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Hastings to Rye

One Cinque port and two ancient towns

Start: Hastings station

Finish: Rye station

Length: 19.0km (11.8 miles). For a shorter variation, *see below* **Walk Options**.

Options.

Time: 6 hours. For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 11 hours.

Transport: Trains go from Charing Cross, London Victoria or St Pancras (changing at Ashford) to Hastings; the fastest journey time is 1 hour 30 minutes. Take the nearest train to 9am. Trains back from Rye run once an hour, changing at Ashford; journey time 2 hours. Buy a day return to Rye. There is also an hourly bus service from Winchelsea to Rye. For those driving, park centrally in Hastings. Trains back from Rye to Hastings are hourly and take 20 minutes.

OS Landranger Maps: 189 and 199

OS Explorer Maps: 124 and 125

Hastings, map reference TQ814097, is in East Sussex.

Toughness: 7 out of 10

Walk Notes: This rewarding walk starts with a fine clifftop coastal walk with steep climbs along the way. This section is the

most strenuous part of the walk. Lunch is at Pett Level, after which the terrain levels out, before leading up through the New Gate into Winchelsea for tea. After tea and just east of the town, you reach The Look Out, offering panoramic views across the whole of Romney Marsh and the Kent Downs beyond. From there it is down and along to Ferry Bridge, following an easy flat route north-east to Rye. It is worth trying to arrange this walk to coincide with a low tide at Pett Level (a few minutes after Hastings) at around 3pm. So that after lunch you may take a small detour 500 metres west along the beach from The Smuggler to see the 5200-year-old ancient drowned forest under Cliff End. In early 2014 there was a serious landslip at Ecclesbourne Glen (early on in the walk). Consequently there is now a (well signposted) diversion.

Walk Options:

a) Shorter Hastings circular walk: You may reduce the length of the main walk to 9.5km (5.9 miles) by following the main route directions as given until [2]. Then follow the directions for this option at the end of the main walk text. This route goes past the Caves and the castle to finish at Hastings.

You could also reduce the length of the main walk by 2.4km by finishing at Winchelsea station.

WALK DIRECTIONS

[1] [Numbers refer to the map]

Coming out of **Hastings station**, go down *Station Approach*. After 130 metres cross *Devonshire Road* to go down *Havelock Road*, your direction south. In 200 metres Havelock Road intersects with a six-way crossroads, four roads of which are pedestrianised. Veer left along *Wellington Place*, a pedestrian zone, your direction 100 degrees. In 160 metres you pass through a subway and 70 metres further on veer left to join the main *A259 coastal road*, your direction east.

After 250 metres fork left along *George Street* through Hastings old town. In 300 metres you come to the High Street. Cross over to join East Street, ahead and slightly to the right. After 90 metres cross over The Bourne and continue in the same direction, along *Rock-A-Nore*, with the tall black net huts away to your right.

[!] In 100 metres turn left up *Tamarisk Steps*, immediately before the Dolphin Inn. After the initial flight ignore a narrow flight of steps ahead to follow the steps round to the right to come out onto Tackle Way. Turn left and, in 25 metres, turn right up a long flight of steps to East Hill. At the top of these steps you reach a sign 'Welcome to Hastings Country Park – East Hill'. Turn right to go up a short flight of steps. To your right is the East Hill funicular railway.

There is a large stubby footpath post (No.1) on your left indicating cliff walks, with 'Fire Hills 3½ miles', pointing east along the cliff.

If you are taking the **main walk** to Rye you now follow the cliff walk for [5.6km to Fire Hills at the end of Hastings Country Park \[3\]](#), which is clearly signposted by large wooden stubby footpath posts. [If you are taking the **Shorter circular walk**, the route diverges from the coast at point [2] in the text below.]

In more detail: Head east as indicated by the large stubby footpath post along the cliff with a wooden fence on your right, keeping to the lower route, your initial direction 80 degrees.

In 700 metres you start to go more steeply downhill, with a fence to your right. After 100 metres go past a large stubby footpath post (No.2), with a footpath arrow to the right indicating 'Ecclesbourne Glen (lower) ¼ mile, Firehills ¾ miles'. Turn right to go down some steps, your initial direction 80 degrees.

After 80 metres, at the bottom of the steps, you come out to a level. Ignore a main turning off to the left and continue straight ahead to then go down a second flight of steps. 150 metres further on, at the bottom of the steps in the middle of the gorge, continue up a flight of steps to reach the top of the steps after 200 metres to go through a wooded area.

In 25 metres you emerge from the wooded area and veer right to reach a viewpoint after 25 metres. Turn left to continue along the coastal path, with a wooden fence on your right. Stick to the wider grassy path rather than the narrower one through some brambles.

In 750 metres you pass a large stubby footpath post on your left.

After 600 metres, just after ignoring a fork to your left, you reach a large stubby footpath post (No.12), with a footpath arrow pointing right to Firehills, to then enter a wooded area, your initial direction 70 degrees.

After 100 metres you go down some steps. 100 metres further down these steps you reach a large stubby footpath post on your left, with a footpath arrow pointing ahead to 'Fairlight Glen (lower) ¼ mile, Warren Glen ¾ mile, Firehills 1¼ miles' and left to 'Fairlight Glen (upper) ¼ mile, Fairlight picnic site 1 mile, North's seat 1¼ mile'. [2]

[At this point you can choose to take option **a**), the **Shorter Hastings circular walk option**. Follow the directions at the end of this main text.]

Otherwise, *for the main walk, continue straight ahead down the steps, your direction 130 degrees.*

After 40 metres, at the bottom of the steps, the path levels out. In 60 metres you emerge from the wooded area to commence a steep descent. After 150 metres, at the foot of the hill, you enter a wooded area. In 45 metres, at a footpath junction with a large stubby footpath post (No.16) on your left, follow a footpath arrow pointing right to Firehills, your initial direction 50 degrees. In 30 metres you pass a Hastings Country Park notice on your right.

Continue uphill to eventually emerge from the wooded area onto a grassy area with a bench ahead. Turn left at the bench up a grass track. In 500 metres, at a footpath junction marked by a large stubby footpath post (No.17), turn right for Firehills, to go up some steps into another wooded area, your initial direction 50 degrees. In 80 metres, at the top of the steps, continue on the level to emerge from the wooded area after 20 metres.

In 110 metres you pass a large stubby footpath post on your left, with a footpath arrow pointing ahead for Firehills.

After 90 metres you enter a wooded area and go down some steps. In 100 metres at the bottom of the steps you emerge from the wooded area to pass a large stubby footpath post (No.18) on your right with a footpath arrow pointing ahead to Firehills.

After 140 metres of going downhill the footpath narrows and becomes steeper. In 200 metres you pass by a large stubby footpath post (No.21) on your left, with an arrow for Firehills pointing ahead, to enter a sparsely wooded area, your initial direction 60 degrees.

In 20 metres you cross a stream and start to go uphill and in 220 metres you go up some steps. In 40 metres, at the top of the steps, you reach a footpath junction, with a bench and a footpath post on your left. Turn right, following a yellow arrow on the post, your direction 130 degrees.

In 500 metres you pass by a large stubby footpath post (No.24) on your left with a Firehills arrow pointing ahead, with a radar station up to your left. [If you are having lunch at the Coastguards tearooms, go uphill to pass by the right-hand side of the radar station to then go through a wooden kissing gate. Turn left along a car wide track and in 300 metres, at the end of a small car park, leave the road to go to the right of the Hastings Country Park Visitors Centre; up a path between two concrete bollards onto Coastguard Lane. **The Coastguards Tearooms** is 150 metres further on the right. After lunch, re-trace your steps.]

Continue straight ahead and take the lower path, which forks downhill to the right.

In 120 metres the path levels out. After 350 metres you come to the end of Hastings Country Park to go through a wooden kissing gate. **[3]**

Follow the path between fences to come out onto a shingle road (Channel Way) after 100 metres, with houses and bungalows to your left. [Note: If you have not exited Hastings Country Park before 13:15 then you should consider the Cove pub for lunch given that The Smuggler pub (2km further on) stops serving food at 14:00 Mon – Sat]

In 250 metres you pass Gorsethorn Way on your left. After 260 metres, *at a road junction, turn left down the tarmac Shepherds Way, your direction 350 degrees.*

In 120 metres turn right along Bramble Way. After a further 120 metres

you pass Blackthorn Way on your left and Heather Way on your right. In 75 metres ignore Smugglers Way on your left. [Note if taking an earlier lunch stop at The Cove turn left down Smugglers Way. After 170 metres where the road forks at the bottom, fork left. In 120 metres at a T-junction turn right along Waites Lane to reach The Cove on your right after 50 metres. After lunch retrace your steps to the point where the road forks at the bottom and turn left along Lower Waites Lane for 250 metres to pass Rockmead Road on your right to resume the directions from the asterisk [*] below.]

Continue along the shingle Rockmead Road, passing a sign on your left 'Unsuitable for large vehicles'. In 200 metres where the lane curves to the left and then to the right, as you pass by a wooden fieldgate entrance to No.15 on your left.

After 80 metres the lane now curves to the left to go slightly downhill. In 40 metres the shingle lane becomes tarmac.

In 170 metres (having ignored a footpath off to your right), *at a road junction you turn right*, your initial direction 50 degrees.

[*] After 180 metres you pass Cliff Way on your right with a sign 'Sea Road closed'. 40 metres further on you pass Primrose Hill on your left and 180 metres further on you pass Briar Close on your left.

[!] In 150 metres, *where the lane curves round to the left and Sea Road leads off up to the right, continue straight on through a narrow entrance onto a footpath*, passing a two-armed wooden footpath signpost after 10 metres, and turn right as indicated, your initial direction 120 degrees.

In 100 metres the footpath curves to the left. Follow the fenced-in footpath for 100 metres to come out with the cliff edge away to your right. Continue up the footpath, with a field fence on your left.

After 140 metres go up some steps. In 300 metres ignore a stile on your left and after a further 300 metres, at the end of the field on your left, go downhill along a narrow path.

Continue downhill, ignoring any turnings off for the next 450 metres to then *go down some steps to join a lane. Continue down for a few metres to a T-junction [4] and turn right onto a road*, your direction east. In 150 metres you pass some public conveniences on your right.

[!] After 15 metres, *where the road curves to the left, continue straight on to go up a driveway to the right of The Boat House. In 40 metres turn left*, marked by a wooden footpath signpost, to go up a small flight of steps and then down some steps.

Follow an arrow on a post to veer right. In 50 metres you *climb up some steps to cross a beach rampart and turn left along the promenade* with the rampart on your left and a metal railing to your right.

After 220 metres you go through some sea defence gates to veer left, passing the fieldgate entrance to Pett Level caravan park on your left. You then *join a car-wide track off the promenade, which descends down to the* **Smuggler Inn**, the suggested lunch stop.

After lunch, *retrace your steps back up to the promenade and turn left. In 400 metres ignore a car-wide track veering down to the left towards the main road and continue along a narrow path* with a grass slope on your left and the shingle beach to your right.

[!] After 180 metres *turn left down the easy to miss steps to the road. Go over the road to continue ahead on a concrete path marked by a tall white post.*

After 30 metres you reach a three-armed footpath post and the Military Canal. Ignoring a bridge over the canal, *turn*

right along a footpath, with the canal on your left. Continue alongside the canal.

In 100 metres you cross a stile to the left of a wooden fieldgate. After 550 metres, ignore a footbridge to your left at the canal junction. Continue along the canal in a northerly direction, crossing two more stiles to the right of metal fieldgates along the way.

In 1.2km you reach a footbridge* on your left (30 metres before a metal fieldgate). Turn left to cross over the footbridge. Then veer right for 20 metres to cross a concrete footbridge over the junction of the canal. [*If this footbridge is closed: Continue for 600 metres to then turn left over a car wide bridge, to head towards the far left-hand corner of the field, 200 metres distant, to then resume directions from [5].]

Continue straight ahead for 120 metres to Wickham Cliff, (the old coastline), your direction north, where you veer right along the base of the old cliff on your left. In 150 metres veer left to pass by a redundant stile and continue along the base of the cliff for another 400 metres to then go through a metal fieldgate.

Veer left to follow the edge of the field round and up for 80 metres to its top corner. [5] Go through a wooden gate and turn right onto a lane, your direction 60 degrees.

After 300 metres you pass through the **New Gate** of Winchelsea to continue up the lane. In a further 300 metres, where the lane curves round to the right, take an unmarked footpath that forks off to the left, your direction 350 degrees. In 200 metres at a footpath junction where the 1066 Country Walk crosses your path, go over the stile on your right, to join the 1066 Country Walk.

Turn half left, diagonally up across the field, heading towards a stile 20 metres to the left of the remains of an old stone wall on the far side of the field,

your direction 20 degrees. (This gable is all that remains of St. John's Hospital).

After 160 metres cross over the stile and road to turn right along the pavement into **Winchelsea**, with a stone wall on your left.

In 500 metres, having come into Winchelsea, you reach a crossroads. Go over to enter the south-west kissing gate entrance to St Thomas' churchyard, to visit the church of **St Thomas**. [Spike Milligan's grave: There's a tree in a fairly central position in the churchyard with a row of 3 gravestones in front of it – 2 larger stones on the left and a smaller Celtic Cross on the right, which is Spike's.]

Coming out of the church, turn right for 80 metres to exit via the north-east kissing gate. Turn right to go down the High Street for 50 metres to reach the **Winchelsea Farm Kitchen** on your right.

On coming out of the coffee shop, turn left to go back up the road for 50 metres to the crossroads and turn right. After 100 metres turn left at a crossroads to go up Mill Road, your direction 280 degrees. After 220 metres you reach a T-junction with the main road. Cross over to go along a lane, passing a two-armed wooden footpath signpost on your right, indicating the 1066 Country Walk.

After 160 metres, where the lane comes to an end, go through a wooden gate between two fieldgates to follow a yellow footpath arrow towards a fire beacon, your direction 260 degrees.

After 140 metres you reach the **Look Out**, with the remains of Winchelsea windmill to the right of the fire beacon. Veer right for 40 metres downhill to go through a wooden gate and follow a yellow footpath arrow downhill through a cutting, your direction 300 degrees.

In 160 metres continue down the sunken path as it veers to the right, to then cross a stile 30 metres further on at the bottom corner of the field. Continue straight ahead along the top edge of the

field, with an embankment up to your right, your direction 20 degrees.

After 250 metres, at the corner of the field, go through a wooden gate and *over a footbridge*. In 30 metres go through a wooden gate and after a further 80 metres you come out onto a car-wide concrete track.

After 40 metres go over a stile (right of a wooden fieldgate). In 20 metres you *come out onto the main road and turn left*. In 10 metres *continue straight on, leaving the main road to go along a slip road* (signposted Winchelsea station), your direction 20 degrees.

After 200 metres *the road crosses Ferry Bridge*. *Immediately past the bridge on the right you reach a stile with a metal footpath signpost. [6]* [If you wish to cut the walk short then ignore this stile to continue along this lane for 600 metres to **Winchelsea station**.]

Otherwise, for the main walk, *cross over the stile and turn half left to cut the corner of the field*, your direction 80 degrees. In 70 metres *cross over into the next field (not the field on your left) and veer left, diagonally across this field*, aiming for a wooden railed footbridge on the far side (also in the direction of Rye visible 3km), your direction 40 degrees. (However, depending on the time of year and the state of the field you may prefer to follow its left-hand edge all the way round to the footbridge.)

In 260 metres *cross the wooden footbridge* into the next field and continue along in the same direction (40 degrees) across the field. In 120 metres you pass by the corner of a ditch stream on your right and veer slightly to the right (aiming just to the right of the peak of Rye) and continue across the field, your direction 50 degrees. In 200 metres you reach a bend in another ditch stream on your left to now go along the right-hand bank of this ditch stream.

After 220 metres turn left to *cross over a metal-railed wooden footbridge and veer*

slightly to the right towards a not too visible footbridge, your direction 40 degrees. (If you can't make out the footbridge or the path continue straight ahead aiming just to the right of the peak of Rye in the distance).

After 50 metres a small embankment starts on your left. Veer left to continue along this embankment. In 250 metres you *cross over the metal-railed wooden footbridge and continue straight ahead*, in the same direction (40 degrees). After 60 metres, with a metal fieldgate off to your left, go straight ahead and cross over some low wire fencing (this is a public footpath) to continue with the ditch stream on your left. In 500 metres you pass a wooden footpath post with a yellow public footpath arrow, indicating your direction ahead, with the ditch stream on your left.

After 180 metres you pass a yellow 'roofed' wooden footpath post with a yellow footpath arrow, indicating your direction ahead. In 140 metres go over a stile to the right of a metal fieldgate, your direction 20 degrees. In 200 metres go through a (usually open) metal fieldgate to continue along a car-wide track, which curves to the right just before it becomes tarmac after 250 metres.

In 240 metres you *come out to a main road*. Turn left to follow the main road round to the right to cross a road bridge over the river Tillingham after 60 metres. After 150 metres you reach Cyprus Place on your left.

If you wish to head straight back to the station, turn left, your direction 300 degrees, and follow the road round to the right after 70 metres to reach a T-junction after 30 metres, with a level crossing on your left. Cross over the road, to reach **Rye Station** after 150 metres.

However, Rye is a town well worth visiting. Cross over Cyprus Place to turn right along Wish Ward to head into the historic part of Rye. [For the Mermaid Inn after 80 metres along Wish Ward, turn left up Mermaid Street for 100 metres to

reach the [Mermaid Inn](#) on your left.]

WALK OPTIONS

a) Shorter Hastings round walk:

Follow the main walk directions to [2].

At the large stubby footpath post on your left, with a footpath arrow pointing ahead to 'Fairlight Glen (lower) ¼ mile, Warren Glen ¾ mile, Firehills 1¼ miles' and left to 'Fairlight Glen (upper) ¼ mile, Fairlight picnic site 1 mile, North's seat 1¼ mile', turn left, your initial direction 50 degrees; and go along the level through a wooded area.

After 350 metres you emerge from the woods to reach a path T-junction. Turn left uphill, your initial direction 310 degrees. In 250 metres you pass a flight of steps down to the right (leading down after 25 metres to a small dripping waterfall). In 30 metres at a footpath junction with a large stubby footpath post on your left, indicating Barley Lane ¼ mile, Fairlight Picnic site ½ mile, North's Seat ¾ mile.

[!] *Turn sharp left uphill, your direction 210 degrees. In 100 metres, at the top of the hill, you come out of Hastings Country Park to continue along a car-wide earth track and in 20 metres turn right with the track along the right-hand edge of the field, your direction west. In 200 metres cross a stile (to the right of a metal barrier) and continue down a car-wide earth track between hedgerows, your initial direction 300 degrees.*

In 150 metres the car-wide track curves to the right. In 160 metres, at a T-junction, turn left onto a shingle lane, your direction 250 degrees.

In 400 metres you pass round to the right of a metal fieldgate. Beyond the gate a

driveway leads to the left. Continue along the lane. In 300 metres you pass the entrance to Shear Barn Tourer and Tent Park on your right.

*In 150 metres you pass the driveway entrance to Shear Barn caravan and camping ground on your left. After 270 metres take the slip road **[A1]** Rocklands Lane forking off to the left, your direction 210 degrees. In 60 metres the tarmac lane becomes shingle.*

After 400 metres you pass the entrance to Rocklands Holiday Park on the left, with a car barrier ahead to continue slightly uphill along a shingle track. In 20 metres ignore a footpath forking off downhill to the right. After 60 metres the shingle driveway leads out into open parkland, with a Hastings Park Country notice board on the right.

Veer right down the right-hand edge of the open parkland in the direction of Hastings (visible ahead), your direction 260 degrees. In 150 metres you pass a brick pavilion on your right and after a further 30 metres, at a two-armed footpath signpost to the left of a bench, take a path down a steep hill, your direction 250 degrees.

In 40 metres you emerge into an open space and continue downhill along the right hand edge of the open space. In 100 metres, at the bottom of the open space, turn left at a 'Welcome to Hastings Country Park – East Hill' sign, your direction 190 degrees.

After 50 metres take an unmarked footpath forking down off to the right, your direction 230 degrees. In 100 metres, at a T-junction, turn right down some steps for 10 metres to reach another T-junction. Turn right as marked by a yellow arrow on a post and continue along this main lower path along the side of the hill, with the slope dropping to your left, your direction 20 degrees.

In 300 metres turn sharp left down a tarmac footpath. After 150 metres the tarmac footpath comes out to a road.

Continue down the road for 60 metres to then turn right across the road via a zebra crossing. 15 metres further on cross over the main A259 via a zebra crossing and turn right, passing the house on your left where notorious fraudster Titus Oates (1649 -1705) once lived (in 1678 he claimed to have discovered a Popish plot to kill Charles II and replace him with his Catholic brother James; 80 people were rounded up and several executed before Oates admitted that he'd made the whole thing up). After 20 metres turn left up an unmarked footpath, your direction 290 degrees.

In 30 metres, where the footpath forks, fork left alongside a brick wall on your left. In 100 metres ignore some steps leading up to the right and continue uphill. After 150 metres, at a path T-junction, veer left down a tarmac footpath.

*In 100 metres, turn right uphill along an alleyway (Salters Lane). After 70 metres go up some steps to then turn left onto Croft Road. After 10 metres fork right to go up a tarmac footpath. In 100 metres at the top of the footpath you come out into open parkland and turn left. In 100 metres you pass the entrance to the **Caves** on your left. Continue along this path which curves to the right and up towards West Hill Café. In 200 metres, at the end of the path, turn left for 30 metres to **West Hill Café**, the recommended refreshment stop at the top of the West Cliff railway.*

*Coming out of West Hill Café, turn left along a tarmac footpath, which leads up onto the cliffs. In 60 metres you emerge onto a green and turn half right across the green, your direction west. In 60 metres, at a footpath post, go down some steps and follow the path, which leads to **Hastings Castle** entrance after 60 metres.*

Turn right to go down a lane. After 80 metres, at a T-junction, turn left to go down Castle Hill Road. After 30 metres pass Castle Down Avenue on your right. In 60 metres cross over a main road and

turn right for 20 metres to then turn left down Portland Steps.

At the bottom of Portland Steps turn left onto Portland Terrace. In 30 metres go down some steps and turn right downhill along a narrow road (Castle Hill Passage). In 70 metres you reach Queen's Road, with a Marks and Spencer's on the opposite side.

*Cross this main road via the pelican crossing and turn left. In 120 metres you reach a pedestrianised zone and continue straight on. After 100 metres you reach a six-way crossroads. Turn half right to go up Havelock Road, your direction 300 degrees. In 220 metres cross Devonshire Road. Veer left, to go back up Station Approach to **Hastings Station**.*

Lunch and Tea places

Coastguards Tearooms (01424 814131)

Large groups should phone ahead. **Open:** Tue-Sun, 9am-6pm (closes 5pm Nov-Feb) **Serves:** some light lunches such as lasagne, but mainly baguettes, jacket potatoes, puddings and cakes. (600 m off route)

The Cove (tel 01424 812110) Waites Lane, Fairlight, TN35 4AX.

Smuggler Inn Pett Level Road, Pett Level, nr Hastings, TN35 4EH (01424 813491), **Open** 11am-3pm, 6-11pm Mon-Fri; 11am-11pm Sat; noon - 10.30pm Su. **Food served** noon-2pm Mon-Sat; noon -3pm Sun. Located 10km (6.2 miles) from the start of the walk, this pub serves homely food and is the suggested lunch stop for the main walk.

Winchelsea Farm Kitchen 12 High Street, Winchelsea, TN36 4EA (01797 226287), **Open** 8am-4pm; 10am-5pm Sun. Situated 3km from the end of the walk, this is the recommended tea stop for the main walk.

New Inn German Street, Winchelsea, TN36 4EN (01797 226252)

West Hill Café Castle Hill Road, Hastings, TN34 3RD (01424 429636), **Open** Nov-Feb 10am-4pm daily. Mar-Oct 9am-5.30pm daily, 1km (0.6 miles) from the

end of the walk, this café is recommended as a tea stop if doing the shorter round walk.

The Mermaid Inn *Mermaid Street, Rye TN31 7EY* (tel 01797 223065).