

# SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

From rolling hills to bustling market towns, the South Downs National Park's landscapes cover 1,600km<sup>2</sup> of breathtaking views, hidden gems and quintessentially English scenery. A rich tapestry of wildlife, landscapes, tranquillity and visitor attractions, weave together a story of people and place in harmony.

For your guide to everything there is to see and do in the National Park visit [southdowns.gov.uk/discovery-map](http://southdowns.gov.uk/discovery-map)



## YOUR COUNTRYSIDE CODE: RESPECT. PROTECT. ENJOY.

### Respect other people

- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Keep to the paths unless on Access Land

### Protect the natural environment

- Take your litter home
- Keep dogs under effective control

### Enjoy the outdoors

- Plan ahead and be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs



## FIND YOUR WAY

Follow the arrows on waymarkers.

Footpath		
Bridleway		
Restricted byway		
Byway		
Open access land		National Trail Acorn



## TAKE THE LEAD

For a safe and fun visit with your dog please remember to keep them on a lead around livestock and wildlife. Always bag and bin your dog poo – any public bin will do!

## GETTING HERE

**By bus:** There are regular services between Seaford and Eastbourne, visit [traveline.info/se](http://traveline.info/se)

**By rail:** Nearest stations are Seaford and Eastbourne. Visit [nationalrail.co.uk](http://nationalrail.co.uk)

## CONTACT

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@SDNPA

/SDNPA

## SOUTH DOWNS.GOV.UK

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# SOUTH DOWNS WALKS HERITAGE COAST



SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK



Please  
recycle me  
after use





The River Cuckmere  
© Sam Moore



Belle Tout Lighthouse  
© SDNPA

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

### SEVEN SISTERS COUNTRY PARK

This Park comprises 280 hectares of chalk cliffs, a meandering river valley and open chalk grassland. Named after the famous Seven Sisters that form part of the chalk cliffs on the Sussex Heritage Coast, one of Britain's finest unspoilt coastlines, it is a great place to explore. The Visitor Information Centre is staffed entirely by volunteers so please check the opening hours on the website – [sevensisters.org.uk](http://sevensisters.org.uk)

### LITLINGTON

This picturesque village lies about a mile from Alfriston and is surrounded by the chalk hills of the South Downs. Here you will find the Plough and Harrow, a 17th century pub with a lovely garden; Litlington

Tea Gardens, one of the oldest tea rooms in Sussex created 150 years ago; Litlington Church, originally built in 1150 AD and the Long Man Brewery (not open to the public) based at Church Farm – a site where brewing can be traced back to 1538!

### ALFRISTON

This pretty historic village in the heart of the Cuckmere Valley was named after Aelfric tun the 'farmstead of Alfric' in Anglo Saxon times. The village was recorded in the Domesday Book and the area is thought to have been occupied since Neolithic times as a number of long barrows can be found in the surrounding Downs.

During the Napoleonic Wars, Alfriston was home to a large number of troops stationed to repel

any invaders who got past the Martello towers and cliffs on the coast. Following these wars, the village turned to smuggling, and the Alfriston gang, well known for their violence, used the Cuckmere river to bring illegal goods in to the village.

### WHITE HORSE OF LITLINGTON

This chalk figure on High and Over Hill was carved in 1924 by a man called John T Ade, allegedly overnight by the light of a full moon so as to startle the locals with the sudden appearance of the horse in the morning! Camouflaged during WWII it was restored in the early 1980s and since then has been kept clear of vegetation (and occasionally topped up with chalk to keep it white) with the help of volunteer work parties organised by the National Trust.

### BELLE TOUT LIGHTHOUSE

Circa 1691, petitions for a lighthouse were made due to the number of shipwrecks and sailors losing their lives at the hands of this dangerous stretch of coastline. In 1828 a wooden lighthouse was built on the top of the cliffs at Beachy Head and so successful was this a permanent lighthouse was requested.

Belle Tout was built in 1832 but decommissioned in 1902 when the new lighthouse was built at the base of the cliffs. During World War II, Belle Tout was damaged by Canadian troops using it as target practice. In 1999, due to continuing erosion threatening the

future of the building the lighthouse was moved 17 metres (56 feet) back from the edge of the cliff by the impressive engineering work of Abbey Pynford. Finally, between 2008 and 2010 Belle Tout was lovingly restored to its former glory.

### BIRLING GAP

Part of the world famous Seven Sisters chalk cliffs, Birling Gap offers ancient downland, a marine nature reserve, a visitor centre and café. The wild forces of the sea create unusual chalk platforms and huge heaps of gleaming white chalk as the cliffs erode at up to one metre a year. With over 500 acres of open chalk grassland the area is rich with butterflies and downland flowers.



# ALFRISTON AND THE RIVER CUCKMERE

## DISTANCE:

6.4 miles (10.3km)

## ALLOW:

4.5 hours

## GRADIENT:

Several short steep climbs.

## PATH:

A mix of quiet roads, forest tracks and uneven footpaths with several stiles.

## MAP:

OS Explorer 123

## KEY:

- Point of interest
- Pub
- Toilets
- Parking
- Bus stop
- Golf course
- Shop
- Trail point
- Railway station

- Bridge
- Walking trail
- Road
- Long Distance Path
- Bridleway
- Footpath
- Open access land (in shaded area)
- Woodland
- Buildings



# BEACHY HEAD TO BIRLING GAP

## DISTANCE:

5 miles (8.1km) (optional 2.1 mile (3.4km) return route to start point).

## ALLOW:

3.5 hours (approximately 50 mins for optional return section.)

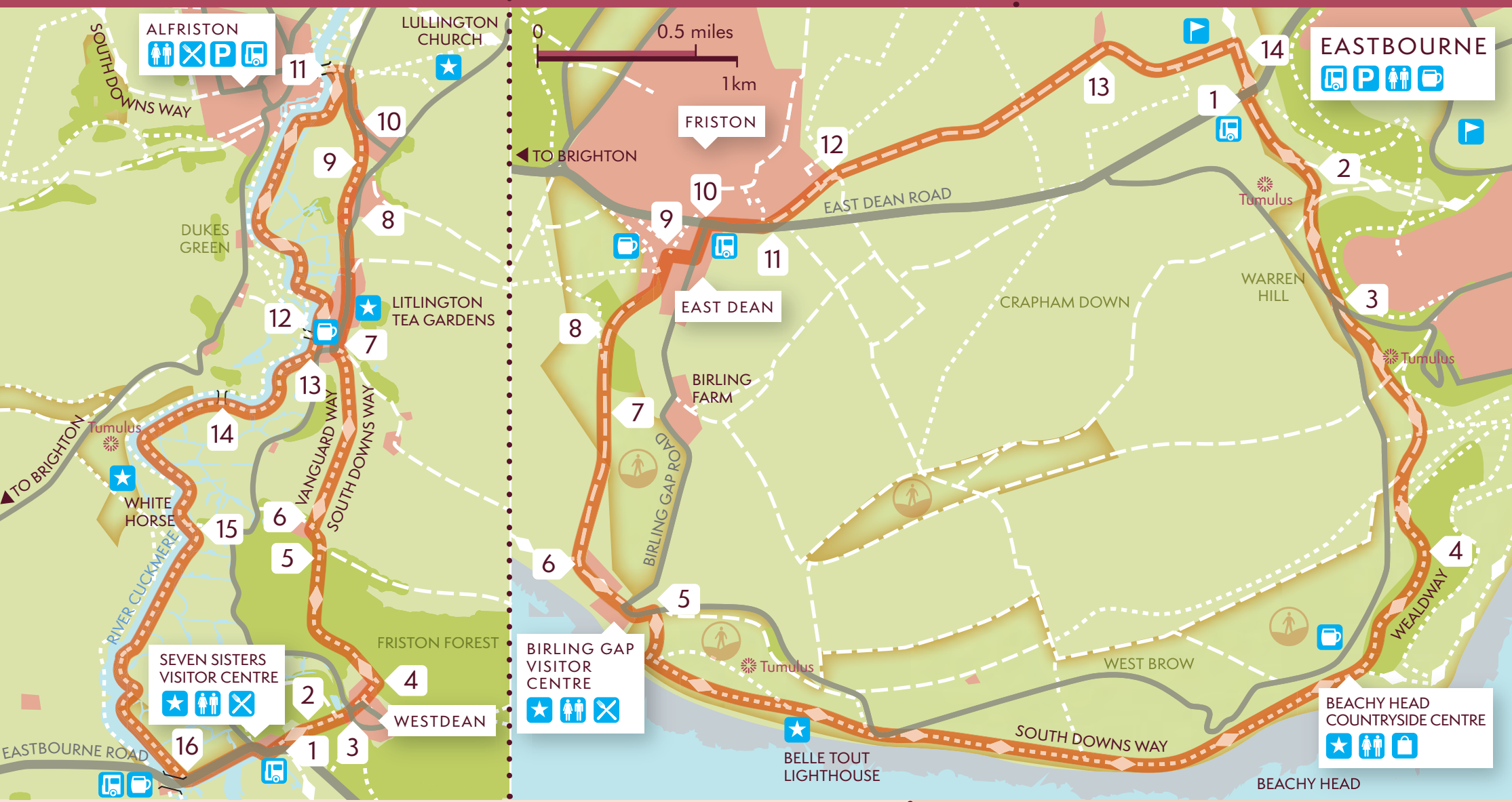
## GRADIENT:

Several gradual climbs.

PATH: Mainly undulating downland paths with some uneven tracks and public road crossings.

## MAP:

OS Explorer 123





## Explore Friston Forest, the banks of the River Cuckmere and the historic downland village of Alfriston.

**1** From the bus stop at Seven Sisters Country Park Centre, carefully cross the A259 and turn right. With the cycle hire barn on your left, follow the South Downs Way (SDW) signs through the kissing gate and up the hill.

**2** At the top of the hill, cross over the wall into Friston Forest and down a series of steps to Westdean.

**3** With Westdean pond on your left, follow the SDW signs straight on, past some houses and uphill back into Friston Forest.

**4** Turn left at the path junction and follow the SDW signs through the forest until you reach a set of steps.

**5** Go down the steps and follow the SDW round to the left.

**6** Turn right at the path junction, cross the stile and follow the SDW/Vanguard Way uphill, over the brow and down into Litlington village.

**7** Turn left at the kissing gate behind the village hall and then right into Litlington. Walk through the village passing the Plough and Harrow pub, Litlington Tea Gardens, Litlington Church and Church Farm where the Long Man Brewery is based (not open to the public).

**8** At a property called 'The Ham', take the raised public footpath

on the left side of the road. After 200m branch left over a stile into a field and follow the field edge footpath.

**9** Cross the stile and follow the footpath diagonally left. Cross a second stile near Lullington Road and bear left.

**10** Go through the kissing gate and keeping the fence on your right, follow the footpath to the corner of the field. Cross the stile and after 60m turn left onto the SDW bridleway to the White Bridge at Alfriston.

(To visit nearby Lullington Church, reputed to be the smallest church in Sussex (1.1km return trip), instead of turning left onto the SDW, turn right to reach Lullington Road. At the road edge, turn right then almost immediately (10m) left and follow the public footpath up behind Plonk Barn. Keep straight ahead at the path junction and follow the footpath through the trees. At the back of the house turn left up a narrow surfaced path to reach the church. Return via the same route, enjoying views of the White Horse/Frog Firl and Rathfinny Wine Estate, with lower lying Alfriston and St Andrews Church below.)

**11** Before the bridge turn left through a kissing gate, following the SDW/Vanguard Way with the river on your right. (To visit Alfriston village cross

the White Bridge.) Continue for 1.1 miles (1.8km) passing through a series of kissing gates until you reach Litlington.

**12** At the SDW path junction continue straight ahead along the tarmac path to Litlington Bridge. Carry straight on with the River Cuckmere on your right to a kissing gate.

**13** Go through the kissing gate and follow the riverbank footpath for 635m.

**14** At the path junction carry straight on and follow the riverbank footpath. Look up to your right to see the High and Over hill and Litlington White Horse.

**15** After 0.6mile (1km) continue straight on at the path junction, following the meandering riverside path for a further 1.04miles (1.7km) over a series of stiles to the A259 at Exceat bridge.

**16** Cross the A259 and either turn left, following the pavement to return to Seven Sisters Country Park Visitor Centre, or finish at the bus stop at Exceat Bridge by The Cuckmere Inn.



### Open Access Land

Wherever you see this symbol you are free to leave the footpath to walk and picnic within the mapped area. Please be aware of livestock and wildlife.

## Discover stunning sea views and rolling clifftop downland.

**1** Opposite Eastbourne Downland golf course, on the seaward side, take the sunken track towards the trig point, which comes into view as you walk along the path.

**2** At the pond bear right of the trig point and keeping on the Downs follow the road to your right.

**3** Cross the road at the turning for Birling Gap, Beachy Head and the Countryside Centre. Keep on the seaward side and follow the Downs over the brow of the hill.

**4** With the sea on your left continue to Birling Gap, via Beachy Head and Belle Tout lighthouse.

**5** Immediately past the entrance to the car park at Birling Gap, take the chalk track up towards the houses on your left.

**6** At the top of the track, go through the gap beside the gate and follow the blue bridleway sign up the hill in the direction you have just been walking.

**7** Follow the path to the right of the red tin roofed barn. Keep the scrub on your right, and keep on the level.

**8** Take the first path that drops down the side of the hill, on the right and head straight on into

the village, through a gate into the field and then a gate onto the access road for the houses.

**9** Go across the village green, by the Tiger Inn, and turn right down through the car park. Turn left onto the road out of the village and return to the bus stop on the main road.

### OPTIONAL RETURN ROUTE

**10** Cross the main road using the pedestrian crossing and turn right following the pavement uphill.

**11** Turn left into Downs View Lane and follow the tarmac road ahead.

**12** At the end of the road take the grassy track to the right of the metal farm gate. Passing a metal vehicle barrier follow the path for around 0.9 miles (1.5km) through the dry valley of Ringwood Bottom.

**13** After passing flint walled fields on your left, bear right at Ringwood Farm to follow a concrete track uphill towards Eastbourne Downs Golf Club.

**14** At the end of the concrete track, turn right and follow the South Downs Way blue bridleway signs to return to the A259 East Dean road and your starting point.