

Memorable MG Routes

Places to visit – check opening times

The Ridgeway

An ancient route over a broad track along a chalk ridge which has been used since prehistoric times by travellers, herdsmen and soldiers. As "Britain's oldest road" it runs for 87 miles (139km) from Overton Hill near Avebury in Wiltshire to Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire past ancient hillforts on the North Wessex Downs, across the Thames and then along lower-lying paths through the wooded countryside of the Chilterns.

Uffington Castle

An eight acre double walled late Bronze Age hillfort sits on the very top of Whitehorse Hill (261m or 849ft) close to the ancient Ridgeway.

Uffington White Horse

One of only four in the UK that face to the right, it is high on an escarpment of the Berkshire Downs below Whitehorse Hill and a mile and a half south of Uffington village. It looks out over the Vale of the White Horse but as it is cut into the turf above the steepest slope, it can only really be viewed well from afar or from the air.

Wayland's Smithy

A Neolithic burial chamber, originally created as a round barrow with material dug from two ditches either side of the mound and then the mound was covered with a wooden mortuary house. From around 3500BC, the mound was enlarged to its present shape with a cruciform chamber and the mound enclosed with a supporting dry stone wall with six large sarcen stones in the entrance wall.

Tom Brown's Museum

The 380 year-old schoolroom which was featured in "Tom Brown's School Days" published in 1857 houses the museum. Thomas Hughes, author of the book, was born in Uffington, and many of the places described in the book are still visible today. The Museum has displays of local history, archaeology and archives of the surrounding villages, as well as mementoes of Thomas Hughes and the late poet laureate, Sir John Betjeman, who spent many happy years living in Uffington. Open from 2pm to 5pm each Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday from Easter until the end of October.
Postcode SN7 7RA



Great Shefford to Hook Norton over the Berkshire Downs and through the Vale of the White Horse

Although the M4 slices through the Berkshire Downs west of Newbury, the valleys leading up to the rolling downland and ridge running east-west reveal far more of the life and purpose of a particularly attractive area. The principal valley is the Lamborn valley running northwest from Newbury and the start of this route is around half way up that valley at Great Shefford, close to J14 on the M4. The route passes through Lambourn at the head of the valley and then, as you head out on the downs with training gallops in all directions, you are increasingly aware of the ridge on the skyline. Once you crest the ridge, you drop down the steep northern scarp slope and then head across an entirely different terrain - the broad Vale of the White Horse west of Oxford. As you pass through this undulating, farming area, brick and flint buildings abound in the many villages and the historic market towns of Faringdon and Witney. Beyond Witney the scenery changes with the soft colours of Cotswold stone buildings. Near Chipping Norton you cross the A361 Banbury road and drop into the narrow lanes through Swerford heading for Hook Norton. This route is one of contrasting scenery with a great deal of interest along the way. It is one that cannot fail to provide a memorable day in an MG!

As you leave Great Shefford you pass St Mary's church with its octagonal tower and climb gently up the valley through East Garston. The key feature is horseracing – it is a major activity with many stables along the length of the valley and in the surrounding area, together with several equine veterinary centres. Frequently you meet groups of horse riders returning from training work on the gallops. It is worth noting these are not ordinary horses – they are highly tuned racehorses, not roadwise hacks, so it is both wise and courteous to resist the urge to pass even slowly. Far better to bring your car to a halt and allow them to walk

by. On the sides of the road there are paddocks with thoroughbreds grazing and you can feel the land is carefully managed. Signs of substantial investment catch the eye with numerous modern or upgraded stables and houses. The villages have a



purposeful feel too with stable staff walking back from an early start to their daily routine with the horses.

At Lambourn you turn right and head out onto the downs. The smooth rolling downs with their large fields have a soft feel to the eye and all the time you are aware of the big skylines. You will see racehorses exercising on the gallops and many will pass you on the road.

Crossing the ridge you see the Ridgeway either side. It is an ancient route that runs from near Marlborough in the west through to the Goring Gap on the Thames and then on east through the Chilterns. To



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Blenheim Palace

The Baroque Palace, home of the 11th Duke of Marlborough and birthplace of Churchill, is set in 2,100 acres of parkland landscaped by Capability Brown. Not far from the centre of Woodstock, northwest of Witney on the A4095. Postcode OX20 1PX
www.blenheimpalace.com

Rousham House and garden

Built in 1635, Rousham is privately owned with an exceptional walled garden. Visits to the house are only by prior arrangement. Note there are no catering facilities. Just off the A4260 east of Chipping Norton. Postcode OX25 4QX
www.rousam.org

Hook Norton Brewery

Remains one of only 32 independent family-run breweries and is a fine example of a Victorian tower brewery. It's also the only brewery still driven by steam. Excellent visitor centre and tours of the brewery by prior arrangement. Postcode OX15 5NY
01608 730384
www.hooknortonbrewery.co.uk

Tea shops and pubs

White Horse

Morning coffee or lunch in this well run pub in the small village of Woolstone is a delight. It has a range of Arkells ales and serves cooked lunches and bar snacks. Opposite is a spacious well surfaced car park. Overnight B&B rooms are available too. Postcode SN7 7QL 01367 820726

Britchcombe Farm Teashop

Just below Whitehorse Hill on the B4057, this farm serves delicious cream teas at weekends in the summer months. 01367 820667

Pear Tree Inn

This attractive 18th century pub has a single, beamed bar with welcoming log fire and has B&B rooms. The Pear Tree is open all day and has the full range of Hook Norton beers. It is an ideal refreshment stop after visiting the brewery. Postcode OX15 5NU
01608 737482

Route data

Route is 58 miles excluding the off route visits and the approximate driving time is 2 hr 10 minutes. Full route details and additional information are available at
www.v8register.net/mmgr/mmgr.htm



the north is a truly stunning sight – a panorama over the broad Vale of the White Horse. On a cold day with clear air, the views are very long indeed. You then drop down a steep scarp slope towards the village of Kingston Lisle but turn left halfway down onto the B4057 which runs parallel to the ridge. Ahead of you looms Whitehorse Hill up on the ridge. After just over a mile you can turn left and climb up a single track road by Dragon Hill. You pass close to the hillfort of Uffington Castle when the road leads to a spacious, well surfaced car park on Woolstone Hill. From there you can enjoy a walk to the hillfort, see the White Horse and walk along the Ridgeway to Wayland's Smithy, a long barrow in a quiet copse.



A good lunch spot is the White Horse in Woolstone, an Arkells pub a mile or so below the Woolstone Hill car park, which serves delicious lunches and bar snacks. If you should do this route in reverse, then there is a splendid teashop at Britchcombe Farm on the B4057 below Whitehorse Hill.

The route north from Woolstone takes you first to the village of Uffington where you



pass Tom Brown's Museum and another church with an octagonal tower, then on to Faringdon via the hamlets of Fernham and Little Coxwell. After a short dash along the A420, you turn into Faringdon. The route on to Witney is enjoyable with the increasing Cotswold stone influence.

North from Witney the route on the B4022 through the villages of Finstock and Charlbury crosses the River Evenlode and then over the A44 to the attractive Cotswold village of Little Tew. On reaching the main A361 Chipping Norton to Banbury road, the route crosses over and drops into the narrow lanes around Swerford and then heads for the very attractive village of Hook Norton. Take very great care here as you often come across horse riders in the narrow lanes.

Hook Norton is an impressive village with a long main street lined by buildings of attractive honey-coloured Cotswold stone which are well maintained and represent a glorious array of thatched and tiled roofed properties. At the western end of the village you will find the lane to the Hook Norton Brewery next to the Pear Tree Inn - a welcome refreshment point.

The visitor centre at the Hook Norton Brewery is well worth seeing as it has an interesting display of the life and times of both the brewery and village. Do try and see the brewery's steam engine in action – it is on the ground floor of the eight storey brewery building. Often you can stand at an open door and see it throbbing away, driving an array of belts and cogs which provide most of the motive force for the building.

