

A king's view – 3 ½ miles

Stonehenge Landscape

This walk explores chalk downland at the heart of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. From Bronze Age burial mounds to ancient ceremonial pathways, the landscape surrounding Britain's most famous prehistoric monument is full of intriguing archaeology. There's also a fantastic array of wildlife to look out for.

Start & finish

Stonehenge car park – grid ref: SU120420 – OS Landranger 184 or Explorer 130 maps

How to get there

Bus & train: regular bus service runs from Salisbury  (9 miles) to Stonehenge

Bike: Stonehenge can be reached from Salisbury or Avebury on Sustrans route 45

Road: 2 miles west of Amesbury, near the junction of the A303 and A344

Facilities

Toilets, refreshments and visitor centre at the Stonehenge car park (English Heritage). Leaflets are available. Contact us on 01980 664780 or stonehenge@nationaltrust.org.uk

Points of interest

The Cursus

This huge enclosure just north of Stonehenge is thought to be older than the circle itself. Stretching 1¾ miles long from east to west, its low earthworks form a massive thin oblong. The name 'Cursus' is Latin for 'raceway' – a name given to it by 18th Century antiquarian William Stukeley, who thought it was a Roman chariot track.

Cursus Barrows

Barrows are burial mounds. They were probably built to house the remains of the most important people in Bronze Age society. The Cursus Barrows at Stonehenge were excavated by Victorians and found to contain decorated pottery, bronze spearheads, flint arrowheads and glass beads.

The Avenue

This ancient ceremonial pathway stretches two miles from Stonehenge to the River Avon. Much of its ditch-and-bank-lined track is barely visible above ground, but the earthworks can still be seen approaching the stones.



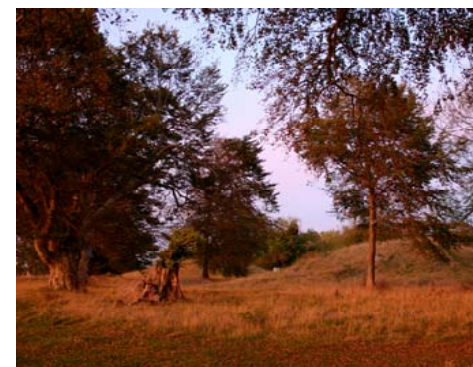
The famous stone circle is just one part of a complex ceremonial landscape on Salisbury Plain. This developed over 2000 years, during the Neolithic and Bronze Age eras, more than 5000 years ago.

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We're restoring the chalk grassland meadows around Stonehenge after many years of intensive farming. This gives colourful wildflower displays in summer, attracting butterflies like the chalkhill blue (pictured left). Sheep and cattle graze here to prevent the grass growing too long.

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Many of the oldest barrows in the Stonehenge World Heritage Site stand along King Barrow Ridge. The graves are sheltered by a line of 200 year old beech trees that make impressive viewing all year.

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"...they are assuredly the sepulchres of Kings and personages, buried during a considerable space in time; and that in peace."

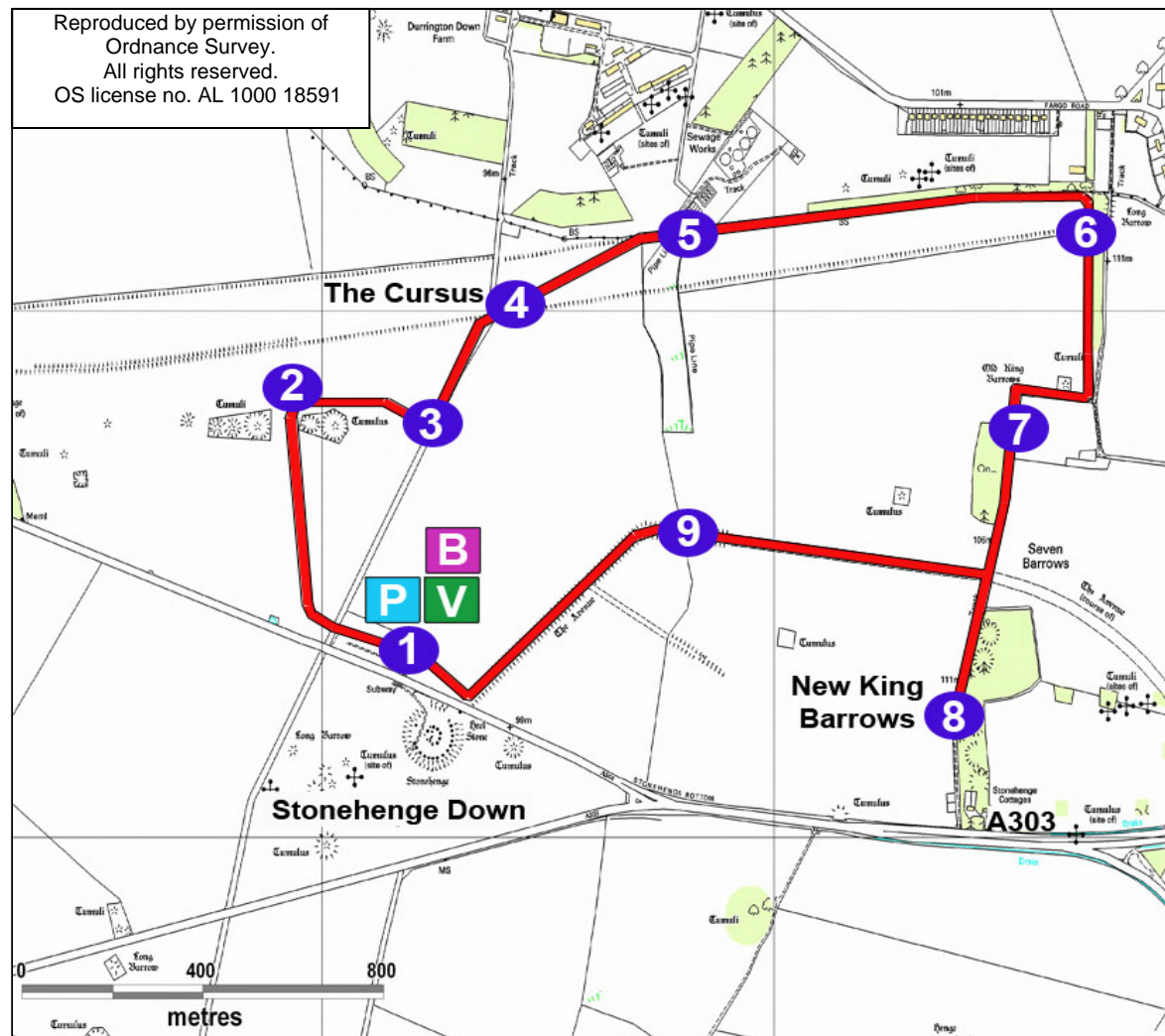
Dr William Stukeley, describing the barrows in his 1740 book 'Stonehenge: A Temple Restor'd to the British Druids'

Directions

1. From the car park cross the bridleway and climb over the nearby stile into a grass meadow. Head right and walk towards a pair of barrow mounds on the horizon.
2. Once at the barrows you will find an information panel behind them. Turn right and walk towards the small road again, on to the next information panel.
3. At the panel, go through a gate and follow the road left, away from Stonehenge. Remember to look back at the stones as they disappear from view in the distance.
4. When you reach the next information panel, pass through a gate on the right hand-side of the road and continue along the route of the Cursus.
5. Cross both the stiles at the valley bottom and head uphill toward some trees.
6. At the end of the field, cross another stile and walk towards an information panel. Continue to a junction and take the right fork, heading behind a row of trees.
7. At the next junction turn right through a gate and follow the path ahead. Pass two more information panels and head for a third amongst the beech trees at New King Barrows for a fine view of Stonehenge and its surroundings.
8. Return to the previous information panel and enter the field. Now follow the course of the Avenue back in the direction of the Cursus Barrows. In the valley, pass through the gate and walk towards the next information panel.
9. From here, stay left of the panel and head in the direction of Stonehenge. As you ascend the slope you will be able to see the ditches of the Avenue leading toward the Stones. Return to the car park on your right.

Walk terrain and accessibility

This 3½ mile circular trail follows hard tracks and gently sloping meadows. Take care as surfaces can be uneven, with potholes or long tussocky grass. This route includes four stiles, but there are alternative routes, which only use accessible gates. Contact us for more details.



National Trust places to visit nearby: Avebury, Figsbury Ring, Pepperbox Hill, Dinton Park

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