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The South Downs National Park

Created in 2011, the South Downs National Park covers an area of 1,600 km² and its National Park status means that the natural special qualities that make the South Downs a place to be treasured and enjoyed can now be preserved for future generations. Recognised as an area of outstanding beauty, the South Downs is also home to vibrant working communities steeped in history and traditional English culture, from the ancient cathedral city of Winchester in the west to the market town of Lewes in the east.

Green rolling pastures, open spaces, ancient woodlands and river valleys encompass the Park's ethos of being one of 'Britain's Breathing Spaces'. There is much to do and see in the area, from walking, cycling or horse riding across the Downs, to exploring wildlife in the wetlands, visiting one of the many local heritage sites or experiencing opera at the world famous Glyndebourne.

The South Downs Way

The South Downs Way covers East and West Sussex in Southern England. Along the 100 mile National Trail, you can walk through ancient woodlands, carpeted with bluebells, watch roe deer in wildflower meadows, witness hares boxing or even spot a red kite.



The South Downs Way is the only National Trail entirely within a National Park, providing fantastic opportunities for both recreational and cultural experiences. Stretching from the cathedral city of Winchester in the west, first capital of England, through to the white chalky cliffs of the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head at Eastbourne in the east, almost all of its length is blissfully off-road.

Walking, cycling or horse riding along the South Downs Way offers the opportunity to experience some of the finest landscapes in Britain. You can enjoy exceptional views of the Isle of Wight and the Solent, the high heathlands of the Western Weald and Blackdown, the heavily wooded Weald of Sussex, the receding ridges of the Chalk Downs as well as the distant ridge of the North Downs. At the eastern end of the trail you can enjoy the famous sea cliffs of the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head.

The South Downs Way gives offers see some of the finest historical sites including the great iron age hill forts of Old Winchester Hill, Chanctonbury Ring or Devils Dyke. For nature lovers, the South Downs Way passes through an extraordinary range of diverse habitats from ancient woodlands, river valleys, and chalk grassland to mixed farm land and coastal habitats. National Trail website: www.nationaltrail.co.uk/southdowns



South Downs Way National Trail Statistics

[South Downs Way Guide](#) - The South Downs Way is a 100 mile National Trail which now features QR code and NFC Tag mobile interpretation, making it one of the most rewarding walks in the south of England. [The South Downs Way website](#) shows the South Downs Way section by section showing you how to get there, what to look for and with plenty of photographs of the sights on offer.

Start point: City Mill, near King Alfred's statue at the bottom of Broadway. **Finish point:** The Western End of Eastbourne Promenade.

Length: 160km (100 miles). The bridleway route is 6km (4 miles) shorter.

Highest point: Butser Hill, Hampshire 270m (900ft) / Ditchling Beacon, East Sussex 248m (814ft). In both locations the Trail runs just below the summits at 245m and therefore both can claim to be the highest points.

Average number of days to complete the full Trail: 8 days for walkers, 3 for cyclists.

South Downs Way National Trail

The National Trails website has a section on the 160km (100 mile) South Downs Way. It contains information about the countryside, wildlife you may encounter, a couple of dozen photographs, an FAQs section, and information about published guides about the South Downs Way, all very useful if you are planning tackling this majestic path. [South Downs Way National Trail website](#)

Monarch's Way

The Monarch's Way is one of the great long distance routes in England, wandering all the way from Worcester to Shoreham and tracing the path of the fleeing Prince Charles in 1651. The Monarch's Way passes from Stansted Park along the Downs to Steyning, and then descends to Brighton and, ultimately, Shoreham-by-Sea. Truly an historic route. [More about the Monarch's Way in Sussex](#)

Access for visitors

100% for walkers, horse riders and cyclists, except at Alfriston / Eastbourne and the Meon Valley (split bridleway and footpaths).

Landscape

Wide grassy or flinty tracks on chalk downland are mostly grazed by sheep on the hills with arable crops below. The Trail lies completely within the newly designated South Downs National Park. The western part of the downs is rolling farmland, the West Sussex Downs are dominated by a steep, often wooded scarp with views across the Weald below, while the East Sussex Downs are classic open grassland running down to the sea cliffs.

Highlights

Winchester Cathedral, Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Parham Deer Park, Chanctonbury Ring, Dew Ponds, Adur Valley, Devils Dyke, Ditchling Beacon, Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age monuments, Long Man of Wilmington, Ouse valley, Cuckmere Haven, Seven Sisters, Beachy Head, blue butterflies.

Nearest Towns

Eastbourne, Winchester and Alfriston are on the route. Steyning (1km (½ mile)), Storrington (1½ km (1mile)), Pulborough (13km(8miles)), Midhurst (6km (2 miles)), Petersfield 6km (4miles)), Newhaven (5km (3miles)), Lewes (6km (4 miles)), Portsmouth (19km (12 miles)), Alton (24km (15 miles)), Brighton (11km (7miles)), Shoreham (6km (4miles)), Worthing 6km (4 miles)).

Access

London Victoria to Eastbourne trains take 90 minutes, Trains to Lewes from London take 50 minutes. Change at Lewes for Newhaven (10 minutes), Seaford (15 minutes) and Southease. London Victoria to Brighton is 50 minutes by train via Hassocks. London Waterloo to Winchester is 60 minutes. There are good local bus services in places (e.g. the South Downs Conservation Board "Breeze up to the Downs" promotions, Devils Dyke open top bus to Brighton, and buses from Brighton to Eastbourne via Alfriston and Beachy Head).

More information available

A National Trail Guide by Paul Millmore is published by Aurum Press (£12.99). ISBN 978-1-84513-565-2. Also Harvey's provide a route strip map available from Harvey maps 01786 841202 www.harveymaps.co.uk. Also available from the NTO is a free Public Transport guide, Mountain Bike Guide and coming soon a new selection of short walks and rides route cards.

If you'd like to know more about smartphone and mobile interpretation for visitors please go to www.itsinconservation.co.uk