

Mendip Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Mendip Hills is a place of such scenic quality that it was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1972.

This designation recognises that the Mendip Hills is one of England's finest landscapes, an area treasured by everyone with special protection and management.



NATURALLY BEAUTIFUL, NATIONALLY PROTECTED because of the landscape and what lies beneath

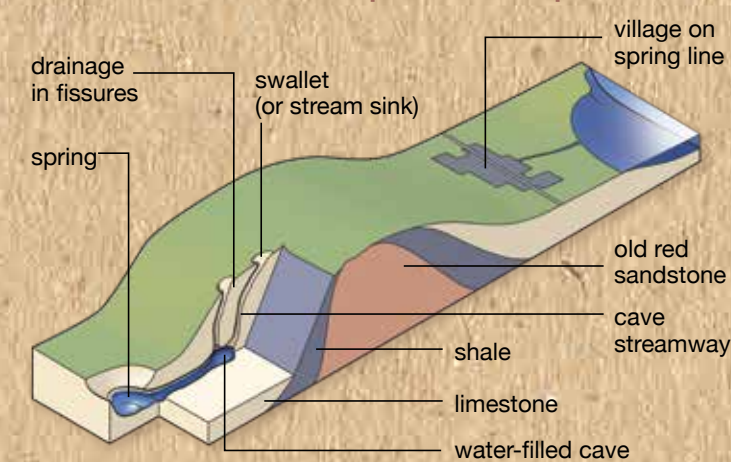
The Mendip Hills throughout its long history has been all things to us; a place to live and work, a place to worship or defend, a place to exploit through mines and quarries and a place to enjoy. All of these are still valid today. Each use has left its mark on the land and over time these characteristic marks have formed what we see today.

A landscape of many layers with modern agriculture on medieval field systems, on top of Roman towns, hiding ancient cave systems, where early man sheltered. Enjoy your visit today through the layers of history. This amazing array of landscapes in one area is enough for you to discover all year round: a hot summers afternoon on Black Down, the autumn colours across Chew Valley Lake, winter mist in the vale of Avalon viewed from Deer Leap and the first flush of spring green in Netherwood.

What lies beneath?

The geology shapes the life and work of us all, even today, in the Mendip Hills AONB. Essentially a huge piece of limestone with whaleback ridges that allows water to percolate through, dissolving the stone to create the legendary cave network and then appearing along the spring line. For miles around we benefit from the water that is captured in Blagdon and Chew lakes and at Cheddar Reservoir. Countless generations have used the cave network with 'Cheddar Man' in Cheddar and Burrington Combe having the earliest recorded cemetery in Britain.

Cross section of Mendip Hills landscape



Planning your visit

The Mendip Hills are easily accessible from Bristol, Bath and Weston super Mare and the M5 Junction 21 if travelling from the north or J22 if travelling from the south.

Greentraveller Guide to the Mendip Hills

www.greentraveller.co.uk/mendip-hills

Free e-guide packed with tips on where to sleep, eat, shop and visit.

Relevant OS Explorer maps are 141, 153 and 155 and Landranger 182.



Local tourist information centres

Burnham-on-Sea
01278 787852
burnhaminformation@gmail.com

Glastonbury
01458 832954
info@glastonburytic.co.uk

Sedgemoor Services
01934 750833
somersetvisitorcentre@somerset.gov.uk

Shepton Mallet
01749 345258
enquiries@visitsheptonmallet.co.uk

Street
01458 447384
info@streettic.co.uk

Wells Visitor Centre
01749 673477
visitwellsinfo@gmail.com

Weston-super-Mare
01934 888800
westontic@parkwood-leisure.co.uk

Cheddar Gorge National Trust Shop
01934 744689
somerset.countryside@nationaltrust.org.uk

National Trust



Be inspired

The beauty and rugged nature of the Mendip Hills have always been inspiring and they are home to many talented artists working in a multitude of media.

The AONB guide to a good day out

We want you to get the most out of your visit, and leave with happy memories of your time spent here. By following the Countryside Code, you can help look after yourself and safeguard the rural beauty of the area for your next visit.

The Countryside Code – Respect, Protect, Enjoy.

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- For the protection of plants and animals take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control and always clean up after your dog
- Consider other people

For the full Countryside Code visit www.gov.uk



If you experience access difficulties on Public Rights of Way, visit the Frequently Asked Questions page of our website for the contact details of local authority Rights of Way Teams to report the issue.

For your safety:

- Park in designated car parks not field gateways or on verges
- Never leave any valuables on view in your car
- Check weather conditions and dress appropriately

Protecting for future generations

Due to the special nature of the Mendip Hills AONB a Partnership coordinates the management and protection of the landscape through the AONB Management Plan. For further information please contact:

Mendip Hills AONB

www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk

Email: mendiphillsaonb@somerset.gov.uk

Tel: 01761 462338



Mendip Hills Fund

The fund provides a simple vehicle for local businesses, residents and visitors to give something back to this very special area, helping to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the Mendip Hills, and benefit local communities.

The fund will support local projects in the Mendip Hills area, including landscape conservation, education and interpretation projects and social and economic enterprises.

If you would like to donate please visit www.somersetcf.org.uk for more information or call 01749 344949.



The Mendip Hills Fund is a partnership between the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership and the Somerset Community Foundation (charity no 1094446).



Local farmshops include Lye Cross Farm in Redhill, New Manor Farm Shop near Bishop Sutton, Priddy Good Farm Shop and Wrington Greens Farm Shop



Strawberries and mushrooms are among the vast range of products grown locally.

Local breweries include Butcombe Brewery in Wrington, Cheddar Ales in Cheddar and Thatchers Cider in Sandford.



Why not visit one? They offer unique products and a great experience.

Look out for local farmers' markets at Axbridge, Cheddar and Wells.



This and the front cover illustration were both created by local artist Anne Carpenter (www.annecarpenterfabriccollages.co.uk/)

Places to go

Bleadon Hill Stunning views of the Bristol Channel. The Mendip Way passes at this point.

Crook Peak Distinctive peak that most of us see from the M5. Classic Mendip limestone grassland with outcrops of craggy limestone. Very steep walks to the summit. (National Trust).

King's Wood Ancient oak woodland that leads to Wavering Down and Crook Peak. Mendip Way and the Strawberry Line can both be joined here. (National Trust).

Shute Shelve Hill Beautiful grassland slopes providing views over historic Axbridge. Parking at Axbridge lay-by. (National Trust).

Cheddar Gorge Nationally famous gorge boasting the highest inland limestone cliffs in the country. Incredible cave systems with tourist facilities. Circular paths loop round the top of the gorge. (Longleat Estate / National Trust).

Velvet Bottom Reserve Distinctive landscape formed as a result of lead mining in the past. The nature reserve links Charterhouse to Cheddar Gorge. (Somerset Wildlife Trust).

Charterhouse Unique historic lead mining area with impressive examples of "gruffy ground". (Somerset Wildlife Trust / South West Heritage Trust / Privately owned).

Blackmoor Reserve Old lead mining area steeped in history with a surreal landscape of lumps and bumps formed from the spoil heaps. A unique mix of habitats including ponds and wetlands, heath and woods makes this site incredibly important for wildlife. (South West Heritage Trust).

Priddy Green Historic green at the heart of Priddy, with the famous hurdle stack and venue of the Priddy Sheep Fair that dates back over 600 years.

Deer Leap The best view in Somerset from this open windswept medieval settlement site. (South West Heritage Trust).

Ebbor Gorge Steep wooded gorge designated a National Nature Reserve with way marked trails to follow. (Natural England / National Trust).

Wookey Hole Caves Famous cave system and visitor attractions. (Privately owned).

Stockhill Forest Modern forest over old lead workings with easy going trails and forest walks. (Forestry Commission).

Priddy Mineries Nature has reclaimed this lead mining site to form a flowing landscape of tall grasses and ponds. Walks up to North Hill, Mendip's second highest hill and Priddy Nine Barrows can start here.

East Harptree Woods

Easy going trails take you through the woods to the last remaining lead smelting chimney on Mendip and superb views over Chew Valley Lake. (Forestry Commission).

Chew Valley Lake

Internationally important for birds. Fishing, sailing, toilets, picnic areas and trails. (Bristol Water) Tea room and fish café.

Woodford Lodge A great place to relax near the lake with restaurant, fishing shop and picnic areas. (Bristol Water).

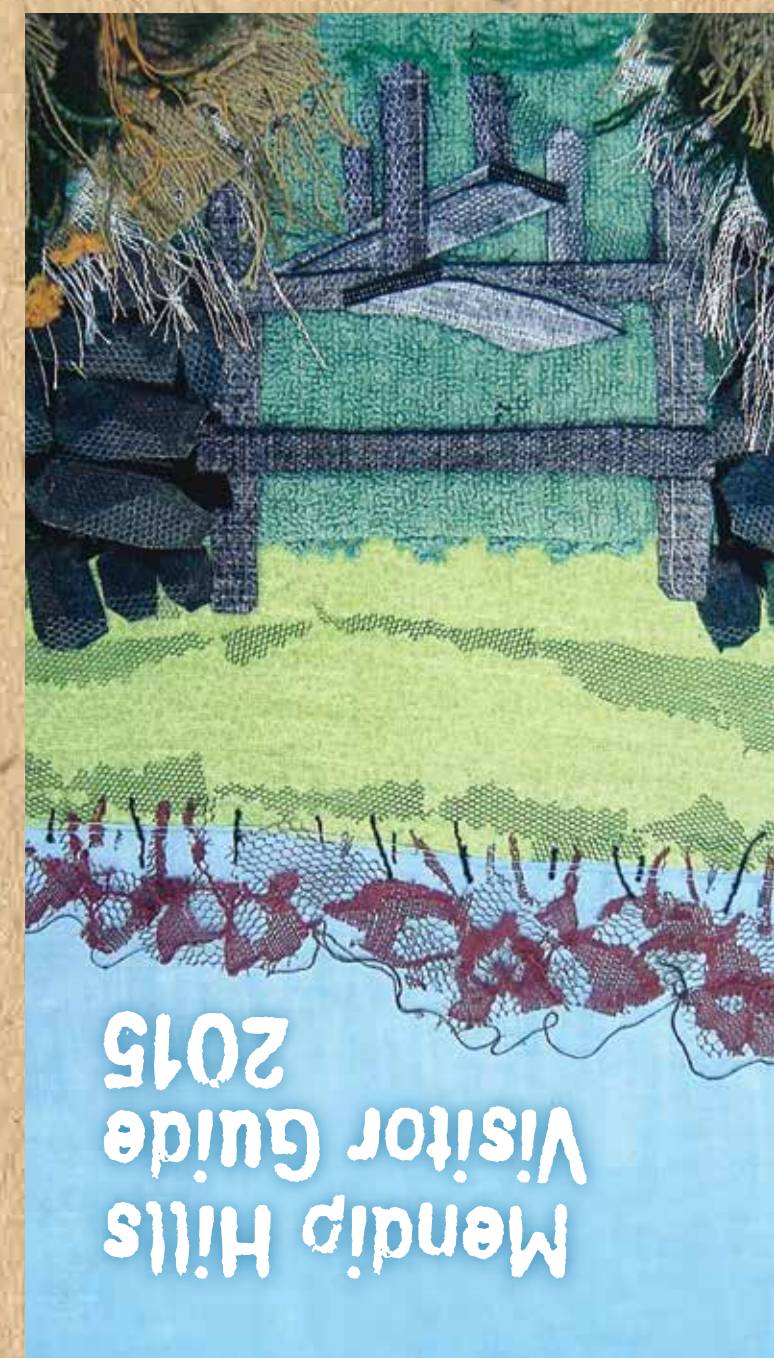
Blagdon Lake Views from the pumping station bridge across the beautiful lake. (Bristol Water).

Burrington Ham Gently rolling grassland and woods above Burrington Combe. (Open Access Land).

Black Down An extensive area of heathland concealing a World War II decoy town. Beacon Batch trig point is the highest point in the AONB at 325m giving you the best views of North Somerset. (Open Access Land).

Rowberrow Forest Straddling the highest ridge on Mendip this modern plantation links to Black Down and contains a good network of bridleways for you to enjoy. (Forestry Commission).

Dolebury Warren and Hillfort Iron Age hillfort renowned for beautiful flowering grasslands. (National Trust / Avon Wildlife Trust).



So much to do!

The Mendip Hills includes lakes, large open grassland areas, deep gorges, and caves to explore providing plenty of opportunities to walk, cycle, horse ride or take part in other outdoor activities from abseiling to yachting.

AONB downloadable walks and trails available from

www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk

The map shows routes and places of interest including:-

The Mendip Way
Strawberry Line
Limestone Link
West Country Way
Monarch's Way

Discovering Black Down



Discovering Black Down is a three year project (2013-2016) funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project is raising awareness of the wildlife and archaeological value of the Black Down and Burrington Commons through activities, events and training. The legacy of Discovering Black Down will seek to ensure local community and user group volunteers continue to play an active role in the care and conservation of the area.

www.discoveringblackdown.org.uk

mendiphillsaonb.org.uk

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