



Ridgeway Traffic Survey

August 2026



Executive Summary

Overview

In August 2026, volunteers from Goring Gap Active Travel conducted a comprehensive traffic survey of walkers and cyclists at the end of the unsurfaced section of The Ridgeway National Trail in Rectory Road, Streatley. The study captured usage data across three typical summer days—a Saturday, Sunday, and Tuesday—to assess contemporary traffic volumes and understand how leisure tourism impacts the local economies of Goring and Streatley.

Key Findings

- **Cycling Popularity:** While an older study from roughly 2000 estimated that cyclists made up just 15% of Ridgeway users, this survey reveals that cyclists now account for approximately 45% of the total. This significant growth is most likely driven by a combination of the post-Covid cycling boom, the rising popularity of gravel bikes, and the active promotion of long-distance off-road “adventure routes” like the Great Chalk Way and King Alfred's Way.
- **Traffic Volumes:** Over the three-day survey period, a total of 192 cyclists and 233 walkers were recorded. Traffic levels were substantially higher at the weekend; Tuesday's volumes were just 21% of the weekend daily average for walkers, and 26% for cyclists.
- **Local and Long-Distance Insights:** Origin-Destination (O-D) surveys revealed a rich mix of users. The Ridgeway serves as an important route for multi-day bikepackers and hikers, and also has high volumes of local leisure traffic. A substantial portion of weekend walkers were using the trail specifically to visit the historic, award-winning Bell pub in Aldworth.
- **Modal Shift Potential:** While some regional visitors successfully utilised the Goring & Streatley railway station to access the trail, a surprising number of regular local users—including joggers and dog walkers—drove short distances (under two miles) to reach the car park at Rectory Road.

Conclusions

The ancient Ridgeway continues to serve as an important recreation corridor and a valuable economic driver for local pubs, cafes, and accommodation providers. Moving forward, the gathered dataset will be used as input to the forthcoming Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for South Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. The report highlights a clear opportunity to market the region more heavily to rail-based cyclists and walkers from urban hubs like London and Reading, and to discourage short-distance driving to the trailhead.

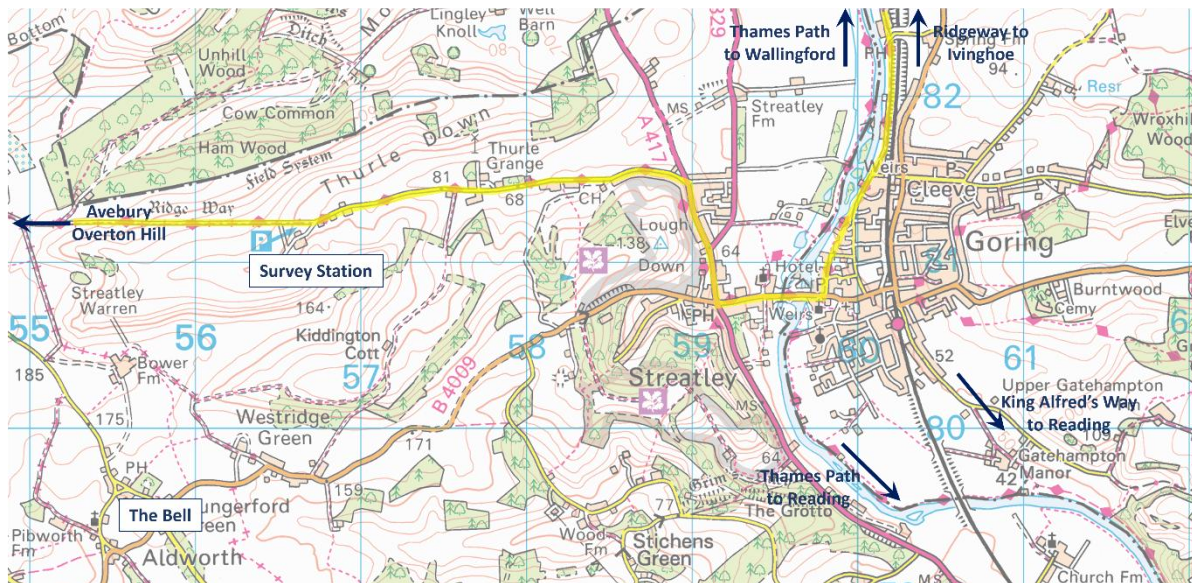
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1 Introduction

On 1, 2 and 4 August 2026, volunteers from Goring Gap Active travel carried out a survey of walkers and cyclists at the end of the unsurfaced section of The Ridgeway in Rectory Road, Streatley.

The purpose of the survey was to get an idea of the number of people using The Ridgeway on typical summer days. Many Ridgeway users also travel across the River Thames to or from Goring, making use of the cafes, pubs and accommodation there, so the survey should give an insight into the impact The Ridgeway has on the villages.



As well as being part of a long-distance through route, The Ridgeway west of Streatley is also a significant local traffic generator. The data obtained will be fed into the forthcoming Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan for the Goring Gap area of South Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.

There are few published statistics on the numbers of cyclists and walkers using The Ridgeway. A Google search returned details of an academic study using data collected in 1999. This estimated that 75% of users were walkers or joggers and 15% cyclists. We think this seriously underestimates the number of cyclists, because of the following changes in the last few years:

- An increase in the number of people cycling during and since Covid
- The popularity of gravel bikes, with cyclists switching from lightweight road bikes to these because of the poor state of the roads and perceived dangers of motor traffic
- The promotion of off-road leisure routes such as King Alfred's Way and the Great Chalk Way.

2 Process

The survey was carried out over a Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday to give an idea of user numbers on a weekend or a weekday in summer. The dates chosen were the first available dry days in August. Reserve dates had been earmarked in case of wet weather, but these were not needed, due to the drought. A team of 11 volunteers working shifts ensured that there were two people surveying from 8 am to 6 pm each day.

The weather each day was dry and mainly sunny, with temperatures in the low to mid 20s for most of the day – effectively in one of the minor lulls between the 2026 heatwaves. It is possible that the

heatwaves prior to the survey date may have discouraged some visitors, but probably not as much as torrential rain would have done.

It was fortuitous that the dates chosen did not coincide with any of the major sporting events that make use of The Ridgeway, such as long-distance walking events or cycling sportives.

The survey consisted of two components:

- A simple count of the number of walkers and cyclists passing the survey station in each quarter-hour period from 8 am to 6 pm each day. This did not require the active participation of any of the walkers and cyclists, so it gives an accurate count of the number of people using this part of The Ridgeway on the dates in question
- A face-to-face questionnaire survey of those willing to stop for a few minutes to answer some simple questions about their origins, destinations and means of travel to the area. This Origin-Data (O-D) data was collected from an average 48% of walkers and 32% of cyclists.

The two survey components could be carried out simultaneously, as there were two volunteers on hand for the whole of the survey period each day.

3 Summary Results

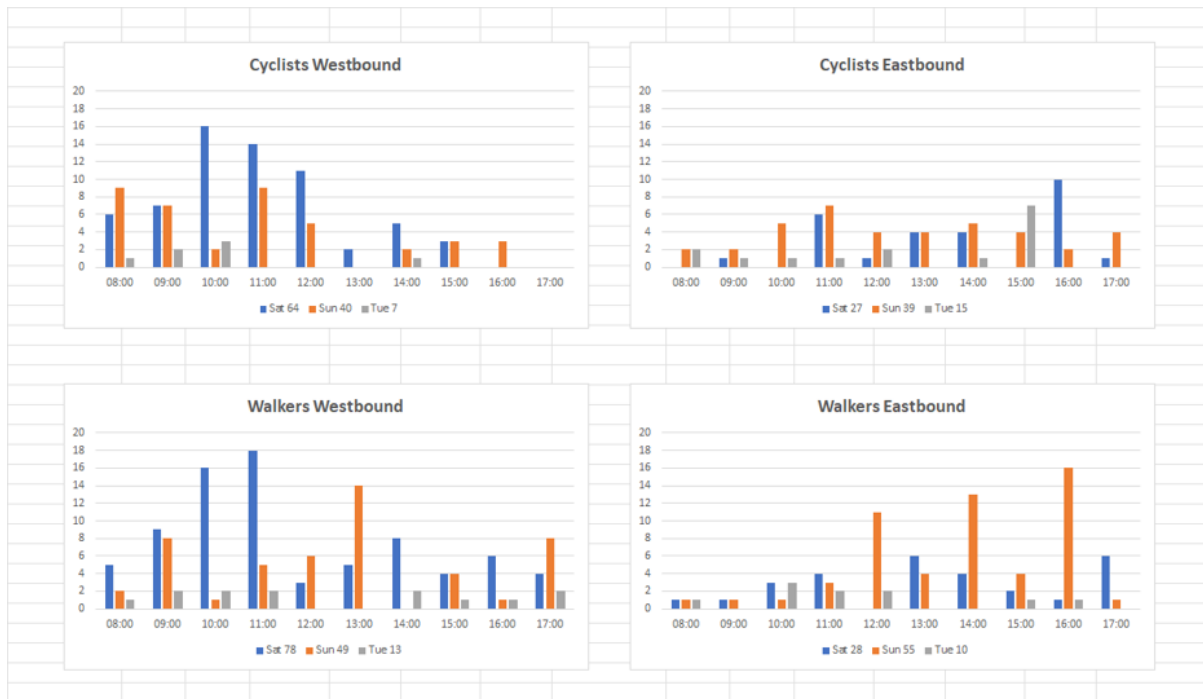
Ridgeway Traffic Count 1 - 4 August 2026 Summary Results										
	Sat	Sun	Tue	Total			Sat	Sun	Tue	Total
Walkers WB	78	49	13	140	Cyclists WB		64	40	7	111
Walkers EB	28	55	10	93	Cyclists EB		27	39	15	81
Total	106	104	23	233	Total		91	79	22	192
O-D survey	60	36	17	113	O-D survey		27	21	13	61
O-D %	57%	35%	74%	48%	O-D %		30%	27%	59%	32%

WB Westbound – Walkers and Cyclists heading from Streatley up The Ridgeway towards Aldworth and Avebury

EB Eastbound – Walkers and Cyclists coming down The Ridgeway towards Streatley and Goring
Numbers in the table show the numbers of walkers and cyclists counted each day, with the bottom two rows showing the number who stopped to answer the O-D survey and their percentage of the total.

4 Traffic Count

The traffic count was based on a simple tally of walkers, cyclists and dogs in each quarter-hour from 8 am to 6 pm, summarised later as hourly data for ease of presentation.



Points to note from the graphs are:

- Numbers for Tuesday were lower: 21% of the average weekend day for walkers, 26% for cyclists.
- The large number of walkers westbound on Saturday morning includes a substantial number heading to The Bell pub in Aldworth. Among this was an organised group of about 10 who arrived by car. This group and a number of others took The Ridgeway en route to the pub, then returned by one of the more direct footpaths that do not go through the survey site. There is some evidence that walkers on Sunday did a similar route the other way around (but we don't know why).
- Saturday westbound cyclist numbers were boosted by a group of around 20 cyclists en route from London to Bristol. They had camped Friday night at Ridgeway campsite near Ipsden. Some got up earlier than others, so they came through the survey station in a number of small groups spread out over a few hours.
- Higher numbers of both cyclists and walkers westbound Saturday morning and eastbound Sunday afternoon highlight the role of Goring and Streatley as a location for starting or finishing a weekend trip, or for being a staging point for multi-day journeys. Five of the eastbound walkers Sunday afternoon were walking from the Wantage area and staying overnight in Goring. The mid-day eastbound walkers spike on Sunday was due to a group of eight from Aylesbury, who were walking from Didcot to Wallingford.
- The number of dogs accompanying walkers was 5 on Sunday and 3 on Tuesday, at the beginning and end of the day. Saturday saw 18, 10 of which were accompanying large family groups going for local walks (eg to The Bell) during the middle part of the day.

The survey time period of 8 am to 6 pm was chosen as it was felt this was the most practical given the number of volunteers available. It was inevitable this would result in some people being missed. From trends observed on the day these are most likely to fall into one of the following categories:

- Early-morning joggers and dog walkers taking their exercise before the day became too hot
- Early morning bike riders avoiding the heat, most likely to be locals rather than long-distance

- Evening dog walkers
- Westbound Ridgeway hikers, intending to wild camp overnight

5 Origin – Destination Data

It was relatively easy to carry out a complete count of walkers, cyclists and dogs across all three days, as no interaction with the people was required for this. Collecting O-D data was a different story. Not all passers-by were willing to stop. This was most obvious in the case of eastbound cyclists coming down the hill at some speed. A significant proportion of these were riding gravel bikes, but it was not possible to assess visually from the kit on the bike whether these were multi-day bikepackers or others just out for a local ride. In the case of cyclists who still stop to talk, “local” covered anywhere roughly in the area bounded by Wantage, Wallingford, Henley, Reading and Newbury.

Joggers were not tallied separately from walkers and were most frequent in the early part of the day. Those who spoke to us were mostly from Goring or Streatley, though some had driven to the car park to start the run from there.

A survey sample of 48% of walkers and 32% of cyclists is large enough to be representative provided the data is a random sample. Reasons why it might not count as random include:

- Joggers were less likely to stop than leisure walkers, leading to an underestimate of local compared to long-distance journeys
- It was easier to “catch” walkers starting or finishing their journeys in the car park by the survey station, leading to a possible overestimate of the proportion of (mainly) walkers that travelled by car.
- If long-distance cyclists were more or less likely to stop than those out for a local ride, this would affect the results, but it was not clear whether this was the case. Some long-distance cyclists were happy to stop for a chat, some water and jelly babies or flapjack (provided by us). Other cyclists may have been reluctant to stop as they were timing their rides for training or fitness purposes.

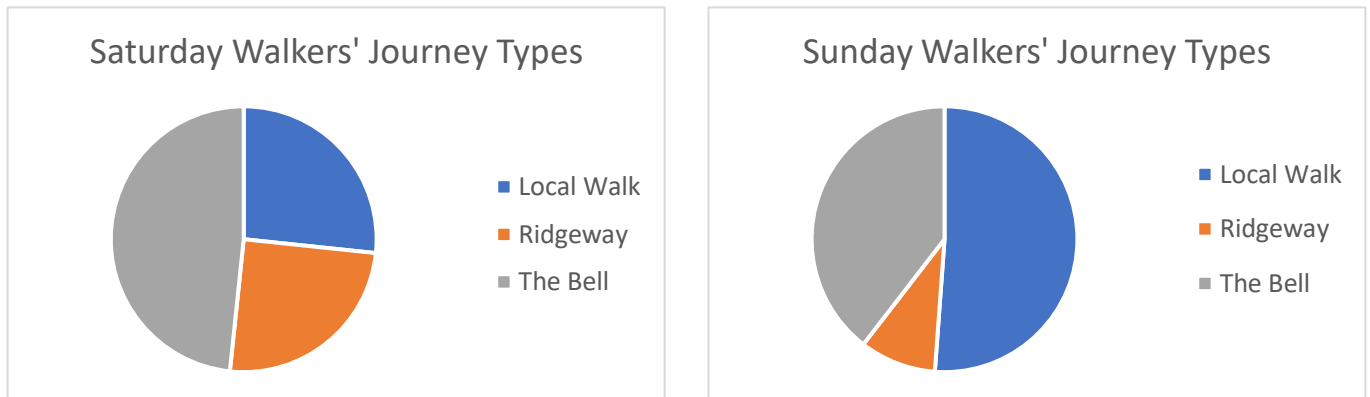
We had hoped to also get an idea of how many cyclists were using Strava to record their rides, as this could be useful in terms of calibrating other cycle use data derived from Strava. As it turned out, the cyclists most likely to be using Strava were probably the ones who didn’t stop and there was not enough data to analyse. However we have another related project, where cyclists visiting five cafes in the Goring Gap area have been invited to complete an online survey form themselves, gathering similar O-D data. At the time of writing the data collection period for this survey (August 2026) is just coming to an end, but it looks as though there will be some useful data to analyse. A separate report will be published on goringgapactivetravel.co.uk when this is complete.

6 O-D Analysis

The classic definition of Origin and Destination breaks down somewhat when the journey is a local leisure walk or cycle, where the focus is the trip itself and not the destination. To address this, walkers’ responses were used to identify three journey types:

- A walk with the specific object of visiting The Bell pub at Aldworth
- A generic local walk/run, such as out and back along The Ridgeway or a circuit returning to Streatley via Moulsoford and the Thames Path

- A linear trip along The Ridgeway, either a day's section such as Wantage to Goring, or a multi-day Ridgeway journey on foot or by bike

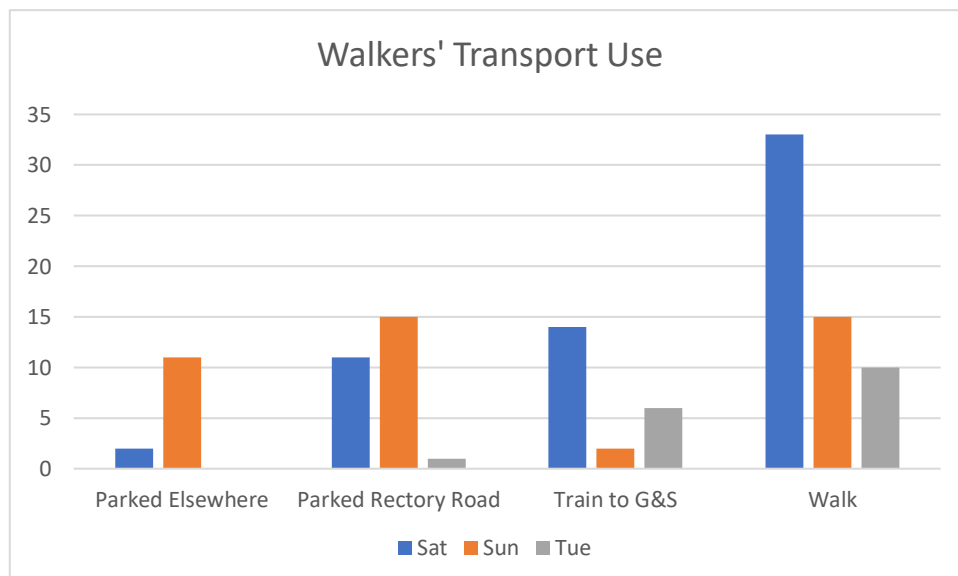


The effect of The Bell as an important local destination is shown clearly in these graphs. Fewer Ridgeway walkers were identified on the Sunday and all of those were eastbound.

The O-D data for cyclists needs to be treated with caution, because of the limited information on the split of these between local and multi-day rides. However from the data that was obtained, 30% of cyclists on Saturday were on part of a multi-day ride, with zero on Sunday and 77% on Tuesday. This suggests that cyclists travelling The Ridgeway are less likely to come through Streatley on a Sunday compared to a Saturday, but a majority of cyclists on a weekday are using this part of The Ridgeway for a multi-day ride.

6.1 Transport to the area

Cyclists and walkers willing to stop were asked where they parked, if they travelled to the area by car



or whether they used Goring & Streatley railway station. Use of cars by those parking at the Rectory Road car park included runners driving from Goring or Streatley to go for a run up The Ridgeway. The same was also true of some dog walkers.

More people used their cars to access The Ridgeway on Sunday than Saturday, with Sunday users also likely to use other locations such as the car parks in Goring or at the top of Streatley Hill. Not surprisingly, train use was lower on Sunday, as the service is only hourly instead of every 30 minutes other days.

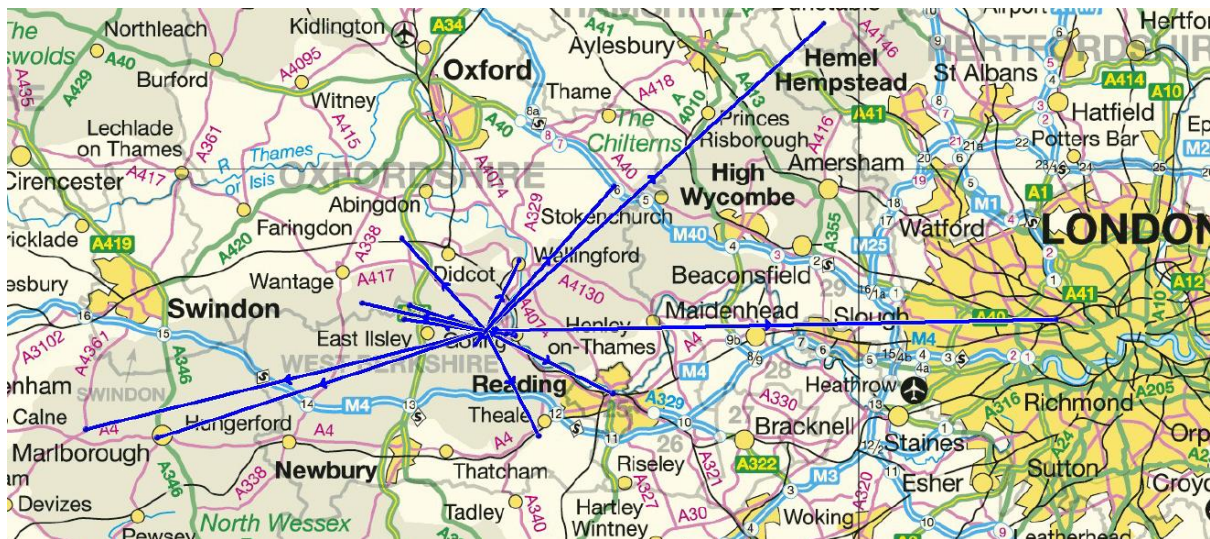
A similar analysis was not carried out for cyclists, as the numbers travelling to the area by car or train was not significant.

6.2 Distance Travelled

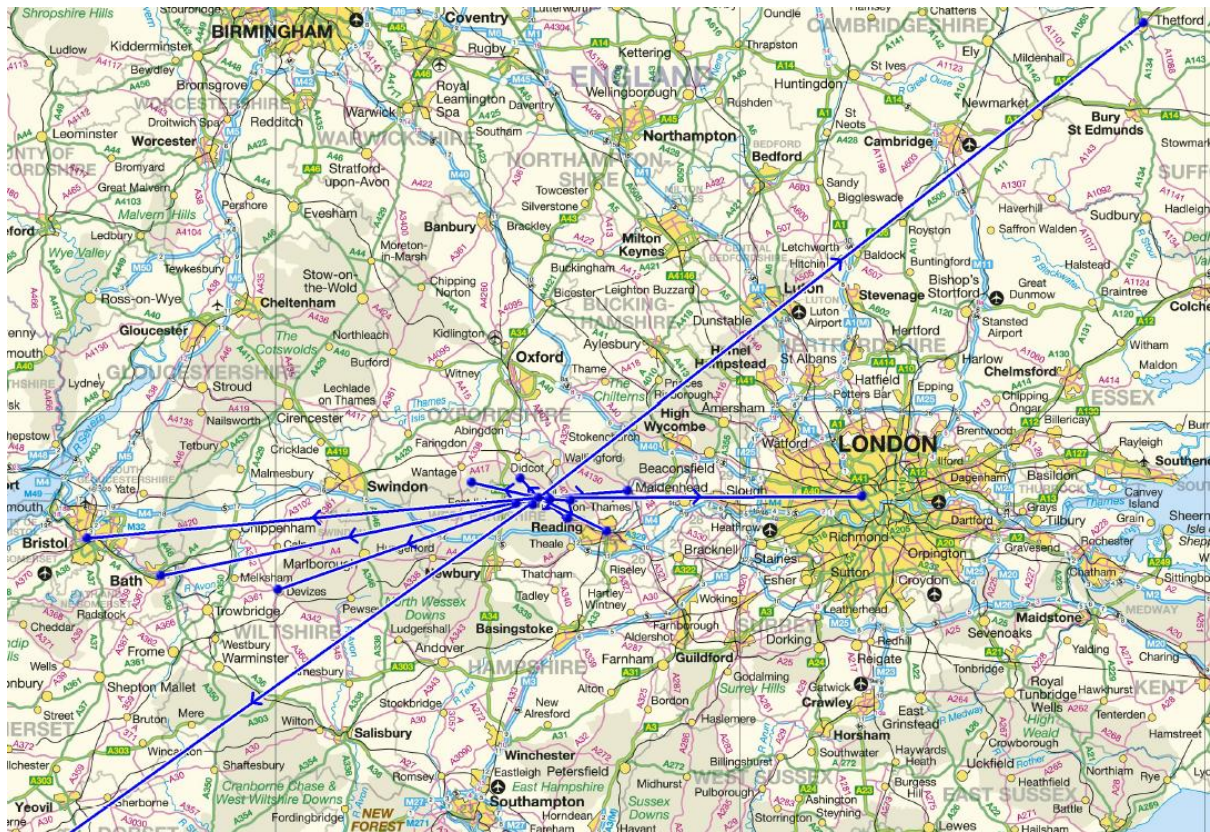
By analysing the origins and destinations stated by interviewees, it was possible to estimate the distances people travelled before or after being surveyed. For the purpose of this analysis:

- The origin and destination used were those of the whole journey for multi-day journeys (eg Lyme Regis to Norfolk for some cyclists), and included sections travelled by car or train (eg for walkers who travelled from London to Goring & Streatley by train).
- Straight-line map distances were used, in the absence of any information about routing. This inevitably introduces some errors. A cyclist from South Stoke would cover at least twice the crow-fly distance, because of the River Thames. Walkers following The Ridgeway would travel significantly further than the straightline distance.

This means the analysis gives an idea of the distances people were prepared to come to use The Ridgeway, not actual distances walked or cycled.



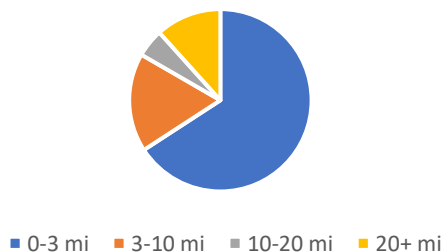
Walkers' Origins and Destinations



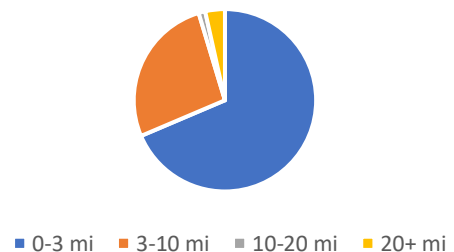
Cyclists' Origins and Destinations

By grouping the origins and destinations into distance categories, it was possible to provide some quantitative analysis to number and types of journey. This analysis was not carried out for Tuesday because of the smaller numbers involved.

Saturday Walkers
Distance from Origin/Destination

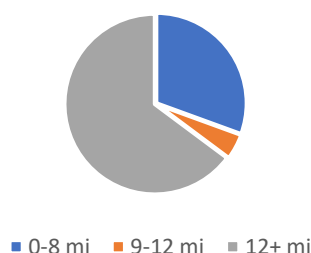


Sunday Walkers
Distance from Origin/Destination

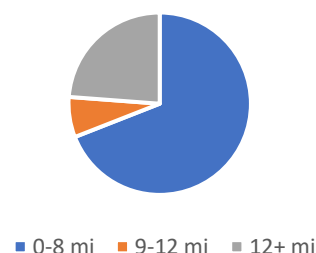


The most striking difference in distance travelled between Saturday and Sunday walkers is in the 20+ miles category, where the average distance travelled is boosted by walkers using the train to travel from London, and more long-distance Ridgway walkers being recorded on a Saturday. The proportion of very local walkers, which will include joggers and dog walkers was similar on both days, but Sunday shows more people coming from between 3 and 10 miles away for a “Sunday Stroll”.

Saturday Cyclists
Distance from Origin/Destination



Sunday Cyclists
Distance from Origin/Destination



For cyclists, there is a pronounced difference in the results for Saturday and Sunday. In particular the 12+ mile category on Saturday included 16 riders who had travelled from 35 miles or further away (including Devizes, Lyme Regis, London, Bristol or Norfolk), whereas the 10 riders in that category on Sunday were all from Henley. This is an interesting finding, but it is difficult to be sure because of the number of cyclists that did not stop for the survey.

7 Anecdotal Evidence

Statistics are important, but they do not give the “rich picture” of the variety of people using The Ridgeway. Specific highlights included:

- The bikepacker who was heading towards Reading on his third and last day of cycling King Alfred’s Way. He had a remarkably small amount of kit, which appeared to consist of a bivvy/tarp and a change of cycling shorts. He complained of having been cold during the night (the Saturday) and wished he’d brought a blanket. He could also have done with a spare shirt, as his was very grubby.
- The German bikepacker who was travelling The Great Chalk Way from Lyme Regis to Norfolk. He was glad to stop for some refreshment and a long chat. He said his friends back home would not believe what a beautiful route it is, but then they might not have the same weather as him another year.
- The middle-aged couple from Preston on two well-equipped touring bikes. After taking the train to Lincoln to visit friends, they were cycling The Great Chalk Way from Norfolk, but planned to head off to Bath and into Wales to head home via the Wales Divide off-road trail, all in two weeks.
- A community of around 20 cyclists riding from Temple Cycles in London to Temple Cycles’ other store in Bristol. Some were riding Temple bikes, but not all. They had camped Friday night at Ridgeway View Campsite near Mongewell, and were travelling in groups of four or five depending on how early they had got up that morning.
- The two novice cycle tourists with Decathlon bikes who had set out from Swindon and were heading to the Wallingford campsite on Tuesday, but not totally sure what they would do next. Both were aged 16, which brought back nostalgic memories for some of us.
- A single Ridgeway walker, followed an hour later by a couple, all headed to the Miller of Mansfield for their overnight stay. We wonder if they met each other and compared notes.

- The mother from Banbury on a folding e-bike, riding from Uffington to Streatley with her teenage son who was on a regular mountain bike. Car transport either end was being provided by the husband/father.
- The young couple from London who had taken the train to Goring to do the walk to The Bell and back (on the Tuesday).

8 Conclusions

The ancient track of The Ridgeway west of Streatley remains an important tourism and leisure route for both local people and those from further afield in the UK.

Previous published information (c.2000) estimated cyclists as making up only 15% of visitors, whereas our count shows that nowadays this proportion is more like 45%, due to the increased popularity of gravel bikes and the promotion of long-distance off-road routes such as The Great Chalk Way and King Alfred's Way.

Over three warm (but not excessively hot) and dry days in August 2026, The Ridgeway was used by the following numbers of walkers and cyclists

	Sat	Sun	Tue	Total
Walkers	106	104	23	233
Cyclists	91	79	22	192

As might be expected, this part of The Ridgeway is popular with local dog walkers and joggers. It was a surprise to those carrying out the survey that some of these regular users drove for less than 2 miles to the Rectory Road car park before starting their green exercise.

Many of the weekend visitors were making this section of The Ridgeway part of their route to the historic Bell pub in Aldworth, which has won countless CAMRA awards.

There was strong evidence of walkers and cyclists on multiday journeys visiting or staying at pubs, B&Bs and campsites in the Goring and Streatley area, showing the contribution of this sort of tourism to the local economy. Surprisingly, none of the visitors questioned referenced staying at the Streatley YHA, which seems a pity.

Some of those interviewed had travelled to Goring & Streatley station by train from London, Reading or Swindon, but not that many. There is untapped potential for marketing the area, particularly to cyclists from London.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the volunteers from Goring Gap Active Travel who gave their time to carry out the survey, including Andrew McCausland, Andy McKenzie, Barbara Karayi, Barrie Turner, Hilary Coutts, Jim Donahue, Robin Williamson, Tessa Costin, Will Graham.

Appendix Sample Data Collection Sheets

Ridgeway Traffic Count Tally Sheet

Location: The Ridgeway (Warren Farm)

Date: 2-8-26 Day of Week: Sun

Start Time: 8:00 End Time:

Surveyor Name(s): Robin Barber

Weather: ☒ Sunny ☐ Overcast ☐ Raining ☐ Windy

Use standard tally mark | for each passing cyclist, walker or dog

Time Interval	Cyclists		Walkers		Dogs (either direction)
	Westbound (to Avebury)	Eastbound (to Goring)	Westbound (to Avebury)	Eastbound (to Goring)	
08:00 - 08:15				①	3 ③
08:15 - 08:30				③	
08:30 - 08:45		②			
08:45 - 09:00	⑤			①	
09:00 - 09:15	⑤		①	①	
09:15 - 09:30		①	①	①	
09:30 - 09:45		①	④	⑤	①
09:45 - 10:00	①		①		
10:00 - 10:15	②				
10:15 - 10:30		①			
10:30 - 10:45		①	①		
10:45 - 11:00		②		①	
11:00 - 11:15		①	①	①	
11:15 - 11:30	④	④		②	
11:30 - 11:45	②		④		
11:45 - 12:00	④	②			

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Origin - Destination data form

Date: Sat 1 Aug

Surveyor Name:

Time	No. in group C or W	No. Strava users	Origin	Destination	Multi-day?	Car Park? If so where	G&S railway station?	Comments
14:10	6 W		Goring	Bell Inn				Local family from Goring
15:00	2 C		Norfolk	Bath	~14			Great Chalk Way
15:40	1 C		Streathley	Local ride				
15:50	2 C		Streathley	Local ride				
15:55	2 W		Monument (Wantage)	Streathley	*	Monument		Part of piecemeal Ridgeway
16:35	1 C		Wantage	Streathley		Hare		
16:35	2 C		Pangbourne	Local ride				
17:20	2 W		Moulsham	Goring				
17:20	1 W		Streathley	Dog walk				
17:35	2 W		Goring	Goring (via Moulsham)			Y	RIDG + GOR
17:40	1 W		Goring	Avebury	3			

O-D data form.docx