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Southeast to Seaford

From the Downs to the sea via Rodmell and Bishopstone.

Start: Southeast station

Finish: Seaford station

Length: 18.1km (11.3 miles). For a shorter walk and other variations, see *below* Walk options.

Time: 5 hours 40 minutes. For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 10 hours.

Transport: Two trains an hour run from London Victoria to Lewes, where you change for Southeast (journey time 1 hour 17 minutes). Take the first train after 10am from Victoria to get to lunch in Rodmell in time. Trains back from Seaford run twice hourly (one per hour on Sundays): change at Lewes for London (journey time about 1 hour 30 minutes). Drivers should park at or near Lewes station.

OS Landranger Map: 198

OS Explorer Maps: OL11 and 25

(formerly 122 and 123)

Southeast, map reference TQ432055, is in East Sussex, 5km (3 miles) southeast of Lewes.

Toughness: 6 out of 10

Walk notes: Starting at the isolated station of Southeast – where you step off the train and are immediately in the

open countryside – this walk offers a beautiful contrast between the idyllic riverside meadows of the River Ouse and the lonely grandeur of the South Downs. It starts by following the river to the pretty village of Rodmell for lunch, and then doubles back to Southeast to cross the very heart of the South Downs. There are magnificent views throughout this section, both inland and out to the sea. Finally you descend through the pretty village of Bishopstone, and emerge on to the beach at the sleepy seaside town of Seaford. Note that, since the lunch pub is located only 3.5km (2.2 miles) into this walk, the route has a long afternoon (14.5km or 9 miles) without refreshment stops. Be sure to take with you water and any other provisions you might need.

Walk options: You can vary the walk length in several ways. The following three are favourite routes:

a) Shorter walk (not via Rodmell):

If you wish, you can cut out the round trip to Rodmell for lunch at the start of this walk, and head straight up on to the Downs from Southeast station. In this case, exit the station and turn right (east) towards the Downs, starting the main walk directions at point [3]. This reduces the length of the walk to 12.3km (7.7 miles), but note that

there is no pub or tea stop between Southeast and Seaford.

b) Alternative ending at Bishopstone:

You can end the walk at Bishopstone station (one stop up the line from Seaford), saving 1.8km (1.1 miles). To find the station, see the instructions at point [7] in the walk directions.

c) Lewes to Seaford:

Using the morning of Walk 24 as far as its lunchtime pub, the Abergavenny Arms, and then switching to this walk at point [2] makes a grand Lewes to Seaford walk of 24.8km (15.5 miles).

WALK DIRECTIONS

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

Coming off the train from Lewes at **Southeast station** *cross the footbridge over the railway and turn left on to a tarmac road, your direction due south.* In 90 metres the road curves to the right, your direction 260 degrees, and in a further 250 metres it crosses a bridge over the **River Ouse**. *15 metres beyond the bridge turn right through a wooden gate and follow the footpath on the left (west bank) of the river, your direction north.*

You follow this footpath for 1.6km (1 mile).

In more detail: Pass through a wooden gate in 40 metres, then go to the right of a redundant stile in a further 300 metres. In a further 300 metres go through a kissing gate. In 900 metres more pass through a kissing gate, *and turn left down the river bank on to a car-wide earth track that leads away from the river, your direction west.* There is a ditch stream on your left.

You follow this track all the way until you get to Rodmell.

In more detail: In 160 metres go through a metal gate (to the right of

a metal fieldgate). The track passes under mini pylon cables in 120 metres, after which it veers to the left.

In 140 metres go through a wooden gate (to the right of a metal fieldgate). In 30 metres the path goes under mini pylon cables and in a further 160 metres it veers to the left to pass under more pylons. (You are following the line of pylons to your left.)

In 300 metres go through a wooden gate (to the left of a metal fieldgate) with a water treatment works building on your left. In a further 270 metres you come to the end of the lane to emerge on a tarmac road. This is **Rodmell**.

*Continue straight on this road and in 100 metres you pass **Monk's House** on your left.* (If you want to visit the church, take the concrete footpath off to the left, just after Monk's House, opposite the signpost 'To Barley Field' on your right). Otherwise, continue on this lane until, after 400 metres, it ends at a T-junction with a road. Immediately on your right is the **Abergavenny Arms**, the suggested lunch stop. **[2]**

After lunch turn left from the front door of the pub on to the main road, crossing the lane you arrived on earlier to continue beyond along the main road, keeping to the pavement on the left-hand side. *In 100 metres, turn left at a car wide entrance into a field to then immediately turn right, to follow a permissive path along the right-hand side of the field (screened from the road by a wooded boundary).*

After 600 metres (having gone through a wooden gate and up a flight of steps along the way), go through a gap to turn right through a wooden gate (left of a wooden fieldgate) and in 20 metres, turn left down a lane passing by **St Peter's, Southeast** on your right-hand side. (To visit the church, turn right and in 30 metres you come to the entrance into the churchyard. There is a 'South Downs Way water tap' at the entrance of the church, worth making use of in view

of the long afternoon's walk.)

Continue on the road through the village and beyond, your direction east, and in 400 metres cross the bridge over the River Ouse. In 300 metres you reach Southeast station.

Cross the level crossing and **[3]** carry on down the road. *In 150 metres, at a three-armed footpath signpost, turn right up a car-wide shingle track following a South Downs Way sign. In 60 metres follow the track to the left and up across Itford bridge over the A26 in another 100 metres. Beyond, keep on up the track. In 100 metres a track merges from the left. In 120 metres go through a wooden gate to the right of a metal fieldgate.*

In 600 metres, **[!]** *just before a cattle stockade 70 metres up ahead of you, fork left following a blue South Downs Way arrow on a post, your direction 30 degrees. Follow a broad but grassy path that slants up across the hillside.*

In 250 metres, when you pass some thorn bushes to the right, curve right uphill, your direction 60 degrees. Climb to the top of the hill, curving gently right all the time. At the top there is a wire fence on your right and you follow a ridge in an easterly direction. There are fine views of Newhaven and the twisting course of the River Ouse on your right, and of Lewes back to the left.

In 400 metres go through a wooden gate and keep straight on, ascending all the while. In 200 metres you pass a trigonometry point (a concrete pillar) on your left and, just beyond this, the dried-up hollow of the **Red Lion Pond** (which is marked on OS maps).

Continue on heading towards radio masts. After 600 metres go through a wooden gate (left of a metal fieldgate) with sheep pens off to your right and veer slightly right with the path.

In 250 metres you come to a four-armed footpath sign, with the radio masts on the hill immediately ahead. **[4]** Here you *turn*

right to leave the South Downs Way, crossing over a cattle grid. Beyond keep straight on across the grass, ignoring the faint car-wide track to the left towards the radio masts (the South Downs Way), your direction 160 degrees.

In 250 metres go through a wooden gate and continue downhill with a wire fence to your left. (The buildings of **America Farm** marked on the OS map can be seen ahead to the left.)

In 950 metres, *where the path narrows between fences just before a hill, the path divides. Take the left-hand fork with a barbed-wire fence still on your left, your direction 150 degrees. In 300 metres, just beyond the top of the hill, the path begins to descend into a large dip.*

In 650 metres, *on the far side of the dip, you pass through a field boundary into another large field and veer right on faint parallel paths between two unfenced fields, roughly following the line of the ridge, your direction 200 degrees.*

In 350 metres *you come to a path with a blue bridleway arrow.*

[!] **The official right of way** here is to ignore the broad, grassy track downhill half left, and instead follow the direction of the arrow to carry straight on diagonally across the field ahead, your direction 190 degrees. You're aiming for a point about two-thirds of the way from left to right along the bottom of the field. In 500 metres, at a post with blue arrows at the far side of the field, you should find yourself at a path crossroads. **[5]** *Here, turn right uphill, your direction west initially.*

(However, at [!] above, if it is too difficult to cross the field because it has been ploughed or because of crops, then simply *turn half left and follow the field edge downhill, your direction 160 degrees for 450 metres until you come to a sunken track. There you turn right and, after 250 metres, come to the path crossroads [5] where you continue straight on uphill, your direction west*

initially.)

In 200 metres the path starts to descend. *In another 40 metres, at a path crossroads, turn left uphill.* In 10 metres ignore a stile to the right. In 100 metres ignore a bridleway to the right. After 150 metres ignore a bridleway and footpath to the right, keeping south (initially) up a fenced-in bridleway.

In 300 metres *turn left through a metal kissing-gate and turn right to resume your former direction with the fence now to your right.* In 300 metres follow the field edge round to the left and then to the right. In 100 metres go through a metal fieldgate (with a cluster of buildings visible below to your left). In 80 metres go through another metal fieldgate. You can now see Bishopstone church ahead and the path starts to descend, still with the fence to your right.

In 100 metres turn right, with the fence still to your right. In 400 metres, with the far end of the field 130 metres distant, *fork left away from the fence to follow the top of the ridge, your direction 170 degrees, aiming for a concrete cattle trough.* Beyond the trough keep roughly along the line of the ridge until **[!]** in 300m *you come to a very faint path slanting left downhill* towards a kissing gate into the wood. On closer inspection, the kissing gate is marked 'In memory of Dick Dennis'.

Go through this gate and continue downhill on a path under trees, your direction 150 degrees. *In 300 metres go left through a wooden kissing gate.*

Keep to the left-hand edge of the field beyond, following a flint wall to your left. In 50 metres go through a kissing gate, to then *take the path half right across the field towards **Bishopstone church***, your direction 110 degrees.

In 270 metres cross over a stile and *turn left along a car-wide track.* In 25 metres *go right uphill on a concrete path* and in 20 metres *turn left up some wooden steps*, your direction east. Cross a grassy space

to enter St. Andrew's churchyard through an iron gate.

Turn right to follow the path around the church and turn left on to the paved path to *exit the churchyard* through a lychgate. **[6]** *Turn right on the gravel path* down to the road for 40 metres and then *turn right on to the road.*

In 70 metres, *where the road bends right, there are two footpaths marked by a post to the left of a wooden gate. Take the righthand path*, following the direction for 'Bishopstone Station $\frac{3}{4}$ mile' diagonally across the field, your direction south. In 300 metres, in the far corner of the field, go through a metal kissing-gate and veer right to walk in a valley with a hilly bank on your lefthand side, and hedgerow and metal fencing on your right, your direction 220 degrees.

In 400 metres cross a stile and ascend the bank ahead to emerge on to the busy A259 (cross with care). **[7]** At this point, you can take option **b) Alternative ending at Bishopstone** by continuing straight on a tarmac path for 25 metres to cross Hawth Hill then follow Station Road to come to **Bishopstone station** at its end.

Otherwise, **to continue on the main walk for tea** and to reach the coast and Seaford, *turn right on the A259* for 30 metres, *then turn left on Marine Parade* (pavement on the right). In 180 metres go under a railway bridge (where there is another entrance to Bishopstone station on your left) and curve left with the road to come to the seafront in 200 metres. Carry on along the seafront esplanade.

In 1km (0.6 miles) pass Salts Recreation Ground (with a café that might be open in summer) on your left. Just after Salts Recreation Ground *turn left on Dane Road.* Continue to the end of this road to a T-junction with Church Road. *Turn sharp left on to Station Approach* to arrive at **Seaford station** to take the train back to London via Lewes. However, for tea at the **Old Plough**, *turn right on Church Road*, passing **Trawler's** and, in 100

metres, come to the pub on your left. Retrace your steps to the station to return home.

Lunch & tea places

Abergavenny Arms *Newhaven Road, Rodmell, BN7 3EZ (01273 472416)*. **Open** 11am-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun. *Food served* noon-3pm, 6-9pm Mon-Sat; noon-4pm Sun. 3.5km (2.2 miles) into the walk, this is a large, friendly pub with a log fire and a varied menu. It is the suggested lunch stop.

Papachino's At The Galley *Club House, Marine Parade, Seaford BN25 2QR (01323 890077)*. In season stays open late. **IG**

Salts Café *Salts Recreation Ground, Richmond Road, Seaford, BN25 1DR (01323 490727)*. **Seasonal opening times.**

Trawler's Fish & Chip Restaurant

32 Church Street, Seaford, BN25 1LD (01323 892520). **Open/food served** 11.30am-2pm, 5-10pm Mon-Sat. Close to the station, this superlative fish and chip shop is popular with both locals and walkers.

Old Plough *20 Church Street, Seaford, BN25 1HG (01323 872921)*. **Open** 11am-11pm Mon-Sat; noon-11pm Sun. *Food served* noon-8.30pm daily. This pub, just beyond the church in the heart of Seaford, sells tea and coffee in large pots and does good desserts. It is the suggested tea stop.

Picnic: Almost anywhere on the South Downs, or the green outside St Andrew's, Bishopstone