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Berwick to Eastbourne

The Long Man of Wilmington and a smugglers' village.

Start: Berwick station

Finish: Eastbourne station

East Sussex, 12km (7.5 miles) north-west of Eastbourne.

Length: 20.5km (12.7 miles). For a shorter walk and other variations, see below Walk options.

Toughness: 7 out of 10

Time: 6 hours 30 minutes. For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 12 hours.

Walk notes: This South Downs walk heads from inland Sussex to the coast, taking in a variety of scenery along the way. From Berwick, the walk cuts across to the peaceful birdwatchers' paradise of Arlington Reservoir before crossing farmland towards Wilmington, then ascends to the huge chalk figure of the Long Man. From here, the route continues to the historic smuggling village of Jevington and ascends the South Downs to follow ridges of chalk grassland with views in all directions, before descending to the seaside resort of Eastbourne. There is the possibility of extending the walk up to the dramatic heights of Beachy Head. Note that this walk involves crossing one busy road (the A27) at Wilmington.

Transport: Hourly trains go from London Victoria to Berwick, changing at Lewes (journey time 1 hour 33 minutes). The National Rail website often suggests changing in Polegate, but this generally only saves a couple of minutes. On Sundays, trains are via Brighton (journey time 1 hour 41 minutes). Take the first train after 9am from Victoria to get to lunch in Wilmington in time. Returning from Eastbourne, there are two direct trains hourly (only one is direct on Sunday; change at Brighton for the other) back from Eastbourne to Victoria (journey time 1 hour 29 minutes; it takes 10-25 minutes longer on Sunday). A day return to Eastbourne covers both the outward and return journey. For those driving, the best place to park is Berwick station; trains back to Berwick from Eastbourne take 14 minutes, and are hourly.

Walk options: Directions for these variations are given at the end of the main walk text.

a) Short walk to Polegate:

This route provides a shorter ending, heading from Folkington to Polegate station to make a total walk of 11.6km (7.2 miles). Follow the main walk directions until point [5], then pick up the alternative directions at the end of the main walk text. Note that the last 1.6km (1 mile) of this option is on suburban roads.

b) Long walk via Beachy Head:

You can lengthen the walk to visit Beachy Head by following the South Downs Way all the way to the coast. This creates a walk of 24.6km (15.3 miles). Follow the main walk directions until just before point [9], then pick up the directions for the long walk where indicated at the end of the main walk text.

OS Landranger Map: 199

OS Explorer Map: OL25 (formerly 123) Berwick, map reference TQ524068, is in

It is also possible to shorten the main walk by 4.3km (2.7 miles) by taking the 12/12A bus from the A259, just before point [8], to Eastbourne station. This bus runs as

often as every 12 minutes during the day, and half hourly until late in the evening. There is also a bus to Eastbourne station from Beachy Head – the 13X – which saves 5km (3.1 miles) off option b) Long walk via Beachy Head. This bus runs on Sundays and public holidays throughout the year; on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays from late March to late June; and daily from late June to late September. For detailed times for both buses, call 01273 886200 or consult the website www.buses.co.uk.

WALK DIRECTIONS

[1] [Numbers in square brackets refer to the map]

Exiting from platform 2 of **Berwick station**, *turn right to emerge on the road opposite Berwick Stores. Carefully cross the road and turn left.*

[!] *In 20 metres turn right, following the direction indicated by the footpath post on a path (with the Berwick Service Station garage off to your left), your direction 100 degrees.*

In 40 metres go through a metal kissing gate. Veer left across a field aiming for a gate on the far side, your direction east. In 100 metres go through this metal gate and continue on a faint grass footpath across the next field, heading to the left of a row of bushes on the far side and to the left of a line of mini pylon cables, your direction 80 degrees.

In 140 metres go through two metal gates each side of a ditch stream and continue uphill, with a barbed-wire fence to your right, your direction east. *In 120 metres, at the top of the hill, turn right to follow the fence, your direction 140 degrees.*

*In 50 metres go through a metal gate and turn left downhill, still with a barbed-wire fence on your right, your direction east. There is now a clear view of **Arlington Reservoir** to your left.*

In 150 metres go through a metal kissing-gate in the bottom right-hand corner of the field (which may be hidden by trees). *In 5 metres turn left on a tarmac lane, your direction initially 330 degrees. In 50 metres ignore a stile on your right. In 80*

metres, turn right towards the reservoir, as indicated by a three-armed footpath signpost on your left-hand side.

In 10 metres go through a metal kissing gate (to the right of a wooden fieldgate) to continue on a tarmac path that follows the right-hand perimeter of the reservoir. (There are two information signposts on your left after going through the gate.)

In 800 metres, at the end of the reservoir, the tarmac path ends and there are two fieldgates. Cross a stile to the right of the two gates and [2] *turn right to head towards the church, your direction initially 100 degrees, then in 50 metres veer right with the path, your direction 140 degrees.*

In 250 metres cross a prominent metal footbridge flanked by two metal gates over the **River Cuckmere**. After crossing the bridge, turn left towards the church, your direction 80 degrees.

In 60 metres go right across a stile into the next field and continue along the left-hand edge of this field, your direction initially 150 degrees. In 60 metres, at a crosspaths, go right, to head towards a wooden fence, your direction 220 degrees.

In 70 metres, just before a stile [!] (*don't cross it*), *turn left, keeping the fence to your right-hand side, your direction 120 degrees. In 100 metres go through a sheep pen barrier to cross a wooden plank over a ditch stream, then go over a stile to continue on a narrow and potentially overgrown footpath with a tall fence on your left. In 30 metres go through a wooden gate and in 40 metres descend from the path and turn left on to a lane, your direction 40 degrees. In 60 metres turn right [!] along a fenced-in footpath (following the direction of a yellow arrow on a post). [3]*

In 70 metres turn right to go through a wooden gate, to turn left along a fenced in path for 40 metres, and at the corner of the fence on your right, turn half right your direction due south.

In 70 metres cross a stile to continue in

the same direction. In 40 metres cross another stile, and in 50 metres cross a further stile. Then continue to head in the same direction, south, on a faint path across a field.

In 160 metres go over a stile to enter a wooded area. In 150 metres go through a metal kissing gate, still heading south and after 70 metres continue along a wide fenced-in path between two large banks of solar panels. In 200 metres go over a stile, *turn left on a track for 5 metres, then go right over a high stile to follow your former direction south.* Continue across the next field towards the Downs.

In 100 metres cross a stile over a ditch stream to continue as before, your direction south, rising uphill. In 150 metres go over a stile (to the left of a metal fieldgate). There is now a good view of the chalk figure of the **Long Man of Wilmington** ahead of you on the Downs.

In 160 metres descend into a dip to go through a fieldgate, with a redundant stile on your left, into the next field and in 60 metres veer a little to the right to follow the path through a gap in the hedge.

Ascend a bank and turn left to follow the left edge of the field as it curves round, your direction initially 130 degrees. In 320 metres go over a stile and climb the banks of the railway embankment to (carefully) cross the railway line.

Descend steps on the far side of the track and then go over a stile to continue in the same direction, keeping the hedge on your left. In 60 metres cross a stile and a wooden plank footbridge. *In the next field, turn left* between wire fences, your direction 150 degrees.

In 130 metres cross a stile and turn right along a car wide gravel track. In 80 metres *turn left*, through a high metal gate to cross a field between high metal fences (this is deer protection fencing), your direction 160 degrees. In 120 metres go through a high metal gate and turn left, your direction 100 degrees, down a wide

fenced-in path. In 110 metres cross a car-wide plank bridge over a ditch stream and turn right through another high metal gate. *In 120 metres turn left*, following the line of the wire fence. *In 180 metres exit over a stile on your right* (left of a metal fieldgate). Keep straight ahead up the right edge of the field, your direction 220 degrees, towards the main road and crossroads visible ahead.

*In 300 metres you arrive at the major road, the A27. **Take your time and extreme care crossing this very fast, busy trunk road.*** Continue on the other side of the crossroads in the same direction on the road opposite (The Street), and in 75 metres you'll come to the **Giant's Rest** pub on your right-hand side, the suggested lunch stop. This is **Wilmington. [4] - [21 August 2021: Currently closed and for sale.]**

After lunch, turn right from the pub door to continue in the same direction as before, along The Street. Pass the village hall on your right and in 400 metres take the elevated pavement on the right-hand side of the road past the church of **St Mary and St Peter** on your right.

In 120 metres, opposite the car park, take the elevated footpath on the left-hand side of the road, signposted to the Long Man. Continue on this raised bank, following the direction of the road, your direction 220 degrees.

In 150 metres go through a horse blocking barrier and turn left on to a track heading towards the Long Man, your direction south. In 400 metres go through a wooden gate. Continue towards the Long Man and, *in 80 metres at the foot of the Long Man, turn sharp left in front of the wire fence, by a sign about soil erosion*, your direction 80 degrees initially. Follow the contour of the hill by continuing on this path for 1km, with views back to Arlington Reservoir on your left. *Then go through a wooden gate to descend a steep bank to a T-junction, where you turn right* up a potentially muddy bridleway.

In 900 metres, the route divides and the left turn becomes a lane at the church of **St Peter's**, Folkington. Here, past a sign for 'Folkington Estate' on your right, *fork right down a car-wide track to continue on the Weald Way* with a flint wall to your left (and the church beyond), your direction 160 degrees. [5]

[At this point you may choose to visit the church, in which case fork left on the lane. Also fork left to take option **a) Short walk to Polegate**: refer to the directions at the end of the main text.]

Otherwise, in 30 metres ignore a track off to the right through a gap in the hedge. In 300 metres ignore a footpath to your right. You are following a path between trees and a bank to your right.

[!] *After 700 metres you ignore a conservation path to your left. In a further 300 metres, 15 metres after a partially obscured narrow footpath indicated by a Wealden Walks sign merges from the right, leave the main path by turning left on a narrower footpath indicated by another Wealden Walks sign, your direction south. In 60 metres go over a stile to continue along a fenced-in footpath, continuing in the same direction.*

In 250 metres go over a stile and, in a further 12 metres, at a T-junction turn right up a bridleway, your initial direction 220 degrees. In a further 70 metres (where the byway curves to the right) turn left off the bridleway, your direction south, and in 10 metres go over a stile to continue in the same direction, your direction 160 degrees. In 80 metres cross a stile.

Continue by crossing the next field heading towards houses. In 300 metres veer left towards a corner stile at the base of a mini pylon pole. In 50 metres go over the stile and cross a car wide track to go over a stile and turn right along the right hand side of a garden bordered by a fence, your direction 200 degrees. In 60 metres turn left along an earth car-wide track byway, your direction 100 degrees.

In 100 metres the lane ends (Green Lane) and you *emerge on to the High Street*. [6] This is **Jevington**.

Turn right, your direction 190 degrees, and in 200 metres you come to the **Eight Bells** pub on your right, a possible late lunch/early tea stop. If, however, you would prefer a tea shop, continue to the **Jevington Tea Garden**, which is 200 metres further up the road on your left.

After visiting the pub, retrace your steps by turning left, and just beyond the pub cross the road to go up concrete steps opposite, where there is a sign saying 'Weald Way, Butts Row 1 mile and Willingdon 2 miles', your direction initially 120 degrees, passing up between barbed-wire fences. In 250 metres go through a kissing gate and continue up the footpath half left towards a prominent footpath post, visible ahead passing by it after 120 metres.

In 250 metres further on, where the footpath forks, take the right fork following the line of gorse bushes to your right. In 200 metres cross a stile to continue across the middle of the field up along a footpath, your direction 70 degrees.

In 450 metres cross a Weald Way signposted stile to continue between bushes. In 500 metres the ridge curves round to the right and two tracks join from the left, with views of Polegate, Eastbourne and the coast ahead. [7] Stay on this ridge on the main track as it veers right, with a wire fence to your right, passing to the right of a wooden seat in 80 metres; a suitable **picnic** spot.

In 20 metres the paths divide. *Follow the less distinct left-hand path, heading towards the car park visible ahead.*

In 250 metres go into the car park through a wooden swing gate next to a five-armed footpath sign.

Follow the direction of the blue bridleway arrow on the post marked 'Beachy Head 3

miles'. Cross over the rough gravel lane of the car park and take the path marked by the big stone for 'Beachy Head' to go straight ahead, your initial direction 200 degrees. In 300 metres *head over to the right to join a broad car-wide track, with a barbed-wire fence on your right.*

Continue and in 500 metres you come to a crosspaths. *Turn left to join the South Downs Way, your direction 150 degrees.* There is a stone marker on your left-hand side and you follow its direction for 'Old Town Eastbourne'.

In 80 metres you pass a concrete pillar trig point on your left. *You now follow this car-wide track, which is the South Downs Way, with a wire fence to your right for the next 2.7km (1.7 miles)* until you come to a main road, the A259.

[Once at the A259, you can shorten the walk by taking **bus 12 or 12A into Eastbourne** – by turning right on the A259, to reach the bus stop on your right in 30 metres.]

Otherwise, to continue on the main walk, cross the A259 with care and turn right uphill for 20 metres. Then turn left on the South Downs Way, with a wire fence to your right.

In 330 metres, 50 metres before a trig point visible ahead to your left, turn left on a wide grassy track, your direction 120 degrees. [8]

[At this point, you can take option **b) Long walk via Beachy Head.** For details, see the directions at the end of the main walk text.]

After 50 metres the trig point can be seen now on your right. Your route is to continue in this direction to descend into town on this grassy slope (heading in the direction of the large single tower block visible towards the coast). In 400 metres the path narrows and you continue to descend. After 220 metres you pass concrete footpath and bridleway signs on the ground on your left. Here the path diverges and *you take the path to the*

right, which passes to the right of bushes. Then after 350 metres you reach the foot of the grassy slope. There is a South Downs Way sign and information board here. Pass to the right of a car barrier and in 20 metres cross Link Road and continue in the same direction down the road.

In 150 metres, at a T-junction with a larger road, turn left. In 300 metres, at a junction of roads, cross over the main road to resume your previous direction by *veering right on Carlisle Road.* Here, if you want to go directly into town rather than to the coast, don't cross the road but take this main road left following the sign for 'Town Centre'. Otherwise, continue on Carlisle Road for 1km (0.6 miles), ignoring all roads off to the left or right. At the end, shortly after passing Congress Theatre on your left, cross the main road and continue on Wilmington Square towards the Wish Tower (a round Martello tower), which is visible ahead. Then, in 100 metres, *you reach the seafront and turn left. [9]*

Continue towards the pier and, in 400 metres at the bandstand, *leave the coast by turning left up the steps on to the main road, then cross at the pedestrian crossing and follow the signposted direction of the town centre to continue inland on Devonshire Place.*

In 400 metres, at the end of this road, you come to a roundabout. Continue in the same direction by crossing over Cornfield Terrace, then continue on Cornfield Road to its end in 300 metres. *Next, turn left* and in 120 metres come to **Eastbourne station.**

There are many cafés and restaurants in this area for a possible tea stop, but a popular option is the **Qualisea Fish Restaurant.** To get there, at the end of Cornfield Road, instead of turning left to the station, turn right on Terminus Road and the Qualisea is on your left in 400 metres. Alternatively, from the bandstand, instead of going inland on Devonshire Place, continue for 300 metres. You can then turn left on Terminus Place to come

to the restaurant, on your right, in 200 metres.

Walk options

a) Short walk to Polegate

Follow the walk directions until point [5] in the main text.

Fork left down the lane, your direction 60 degrees. In 30 metres you pass St Peter's church, Folkington, on your right. In 100 metres the lane turns right; in 200 metres more there's an open field on your right. In another 80 metres pass a double metal fieldgate on your left. [!] 70 metres beyond this turn right off the lane through an easily missed gap into a field marked by a yellow arrow on a post. [A1] Turn half left across the field, heading towards its top left corner, your direction 120 degrees.

In 150 metres, in the top-left corner of the field, cross a stile to enter a partly wooded area. In 40 metres go up some steps. At the top of them, go through a wooden gate, cross a concrete track, and go more or less straight ahead along an unfenced field boundary, your direction 120 degrees. In 50 metres the field boundary edge descends, and shortly afterwards a fence starts to your right. In 250 metres, at the far end of the field, keep straight on, with a small wood to your left and the fence still to your right. In 50 metres, turn left over a stile and turn right. In 10 metres, opposite a fieldgate, turn left, aiming for a stile 40 metres distant.

Cross the stile to walk along the upper right-hand edge of a field, your direction 80 degrees. In 100 metres, where the field edge turns right uphill, keep straight on across the field. In 100 metres you reach the brow of the hill. Here veer slightly right, aiming for a double metal fieldgate 15 metres to the left of the right-hand corner of the field.

In 200 metres cross a stile to the left of this fieldgate to continue along a car-wide track with houses on your left, your direction 150 degrees. In 100 metres you come out to a road and turn left. This is Wannock, [A2] a suburb of Polegate. Carry on down this road, ignoring ways off. In 1.5km (0.9 miles) cross the A27 at the traffic lights to follow the High Street

with the Horse and Groom pub on your left. In 120 metres pass St John's church on your right.

In a further 80 metres pass Polegate Fisheries fish and chip shop on your left and, in 70 metres, just before the level crossing, turn right up a tarmac path. This leads on to platform 1 of Polegate station, for trains back to London.

Walk Options

a) Short walk to Polegate

Follow the walk directions until point [5] in the main text.

*Fork left down the lane, your direction 60 degrees. In 30 metres you pass **St Peter's** church, Folkington, on your right. In 100 metres the lane turns right; in 200 metres more there's an open field on your right.*

*In another 80 metres pass a double metal fieldgate on your left. [!] 70 metres beyond this *turn right off the lane through an easily missed gap into a field* marked by a yellow arrow on a post. [A1] *Turn half left across the field, heading towards its top left corner, your direction 120 degrees.**

*In 150 metres, in the top-left corner of the field, *cross a stile to enter a partly wooded area*. In 40 metres go up some steps. At the top of them, go through a wooden gate, cross a concrete track, and *go more or less straight ahead along an unfenced field boundary, your direction 120 degrees*. In 50 metres the field boundary edge descends, and shortly afterwards a fence starts to your right.*

*In 250 metres, *at the far end of the field, keep straight on, with a small wood to your left and the fence still to your right*. In 50 metres, *turn left over a stile and turn right*. In 10 metres, *opposite a fieldgate, turn left, aiming for a stile 40 metres distant*.*

*Cross the stile to *walk along the upper right-hand edge of a field, your direction 80 degrees*. In 100 metres, *where the**

field edge turns right uphill, keep straight on across the field. In 100 metres you reach the brow of the hill. Here veer slightly right, *aiming for a double metal fieldgate 15 metres to the left of the right-hand corner of the field.*

In 200 metres cross a stile to the left of this fieldgate to *continue along a car-wide track with houses on your left, your direction 150 degrees.* In 100 metres you come out to a road and turn left. This is **Wannock, [A2]** a suburb of Polegate.

Carry on down this road, ignoring ways off. In 1.5km (0.9 miles) cross the A27 at the traffic lights to follow the High Street with the Horse and Groom pub on your left. In 120 metres pass **St John's** church on your right.

In a further 80 metres pass Polegate Fisheries fish and chip shop on your left and, in 70 metres, *just before the level crossing, turn right up a tarmac path.* This leads on to platform 1 of **Polegate station**, for trains back to London.

b) Long walk via Beachy Head

Follow the walk directions until point [8] in the main text.

Instead of turning left on the wide grassy path, continue on the main path and in 50 metres pass a stone trig point on your left. In 30 metres pass a circular pond, on your left, with wooden benches.

Continue on the path as it veers to the right. In 50 metres pass a four-armed footpath sign and follow the direction signposted 'To Beachy Head 1¼ miles'.

[!] *Veer left around the curve of the hill, taking the lower of three paths, with a large wooded area to your left, your direction south.* Continue until you reach the busy B2103 in 500 metres and carefully cross to continue in the same direction on the other side, on the grass verge to the left of a road, following the direction of the sign to 'Birling Gap and Beachy Head Countryside Centre'.

In 1.9km (1.2 miles), as you reach the coast and as the road veers to the right, pass the **Beachy Head** pub on your right. This is the suggested tea place for the long walk. (It is possible to shorten the walk here by **taking the 13X bus back to Eastbourne.**)

To visit **Beachy Head** itself, continue east past the pub and, in 100 metres, on your left there are benches set within a round brick structure. **[B1]** This marks the top of the actual headland. *Take care in this area and stay well back from the edge; this part of the cliff is prone to erosion.*

To return to Eastbourne, retrace your steps, now with the coast on your right. [!] In 400 metres, opposite a small car lay-by, turn right towards the sea. In 40 metres there is a wooden bench. *Here, turn left.* In 10 metres, follow the direction indicated by a footpath post to 'Seafront, SDW', continuing in this direction with the coast to your right.

In 700 metres you pass another footpath post; the path then descends steeply. In 300 metres, after the path becomes stepped, emerge on to a road at the foot of the Downs. There are two information boards here, one indicating the start of the South Downs Way, and the other detailing the 132km (82 mile) Weald Way to Gravesend.

Follow the direction for the town centre indicated on the four-armed footpath post '1½ miles via seafront' on a road called Duke's Drive. In 250 metres, just after the bus stop and signpost for 'Meads Village shops', *veer right off the road to descend on a steep tarmac road following the direction of the pedestrian sign to 'Holywell Promenade Western Parade'.*

You can then take any path to get down to the seafront. Continue on the promenade. *In 1.5km (0.9 miles) you come to the Wish Tower (a round Martello tower) on your left.*

You now pick up the directions from point [9] in the main text.

Lunch & tea places

Giant's Rest ~~The Street, Wilmington, BN26 5SQ (01323 870207). Open 11am-3pm, 6-11pm Mon-Fri; 11am-11pm Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun. Food served noon-2pm, 6.30-9pm Mon-Fri; noon-9pm Sat, Sun. Situated 4.9km (3 miles) into the walk, this welcoming pub has an interesting and inventive menu, and is the suggested lunch stop for the walk.~~
- 21 August 2021: Currently for Sale and closed.

Eight Bells *High Street, Jevington, BN26 5QB (01323 484442).* Open 11am-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun. *Food served noon-3pm, 6-9pm Mon-Sat; noon-9pm Sun.* This is a very popular pub and gets quite crowded, but it has a reasonably sized garden. Situated 10.8km (6.7 miles) into the walk, it is a possible late lunch stop.

Jevington Tea Garden *Hawthorne Lodge, Jevington, BN26 5QJ (01323 489692).*

Open *Mother's Day-late Oct* 11am-5pm Wed-Sun. Set in the garden of a private house (with some inside tables), this pleasant tearoom is just 200 metres up the road from the Eight Bells

Beachy Head *Beachy Head Road, BN20 3JY (01323 728060).* Open 11am-11pm Mon-Sat; 11am-10.30pm Sun. **Food served** noon-10pm Mon-Sat; noon-9.30pm Sun. This pub, right on Beachy Head itself, is a good tea option on the long walk. It serves meals, tea and coffee all afternoon and evening, and provides views back over the walk.

Qualisea Fish Restaurant *189 Terminus Road, Eastbourne, BN21 3DH (01323 725203).* Open 11am-8pm Mon-Thur, Sun; 11am-10pm Fri, Sat. This pleasant, sit-down fish and chip restaurant has long been a post-walk favourite with Saturday Walkers.