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# Introduction

## Welcome to western Mendip

The Mendip Hills are a special landscape where a wide variety of rock types and wildlife habitats occur within a relatively small area. Such diversity makes it one of the best areas in the country to appreciate the relationships between geology, landscape and natural history.

The region has a fascinating geological history that stretches back many millions of years, through frozen tundra, arid deserts and tropical lagoons. Rocky outcrops, coupled with the legacy of mining and quarrying, provide opportunities for you to see the geology and landscape at first hand.

This book and accompanying map will introduce you to the rocks and landscape of western Mendip, and through a series of described localities, will help you explore the area. The guide is divided into a number of areas, which can be explored separately or combined into a tour that can be made on foot or by car. For those interested in finding out more about the geology and natural history of the region, more information and links can be found on the accompanying website [www.mendiphills.com](http://www.mendiphills.com) and in the companion guidebook and map for eastern Mendip.

## Exploring the geology and landscape of the Mendips

Please remember that much of this ground is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and many of the sites described in the text are either protected nature reserves or Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

Many of sites described here can be seen from roads and public footpaths or are on open-access land. The exceptions are the large working quarries. Access to some of the localities is via footpaths across farmland, so please respect the interests of the landowner and if you have a dog, keep it under control. Visits to any localities on private land need permission from the owner, and in this guide the mention of a footpath does not imply a right of way.

Always remember that the cliffs, quarries and caves that so often provide the best exposures for study are also inherently dangerous places. Never enter a working quarry without obtaining permission and first visiting the quarry office. Caves should not be entered except in the company of an experienced caver. Many caves and old quarries are on private land. The use of a geological hammer is not necessary at any of the localities, and hammers should not be used at SSSIs. If a hammer is used, please do so sparingly and with appropriate safety equipment.

Contact the Mendip Hills AONB Service (01761 462338) <https://mendiphills-nl.org.uk/> for more information on access to the countryside and details of caving and climbing clubs.

Numbered locations [1] are shown on the accompanying map and where possible in the illustrations. National Grid References are given in the form [ST 489 123], and all lie within Grid Zone ST.

Finally, always remember: **'leave only footprints; take only photographs'**

## Figures

(Figure 2) Mendip Hills



*(Figure 2) Contact Mendip Hills.*