



NATURAL  
ENGLAND

# The South West: Gloucestershire, Wiltshire (and the West of England)

National Nature Reserves



# Your chance to see nature at its best!

Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and the West of England [Avon] have an outstanding variety of wildlife habitats, everything from ancient beech woodlands and flower-rich hay meadows to rolling downland. These are places where you can see rare spiders, snails and butterflies, wildflowers in abundance, numerous bird species and the remains of human activity over the centuries.

The best examples of these habitats are protected as National Nature Reserves – Britain’s finest wildlife sites. As well as offering protection, National Nature Reserves are places for scientific research and good conservation management – they also give the public a chance to experience wildlife at first hand.



Partial Easy Access



Visitor Centre



Car Park



Picnic Area



Toilets



Cafe & Refreshments



Public Transports



Hides



Dogs Admitted



Leaflets Available

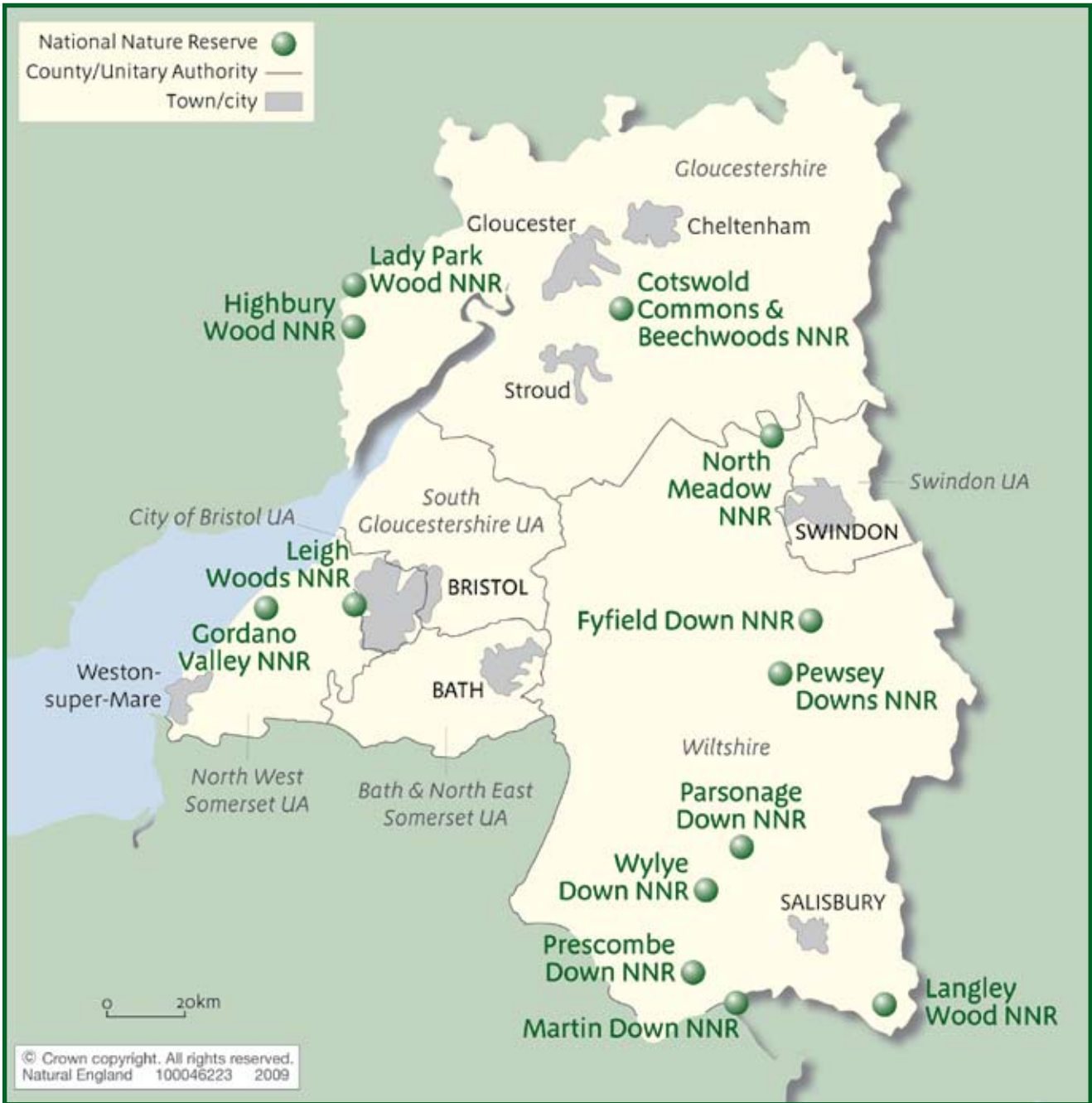


Wheelchair Access



Information Panels

- National Nature Reserve
- County/Unitary Authority
- Town/city



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## Visiting National Nature Reserves

This leaflet describes six superb National Nature Reserves in Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and the West of England and one just over the border into Hampshire that you can visit for quiet enjoyment. The map shows a further seven reserves in the region.

Each entry in this leaflet has symbols showing the facilities that are available at each reserve and whether or not dogs are permitted. Many of the reserves also offer exciting events or can provide guided walks for organised groups. The reserves are open all year round although the seasonal interest varies.

When you visit, please make sure that you have suitable clothing and footwear and be prepared for changes in the weather. Do not leave any bags or valuables on display in your car.

There are often opportunities for volunteers to get involved in looking after reserves, including habitat management and recording wildlife.

Remember, these places are working reserves, not parks. Wildlife conservation and the peaceful enjoyment of nature are the goals here, so please follow the Countryside Code at all times.

## Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods



You can enjoy some of Britain's finest beechwoods in this internationally important reserve. There are three main visitor sites, at Buckholt woods, Cranham Common and Edge Common.

In the woodlands you may see rare spiders and snails. And on the commons there are more than ten kinds of orchid and a host of different species of butterfly.

There are plenty of paths, including nature trails, for you to choose from.

### When to come

- April/May for spring flowers, beechwoods coming into leaf and spring birdsong.
- May/June for orchids and other grassland flowers on the commons.
- October for beech and other trees in autumn colours.

### How to get here

#### By road

If you come by car, take the minor roads from the A46 and the B4070. Informal parking including laybys are available in the area.

#### By bus

Regular bus services operate from Stroud, Gloucester and Cheltenham to Edge Common, Rough Park and Buckholt, with less frequent services to Cranham and Sheepscombe.

#### By train

The nearest train stations are at Stroud (5 miles to the south-west) and Gloucester (5 miles to the north-west).

#### Contact details

Tel: 0300 060 6000

Email: [gloucestershire@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:gloucestershire@naturalengland.org.uk)



## Fyfield Down

### P

Britain's best collection of sarsen stones stand on this internationally important site, which is part of the Avebury World Heritage Site. There are no fewer than 25,000 of these large boulders, formed from siliceous sandstone. From the ancient burial mounds, settlements, tracks and field systems it is easy to see how people have shaped this landscape over thousands of years.

Three trails cross the site: the Wessex Ridgeway, the Ridgeway National Trail, and the White Horse Trail.

### When to come

- All year for landscape, lichens and history.
- Summer for wildflowers, birds and butterflies.



© Natural England

### How to get here

#### By road

You can get here by car from a minor road between Marlborough and the village of Broad Hinton. There is one car park on this road, around 2 miles to the south-east of the village, and another near Manton House, 1 mile north-west of Marlborough.

#### By train

The nearest train station is in Pewsey (7 miles to the south).

#### By bike

A main cycle route (Sustrans route 4) runs through the centre of the reserve.

#### On foot

The reserve is on the Ridgeway National Trail, less than 2 miles from its starting point near West Kennet and Silbury Hill. There are footpaths from here that lead to Fyfield Down.

### Contact details

Tel: 0300 060 6000

Email: [wiltshire@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:wiltshire@naturalengland.org.uk)

When you visit, please respect farming enterprises on the Down and leave gates open or shut as you find them.

## Leigh Woods



Just a stone's throw from Clifton Suspension Bridge is Leigh Woods, an area of woodland with steep, grassy slopes.

More than 300 species of fungi have been recorded here. There is also a well preserved Iron Age hill fort, known as Stokeleigh Camp.

You can choose from a number of footpaths that pass near or through the reserve, including the River Avon Trail. There is an easy-access Purple Trail that is suitable for wheelchair users.

Look out for the events that are put on by the National Trust at the reserve throughout the year.

### When to come

- March/April for bluebells and wood anemones.
- June/July for wildflowers and butterflies.
- October/November for autumn colours and fungi.

### How to get here

#### By road

The reserve is on the western side of the Avon Gorge, opposite the Bristol suburb of Clifton. You can travel here by car from North Road or off the A369 to the Forestry Commission car park and picnic area.

#### By train

There is a mainline train station in Bristol, with connections to Clifton Down (1.5 miles from the reserve).

#### By bus

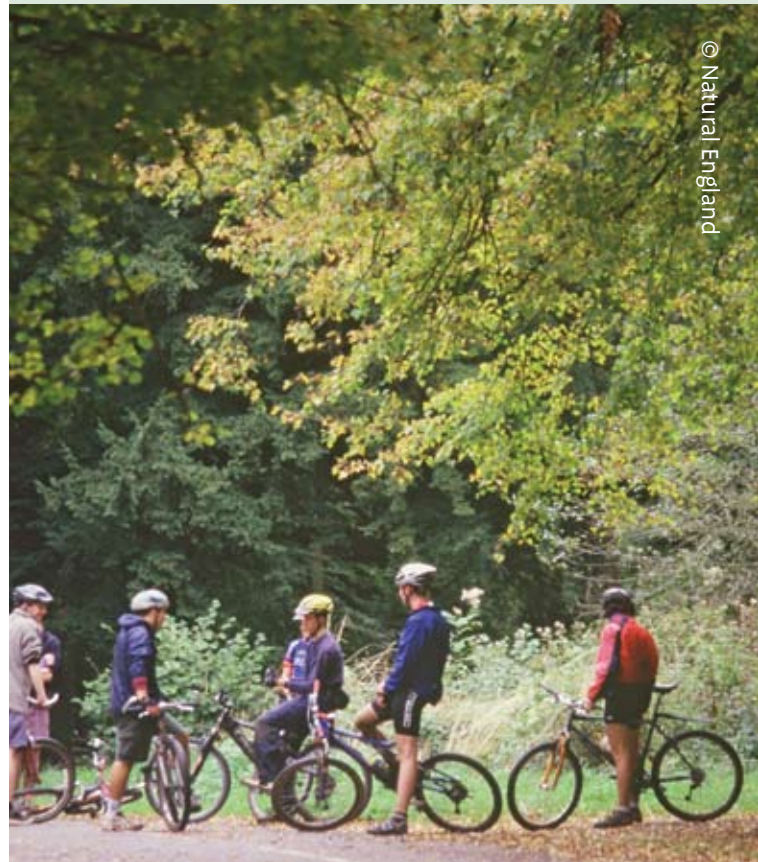
Bristol Portishead buses run along the A369 to the Forestry Commission car park.

### Contact details

Tel: 0117 9731645

Email: [leighwoods@nationaltrust.org.uk](mailto:leighwoods@nationaltrust.org.uk)

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



## Martin Down



Martin Down is home to an exceptional collection of plants and animals, including a number of rare and threatened species. During your visit you might spot some of the 12 orchid species that have been identified here, or even some of the five species of bat!

Rich in archaeology, the site features a massive linear prehistoric earthwork known as the Bokerley Dyke.

The Jubilee Trail which runs from Forde Abbey to Bokerley Dyke stops near the site.



© Linda Smith

### When to come

- All year round for nationally important archaeology.
- April to September for an array of butterflies and wildflowers.

### How to get here

#### By road

The reserve is around 9 miles south-west of Salisbury, 2/3-mile west of Martin. The car park is clearly signposted from the A354. Alternative parking is available at the end of Sillens Lane from Martin village.

#### By bus

The Wilts and Dorset Bus Company run two services that go near to the reserve – Route 42 (Salisbury to Fordingbridge) and Route 184 (Salisbury to Blandford).

#### By train

The nearest station is at Salisbury, 9 miles away.

### Contact details

Tel: 0300 060 6000

Email: [wiltshire@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:wiltshire@naturalengland.org.uk)



## North Meadow

North Meadow is a lovely old, flower-rich hay meadow on the northern edge of Cricklade. This is the site of Britain's largest population of a nationally scarce flower, the snake's head fritillary – with its distinctive bell-shaped flowers and purple mottled pattern. One of the finest examples of a lowland hay meadow in Europe, the site is marked by many carved stones which define the ancient boundaries of different 'hay lots'.

During the spring and summer months North Meadow teems with butterflies and damselflies, drawn here by the great variety of wildflowers.

### When to come

- Spring for snake's head fritillaries, marsh marigold, skylarks and linnets.
- Summer for hay meadow wildflowers, butterflies and damselflies.

### How to get here

The reserve is approx ½ mile from Cricklade Town Centre, along the High Street, north-west towards the A419. The entrance to the reserve is at Weaver's Bridge, and is signed by the roadside on the left.

### By road

There is parking for only a few cars around 300 metres from the reserve, north west of Cricklade.

### On foot

You can walk from Cricklade town centre to the reserve in around 20 minutes.

### Contact details

Tel: 0300 060 6000

Email: [wiltshire@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:wiltshire@naturalengland.org.uk)



## Pewsey Downs

**P**

For a wide, open landscape, expansive skies and a sense of remoteness you should look no further than Pewsey Downs.

Evidence of the past can be found all over the reserve, including Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds and the imposing Wansdyke, an enormous Saxon earthwork.

One unmissable feature is the White Horse, cut on the hillside in 1812. The reserve lies on the White Horse Trail – a 90-mile circular trail connecting Wiltshire's 8 chalk horses.



### When to come

- All year, for sweeping views.
- June for orchids and Marsh Fritillary butterfly.
- September for Adonis blue butterfly.

### How to get here

#### By road

Travel to the village of Alton Barnes, 8 miles east of Devizes. From the crossroads at the edge of the village follow the road north up the hill. You'll find the car park at the top of the slope on the right.

#### By train

The nearest train station is at Pewsey. From here, it is a 5-minute bus journey to Alton Barnes.

#### By bus

You can catch a bus from Devizes and Marlborough to the village of Alton Barnes.

### Contact details

Tel: 0300 060 6000

Email: [wiltshire@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:wiltshire@naturalengland.org.uk)

When you visit, please respect farming enterprises on the Down and leave gates open or shut as you find them.

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Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.

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