

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AND EAST SUSSEX

Outstanding Circular Walks

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Cuckmere River and Norton Top from Alfriston

Start Alfriston

Distance 9½ miles (15km)

Height gain 770 feet (235m)

Approximate time 4½ hours

Parking The Willow long-stay Pay and Display car park on the left of the main road on the northern approach to town

Route terrain Field, downland and riverside paths

Ordnance Survey maps Landranger 199 (Eastbourne & Hastings), Explorer OL25 (Eastbourne & Beachy Head)

GPS waypoints

- TQ 521 032
- TQ 519 015
- TQ 509 011
- TQ 488 023
- TQ 497 050
- TQ 507 057
- TQ 512 053
- TQ 518 048

A route that covers riverside and downland inevitably involves a climb or two, but the gradients on this route are reasonably easy and the views outstanding. Half-time refreshment can be taken in village pubs on the homeward leg.

Looking across the Cuckmere Valley to Alfriston church

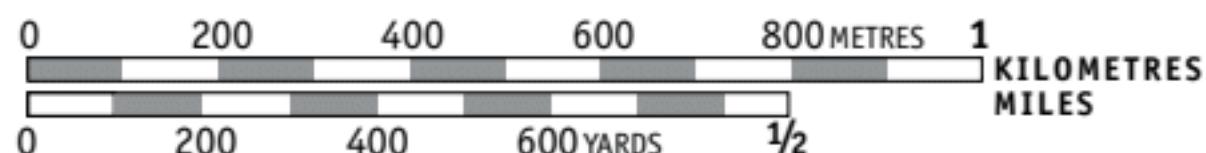


meadows to Chilley Green.

After crossing the stile walk a few paces to the left, climb another stile and bear left around the edge of the meadow. There is a stile and footbridge by a clump of bushes on the far side. After crossing the bridge turn right to walk along the field edge beside a ditch. This will eventually bring you to a gate. Pass through this to another gate ahead, then keep left beside the hedge and follow a short track to the road at Chilley Green **E**. Turn right and then right again, immediately after the farm, onto a track which leads to Chilley Farm Shop. Pass in front of the shop and beside a pond, then go through a gate on the left just beyond the farmyard. Cross the field to a footbridge and continue

directly across the next two fields, heading once more for the tower of Pevensey church.

This leads to the banks of Pevensey Haven again and to a long footbridge. Cross the bridge **B** and turn left, following the bridleway along the waterside until a blue waymark on a post **F** directs you to a metal gate, from where a path leads, with a couple of twists, to the bypass. Cross carefully again, go through a gate and walk along an enclosed path which emerges onto a road in Pevensey in front of the castle walls. Turn left to return to the starting point.



SCALE 1:25 000 or 2½ INCHES to 1 MILE 4 CM to 1 KM

post, following the footpath signed for Friston and East Dean, turn right across the drive up the steps opposite and through a gate. Keep straight ahead across a field, go through a gate on the far side and descend steps to a tarmac drive. Cross it, bear slightly left to climb the stile opposite and continue diagonally and slightly uphill across a field to another stile in the far corner. Climb it and follow a path through woodland, finally climbing a stone stile on the left to reach a road near to its junction with the main road **C**. Go over the road and grass beyond to the main road.

Cross the busy main road with care and take the no-through road opposite signposted for Crowlink, passing between a lily pond on the right and Friston's small, attractive church on the left. If visibility is poor, carry straight on down the access road to Crowlink. Otherwise just before entering the National Trust's Crowlink car park, turn left through a gate and then turn half-right across a field. Go through a gate and bear right along a very indistinct path **D**, keeping in a straight line diagonally across the field. Although the numerous paths across this National Trust property may appear confusing, there is no problem. Once you reach the brow of a hill, aim for the hamlet buildings spotted through the trees below. Look out for a stile in a wire fence, climb it and continue downhill to pass through a hedge gap onto the access lane. Turn left passing to the right of the cottages, go through a gate and walk through the dry valley of Gap Bottom, keeping by a wire fence and hedge on the right. Continue along a wide, smooth, grassy path that winds through the shallow valley bottom to the edge of the cliffs **E**.

Turn right onto the South Downs Way to Cuckmere Haven, a route that climbs over four of the series of chalk cliffs known as the Seven Sisters. There are



some steep 'ups and downs' on this section but the superb cliff scenery and the magnificent, extensive views more than compensate for the effort expended. Over the last brow you look down on Cuckmere Haven, the beautiful and unspoilt estuary of the Cuckmere, with its shingle beach, lagoons and meandering river, and beyond that to Seaford Head.

Friston Forest, the Seven Sisters & Cuckmere Haven

Start Exceat, Seven Sisters Country Park

Distance 6½ miles (10.5km)

Height gain 1,150 feet (350m)

Approximate time 3½ hours

Parking Riverside Pay and Display car park at Exceat on south side of A259

Route terrain Forest tracks, downland, cliff and riverside paths

Ordnance Survey maps Landranger 199 (Eastbourne & Hastings), Explorer OL25 (Eastbourne & Beachy Head)

GPS waypoints

- TV 518 994
- TV 523 996
- TV 547 989
- TV 551 982
- TV 550 976
- TV 537 968

Forest, downs, coast and river combine to create a most satisfying and superbly varied walk. A pleasant ramble along wide, green tracks through the woodlands of Friston Forest is followed by a walk across smooth and open downland to reach the coast. Then comes the scenic highlight and most strenuous part of the route: a series of quite steep climbs over four of the Seven Sisters, the succession of chalk cliffs (there are actually eight) that lie just to the west of Beachy Head and one of the most spectacular stretches of coastline in England. After Cuckmere Haven, a gentle stroll by the meandering River Cuckmere makes a relaxing finale.

The spectacular Seven Sisters – where the South Downs meet the sea





Beachy Head at dusk

the left around the rim of the Hole, coming close to the road and then swinging away from it. The path becomes asphalted as it approaches Beachy Head **F**. This is necessary because of the crowds who come here by coach and car, few venturing far along the coast path.

The Countryside Centre has interactive displays illustrating the history of this part of the South Downs and how man and beast have been influenced by the unstable geology. Refreshments are available at the **Beachy Head** pub, which has a bar, restaurant and coffee shop.

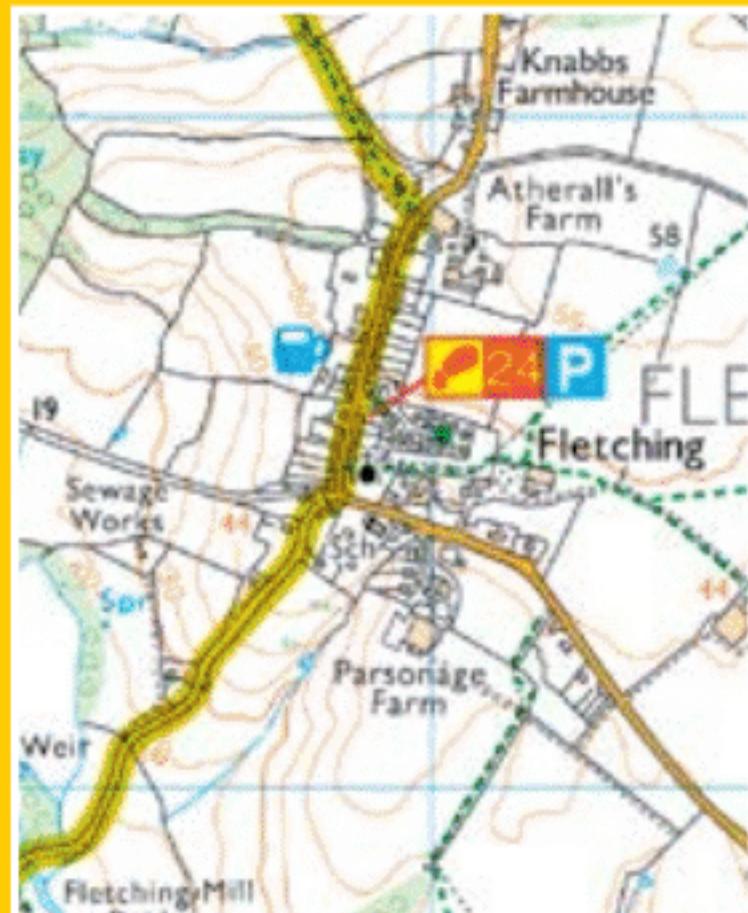
The lighthouse, 536 feet (163m) below the clifftop, is best seen from near the parking area about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile (400m) past the pub, where the road makes a hairpin turn. On a clear day the view extends 40 miles (64km) to the east to Dungeness, while in the opposite direction you may see the outline of the Isle of Wight, 80 miles (128km) away.

For the rest of the way, walking is a delight on springy turf away from all the crowds. There is an energetic switchback at the conclusion, with the cliffs at their most spectacular, before the path comes close to the road at the starting point.

Outstanding Circular Walks in the SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AND EAST SUSSEX

185 miles of superb South Downs and East Sussex walking with the best routes off the South Downs Way from Ditchling to Beachy Head; coastal walks at Cuckmere Haven, Pevensey Bay and around Winchelsea and Rye; plus High and Low Weald outings to Pooh Sticks Bridge, 'Mad Jack's' fantastic follies at Brightling, a 1066-country walk at Battle, Bodiam and Herstmonceux Castles, and Bewl Water.

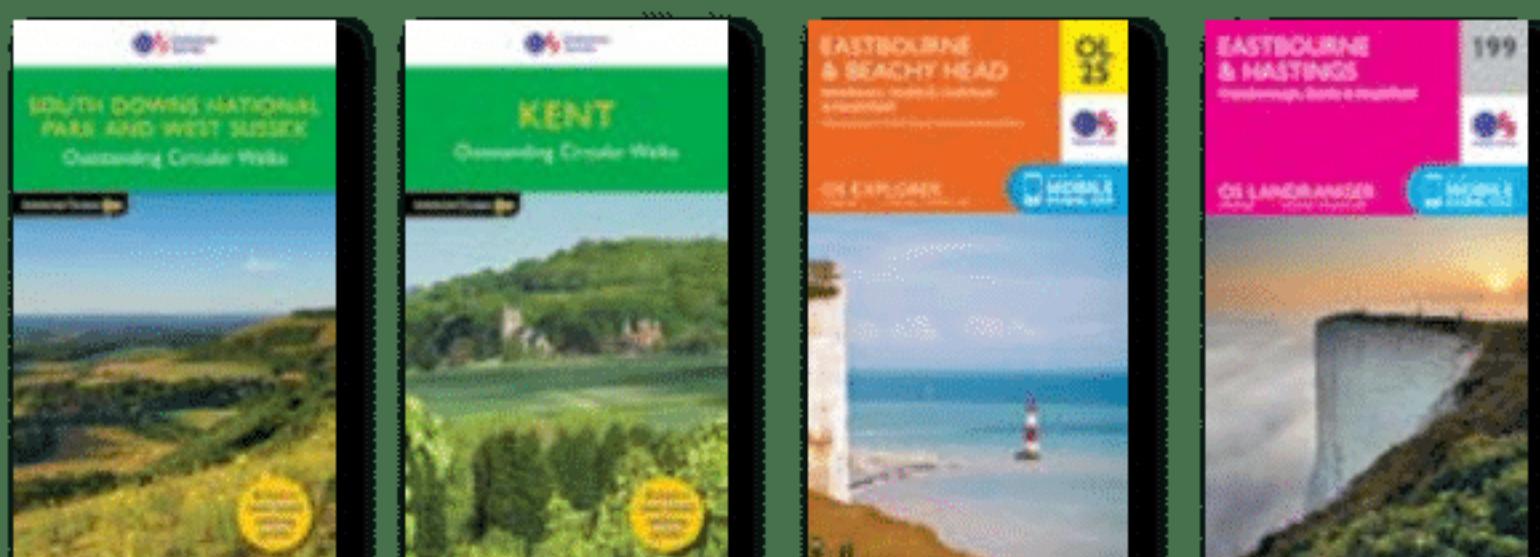
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