

Ridgeway In Winter: Magnificent Walks In The Snow

ITM London



The Ridgeway is a walking track for all seasons. From December to January it is a winter wonderland providing magnificent views of the snow-clad landscape.

One of Britain's oldest roads, the track follows ancient tracks and paths previously walked by herdsman and soldiers as long as 5000 years ago. Walkers discover a tranquil escape from day to day life, passing two distinct and different landscapes; the open and remote countryside of the Wessex Downs and the quaint villages and chalk grassland of the Chiltern Hills.

The walkway stretches through

five counties, starting in Wiltshire and passes through Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Hertfordshire before ending in Buckinghamshire.

Winter is not the ideal time to attempt to traverse the entire walkway. But short walks of around four hours, with a stop for lunch at a village restaurant, provide much needed fresh air and exercise during the cold, dark months.

The winter landscape is totally





different to the lush fields and flowers of summer. Snow sits comfortably on the hauntingly beautiful bare trees whose long branches stretch towards the sky. Historic churches welcome visitors who walk along the track past sheep and horses. The animals do not seem to mind the snow.

A popular wintertime walk starts outside Britwell Salome a village in South Oxfordshire about 4.5 miles north-east of Wallingford and finishes in Nuffield village just over 4 miles east of Wallingford. The

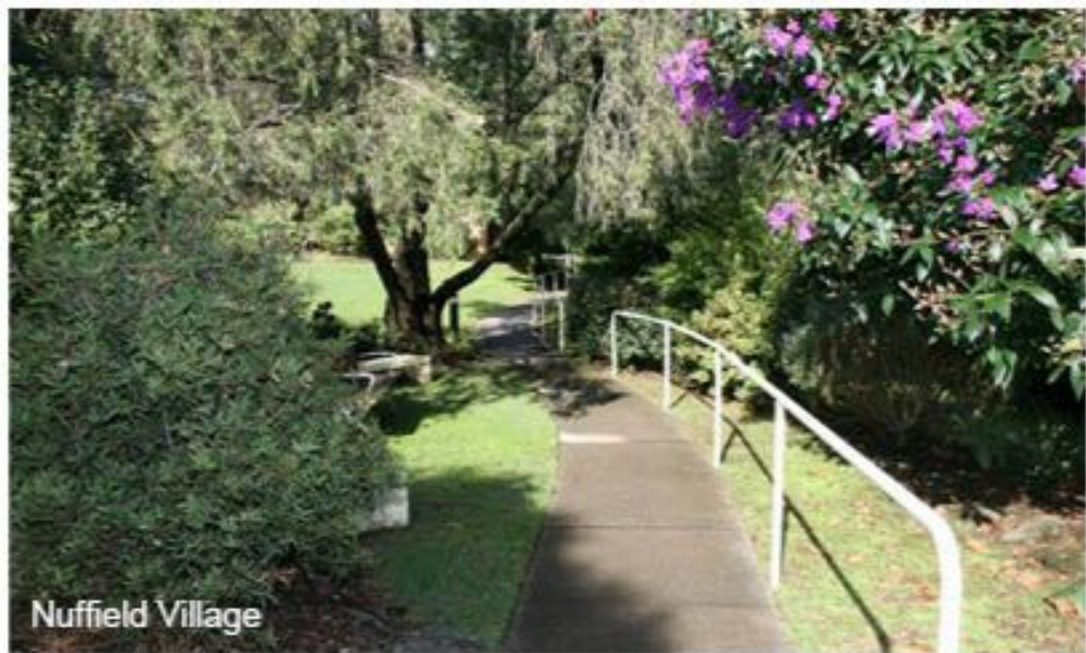
section of the Ridgeway west of the Nuffield follows the ancient Grim's Ditch. The purpose of these earthworks, dating back to 300BC, remains a mystery - the ditch is too small for military use but may have served to demarcate territory.

Two churches are worth a visit: Nuffield's Church of England parish church of the Holy Trinity built in Norman times and St Nicholas church in Britwell Salome built in the 13th century.

In the Holy Trinity Church some



Britwell Salome



Nuffield Village



Grim's Ditch

of the masonry from Roman times survives on the south side. In the 14th century the church was rebuilt and the north aisle was added.

Britwell Salome, the village where the winter walk starts, is just over an hours drive from London off the M40.

Many other short walks are possible on the Ridgeway which starts in Avebury home of the

largest stone circle in Europe. The path continues across the North Wessex Downs with a wild and remote landscape and fantastic views over the rolling hills down to the south. From Goring, on the River Thames, the landscape changes to woodland tracks with chalk grasslands. There are small villages and towns en route until Ivinghoe Beacon.

Nuffield Church of the Holy Trinity

