

## **Summer solstice at Stonehenge**

Saturday 20 June is the longest day of the year. It is also known as "Midsummer" or *the "summer solstice"*. On this day the sun reaches its highest point in the northern hemisphere and its rays appear to stand still on the horizon. The Arctic Circle enjoys twenty-four hours of sunlight on the solstice.

In the UK, the day lasts around seventeen hours. *At Stonehenge, located in the county of Wiltshire, south-west England, the summer solstice is a special time. No one knows the exact purpose of the Neolithic monument, but its builders were experts in astronomy. The huge stones are perfectly arranged to welcome the first rays of summer.*

Every year on the day of the solstice, thousands of people gather inside the monument just before sunrise. They face the Heel Stone, a huge monolith which stands to the north-west of Stonehenge. From that position, they see the sun rise over the Heel Stone. *The stone arches showcase the first rays of sunshine.* The shadow of the Heel Stone falls into the monument, touching the heart of the Stone Circle. It is a beautiful sight.

## **Why is summer solstice so beautiful at Stonehenge?**