Avebury archaeology walk

Starting at the heart of the Avebury World Heritage Site, this walk takes you through the remains of the largest stone circle in the world and along the West Kennet Avenue into beautiful, rolling chalk downland. You’ll catch glimpses of mysterious Silbury Hill, pass Bronze Age burial mounds, and walk along ancient roads with fabulous views.

Terrain

Footpaths and tracks which can be slippery and very muddy. Take care crossing roads. Only part of the circle at Avebury is accessible for wheelchairs. Route is open all year round, although parts of the henge may occasionally be closed to enable erosion repair (an alternative route will be signposted). Dogs on leads are welcome.

Things to see

**Neolithic Avebury**

Neolithic Avebury dates from around 4,600 years ago. The massive circular bank and ditch (called a henge) surrounding the stone circle is part of a huge ceremonial landscape that took centuries to build. The henge you see today is impressive, especially when you realise that the chalk was dug out by hand. Excavation results tell us that originally the ditch was much deeper, with steep sides at least 30ft (9m) deep and the bank over 13ft (4m) high.

**West Kennet Avenue**

The West Kennet Avenue is a double line of stones and once formed a ceremonial route joining the henge to a timber and stone circle called the Sanctuary.

**Giant stones**

The stones are a hard, grey sandstone called sarsen. Look out for the two remaining stones of the Cove; the largest of which weighs at least 100 tonnes.
near Marlborough, Wiltshire

Start/end
Start: Avebury National Trust car park, grid ref: SU099696
End: Avebury National Trust car park, grid ref: SU099696

How to get there
By bike: National Cycle Network routes 4 and 45 meet in Avebury
By bus: Stagecoach in Swindon 49, Swindon to Trowbridge (passes close to Swindon train station)
By rail: Pewsey, 10 miles (16km); Swindon, 11 miles (18km)
By road: 6 miles (9.6km) west of Marlborough, 1 mile (1.6km) north of the Bath road (A4) on A4361 and B4003. Pay & Display car park (free for National Trust members). Sat Nav: Use SN8 1RD

1. From the car park follow the signs to the henge. Turn right into the High Street, enter the henge via the first gate on your right and follow the curve of the huge sarsen stones and the ditch. Cross the road and head along the fence line past the bank and trees. Go through the gate and cross the minor road into the West Kennet Avenue.

2. This part of the Avenue was excavated by Alexander Keiller in the 1930s. He re-erected the stones, putting markers where he found holes that once held stones that had been broken up and taken away for building.

3. At the end of the reconstructed part of the Avenue, cross the road and follow the footpath straight ahead. Look out for the sole remaining stone of Falkners Circle in the hedgerow on your left. Continue on this footpath until you reach a crossroads.

4. Follow the waymarker pointing right and uphill along the track. As you gain height, looking across the valley, you’ll be able to see the top of Silbury Hill. Stay on this track, until it meets the well defined track that is the Ridgeway. The Ridgeway was set out in the 18th century when the downland was split up into fields. The use of this route along the high ground extends much further into the past.

5. Turn right for a short detour to explore Overton Hill barrow cemetery. The chalk burial mounds from around 4,200 years ago are called barrows, and some of the best preserved are on Overton Hill. Nineteenth-century landowners planted trees on top of some of them - you can see why they are known locally as hedgehogs. See if you can spot the grassy remains of a Roman road running across the field. Retrace your footsteps along the Ridgeway.

6. Continue along the Ridgeway until you meet the junction with Green Street. Turn left along here, heading downhill. Green Street was once the main road from Marlborough to Bath. It's also known as the Herepath, an Anglo-Saxon word meaning army road.

7. Passing through the banks of the henge, go through the gate on your right into the north-east sector of the henge. Cross the road at the gateway behind the giant Cove stones to explore the north-west part of the henge.

8. The steps down from the henge bring you into the farmyard. Turn left for the footpath to return to the car park, or turn right to explore the museum and shop, or why not take a well deserved break in the restaurant.

http://nationaltrust.org.uk/walks