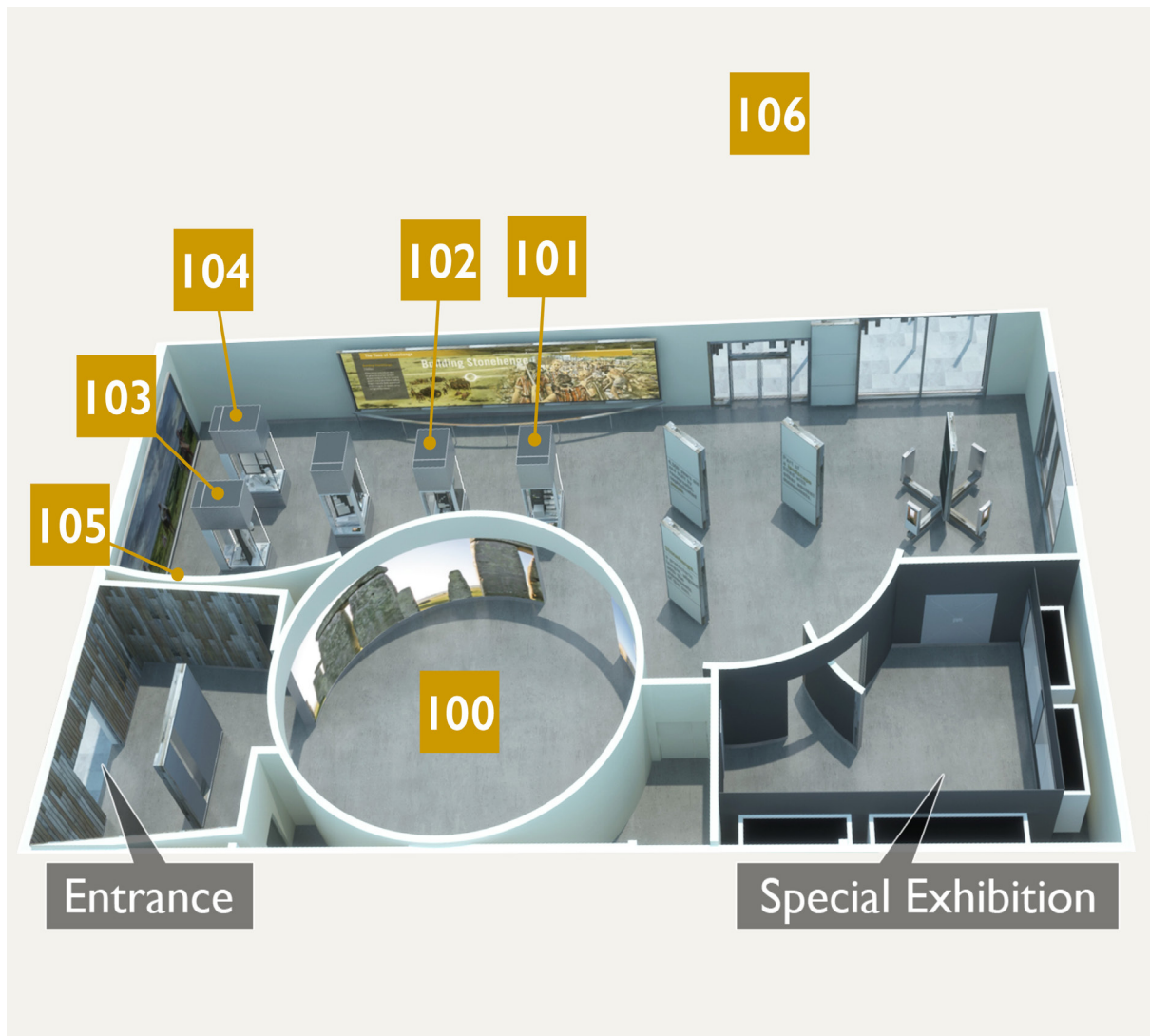


Stonehenge Audio Guide Transcript Exhibition Tour

Discover more about the archaeology of Stonehenge and its surrounding landscape in our exhibition, where there are many archaeological objects on display and an immersive introductory film.

Exhibition Map



100 Introduction

Welcome to the Exhibition Tour at the Stonehenge visitor centre. The first part of the exhibition is a 360 degree film that lasts about three minutes and shows you how Stonehenge looked at different stages. Look out for the dates at the top right of the screen and keep an eye out for clues about how Stonehenge was aligned with the sun.

As you leave the film, the next audio stop can be found in the first glass display case – look out for the headphones symbol with a number.

101 Building Stonehenge

This case contains objects that have been excavated at Stonehenge. At the top are some deer antlers that were used as picks to dig the large circular ditch that surrounds Stonehenge. This was dug in about 3000 BC, about 500 years before the stone circle was built. Antler rakes were used to scoop up the chalk rubble, probably into woven baskets, to build the adjacent banks.

The animal bones in the bottom of the case were all placed into the ditch, perhaps as offerings. They include some cattle skulls that were already a few hundred years old when they were deposited. People also placed bone and flint tools, and carved chalk objects into the ditch. Around the end of the case

you will be able to see examples of bluestone and sarsens, the two types of stone that were used to build the stone circle at Stonehenge in about 2500 BC. Both types of stone were brought over long distances to Stonehenge – the map shows you where they came from. People used sledges and ropes to haul the stones, perhaps using rollers, over land and simple boats along rivers and the coast.

Once at the site, the stones were carefully worked into shape using hammerstones and then fitted together with joints normally found only in woodworking. The stone holes, dug using antler picks, were dug at an angle so that the stone could be carefully tilted into the hole. Wooden scaffolding was used to lever up the lintels to be placed on the top. Building Stonehenge was an astonishing feat of architecture and engineering.

Take time to explore the amazing artefacts on display and the other areas of the exhibition.

102 Durrington Walls

Much of what we know about the people who built Stonehenge comes from the site of Durrington Walls, about three kilometres or two miles away. Excavations there have uncovered several small houses and there were probably several hundred here. We think that this might have been where the builders or users of Stonehenge lived. In this case you can see some of the finds

discovered at this settlement, including bone pins, beads and flint arrowheads.

As well as the houses, Durrington Walls had large ceremonial timber monuments and an avenue, or roadway, linking to the River Avon. It wasn't just a settlement but a place of ceremony and ritual, where people gathered for feasts. In the bottom of the case, you can see the contents of a pit filled with the remains from one of these feasts: pig and cattle bones, and decorated pottery called Grooved Ware.

The pig bones found were mostly from nine-month old animals, suggesting that, if they were born in the spring, they were being killed at midwinter. Analysis of the cattle teeth shows that they were being brought from a variety of places across Britain. Perhaps people were travelling these distances too, to help build or take part in ceremonies at Stonehenge.

103 Long Barrow Burial

You're looking at the skeleton of a man who was buried not far from here, about a thousand years before the stones were raised at Stonehenge. He was between 25 and 40 years old when he died, stood 1.7 metres, or 5.5 feet tall and, except for an old injury to his right upper leg and knee, was healthy until his death.

When this man was alive, the Stonehenge area was already a place where people gathered and built monuments. These included circular enclosures surrounded by multiple ditches, enormous rectangular enclosures called cursus monuments and long barrows where people buried some of their dead, including this man.

This man lived in a period that we call the early Neolithic. The first domestic crops and animals were brought here just after 4000 BC, at the start of this period, along with the earliest pottery. You can see an example of this pottery on the other side of this case.

104 Early Bronze Age Burial

Building work at Stonehenge had ended by about 2200 BC, in the early Bronze Age. From this date on, for about 500 or 600 years, people buried their dead under mounds in the surrounding landscape, often within sight of Stonehenge. This was a time of great change, when people were arriving in Britain and Ireland from Continental Europe, bringing with them new ways of burying their dead, a new style of pottery vessel called 'Beakers' and the earliest metalworking skills. The area around Stonehenge developed into one of the largest concentrations of round barrows in Britain.

You can see one of these early burials in the base of this case. This 20–30 year old man was buried not far from Stonehenge,

with broken pieces of Beaker pottery and a bone belt ring.

Other objects displayed here were also found with burials placed under round barrows. The film at the end of the case shows how people developed the ability to combine copper and tin to create a much harder and more valuable material – bronze.

105 Stonehenge Models

Stonehenge wasn't constructed all at once. People built, altered and rearranged the monument over a thousand years. These models show how we think Stonehenge appeared at three key dates – and how it looks today.

On the model furthest to the left you'll see the earliest monument: a large circular enclosure defined by a ditch, where the chalk was dug out, and a bank created from the piled-up chalk and earth. This enclosure, or 'henge', was created in about 3000 BC – more than 5,000 years ago. Inside was a ring of 56 holes which probably held upright pillars of either timber or stone. Cremated human remains were placed inside and around these holes, making the earliest version of Stonehenge a prehistoric cemetery.

The second model shows how the henge looked when the stones were raised. This was 500 years later – in about 2500 BC. The large stones called sarsens, were placed in a

circle with a horseshoe inside. There were also smaller stones – bluestones – placed in a double arc within the stone circle.

The third model shows Stonehenge in about 2200 BC. By this time the Avenue, a processional approach, had been built and the bluestones re-arranged. This model has a line showing the solstice alignment at Stonehenge, around which the stones were carefully positioned. In midwinter, on the shortest day of the year, the sun would set framed by the two upright stones of the trilithon at the head of the inner horseshoe. On Midsummer's Day, the sun would rise above the Heel Stone at the entrance to the monument.

Finally, the model on the far right shows Stonehenge as it looks today, a ruin after four thousand years of destruction and decay. In the 1920s and 1950s, some stones that had fallen were raised again and many were secured in concrete, preserving and protecting the monument for the future. Take time to explore the amazing artifacts on display and the other areas of the exhibition, including the reconstructed Neolithic Houses just outside.

106 Neolithic Houses

These houses are reconstructions based on evidence uncovered by archaeologists at Durrington Walls in 2006. They were occupied in about 2500 BC, just when the stone circle at Stonehenge was being built. Finding evidence of houses from this period in Britain is rare, so this was an exciting discovery.

The houses are built from woven hazel threaded between stakes and covered in cob – a mixture of chalk and water – then topped with a thatched roof. Inside, the chalk floors preserved the remains of a hearth and traces of wooden furniture. In one of the houses, archaeologists even found depressions in the floor where the occupants knelt to tend the fire. Outside the houses, they discovered large pits filled with discarded animal bones and pottery. Some still had meat attached when they were buried, suggesting that people gathered at Durrington Walls for ceremonial feasts – particularly in mid-winter.

If you're lucky, you might find our volunteers inside the reconstructed houses, lighting the fires or making crafts. Feel free to ask them questions!

This is the last part of the tour at the visitor centre. If you haven't yet visited the stones, make your way to the monument through the landscape or on the shuttle bus.

Thank you for visiting Stonehenge today.

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