

# Cranborne Chase AONB – Top 10 Stargazing Locations

## 1. King Alfred's Tower



Kingsettle Hill, South Brewham, Bruton, Somerset BA10 0LB

King Alfred's Tower is a striking 160ft (49m) folly, built in 1772 for Henry Hoare II, known as Henry the Magnificent, the designer of the iconic Stourhead gardens. It is believed to mark the site where King Alfred the Great rallied his troops in 878. The tower commemorates the accession of George III to the throne in 1760 and the end of the Seven Years War. Henry would surely have appreciated the majesty of the night sky as much as his own creations and this site provides a perfect spot from which to admire the beauty above.

[Directions](#)

[Website](#)

**Grid reference:** ST778340

**Eastings:** 377848 **Northings:** 134032

**Latitude:** 51.105152 **Longitude:** -2.3177773

**Facilities:** Car park

**Owner:** The National Trust

## 2. Dinton Park



St Mary's Road, Dinton, Wiltshire SP3 5HH

Perfectly described by the National Trust as “far-reaching rolling parkland with tranquil views in the grounds of a Neo-Grecian house”. Please note that car parking for Dinton Park is located on St Mary's Road immediately south of St Mary's Church. There is no visitor car parking at Philipps House itself. This park is one of Wiltshire's best kept secrets and boasts substantial views - even Salisbury Cathedral can be seen from the highest point. Just like the

night sky, the house is strikingly simple, deliberately conservative and grand, making it a fantastic backdrop for your night time photography.

[Directions](#)

[Website](#)

**Grid reference:** SU009315

**Eastings:** 400985 **Northings:** 131584

**Latitude:** 51.083577 **Longitude:** -1.9873184

**Facilities:** Car park, nearby shop and pub.

**Owner:** The National Trust

### 3. Fontmell and Melbury Downs



Spreadeagle Hill, Melbury Abbas, Dorset SP7 ODT

At 263m, the summit of Melbury Hill is one of the highest points in Dorset. An Armada beacon sited here in 1588 formed part of the chain of signal beacons stretching between London and Plymouth. What better place to witness the other navigational tools used by sea farers worldwide – the mystical constellations. This site offers superb panoramic views which, apart from Win Green, are unparalleled in the AONB.

[Directions](#)

[Website](#)

**Grid reference:** ST886187

**Eastings:** 388608 **Northings:** 118715

**Latitude:** 50.967740 **Longitude:** -2.1636066

**Facilities:** Car park, nearby café at Compton Abbas Airfield.

**Owner:** The National Trust

#### 4. Martin Down Nature Reserve



This 336ha reserve is home to an exceptional collection of plants and animals associated with chalk downland and scrub habitats, including a number of rare or threatened species. It also offers an exceptional view of our night skies. Savour this ancient landscape where our prehistoric ancestors would have relied heavily on the night sky for navigation, planning their year and for their religion and associated rituals.

[Directions](#)

[Website](#)

**Grid reference:** SU036200

**Eastings:** 403665 **Northings:** 120048

**Latitude:** 50.979831 **Longitude:** -1.9491720

**Facilities:** Car park

**Owner:** Natural England and Hampshire County Council

#### 5. Win Green



Donhead Hollow, Near Ludwell, Wiltshire SP7 0ES

One of the best known and most iconic sites in the Cranborne Chase AONB, Win Green is its highest point as well as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It contains chalk grassland, a habitat that has been seriously eroded in the UK and offers extensive views, with Bournemouth, the Isle of Wight, Salisbury, Glastonbury Tor, the Mendips, the Quantocks and Milk Hill all visible when clear.

[Directions](#)

[Website](#)

**Grid reference:** ST923204

**Eastings:** 392328 **Northings:** 120473

**Latitude:** 50.983613 **Longitude:** -2.1106625

**Facilities:** Car park

**Owner:** The National Trust

## 6. Knowlton



Knowlton, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 5AE

Many people report a strange sensation when standing at the centre of Church Henge, among the ruins of the medieval church. This is perhaps because it is at the heart of a major pagan ceremonial site, once taken over by Christian worship, but now returned to nature. Surrounding the site is the largest concentration of pre-historic barrows and henges found anywhere in the UK. Read up on the constellation myths created by our ancestors that tell of gods and monsters, heroes and villains and other legends using only the stars in the night sky and then witness the incredible theatrical display for yourself. The backdrop of the stunning church also makes for fantastic astrophotography.

[Directions](#)

[Website](#)

**Grid reference:** SU023102

Eastings: 402331 Northings: 110231

**Latitude:** 50.891560 **Longitude:** -1.9682264

**Facilities:** Small car park

**Owner:** English Heritage

## 7. Badbury Rings



B3082, near Wimborne, Dorset BH21 4DZ

Badbury Rings is an Iron Age hill fort in the territory of the Durotriges. In the Roman era, soldiers built a temple nearby which was used by the people of Vindocladia, a small local settlement. Back then there was little light pollution and our ancestors would have visited Badbury Rings and witnessed the full majestic view of our galaxy and beyond.

[Directions](#)

[Website](#)

**Grid reference:** ST960030

**Eastings:** 395983 **Northings:** 103064

**Latitude:** 50.827097 **Longitude:** -2.0584077

**Facilities:** Car park

**Owner:** The National Trust

## 8. Cley Hill



Corsley, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 7QU

Although a bracing walk to the top of this ancient hillfort, once you've reached the summit you'll be on top of one of the UK's UFO hotspots. For almost 40 years this site has drawn UFO spotters who are keen to see if the talk of lights, flying objects and other unidentifiable oddities are true. Warminster has a designated National Reporting Centre for UFOs - so you won't have to go far to record your sightings. The site offers 360 degree views of the surrounding hills and while the lights of Warminster may reduce the quality of the darkness, you may well enjoy an out of this world experience.

[Directions](#)

[Website](#)

**Grid reference:** ST837442

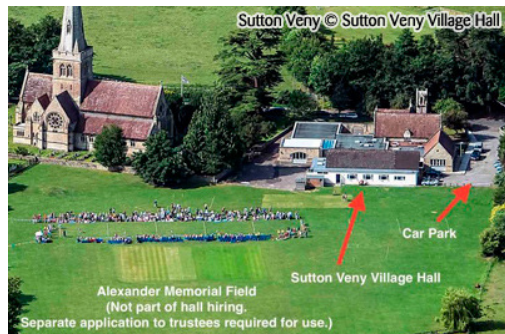
**Eastings:** 383769 **Northings:** 144287

**Latitude:** 51.197568 **Longitude:** -2.2336712

**Facilities:** Car park

**Owner:** National Trust

## 9. Sutton Veny playing fields



This small picturesque village not far from Warminster is home to the Starquest Astronomy Club, a successful group made up of novices and more experienced astronomers. They meet once a month for talks and training in all things astronomy and also set up their telescopes on Sutton Veny playing fields for observation sessions. If you're looking to find out more about the AONB's night skies and astronomy, this club is probably for you. For more information, email [peter.lee@tytherington.net](mailto:peter.lee@tytherington.net); tel: 01985 840093.

[Directions](#)

[Website](#)

**Grid reference:** ST901417

**Eastings:** 390192 **Northings:** 141759

**Latitude:** 51.174978 **Longitude:** -2.1416849

## 10. Ox Drove



Middle Down, north of Alvediston

Retrace the steps of our ancestors as they drove their cattle along this ancient track and take a journey of your own exploring the night sky. While you will not see the same brightness of starry night skies as they once boasted, you will still be one of the lucky 10%

living in this country who are able to witness pristine skies. Park in the lay-by next to the Ox Drove.

[Directions](#)

**Grid reference:** ST964250

**Eastings:** 396469 **Northings:** 125041

**Latitude:** 51.024727 **Longitude:** -2.0517156

**Facilities:** Car parking in lay-by