

Wild camping on the Ridgeway: how to do it responsibly

The Ridgeway National Trail is one of England's oldest roads, offering a spectacular journey through chalk downland, ancient monuments and peaceful countryside. For many walkers and cyclists, the idea of wild camping along the Trail is part of the adventure. But it's important to understand the legal context and how to minimise your impact if you choose to camp.

Is wild camping legal in England?

In most of England, wild camping without the landowner's permission is not legal, even on open countryside or access land. The only place where wild camping is legally permitted without prior consent is in designated areas of Dartmoor National Park, and even there, it is subject to specific rules and zones. Elsewhere, including along the Ridgeway, wild camping is technically a civil offence. Police powers to fine or arrest are generally aimed at large groups who refuse to move on peacefully. Solo or small-group campers who follow the Countryside Code and behave responsibly are unlikely to face enforcement—but it's not guaranteed.

If you do choose to wild camp, please do it responsibly

We know that some people will choose to wild camp along the Ridgeway. While we cannot endorse illegal camping, we want to help you do it in a way that protects the Trail, its heritage, and the natural environment.

The unwritten rules of responsible wild camping

Ask first: Whenever possible, seek permission from the landowner. If asked to move on, do so quietly and respectfully.

Leave no trace: Take all litter with you, leave the site exactly as you found it.

Stay one night only: Avoid altering the landscape—don't move stones, dig holes, or build structures.

Camp away from water: Stay at least 200 ft from streams or ponds. Don't use soaps or detergents in natural water sources.

Toilet waste: Normally, burying human waste is considered good practice. However, on the Ridgeway, this is not always appropriate due to the presence of archaeological sites and ancient monuments along the Trail. In these areas, it's better to take your waste with you using a portable toilet bag system. Never bury sanitary products.

Keep it small and quiet: Camp in groups of no more than two or three. Keep noise to a minimum.

No fires or BBQs: Use a camping stove and avoid scorching the ground. Fires and disposable BBQs are strictly discouraged.

Be discreet: Choose a spot out of sight from paths, buildings, roads and livestock.

Arrive late, leave early: Set up at dusk and pack up at dawn to reduce your visibility and impact.



The Ridgeway is more than a National Trail—it's a living link to our past. It passes through areas rich in archaeology, including ancient burial mounds and hillforts, as well as habitats for rare wildlife. Damage from careless camping—such as fire scars, litter, or trampling—can have lasting consequences. By following these guidelines, you help preserve the Ridgeway for future generations of walkers, cyclists, and nature lover