

# 09 Southern England

## Alfriston, East Sussex

• Distance 13km/8 miles • Time 4hrs • Type Downland and valley



### Plan your walk



**WHERE:** Circular walk from Alfriston via South Downs Way, High and Over, and Cuckmere Valley.

**START/END:** Main car park, North Street, Alfriston (TQ523034).

**TERRAIN:** Well way-marked footpaths throughout, with some stiles and steep sections.

**MAPS:** OS Explorer 123; Landrangers 198 & 199.

**GETTING THERE:** Mainline trains run to Seaford and Berwick, from where regular buses connect with Alfriston, including the Cuckmere Community Bus (☎ 0871 200 2233, www.traveline.org.uk).

**EATING & DRINKING:** Alfriston has a good selection of pubs, cafés, restaurants and hotels, including The George Inn (☎ 01323 870319, www.thegeorge-alfriston.com); The Star Inn (☎ 01323 870495, www.thestar



PHOTOGRAPHY: FIONA BARTROP

Situated in the Cuckmere Valley at the eastern end of the South Downs is the picturesque old village of Alfriston. Despite its popularity, the village has lost none of its charm, and remains thankfully unspoilt. As well as several pubs, cafés, restaurants and hotels, there are a few shops, including an excellent bookshop. On the village green, next door to the church (known as the 'cathedral of the Downs'), is the Old Clergy House – a medieval thatched cottage and the first building bought by the National Trust in 1896 – for just £10! To the north of the village is Drusillas Park (☎ 01323 874100, www.drusillas.co.uk), the best small zoo in the UK, ideal for those with children. Alfriston makes an excellent base for exploring the delightful Sussex countryside to be found all round it, with a variety of fine walks to be enjoyed. This route combines downland and valley walking,

with some lovely views along the way.

**1. START** From the car park, head for the High Street, go past the George Inn and, at the Star Inn, turn R along Star Lane. Follow this road – the route of the South Downs Way (SDW) – and go straight across at the next crossroads, now climbing up past houses. Soon the road comes to an end and you continue in the same direction along a broad, flinty and chalky track, which continues to climb, initially under tree cover. Before long you'll come to an intersection of tracks out in the open. Keep going ahead, following the SDW. The views improve all the time as you ascend, so don't forget to look back from time to time. You should soon be able to see Cuckmere Haven and the start of the Seven Sisters to the south, while to the east is Windover Hill with Friston Forest south of it, and

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alfriston.co.uk); Ye Olde Smugglers Inne (☎ 01323 870241); Tudor House (☎ 01323 870891); Badgers Tea House (☎ 01323 871336, badgersteahouse.com). **SLEEPING:** There are plenty of hotels, guest houses and B&Bs in Alfriston, including the George Inn and the Star Inn (see above); Rose Cottage B&B (☎ 01323 871534, www.rosecott.uk.com); and a YHA youth hostel less than a mile south of the village (☎ 0845 371 9101, www.yha.org.uk). **VISITOR INFORMATION:** Eastbourne TIC (☎ 0871 663 0031); Seaford TIC (☎ 01323 897426); or visit www.alfriston-village.co.uk. **GUIDEBOOKS:** *Walking in Sussex* by Kev Reynolds (£10, Cicerone, ISBN 9781852844257); *The South Downs Way* by Kev Reynolds (£12.95, Cicerone, ISBN 9781852844295). **LOCAL RAMBLERS GROUPS:** Sussex Ramblers has several local groups (☎ 01243 536080, www.sussex-ramblers.org.uk).



Map not to scale. Representation of OS Explorer MAP 123 1:25,000 www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk

to the north the Weald. The SDW reaches a high point at Bostal Hill – a popular spot with paragliders and hang-gliders – before a short descent to the Bopeep car park.

**2.** A brideway signpost on the L has the L fork signed for High and Over (your next destination) 3½ miles. However, it's less than a mile from the car park to Firlie Beacon (217m/712ft), the highest point on this stretch of the South Downs – a particularly fine vantage point and recommended if you've got the time and energy. Otherwise, follow the brideway south, then south-

east, ignoring paths and tracks on either side. Along the stretch of track marked as the Comp, keep L just beyond the trig point to continue over Cradle Hill to the road. Turn R and walk up the grass verge, then cross the road to the High and Over car park.

**3.** Just to the L of the NT Frog Firlie Farm sign (which gives the meaning of 'Firlie' as 'oak-covered land' – the Downs were once covered with trees), go through the trees and along a paved path, which leads to the main viewpoint. There's a toposcope here to help you make sense of the panorama. In the valley below is the meandering Cuckmere,

flowing gently down to the sea. On the hillside beneath you (not visible from up here) is carved a white horse, first cut in 1836, and recut in 1924. Go back up the path and bear R before you reach the car park. Follow this path through the trees and then over grassy downland, keeping to the R of the road down to the river.

**4.** Turn L and walk along the river bank path back to Alfriston, crossing to the east bank at Litlington Bridge if you wish. *Route devised by Fiona Bartrop*