

Welcome to the High Weald National Landscape, an unspoilt medieval landscape. Forget Beachy Head and the South Downs, The High Weald is the best place for walking in Sussex. This walk, which is easy to get to from many parts of the south east, introduces you to the some joys of the High Weald and also to one of the threats to it.

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| Distance and duration | 6 miles / 10 kilometres - 2 - 3 hours |
| Level | Leisurely |
| Start & finish point | Start Hayward's Heath Railway Station Finish Balcombe Railway Station |
| OS map reference | OS Explorer 135 |
| Other information | Trains run to Haywards Heath from Lewes, Hastings Brighton, Worthing, Littlehampton, Portsmouth, London, Luton and Bedford. Trains run from Balcombe to Haywards Heath, Brighton, London, Luton and Bedford. Nearly all the trains that stop at Balcombe are run by First Capital Connect, so you will not be able to use cheap tickets that are only valid on Southern Trains. Click here to download a GPX file of the route |

I-Spy - Something to look out for in the landscape



We are grateful to [Travel Log Lewes](#) (Chris Smith) for the loan of this walk.

Leave Hayward's Heath station by the main exit. Turn right along the footpath which runs alongside the forecourt. Turn right at the end. You come immediately to a roundabout. There are shops here and a pub. Turn north, next to the pub. Walk for about 300 metres to the end of the road. To your left the road runs in a tunnel under the railway, but your route turns right here

1) Then take the first left along Whickham Way, walking slightly uphill past suburban houses. The houses and the road run out. Turn right at a junction, walking on a lane with the large wall of a rather impressive estate on your right. Come to the entrance to the estate on your right. Turn left here, at a right of way sign. Your way is now straight ahead. You come to Haywards Heath Golf Club. Continue straight ahead.

A golf club sign tells you that you cannot stop or eat while on the path. Of course this is wrong. You have the right to rest and take refreshment.

2) After about 900 metres of straight walking you meet a footpath junction. You can no longer go straight ahead. Turn left here, into the wood.

This is the first High Weald Wood on the route. Once the whole of the High Weald was woodland. There is still a large amount of very beautiful woodland. Immediately you enter the wood there is a further junction. Take the left fork. Do not take the path to the right that leads gently downhill.

You have now joined the Sussex Ouse Valley Way. This is a 42 mile route from the source of the Ouse near Lower Beeding and the sea between Newhaven and Seaford, running through Lewes. The part of the walk to the west of here runs through some lovely High Weald scenery.

The route is now well waymarked and fairly easy to follow. Cross Copyhold Lane and keep straight ahead.

You are now not just on the Ouse Valley Way but also on the High Weald Landscape Trail. This 90 mile trail starts on Horsham Station and finishes at Rye. It is one of the most beautiful and undiscovered walking trails in South East England.

Pass River's Farm and cross the railway line that conveys goods from Ardingly to Haywards Heath. Enter the attractive Rivers Wood.

3) At the end of the wood the High Weald Trail goes straight on, but your route goes left up the Ouse Valley, following the Ouse Valley Way. The legal right of way exits the wood and carries straight on. Just before the bridge there is a signpost. The route turns left here.

Come to a road at Upper Ryland's Bridge. Do not let the view distract you from paying attention to the road, which can be very busy. Turn right at the junction, cross the river, and find a stile on your left after about 100 metres.

A) Before you is the Ouse Valley Viaduct, built in 1841 and a candidate for the most handsome viaduct in England. It carries the main London- Brighton line. Ironically, the River Ouse was navigable up to Upper Rylands Bridge and boats were used to bring the bricks to the site to build the viaduct. The coming of the railway destroyed the Ouse Navigation. The railway was so much faster and the river could not compete. You will either travel over the viaduct later on your return journey or will already have travelled over it to get to Haywards Heath.

The path from the stile runs west to pass under the northern end of the viaduct, it then

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crosses a further field to emerge at a farm track. Turn left and reach the yard of Rylands Farm. Turn right through the farmyard.

Now walk westwards, diagonally across two fields until you come to a bridge over the Ouse. From here continue west/south west towards Lower Bentley Farm. From the farm follow the farm drive westwards to meet the main road.

Turn left and then immediately right up a small lane on the opposite side of the road. Head north up this. At the first farm track on the left the Ouse Valley Way turns left. Do not follow it but keep straight ahead up the road. The road descends through trees across the infant River Ouse.

4) Immediately after this crossing the road bears right. On your left you will see a large gap in the hedge. There is a footpath sign, and if you walk through this gap you should see the traces of the path. The route travels north on the right hand side of a hedgerow, climbing gently.

The path re-joins the road. Turn left here and then right again after about 10 metres, heading north again. The path continues to climb and head in the same general direction for a further 600 metres. It then starts to descend and enters Pilstye Wood.

You come to a track which crosses the route. Signposts show that you should continue straight ahead and then down to the right. You emerge at the other side of the route at a field.

The route here runs north / northeast, slightly to the left, across the field. In the past this route has been ploughed up or obstructed by crops. If this is a problem when you walk the route please report it to West Sussex Rights of Way. The grid reference is TQ307295 and the path number is 17Ba

5) On reaching the far side of the field turn left along the field edge. Come to a field gate with a stile to the right of it. Cross the stile and walk along a narrow path to the road. Cross the road carefully.

If you turn right here on the roadside verge you will reach the sight of the proposed oil extraction site. It is marked by a track on the left. A company called Cuadrilla wanted to extract oil here by fracking. The safety of the technology is unproven and the use of chemicals so near Ardingly reservoir, which supplies water to Lewes and other towns in the area is, at least, alarming. In 2022 the government removed the ban on fracking.

To follow the main route turn left and then immediately right up a drive. Follow this drive through a gate into the grounds of a large and rather wonderful house, which you pass on your left. Immediately after the house turn right and see a footpath sign pointing you into the woods. Almost immediately you come to a footbridge over the railway.

After the bridge the path turns left and then runs along a field boundary, emerging at a road.

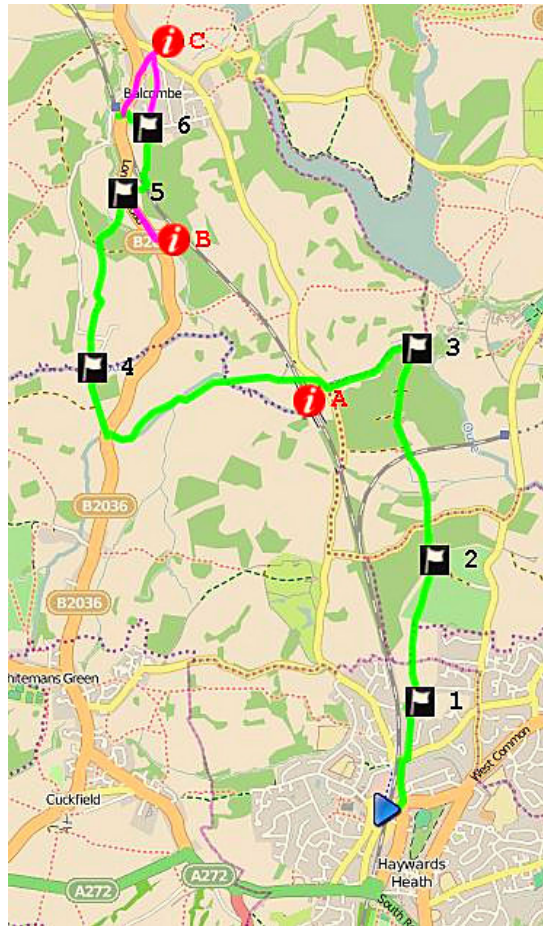
6) The main route assumes that you want to go straight to the station. Trains from Balcombe only run at a rate of one every hour. Turn left along the road, which curves round to the right. Come to steps, with a handrail, which lead through a gap in the houses down to a main road. At the road you can see the entrance to Balcombe station on your left.

If you have spare time and would like to explore the village or take refreshment then you can walk straight ahead. Walk along the road ahead for about 100 metres. Then take a path ahead on the right hand side. Pass the recreation ground, keeping straight ahead.

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The way turns into a road. Turn right at the end of this to find the village centre.

To return to the station retrace your steps down Bramble Hill (do not turn off to the left). You reach the main London Road. Bear left here to reach the station.



At all times please follow the Countryside Code

Respect everyone

- be considerate to those living in, working in and enjoying the countryside
- leave gates and property as you find them
- do not block access to gateways or driveways when parking
- be nice, say hello, share the space
- follow local signs and keep to marked paths unless wider access is available

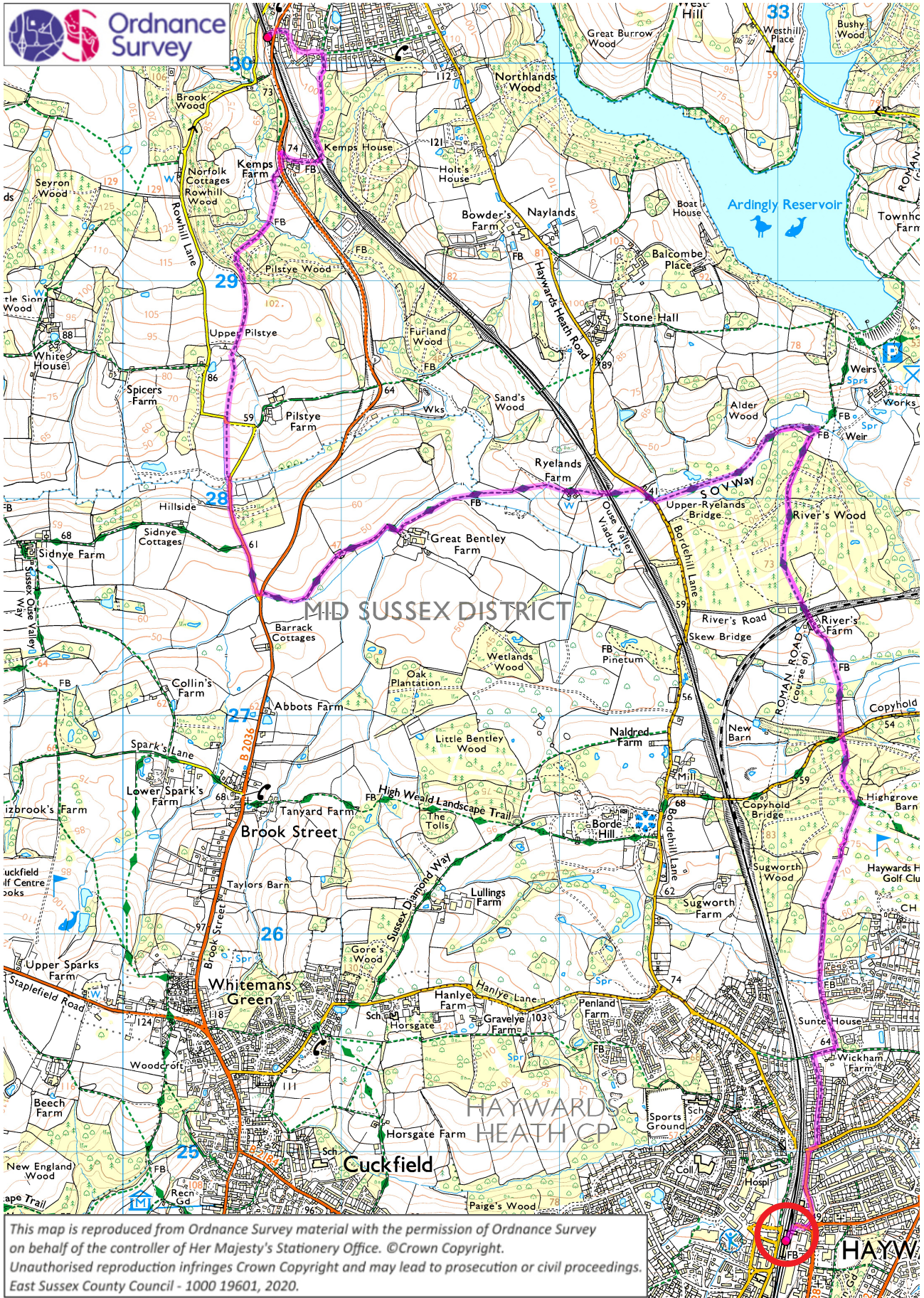
Protect the environment

- take your litter home – leave no trace of your visit
- do not light fires and only have barbeques where signs say you can
- always keep dogs under control and in sight
- dog poo – bag it and bin it – any public waste bin will do
- care for nature – do not cause damage or disturbance

Enjoy the outdoors

- check your route and local conditions
- plan your adventure – know what to expect and what you can do
- enjoy your visit, have fun, make a memory





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