

ITINERARY

Exploring the North Wessex Downs AONB

Why spend hours on the road when there's so much to experience in just two days of exploring the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).



Marlborough on Market day

Day 1. Hungerford to Marlborough

An historic market town famous for its antique shops – book a walk around the treasure-house at **Below Stairs** with its owner. In this classic English antique shop, distinctive owner Stewart Hofgartner has turned a lifelong passion into his life's work, specialising in 19th and early 20th century items. After morning coffee and pastries at **The Tutti Pole**, it's time for a walk. Hungerford is at the centre of the **North Wessex Downs AONB**, which has produced a leaflet of three short walks exploring the streets and canal areas of the town. An opportunity for your group to explore independently. July is a good time to visit, with a variety of events to book during the three-week **Hungerford Arts Festival** – everything from music and theatre to film and talks.

A drive through the country lanes for lunch in the **Three Tuns Freehouse** at Great Bedwyn. In the 16th century this idyllic English village was held by the Seymour family, and there is a memorial to the father of King Henry VIII's wife Jane Seymour in St. Mary's church. Discover a stone effigy of a knight in armour.

Next stop is **Wilton Windmill**. Built in 1821, it's the only operating windmill in Wiltshire. After a guided tour, take a 2.5-mile circular walk that takes in **Crofton Beam Engines**, magnificent pieces of industrial archaeology and the oldest working steam engines in the world. Pass Wilton Water, a reservoir feeding the K&A Canal, and along part of the old Roman Road that ran from Venta Belgarum (Winchester) to Cunetio (Mildenhall, near Marlborough). Finally, it's on to the traditional market town of Marlborough to



spend the night. In July, catch one of the **Marlborough College Summer School** evening entertainments, ranging from talks to orchestral evenings. Or book one of their Summer Residential courses – there are over 500 to choose from.

Day 2. Marlborough

Marlborough is an ancient town, recorded in the Domesday Book as 'Merleberge'. In later years coins were minted here and coaches heading west from London stopped to feed and water their horses. Visit on a Wednesday and Saturday to trawl the local market for goodies and gifts. Explore the magnificently restored 17th century **Merchant's House** with its acclaimed wall paintings and reconstructed gardens. From this street there's a four-mile circular walk to visit Marlborough's White Horse, cut in 1804 by a group of schoolboys. On March 10 1498, Thomas Wolsey – later to become Cardinal Wolsey – was ordained in St Peter's church, a beautiful example of 15th-century religious architecture with Victorian restoration. It now has a coffee shop and craft shop where you could enjoy lunch. Guided tours of the Church and Tower are available for groups through Marlborough Tourist Information Centre.

A selection of tour operators and guiding services who offer bookable itineraries along the Great West Way can be found on page 9 of this Directory or on the Bookable Products section of GreatWestWay.co.uk/trade



Hungerford

INSIDER TIP

The origins of the Town & Manor of Hungerford & Liberty of Sanden Fee go back to at least the 14th century. Now a charity, it was set up to protect commoners' rights and the lands and rivers of the Town and Manor of Hungerford. Join one of the expert-led walks or trailer rides to find out more about the local area, and the conservation projects managed by this organisation (www.hungerfordtownandmanor.co.uk/things-to-do).

To organise a group trip contact Sally Wallington:
07932 322163 admin@townandmanor.co.uk

Places

Hungerford to Marlborough

Miles/kms by road

14miles/23kms