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## Lewes via West Firle Circular

### A historic town, the South Downs and the River Ouse.

**Start and finish:** Lewes station

**Length:** 23.3km (14.5 miles). For shorter walk variations, see *below* **Walk options**.

**Time:** 6 hours walking time. For the whole outing, including meals, breaks and trains, allow 11 hours.

**Transport:** Twice hourly trains run between London Victoria and Lewes (journey time: 1 hour 5 minutes). Take the train nearest to 9.15am. From London Bridge and other Thameslink stations, you can change at East Croydon for the train from Victoria. For those driving, park centrally in Lewes; the train station has a car park.

**OS Landranger Map:** 198

**OS Explorer Maps:** OL11 and 25 (formerly 122 and 123)

Lewes, map reference TQ416098, is in East Sussex.

**Toughness:** 7 out of 10.

**Walk notes:** Each of the three sections of this walk make fine walks in themselves. Put together, they add up to a grand day's circuit in stunning scenery. The main walk starts in the historic town of Lewes, with the early section having fine

views over the town and castle. After reaching a secluded valley, skylarks can often to be heard high above. The middle section along the South Downs Way offers extensive views both inland and towards the port of Newhaven with the Channel beyond. The final stretch re-enters Lewes along the levee beside the River Ouse.

The walk has 360 metres of ascent spread over three steepish hills, but in between there are long sections that are mainly level.

**Walk options:** The main walk is in three sections, each with a station at the beginning and end, and each section can therefore be done individually, or in any other combination. Lewes to Glynde is 5km (3.1 miles), Glynde to Southease is 11.8km (7.3 miles) and Southease to Lewes is 6.5km (4 miles). The latter section is completely flat, but is perhaps the least interesting. Glynde and Southease are on separate train lines but each has trains hourly to Lewes.

#### a) Alternative ending at Saltdean:

You may vary the end of this walk and finish at Saltdean for a 23.6 km (14.7 miles) walk and if feeling particularly energetic continue for a further 8.5 km to Brighton. Follow the main walk directions to [6], then follow the directions at the end of the main walk

text to link up with the end of the separate Lewes to Saltdean directions (CW2, walk 24). Your return rail ticket to Lewes will be valid from Brighton.

**b) Alternative return to Lewes via Northease Manor:** This route takes you inland via Northease Manor (covering the same distance as the main walk along the Ouse). Follow the main walk directions to [7], then follow the directions at the end of the main walk text to link up with the end of the Alternative return to Lewes via Northease Manor directions from the separate Lewes to Saltdean directions (CW2, walk 24).

An option for this walk finishing at Berwick is available on the website of the Saturday Walkers' Club [www.walkingclub.org.uk](http://www.walkingclub.org.uk) in the 'Time Out Country Walks 2' section.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

### Lewes Station to Glynde Station 5 km (3.1 miles)

**[1] [Numbers refer to the map]** From the main exit of the station, *turn right to head towards the centre of town*. 100 metres from the station entrance *turn right down Lansdown Place*. After 100 metres you pass by a church on your left that has been converted into an arts centre. In a further 180 metres, at a mini roundabout, go straight on. After 60 metres, *turn right to take the pedestrianised High Street*.

Go straight on and after 80 metres go over the river bridge; on the left you can see **Harveys Brewery**. Continue straight along Cliffe High Street until it ends at a junction with Malling Street (the parish church of **St. Thomas a Becket** will be on your left). *Cross Malling Street to go essentially straight on up a small road called Chapel Hill* (this is slightly to the right of the junction by the church).

Walk up the hill; soon you will have views behind you over Lewes. After 200 metres continue up the drive of Lewes Golf Club, (a road with speed ramps). In 70 metres take the path parallel to the roadway on the right-hand side giving good views of Lewes.

**[2]** In 300 metres, at the start of the Club House car park, *follow the footpath around the right-hand side of the car park*. After 40 metres go through a wooden gate and follow a clear path past a water trough, your direction 70 degrees. In 320 metres, pass by an old gate post and then *veer slightly right with the main path to go downhill*, due east, ignoring a path up to the left. After 100 metres go past a redundant wooden gate and follow the lower path gently downhill.

After 200 metres go past a waymark post and in a further 25 metres, at another waymark post, *veer right down some steps and go through a wooden gate*. Continue gently downhill on a clear path, your direction 120 degrees, *towards the valley bottom*, passing a waymark post after 200 metres.

In 140 metres, at a waymark post *in the valley bottom*, *veer left to go through a wooden gate after 60 metres*. In 20 metres *pass by a circular concrete pond on your left*. In a further 20 metres *veer right*, ignoring a track leading uphill and passing a waymark post on your left. You are walking along the floor of the valley, your initial direction 150 degrees.

After 280 metres you *veer left towards a stile* beside an information board for Mount Caburn nature reserve. Cross this stile and *veer right to take the path steeply uphill* (ignoring a footpath further to the right alongside a fence), your direction 130 degrees. The route is essentially straight all the way from here to Glynde.

In more detail: go uphill and after 700 metres (just before the crest of the hill) cross a stile. [At this point if you wish to visit the hill fort of Mount Caburn

(recommended), turn right for 250 metres; the views from the fort are excellent. Afterwards return to the main route, by the stile.]

Returning to the main route, at the stile, there are now two alternatives. **(i)** Continue on the standard route, or **(ii)** take an alternative route into the Glynde village via Glynde Place (an Elizabethan manor house) and the village church.

**(i) Standard route:** At the stile, continue in almost the same direction as you came up the hill to head towards Glynde, which is soon visible below in the distance, your direction 110 degrees.

After 450 metres cross a stile in a fence, 25 metres to the left of a fieldgate. Go down a step and then follow the path down in a similar direction to before (100 degrees), with a wire fence on your right, towards a house with white windows. (To the left the cupola of Glynde Place can be seen.)

In 500 metres cross a stile in the lower right-hand corner of the field, to continue downhill with the main path, your direction 120 degrees. In 150 metres go through a wooden gate to a road, where you *turn left to pass the post office* after 15 metres.

In 30 metres, at the main road, *turn right* to pass the **Glynde Forge General Smith**. If this open you can pop in for a look. Continue along the road for 180 metres to pass by **Glynde Station**. [Rejoin the main walk directions at \[3\]](#) below.

**(ii) Glynde Place and the village church:** At the stile, turn left. In 150 metres, *at a wooden post, turn right and follow a wide track all the way down the hill. In 1km you reach the road and turn right.* Glynde Place (open Sundays, Wednesdays and Bank Holiday Mondays in summer; free entry to the gardens) is on the left, immediately followed by the church; this was built in the 18thC in an unusual Palladian style, and still has its box pews. You can see something of

Glynde Place's gardens from the back of the churchyard, including a pair of very impressive stone griffins. Afterwards, continue down the road past the road junction to pass the **Glynde Forge General Smith**. Continue along the road for 180 metres to pass by **Glynde Station**.

*[Glynde Station to Southease Station section now follows.]*

**[3]** From the station go uphill on the road, over the railway, following the road round to the right to pass by the long closed Trevor Arms. **[!]** *20 metres beyond the once pub garden, and just after Trevor Gardens numbers 11-16, turn right on a small path.* Pass gardens, cross a track, pass more gardens and go over a footbridge to follow a hedgerow, keeping it on your right.

In 250 metres at the end of the hedgerow continue across a field, your initial direction 220 degrees. The exit to the field is 450 metres away through a fieldgate gap in the hedgerow opposite. Go through this fieldgate gap (with a long abandoned decrepit stile on the left, TQ4527 0805) and *follow the path half-left, your direction 220 degrees towards an underpass* going under the busy main road.

In 70 metres go through the tunnel, to pass by a complex of barns on your left. At a T-junction with the old Eastbourne road *turn left* and then *in 300 metres turn right up a small road*, away from the busy main road.

*After 250 metres turn left onto a car wide tarmac track.* In 150 metres you pass between a dilapidated barn with a corrugated roof on your left and a house and garage on your right. Pass through some metal fieldgates and, 3 metres beyond these, *go over a stile in the fence to the left.* Follow roughly the right-hand side of the field towards a metal fieldgate. In 200 metres go through this fieldgate and in a further 60 metres pass through a small gate and continue along a small

ridge field boundary, your direction 70 degrees.

After 120 metres pass just to the right of a clump of trees and barns. Immediately beyond the barns *turn left on a track and then in 50 metres turn right on a track heading towards houses*, your direction 100 degrees.

After 200 metres cross a road and *turn half right into the grounds of **Firle Place***. In 30 metres pass a cattle grid and *immediately turn half right*, almost along the field edge. In 90 metres go through a wooden kissing gate to continue, your direction 150 degrees, *towards the left-hand edge of tennis courts 250 metres away*, just beyond a row of trees surrounded by protective fences.

Just to the left of the tennis courts go through a wooden kissing gate, and turn half right towards a cricket pavilion. In 40 metres turn right along a car wide track, to then pass by a wooden fieldgate, now between walls, emerging after 60 metres at the road with the **Ram Inn** on your right. **[4]** This is the suggested lunch stop.

Leaving the pub *turn left and then veer right with the road to go into the village*. In 200 metres at Firle Stores Post Office, *turn left down a small private road*, your direction 40 degrees. After 200 metres pass through a wooden kissing gate into the grounds of **Firle Place**.

**[!]** *From here the path curves round to the right on a bend a little tighter than the track ahead. The route follows waymarked posts all the way through the grounds. The first post is about 80 metres from the entrance to the grounds and to the right of the track ahead.* From this post, after 70 metres, the route next crosses the main driveway to Firle Place at a two-armed sign. Continue in the same direction (100 degrees), following the occasional footpath post along the way. (At times you can see the top of a round tower poking through trees ahead of you.)

700 metres after entering the grounds

you exit them through a small gate and *turn right up a lane*. In 250 metres, at a junction of tracks, go straight on uphill (as indicated by a blue bridlemay arrow on a post) and in a further 220 metres pass through a gateway to reach a T-junction where you *turn right up a tree-lined track*, your direction 260 degrees.

In 200 metres you come to a line of trees going uphill; *turn left immediately before these trees to take the track uphill*. (The path heads uphill with a row of trees just to its right; it's not the path through these trees.)

After 500 metres pass through a gate to the right of a metal fieldgate. Continue directly uphill for 70 metres, going slightly left with the path between trees and climb up the side of the hill.

**[5]** In 300 metres, as the path starts to level off *near the top of the hill*, *turn right* to go directly uphill towards a fence to intersect the South Downs Way (SDW).

*Turn right at the fence onto the SDW* and head towards two radio masts, your direction due west. The walk now stays on the South Downs Way all the way to Southease station. Remain on the ridgeway passing by the radio masts after 2.5km. In 250 metres you reach a crosspaths. (TQ 4550 0597)

If you wish to end at Seaford, turn left here and follow the Southease to Seaford directions from **[4]**.

Otherwise cross over the cattle grid to continue west along the SDW, passing by a concrete trigonometry point off to your right after a further 1km.

When the path starts to go steeply downhill, note a bridge over the main road (to the left of some farm buildings) below which you will cross.

In order to get there, *follow the path round to the left, along a distinct grass track, traversing the slope*, your direction 200 degrees. After 400 metres, at a post, *turn right down a car wide shingle track*.



*80 metres before the main road (A26) fork left down a fenced in car wide track leading to the bridge across the A26. In 100 metres, cross over the bridge to go down a car wide shingle track curving to the right. After 160 metres at a T-junction, turn left along a lane to reach Southease station after 120 metres.*

[At this point, you can choose to take the option **a**) the **Alternative ending at Saltdean**. Follow the directions at the end of this main walk text. Note that you will also require the [CW2 Walk 24 directions](#).]

Otherwise, *to continue with the main walk back to Lewes.*

*[Southease Station to Lewes station section now follows.]*

**[6]** From Southease station you can catch a train back into Lewes or continue for the last 6.5km (4 miles), completely flat and mostly beside the river.

In more detail: cross the railway line at the station and continue on the road to cross the river on a bridge. *15 metres beyond the bridge turn right* through a wooden gate and follow the footpath on the left (west bank) of the river towards Lewes, your direction north, to go through a wooden gate after 40 metres. After 600 metres (having passed by a redundant stile), you go through a wooden kissing gate.

In a further 900 metres you go through a kissing gate, with a car-wide track earth track off to your left leading to the village of Rodmell **[7]**. (It was from Rodmell that Virginia Woolf left her country home, Monk's House, to cross the water meadows to this point to end her life in 1941.)

[At this point, you can choose to take the option **b**) the **Alternative return to Lewes via Northease Manor**. Follow the directions at the end of this main walk text. Note that you will also require the

[CW2 Walk 24 directions](#).]

Otherwise, continue on the bank of the river for 3.4km until you go under a road bridge.

60 metres after going under the bridge *follow the path round a corner to the right*, and after a further 30 metres *turn left to pass just to the left of recycling banks*. Walk along the tarmac road, with the recycling banks to your right. In 200 metres *at a T-junction, turn right on a road, crossing a small stream* and then passing low buildings on the right and then playing fields on your left. Near the end of the playing fields *turn right with the road* and, after a further 100 metres, *turn left at the junction*. After 250 metres, at a mini roundabout, *turn right* towards the railway station.

To reach either of the tea stops, continue past the station and then go up hill into Lewes, there are selection of possible refreshment places in Lewes. To get to the **White Hart Hotel**, continue up to the traffic lights, turn left and the hotel is 20 metres on the left.

### **a) Alternative ending at Saltdean**

*Follow the main walk directions until point [6]*

From Southease station continue on the lane to cross a bridge over the river Ouse after 300 metres, to continue along this lane. After 400 metres having reached Southease village you pass by St Peters Church on your left-hand side to continue up the lane. After 120 metres *at the main road turn right* along the grass verge alongside it.

*In 70 metres turn left to go up a road sign- posted Telscombe. After 20 metres turn right through a gate into a field (sign-posted South Downs Way), your direction 320 degrees. After 30 metres you go over a small ridge to follow the footpath down. In 80 metres you go through a wooden gate to continue down the now fenced in footpath.*

*After 60 metres turn left up a car wide shingle track, your direction 220 degrees. In 1km you reach a path junction with the South Downs Way (SDW); continue ahead.*

*You now follow the main Lewes to Saltdean directions from [6]*

### **b) Alternative return to Lewes via Northease Manor**

*Follow the main walk directions until point [7]*

*Turn left down the riverbank onto a car-wide shingle track that leads away from the river, your direction west. There is a ditch stream on your left.*

*After 1.2 km (having passed through several gates along the way), you come to the end of the shingle track to continue up a tarmac road, (with Monk's House car park on your left-hand side). This is **Rodmell**.*

*In 100 metres you pass **Monk's House** on your left.*

**[!]***In a further 70 metres turn right onto a footpath following a footpath signpost opposite a triangular road sign indicating 'School 30 mph', to go through a kissing gate to the right of a wooden fieldgate 'Denholme'.*

*In 35 metres go through a squeeze stile. Continue straight ahead across an open space, your direction 300 degrees.*

*You now make use of the Lewes to Saltdean walk to follow the Alternative return to Lewes via Northease Manor option from [A1].  
(For details, **CW2 Walk 24.**)*

### **Lunch & tea places**

**Ram Inn** *The Street, Firle, BN8 6NS (01273 858222).* **Open:** 11.30am-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun. **Food served:** noon-5.30pm Mon-Thu; noon-9pm Fri-Sun. Real ale and wholesome food at reasonable prices, plus two pleasant gardens. Located 8.5km into the walk, this is the suggested lunch stop for the main walk.

**White Hart Hotel** *55 High Street, Lewes. BN4 1XE (01273 476694).* **Open** 10am-11pm. **Food served** 12.30-2.15pm, 7-10.15pm daily. One of several alternatives for tea. It was at this inn that Thomas Paine was wont to expound (see p266 **No Paine, no gain**).