

Stonehenge; A Site Of Interest To Historians And Tourists

Stonehenge is arguably one of the most iconic places in the world. Not only does the site of this ancient stone circle conjure up images of mysticism and spiritualism, but as a tourist attraction it remains one of the must see sights while most people visit the United Kingdom. As simply a pile of rocks in a field it is surprising that so many people visit Stonehenge on a regular basis; it is not however that simple, the intricacies and sheer scale of the place amazes while the mystery that surrounds its creation is still a question that causes much debate amongst the historical community. Stonehenge is an easy site to get to; its location in the scenically beautiful county of Wiltshire does not mean that Stonehenge should be your only destination while in the area. However thanks to a relatively close proximity to London, most who are visiting England and especially the capital can find time to head down the M3 motorway and see this fascinating piece of history. It takes around two hours to reach Stonehenge by car but for those who do not have their own means of transport, Stonehenge is still reachable thanks to bus services from central London. As prehistoric sites go, Stonehenge is widely accepted to be one of the most important monuments anywhere in Britain. The current structure is in fact not the original layout and has been in existence since around three and a half thousand years BC. What we see today is the evolution of a site that was in use for a further two thousand years at least. Originally Stonehenge would not have had the stones and was simply an earthwork monument, from these humble beginnings various stones were added in stages resulting in what we see today. In this time period there were even points when Stonehenge was not used, some of these periods being a thousand year or mores. The most striking features of Stonehenge are the blue stones. Mystery still surrounds how these stones arrived at the site from the quarries of the Preseli Mountains in Wales. Current historians now surmise that the stones were placed onto rollers and rolled down to Milford Haven where they were loaded onto rafts and shipped up to the river Avon and then through a system of dragging and rafting, the stones reached their destination on the plains of Wiltshire, a journey of around two hundred and fifty miles. The solstice is the time of year that sees the largest numbers of visitors to Stonehenge. This is mainly due to the way the stones are aligned with the sun on these two special days in the year, one in summer and one in winter. Today Stonehenge sees many people visit on these days to capture the magic of the place and to receive an indication of why the site was built. That said, not all past inhabitants had the same respect for the site as we have today, for centuries locals have removed stones for uses such as house and wall construction. Currently Stonehenge is under the guardianship of English Heritage. Part of their work has been to preserve the site in order to secure it for future generations. For instance one of the major pieces of restoration enacted in Stonehenge was the restructuring of one of the stones with concrete in order that the lintel would not fall down. More recently English Heritage have made the decision to rope off the immediate vicinity of the circle, this is because over the years the large numbers of tourists have trampled the central area; so much so that it may in fact harm the site. As a result of this restorative and protective effort visitors are now no longer permitted access into the heart of the stone circle, although the views from the perimeter are equally striking. Stonehenge remains one of the world's most visited archaeological sites and still provides academic interest for historians. Being so accessible this is understandable, while using the site as the perfect starting point of an expedition to the beautiful West Country makes it not only a top tourist destination in its own right, but an important addition to any tour of England.

About the Author

Travel expert Thomas Pretty looks into why [Stonehenge](#) remains a popular tourist destination and site of academic research.

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