

BHS Paralympic Legacy Access Project

Route 13 – The Ridgeway – Ilsley Downs Ride



PLAP Route 13 – The Ridgeway – Ilsley Downs Ride

Distance: approximately 8 miles (can be increased to 10 miles)

Map: Ordnance Survey Explorer Map Number OL170 (Map 1:25000)

Important notes: Although the identified routes were driven for inclusion in the Project in August 2013 this doesn't allow for changed path surfaces following illegal use of motorised vehicles or variations in rainfall. It's essential that a horse is physically fit enough to complete the route intended as the routes are designed in a circular format instead of being one straight route running solely along the National Trail. They therefore involve some steep hill work going and down from the Ridgeway Trail. Accessing someone in need of assistance is not easy once they join the National Trail.

The Ridgeway National Trail was created using some of the pathways that originally formed a prehistoric trading route from the Dorset Coast to the North Norfolk coast. Starting at Overton Hill near Avebury in Wiltshire, it passes over The North Wessex Downs and Chiltern Hills to Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire, with two distinct types of scenery – semi-isolated downland grassland in the west and the less open wooded scenery of the Chilterns. Wherever you go, the scenery is spectacular and relevant historic details are shown on information boards with stunning views all around on clear days.

While the Ridgeway National Trail amounts to approximately 87 miles, it is not all accessible to carriage drivers.

Two drives/rides have been specifically identified in order to offer the opportunity to drive/ride in relatively remote and beautiful countryside while also having enough variety to enable driver/riders with differing physical abilities to choose shorter routes if they want to. Although both routes are less than the specified PLAP project distance of 12 miles, both can be considerably extended using some of the many other Restricted Byways and Byways Open to All Traffic available, but carriage drivers should be aware that not all these paths can be driven safely.

Researched, suggested and driven by Margaret Pawson, BDS National Access and Rights of Way Co-ordinator. Assistance also received from Peter Kyle, BDS Area Commissioner.

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Route Description

Cross the road from the large car park heading towards the A34, and after approximately half a mile continue past the bridleway signed on your right.

Turn right onto the next signed pathway (RB) keeping the gallops on your left and take the right-hand path on reaching a place where the path divides and a bridleway bears off to your left. This leads you down into West Ilsley where the path is slightly gravelly and overgrown where it joins the road.

Turn right on reaching the tarmac road and continue straight through the village keeping the duck pond and cricket pitch on your left, and The Harrow Inn on your right.

After passing a bridleway on your right which leads back to the top of the Ridgeway (set back from the road among some trees), continue along the road for approximately 1.5 miles. Visibility is good along this road and cars move fast.

Here it is possible to reduce the length of the whole route by returning to the small car park using the next right turn onto a byway open to all traffic (BOAT) which reverts to a RB after approximately half a mile – otherwise continue along the road.

Take the next right turn by Lands End Cottage onto a BOAT (disregarding the bridleway) and follow the hard track around the back of the house turning left onto the grass track (note that this is the lower of the two tracks). Half way back to the National Ridgeway Trail, the path becomes an RB, from which it gradually ascends back to The Ridgeway Trail crossing a chalk track on the way.

On reaching the top, turn right onto The Ridgeway Trail and follow the track past the first car park returning to the starting point. This section is approximately three miles long.

General Information

Parking: On the Ridgeway at Scutchamer's Knob, three kilometres (two miles) south of East Hendred off the A147 east of Wantage, Grid Ref SU45885 (Not suitable for anything over a 3.5T horse box).

On the Ridgeway at Bury Down on a minor road from A34 to West Ilsley (signed Ridgeway from A34), grid reference SU47984. If approaching from West Ilsley, the park on the left is easier to access and the entrance is wide enough for an HGV.

Insurance: The BHS recommends that before undertaking any part of this route, both horse and rider should be adequately insured against public liability. The British Horse Society can provide public liability and personal accident insurance cover as well as many benefits if you join as a member (terms and conditions and territorial limits apply). For more information or to join, visit www.bhs.org.uk/membership.

Feedback: These routes are kept to the standard that the local authority can afford. They were all accessible at the time of launch and are on definitive public rights of way. If you experience any

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problems with the routes or wish to raise any concerns, please contact the local authority, your local BHS Access Officer or the Access Team at BHS HQ via access@bhs.org.uk.

About the **Paralympic Legacy Access Project**

In 2013, the BHS launched the Paralympic Legacy Access Project (PLAP), dedicated to identifying and promoting 20 off-road routes across Britain. The 12-mile circular routes were recognised to suit the needs of carriage drivers with physical limitations.

The project was inspired by an anonymous donation to commemorate the achievements of the Paralympics and Para World Carriage Driving Championship in 2012. Launched by BHS President, Martin Clunes, the 20 routes were all tested prior to launch.

A huge thank you to those who volunteered their time, knowledge and input to create the routes of the Paralympic Legacy Access Project.

Discover more at www.bhs.org.uk/carriagedriving

Contact Us

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Find out more

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