that the general public may access land without the use of paths.

**Note:** Although private areas do exist, you can find them on [maps via Natural England](#). Landlords of private property will in many cases put up a notice; *Private land*, or *Do not trespass* – so be sure to respect their wishes if you do come across these signs.

On top of this, there are [plenty of right-of-way paths](#) for walkers to use, which are mapped out and easily accessible. If you are curious about what this means or have questioned the [Ramblers walking organisation has a great FAQ \(frequently asked questions\) which covers walkers and landowner rights in](#)

[detail.](#)

On the rights of way paths, farmers and landowners are asked not to obstruct the path or block access to it. Nor should they let aggressive bulls into the field alone. One exception is made for non-dairy breeds, which can be in a field if accompanied by cows. Apparently, the dairy bulls are more aggressive. As many of us might not be able to decipher one breed from another if you see a bull and are worried simply play it safe and find another route.

In return, it is expected that walkers also respect the landowners, and their lands by following the [countryside code of conduct](#). It is generous of farmers to allow the public access to the land that is their means of living.

If you bring your dog, have them on a leash when on farmland with livestock. If concerned there are also plenty of other farms, forests and fields without livestock that you can enjoy.



# The Pilgrimage Revival

You may have also noticed a revival in ancient pilgrimages. There have been some great articles published that feature the [British Pilgrims' trust](#). An organisation that has done a stellar job in the last few years of not only promoting pilgrimages but also organising pilgrimages and bringing ancient pathways back to life for people to enjoy.

One such pathway is aptly named the [Pilgrims' way and will take you from Canterbury](#) to London's Southwark Cathedral. Travelling in true Pilgrim fashion on foot and staying in wayside houses or churches along the route.

Anyone looking for an inspirational book to read along the way, I highly recommend either the [Art of Pilgrimage](#) by Phil Cousineau or [The Old Ways by Robert MacFarlane](#).

*"Pilgrims are poets who create by taking journeys. Niebuhr"*

On top of the old Religious Pilgrim routes, there are even more ancient pilgrimages to sacred sites such as Stonehenge, [Glastonbury](#) or [Standing stones of Avebury](#).

While not every walk is a pilgrimage, there are many other groups that you can join for a hike or a stroll:



# Walking Associations and Groups

Whether you're a traveller from distant shores, or a local who would like to get out and about more – there are endless walking groups and options here in the UK.

[Meetup has a wide choice of walking groups](#) for all ages and has walks you can join in all areas and at weekends.

There are also established national and [local walking groups, such as the Ramblers](#). It's a great way to motivate oneself into doing longer countryside walks – while promoting a good cause.

The Ramblers is a non-profit and as well as receiving a quarterly magazine, maps and free access to lead walks, they actively campaign and support walkers' interests in England.

Currently, they are in the process of lobbying with landowners and the government, to create the 'England Coast Path'. Set to

open in 2020, it will cover 4.500 km of Britain's coastline, making it the longest coastal walk in the world.

On top of this, they are putting out a call to members of the public to go through old maps, to locate old pathways, so that they can be noted and reclaimed before the due date in 2026.

More than that though they offer a great range of routes throughout the country via their website or app. You can choose either independent or led walks, short or long, and easy to hard – there really is something to suit everyone.

There is nothing quite like joining a group of like-minded individuals for an afternoon of sturdy walking. You can find them online at [Ramblers.org.uk](https://www.ramblers.org.uk)



## Well-known routes through the English country

While most everyone has heard of the [Camino de Santiago de Compostela](https://www.camino.org.uk/), and the Appalachian Trail. Britain also has its fair share of stunning trails, which may not be as famous but

thankfully quieter, and equally stunning that you can enjoy if you'd like a walking holiday.

Here are just a few worth mentioning:

**Cotswolds Way:** This is one of the most picturesque walks. It spans the length of the Cotswolds from North to the South. Covering over 100 miles, it snakes along the upper escarpment of the region and passes ancient long burrows and ruins left by prehistoric man. Being in the Cotswold it also passes through quaint villages and runs either to or from Bath, which is one of the most beautiful cities in England.

**Hadrian's Wall:** This is the famous wall that the Romans put up in the hope of keeping the unconquered and unruly Scots out. While I like to think of it as 'The Wall' from the Game of Thrones, the reality is that it's not half as high or fearful. Listed as a UNESCO world heritage site, it runs along the thinnest part of England. So, you can make it from the East to the West coast in under 8 days. It's a trail where you really do follow Romans' footsteps, passing by historic Roman ruins set amongst the breathtaking countryside.

**The Pilgrims Way:** This is an old Pilgrimage route, and you can either walk to or from London or Winchester to Canterbury, there are a few options available for the route. Canterbury was an old stopping point for pilgrims on their way to Rome. Back in the day, it was normal for most of people to try to do at least one pilgrimage in their lifetime. In doing so, and by giving alms to the church they felt more likely that they could gain, if not buy a spot in heaven.

While it did fall out of favour for a few centuries thanks to Henry VIII, it is thankfully back in style and much of the old pathways have been given a new life for a new set of walkers and modern pilgrims.

**Offa's Dyke way:** Follows most of the border between England and Wales and is named after the Anglo-Saxon king of Mercia.

It snakes through the historic Welsh countryside all the way from Chepstow in the South to the Northern shores.

[Heart of England Way](#): This as it sounds leads you through the heart of England and through the West Midlands countryside. It's about 100 miles long and goes from Milford down to Bourton-on-the-water, one of the Cotswolds' quaintest if not most popular villages.

You can get booklets and trail passports as well as advice on the route, and places to stay along the way from the [National Trail website](#).



## Transformation of Unexpected Pathways

Recently alternative routes are being uncovered. Such as old railway lines and towpaths are easy to walk along and have been revived and lovingly restored and transformed.

Towpaths, for anyone unaware, is the old route that was laid



alongside the man-made waterway canals. These were built back in the industrial age before motor cars so that donkeys could pull the narrow boats containing wares through to their final destination.

Canals were eventually replaced with the railway. However, thanks to locals, volunteers and organisations such as [the canal and river trust](#) have put in a serious amount of effort to do restoring many canals to their former glory. As a result, the towpaths alongside them offer both picturesque and relatively easy walking paths.

The same is being done with older railway lines that have become overgrown through time. There is a TV show on Channel 5 in England called: Walking lost railways, and a [book Lost Railway walks](#), that highlights them. As such there are also a few [websites promoting lost railway routes](#) and sharing them so that we can all enjoy them.

It's great to see that even an old railway line can be recycled and put to new use.



## Benefits of Walking

Yes, England really is the perfect country to explore on foot, but there are a lot of side benefits to doing so. Of course,

exercise and an improvement in overall health are a given.

But my favourite benefit is that I am travelling at a pace that is right for me, I can stop, sit or walk fast at whichever point I like. If the view has become exceptionally stunning, you can stand or sit in awe for as long as you like.

It's flexible so that you can choose a different pathway, or do a circular route a linear route or makes one of your own – there are no time schedules or anything to abide by other than common courtesy and respect for others on the path.

In the meantime, science has proven what many of us already knew spending time in nature, with trees and fresh air has a positive effect on the heart, organs and mental health. This is why [the art of forest bathing is so popular in Japan](#) and has been taking off everywhere.

Personally, I believe that spending time outside in nature, in a disconnected world is healing for the body and soul. It leads us to appreciate the world around us, and feel connected.



# Appreciating the natural world

Anyone who has spent hours walking through forests, over hills and small creeks can't help but to spend some of that time in awe of the landscape around them. The birdsong that fills the air, squirrels foraging for nuts.

[Red Squirrels are even being re-introduced](#) in areas of Snowdonia in Wales and Caledonia in Scotland. If you have a keen eye you may even spot the elusive badger or friendly otter. Or a peaceful forest floor filled with bluebells or snowdrops.

The change of the season, the fresh air or crystal-clear springs and canal towpaths. It's as healing as it is magic and touches us as humans deep in the soul of our being.

## Protecting that which we love

Once we start to walk more – we can't help to connect, it brings us back to our natural state being and hence to the natural world around us.

I've not yet seen a walker with headphones, they're too busy listening to the birds, a burbling brook or the rustle of leaves through the trees. They'll stop to enjoy the views, breathing in the fresh air and reaching a deeper state of calm.

In the pure enjoyment of time spent in nature, we become more naturally inclined to want to protect it, and care for it, as it should be respected and cared for.

You can see this reflected in the number of efforts local walking organisations have to protect these areas and

pathways. It's also why I appreciate upcoming organisations such as [Rewilding Europe](#), [Rewilding Britain](#) and the [woodland trust](#).

These types of organisations are going above and beyond to restore ancient woodlands and areas that are safe havens for local wildlife, birds and insects that are so critical to these natural habitats.

It's scary to think that some countries have no ancient woodland left, the ecological structure that they host so much more than just a selection of trees or a simple place for us to enjoy our daily stroll.

If you have the opportunity to look into them if you are in the UK for a while why not also support them with your time as a volunteer or purchase a membership?



## Get your boots on and start walking

If nothing else, your feet are made for walking. Endless pathways that cross the United Kingdom are calling you to walk

upon them.

So, let's get our walking shoes on, and they say in one of my favourite Celtic Proverbs:

*"Your feet will bring you to where your heart is".*

## Resources

[Government Right of way, Right to Roam](#)

[British Pilgrimage Association](#)

[National Trails](#)

[Railway Paths](#)

[National Trust: A beginners guide to forest bathing](#)

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# A Pilgrimage to Avebury Stone Circles in Wiltshire

*Pilgrims are poets who create by taking journeys. Niebuhr*

There are famous pilgrimages recommended by religious groups or there is the pilgrimage that one does for oneself.

It doesn't have to be on foot or by any particular mode of transport. It is nothing more than the journey of getting to the desired destination, in any way or form.

For me, that desired destination was the Stone Circles in Avebury, Wiltshire. I've travelled through the Netherlands, France and the rest of the UK, with buses, trains, and ferries to reach it.

I left Australia with the wild urge to sit in Stone Circles and visit the sacred sites of Europe. Walk the paths of my ancestors and distant kin, touching the earth of those that went before me.

So, why would anyone want to visit Avebury, a place that is often seen as the poor cousin of the ever famous Stonehedge? While in reality, it is not less, but so much more.



## Why visit the Stone Circles in Avebury?

This sacred Neolithic site is the largest set of Stone Circles out of the thousands in the United Kingdom, and in the world.

It is also much older than other sites. The sites dating though is sketchy and I've heard everything from 2600BC to 4500BC. While this is still up for discussion as some researchers say that it is even older others say that it's younger.

None of us was there, so who knows...

Despite the fact that it is a major World Heritage site, it is not shut off to the public. This means that you can walk around the stones, touch, sit next to them. You can visit the site at your own pace and in your own way.

Avebury is accessible by public transport, [buses](#) stop in the middle of the village. Visiting Avebury and walking among the stones is totally free. Considering that Stonehenge costs £19.50, and you can't even go near the stones, this is a

bonus.

Visiting Avebury is a full day out. As well as the stone circles on the site, there is also the avenue of stones that you can follow. These take you down to the West Kennet Long Barrow and Silbury Hill. There is also a museum and manor on the site that is run by the National Heritage Trust.

Avebury itself is also worth visiting for the energies alone. It's situated in the centre of St. Michael's Ley Line. These are energy lines that run over and through the earth, St Michael's is one of the most well known as it is host to many sacred sites. This leads me on to a few things you may not know about the site:



## **What you may not know about Avebury:**

As with many sacred sites, I recommend you get an alternative guide or do your own research before going. Mainstream guides or archaeologists rarely ask big questions. Nor are they up-to-date on the latest research.

Luckily, there are many who have done their own research. In one experiment, researchers planted electrodes at Avebury. In



doing so they tested the earth's telluric energy field at various times of the day. It showed that the ditch around the site harness's the earth's ground current and sends it back to the entrance of the site.

Other tests at stone circles show that energies spiral towards the centre of the site. The stones act as resonators and hold the energy during most of the night before releasing it at sunrise.

The late John Burke once tested the magnetism of the site. Tests showed that every large stone on the outer circle is magnetically facing north. And that its magnetic orientation leads on and connects it to the next stone in the circle.

As a stone's magnetic energy occurs naturally while the stone is being made, aeons ago. It's incredible that people so far back could not only be aware of this magnetic field but could measure it. Using those measurements to bring the stones together in such a precise alignment – this can't be a fluke.

Avebury and Stonehenge are both situated on St. Michael's ley lines. Both of them have avenues and both were used for ceremonies at certain times of the year. Many of England's Crop Circles also appear between the two sacred sites.



## **Avebury from Yesterday to Today:**

Avebury has had an interesting past. As many of the sacred sites we can only guess at its real use, and who built it and why.

There are all sorts of theories of how the stones were transported and then leveraged into place.

There are those believe that sound could have lifted and moved the stones. Others believe that it would a system of pulleys, some people believe it may have been giants. In all honesty, we may never know.

During medieval and religious times fanatics removed the stones. As the church believed that the stones had been a place of heathen worship and put there by the devil.

The site later went through a period of restoration. The stones put back together, and some in different spots. They added other stone markers for stones that were missing. While it's not exactly how it was – it still as impressive today as it would have been in the past.

Has all this interference affected the power of this sacred site?



## The Energies at Avebury of the Stone Circle

While there have been tests on the energy and the acoustics. How tangible is that for everyday people like you and me?

Now I can't speak for you ☐ For me, the energy at Avebury was both tangible and phenomenal. I could feel it the moment I arrived, it was so thick I could have sliced it with a knife.

I wandered about and touched all the stones. While I didn't feel that one stone that was stronger than another one. I did notice that when I sat in the centre or was in-between the stones, I could feel a resonance of their energy working together.

All in all, it was an incredible experience – although it floored me for the rest of the day (May also be the 3 hours on a bus there and 2 hours back). It was well worth the four-month pilgrimage across land and sea. To finally come to the

heart of hearts of European Sacred sites and Stone circles.

In all honesty, I can't wait to go back.



## **What to know before you go:**

The main reason I'd like to go back is to not only experience the energies all over again. But to also to have more time to explore the area. It's a bigger site than I anticipated. So, I didn't have enough time to go down the avenue and to visit Silbury Hill and the West Kennet Long Barrow. Which I would have like to have done.

Remember to bring a packed lunch. Or make sure you are on-time to eat at the village pub, which stops serving food during the day. There was a pop-up café near the National Trust Entrance, but that smelt a bit funny, so bring food or be on time.

As with most sacred sites, taking your time and be mindful. For me, this means no mindless chatter. Nor yelling at others to try to prove that you are more spiritual than them. Yes, this was what one lovely lady happened to be doing.

Take some quiet time, centre yourself, and be open to the

energies that are there. Sit somewhere quiet and ponder, meditate or just be. Stew in that and see how it feels.

Each sacred site can set alight a spark in us if we allow it to – it's a site that people have done ceremonies and that special stones have been put in place to bring together the strongest of energies. What we chose to do, feel or not feel is of course up to us.

We do ourselves and others visiting the site a favour, if we can visit them in a way that is respectful, full of reverence and good intentions.

For me, the pilgrimage goes, on. I heard the other day there are over 1000 stone circles in the United Kingdom, so I am sure Avebury isn't the last on my list. To me, life itself is a pilgrimage. And sacred sites like Avebury make the journey that we are on, all the more magic.



## Resources for visiting Avebury

[Manon Tromp](#): Offers tours of Avebury and Stonehenge, may also have night passes at certain times of the year if you would like to join a ceremony

[Invisible Temple](#), Freddy de Silva – Freddy does tours and has published a few great books on sacred sites and temples.

[Stone Circles website](#) – lists all many of the main stone circles in the British Isles

[Earth Ancients Interview with](#) Hugh Newman that covers the Stone Circles and more research in greater detail.

[Megalithomania](#) – annual UK event that focuses on Megalithic structures, great speakers. Hugh Newman who runs the event and site has also authored great books on the subject.

[Sacred sites website](#)

[National Trust Website](#)

[Steve Marshall](#) has a great book called exploring Avebury, here is also one of [his talks from the Megalithomania Event.](#)

More information on [West Kennet Long Barrow](#)

p.s. Disclaimer: I don't use wikipedia, I believe their word usages, biased point of view and censorship of certain content supports a wholly mainstream agenda – which I don't agree with. Plenty of much better information out there!















