



The Star

The Cuckmere River, Westdean, Friston Forest, Jevington, Folkington, Wilmington

From the Tye cross the river bridge ① turn right and follow a path along the raised river bank. You are now on the alternative footpath route of the South Downs Way which you will be following as far as Westdean. After a pleasant mile beside the river, just short of the next bridge over the Cuckmere, turn left on a path which takes you out to a road at Litlington. The 12th-14th Century church is a short distance along the road to the left but the walk continues to the right past the Plough and Harrow pub.

After 100 yards or so, ② turn left along a road and, quickly, fork right through a swing gate. A worn path climbs a grassy slope and continues along a ridge with good views across the Cuckmere valley to the prominent White Horse hill figure on the slopes of High and Over. Unlike the Long Man, this is a relatively modern artefact.

The path drops down into Charleston Bottom where, at a T-junction you should turn left. Shortly, fork right up a flight of steps and go ahead along a wide forest track. Follow the South Downs Way signs with care, ignoring a right fork. A final right turn brings you quickly down to the village of Westdean. On reaching a lane, turn left past the church and the Old Parsonage. Westdean is a tiny secluded village, without pub or shop, tucked down in a quiet valley surrounded by the woodland of Friston Forest. The church dates back to the 11th century, and the parsonage, though much restored, from 1220. Inside the church, look out for a memorial bust of the first Lord Waverley by Epstein.

WALK 2

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A few yards beyond the church, ③ turn left past a Forestry Commission notice 'Friston Forest' to follow an access drive. Once you come to the end of the tarmac road, fork to the left, next to the pole barrier and follow the main track all the way to the view over the valley. Then turn right. Eventually you will see a gate on your left, walk through this to the other side of the opening and then follow the main track to the top of the gallops.

At the top, leave the woodland, cross a gallop and go ahead along a track which drops downhill with Jevington soon in view ahead against a backdrop of Combe Hill on the left and Willington Hill to the right and, in between, the valley leading up towards Butts Brow.

Join the road at **Jevington** past a small car park and turn left. ④ Go left along Church Lane. On reaching the church, turn right through the churchyard passing the building. Jevington Church is a typically charming example of a downland church, with flint walls and a solid Saxon tower although, like many, it has been subject to 19th century restoration.

Leave the churchyard through a centrally pivoted tapsell gate and follow a path out to rejoin the road through the village. Continue past the Eight Bells pub and after another 200 yards or so go left along Green Lane. Carry on to the end of Green Lane until you meet a track, take the right turn and carry on.

Fork left up a scrub covered bank and follow another fenced path between paddocks to join another enclosed track. Bear right for a few yards and fork left once more up the bank to a stile.

A notice and map indicates that you are now entering an open access area established under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Until at least September 2112, this allows you to use this high level route, bearing left up to and along the ridge of Folkington Hill. This alternative is marked on the sketch but not described.

For a direct route using rights of way, head straight out across the open area to a stile, and a path which drops obliquely down a steep grassy bank. Your route should be marked out as it heads out across a field to a fence corner and then bears right down to a T-junction with a track in front of the line of trees. ⑤ Turn left to follow this track past the end of the cul-de-sac road at **Folkington**, next to the church. Continue along this track, part of the old coach road, along the patchily wooded foothills of the downland escarpment, high enough to give good views out across the Weald. You will pass a bridle gate on the left, ⑥ where users of the high level route rejoin the main walk. Continue

for another half a mile or so back to **Wilmington**, joining the village street opposite the church.

The tiny flint church, is 12th century and was founded, with the neighbouring Priory, by Benedictine monks. In the churchyard stands a much propped-up yew tree which may be over 1600 years old. Inside, in the north chapel, seek out a window, depicting 10 species of butterfly and moth including some which are now extinct.

Turn left back into the car park.

Set out along a signposted path to the Long Man, which starts opposite the car park entrance. ⑦ On reaching the foot of the hill figure, turn right on a path which climbs round the shoulder of Windover Hill. Go straight across a crossing track. On reaching a fence, turn left beside it and, after 30 yards go right through a gate. Now follow a sunken track which passes to the left of a covered reservoir and drops down towards the Cuckmere valley. Alfriston is soon directly ahead backed by a wide downland panorama extending from the scrub covered slopes of High and Over on the left to the distinctive profile of Firle Beacon, away to the right.

On reaching a road, turn left and, after about a quarter of a mile, ⑧ go right along a path signposted to Lullington church. Follow this path past the church, accessible via a short path to the right.

Lullington church, no more than 16 feet square, must be one of the smallest in the country, though it is really no more than a portion of the chancel of a much larger structure. It has lovely views overlooking the Cuckmere Valley.

Beyond the church the path soon drops down along a field edge with a fine view of Alfriston church. At a road, go right and immediately left on a path which takes you to the Cuckmere River. The bridge ahead provides access into Alfriston.

Alfriston church, which has acquired a 'cathedral of the Downs' label, because of its scale for such a small village, stands on a low mound overlooking the river, and the village green. The nearby Clergy House, is owned by the National Trust, and open during the summer months.





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Distance: 11 miles approximately.

Route: Alfriston, Westdean, Friston Forest, Jevington, Folkington, Wilmington, Long Man.

Map: OS Explorer OL25, Eastbourne & Beachy Head.

Conditions: mostly along chalk and flint tracks and forest rides plus short sections along a raised river bank and across open downland. Several hills, none severe.

Refreshments: Plough & Harrow at Litlington, Eight Bells at Jevington and Tea Gardens at Litlington (only open Easter - October).

Mobile Download: If you prefer to be guided by your phone, please download the free OS Maps app and then follow the QR code inside to link to this route.

WALK 2

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