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South Downs Way Option for book two, walk 27

Walk notes

This option enables you to walk up over the downs between Wilmington and Jevington, following the South Downs Way, providing an attractive alternative route for Walk 27, Berwick to Eastbourne in *Time Out Country Walks Volume 2*.

If you are using the 2004 or 2006 edition of the book, the route also has the advantage that it takes you up past the Long Man of Wilmington (see **Points of Interest** below); if using the 2011 edition, this close-up view is already incorporated in the directions in the book.

From the Long Man, this route climbs up over the downs, descending to Jevington church and the Jevington Tea Rooms. Here you can either turn left for 200 metres to the Eight Bells pub to rejoin the book route, or take a slight short cut along the South Downs Way to rejoin the book route on the crest of the downs.

If you take the former option, this route is about 0.8km (0.5 miles) longer than the book route: if you take the latter option, the differences cancel out.

Points of interest

The **Long Man of Wilmington** is one of those ancient chalk figures that may not in fact be that ancient. Certainly if you get up close to it, as you do on this walk, you will see that it is not a chalk-cut figure at all, but outlined by white stones, cemented together. These date from 1874, and before they were put in place the figure was only visible in certain lights.

The earliest known drawing of the figure dates from 1766, but in that it is holding a rake and a scythe, not the long poles it now has. How much earlier than that the figure was created, no one knows.

Whoever did create it understood perspective – it is elongated so that it looks in proportion when viewed from below. It is also special in depicting a human figure at all – though there are several white horses dotted around the country, the only other human chalk cut figure in England is the Cerne Abbas giant near Dorchester.

WALK DIRECTIONS

1. Coming out of the Giant's Rest pub in Wilmington (point **[4]** in the book directions), turn left, away from the A27, up the road through the centre of the village
2. In 400 metres a pedestrian walkway starts on the right-hand side of the road, walled off from the road itself. 40 metres after this starts, do not neglect to go up the steps to the right into the churchyard to see an amazing **yew tree** (reputed to be 1600 years old). After visiting it, return to the road and continue in the same direction as before.
3. 130 metres past the church, and just over the brow of the hill, with the **Long Man of Wilmington** now in plain view on the hill ahead, veer left off the road onto a path that runs parallel to it on its left-hand side.
4. Follow this path down into the dip, and then left, away from the road and all the way up to the foot of the Long Man (about 600 metres).

5. At the top of this path, pass through a gate, and then curve right with a broad grassy path to the very foot of the Long Man in another 100 metres. Continue to the right following this path, with a fence to your left, as it climbs gently across the slope on a broad shelf, with an increasingly fine view to the right
6. In 300 metres, pass through a gate and turn left at a path crossroads, going uphill, initially in a gully
7. In 130 metres, ignore a track to the right and keep to the fence on your left. In another 80 metres ignore a grass track up the hill to the right, and still keep to the fence
8. In 150 metres you get an interesting view of the Long Man from above. You can cross the stile to the left here for a better one, and for a grassy perch to sit on: otherwise, keep on up the path, with the fence still to your left.
9. In 300 metres, at the top of the ridge, cross a stile, and pass to the right of the hill ahead (no clear path) to merge in 80 metres with the South Downs Way, a distinct car-wide track curving around a deep valley to the right
10. In 200 metres, at the far end of this deep valley, fork left on a faint grassy path away from the fence and up over a ridge.
11. Carry on across an undulating grassy plateau beyond, following footpath posts, and with a line of gorse 50 metres to your left.
12. Eventually in 500 metres this very indistinct path curves to the right, away from the gorse, following the top of a broad ridge, with a deep valley increasingly evident to your left. (This is still the South Downs Way but not very well waymarked here: however, the route is fairly obvious)
13. In 400 metres, pass through a gate and curve left with the faint path, now gently downhill. In 300 metres the path comes alongside the line of bushes to the left and comes to a gate
14. Beyond the gate, keep on along a path between bushes. However, [!] in 100 metres, at a crosspaths, turn left downhill into the trees.
15. In 300 metres, after this path has curved right and levelled out, fork **right** at a junction marked by a footpath post (the less obvious of the two tracks)
16. In 70 metres, keep straight on at a crosspaths, and carry on now more steeply downhill.
17. In 150 metres, there are open fields to the right and you can see Jevington Church ahead. Stay on the path, passing a succession of fields to your right.
18. In 100 metres, pass **Jevington Church**, and carry on down the road.
19. In 200 metres, you come to a road junction. For the **Eight Bells** pub, and to rejoin the book route at this point (point [6] in the book directions), turn left here: it is about 200 metres along the road. Otherwise, *turn right* on the road.
20. In 50 metres, you can see the **Jevington Tea Gardens** (01323 489 692) on your left. Turn left just beyond this, up a lane, signposted South Downs Way.
21. In 100 metres, the lane ends and you carry on up a car-wide track. In 500 metres, this brings you out into open fields.
22. Keep on up the track, with the way never in doubt, until in 1km or so, you come to the top of the hill. Pass through a car-blocking barrier.
23. Ignore tracks left and right here, and keep straight on, following a blue arrow on a post, on car-wide track.
24. In 80 metres pass a white trig point away to your left. You now follow the car-wide track along the crest of the downs, the South Downs Way, for 2.7km (1.7 miles) until you come to a main road, the A259. At this point – shortly before point [8] in the 2011 edition or point [9] in the 2004 or 2006 edition – you can rejoin the book directions