

North Downs WAY

84 large-scale maps & guides to 44 towns & villages

PLANNING – PLACES TO STAY – PLACES TO EAT

FARNHAM to DOVER via CANTERBURY

JOHN CURTIN &
HENRY STEDMAN



The first edition of this guide was researched and written by **JOHN CURTIN** (right) who lives at the foot of the North Downs Way in Abinger Hammer, Surrey. When not writing, John is busy bird guiding for the RSPB and species surveying for the BTO and Butterfly Conservation.



This second edition was updated by **HENRY STEDMAN**, who was born in Chatham, Kent, and went to school in Rochester, just a mile or so from the North Downs Way. (Indeed, thirty years ago the landlord at the Robin Hood pub, which sits alongside the North Downs Way, was one of several in the area who refused to serve him alcohol because he was under age. Thankfully, he seems to have been forgiven in



the intervening three decades and while researching for this edition enjoyed a pint there without difficulty.) Henry has been writing guidebooks for almost a quarter of a century and is the author of: *Kilimanjaro*, *Coast to Coast Path*, *Hadrian's Wall Path*, *Dales Way* and all three books in the *South-West Coast Path* series. He's also updated *Offa's Dyke*, *Pembrokeshire Coast Path*, *South Downs Way* and *The Ridgeway*.

With him on this trek, as with every walk he does in the UK, was **DAISY** (below), his (mostly) faithful dog. An experienced long-distance walker, Daisy has already completed all the trails above with Henry and her ambition is to walk all 15 National Trails.



North Downs Way

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A request

The authors and publisher have tried to ensure that this guide is as accurate as possible. Nevertheless things change even on these well-worn routes. If you notice any changes or omissions please write to Trailblazer (address as above) or email us at info@trailblazer-guides.com. A free copy of the next edition will be sent to persons making a significant contribution.

Warning: long-distance walking can be dangerous

Please read the notes on when to go (pp13-15) and health and safety (pp53-5). Every effort has been made by the author and publisher to ensure that the information contained herein is as accurate and up to date as possible. However, they are unable to accept responsibility for any inconvenience, loss or injury sustained by anyone as a result of the advice and information given in this guide.

PHOTOS – Front cover: Daisy and companion pause to admire the scenery from the North Downs Way viewpoint (see p152), before Hollingbourne.

This page: Poppies provide a colourful border to many of the fields en route, such as here just outside Detling.

Overleaf: Strolling through the barley on the way back from Lenham to the trail.

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INTRODUCTION

'I can assure those townsfolk who send forth a cry that wild nature and scenery are becoming difficult to find, that any amount of both still exists, within a short railway ride from London.'
Denham Jordan, author of *On Surrey Hills*.



Every day tens of thousands of people wend their dreary way along the three of the major transport arteries of South-East England – the M25, M26 & M20. Doubtless many of these same people from time to time turn their gaze from the tarmac to look wistfully up at the gentle grassy slopes that line one side of the motorways and wonder to themselves exactly what lies atop these same hills.

It's probably just as well that they don't know, for if they did they'd probably be tempted to swerve rashly onto the hard shoulder, screech to a halt and run straight up those same verdant slopes – which, if everybody did, would have dire consequences for the smooth running of UK transport network's south-eastern division.



National Trail milestones, such as this one in the woods above the White Horse Stone outside Aylesford, crop up regularly along the path and help you to keep track of your progress.

For hidden amidst the trees that crown the downs is the North Downs Way stretching all the way from Farnham, in Surrey, to Dover, in Kent. Stretching for 131.6 miles (211.6km) – or 124.2 miles (200km) if taking the shorter alternative finish from Boughton Lees to Dover that misses out on Canterbury – it's no coincidence that the North Downs Way is shadowed for much of its length by these major thoroughfares; because for several millennia the North Downs Way was the major transport route between Dover on England's eastern shore and the major trading and population centres of Canterbury, the Medway towns and on into Surrey. Indeed, **Stone Age burial**



The start of the trail at Hinkley Corner (see p71) in Farnham. The sculpture was installed in 2015 and is made from a form of architectural steel called corten that's designed intentionally to rust.

If you want to get an idea of just how important this route was, just look at the buildings that you can see along the way. No fewer than **eight castles** and **three cathedrals** lie on or just off the trail, not to mention several **archbishops'**

For several millennia the North Downs Way was the major transport route between Dover, Canterbury, the Medway towns and Surrey

sites and other monoliths in Northern Kent testify to how long the Downs have been inhabited. Given that the trail follows a ridge of chalk hills running across Surrey and Kent, it doesn't take much imagination to see how even Britain's first inhabitants would have followed this trail. Indeed, people in the Stone Age would have doubtless enjoyed how, by following the line of this natural geological phenomenon, they would find it easy to orientate themselves and avoid getting lost – a feature that walkers still appreciate to this day!

palaces (now, sadly, all in ruins), an assortment of WWII defences and one folly. It is the cathedrals – and, in particular, Canterbury Cathedral, arguably the most important Christian building in

England and certainly one of the oldest – that did much to popularise the trail that we now call the North Downs Way, as pilgrims flocked to the cathedral to pray at the tomb of St Thomas à Becket. Indeed, for much of its western half the North Downs Way follows the so-called 'Old Road', also known as the



How difficult is the path?

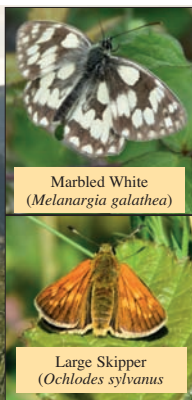
The North Downs Way is a well-signposted 131.6-miles (211.6km) or 124.2 miles (200km) if completing the alternative walk via Canterbury; and it's 155.9 miles (250.9km) if you manage somehow to combine both without missing any part of either trail, and without going over any of the trail twice. It is also one of the less taxing trails, as you walk over generally level and firm ground with very few steep ascents or descents. You do not need previous experience of long-distance path walking. What you do need is suitable clothing, money, time, a half-decent pair of leg muscles and a realistic assessment of your fitness. Remember you don't have to do it all in one go and because transport options are so good you can tackle it in bite-sized stages. The main thing is not to push yourself beyond your ability.

If you don't have the time or want to skip the less interesting parts where motorways intrude, there are excellent transport links to most parts of the North Downs Way from London and the south coast making day and weekend trips easy (see Highlights box pp32-3).

How long do you need?

You can have an invigorating holiday easily completing the walk in 10 days, or 14 if you prefer a more relaxed pace.

You can do it in a week if you are determined to crack off the miles day after day and provided you are fit. But that really feels like a race against



time. You can have an invigorating holiday easily completing the walk in 10 days, or 14 if you prefer a more relaxed pace. Bear in mind that if you are camping, carrying a heavier pack will slow you down and many of the official campsites are well off the trail. You may also want to take a day off – you'll probably be tempted by Canterbury. Both Guildford and Rochester are worth at least half a day each and this will add to the time needed. Then again there are superb **day and weekend walks** (see pp32-3) with easy access and excellent transport links.

See p31 for some suggested itineraries covering different walking speeds

When to go

SEASONS

The old joke is Britain doesn't have a climate; it has weather and if you don't like it just wait five minutes. Walking the North Downs Way can be enjoyed year-round as long as you dress suitably and take it for granted that even in summer there may be parts of the trail that are muddy. However, severe conditions of heat, cold or rain seldom last for long.

You may get wet on the North Downs but you're unlikely to perish. Temperatures seldom dip below 0°C in winter or above 32°C in summer and the south-east tends to have the highest temperatures and the greatest number of sunshine hours in Britain. In summer it tends to be slightly cooler by the coast because the sea takes longer to heat up. Conversely in winter it takes longer for the sea to cool so it's milder by the coast because of the warming effect of the sea.

Spring

This is a great time of year for stands of bluebells and spring wild flowers along the Surrey sections of the North Downs Way. With the first leaf growth coming

Below: Butterfly-filled meadows such as here, near Titsey Plantation, are a feature of the Downs.



leaves begin to change and the nights start to draw in. Farmers will be ploughing so you can expect some tough going over recently ploughed fields, especially if it's been raining.

Winter

There is nothing like a bright, clear, frosty day to admire the views from the North Downs' ridgeline and we often get a spell of weather like that early in the New Year. But it's wet, relatively mild, damp days that are the norm. With good waterproofs there is nothing to hold you back from walking the North Downs even if it's a bit dispiriting. With the leaves off the trees the views on a clear day are uninterrupted. Most pubs and B&Bs remain open as their business here is year-round so it will be easier to find accommodation but do make sure you get an early start each day as the nights draw in quickly.

TEMPERATURE

Temperatures are pleasantly warm during the summer and generally seldom drop below 0°C in the south-east in winter.

RAINFALL

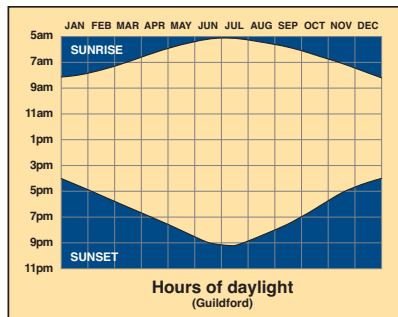
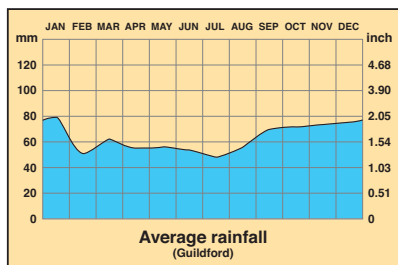
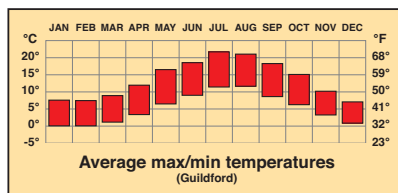
Rain falls in every month of the year and is highest in winter as expected. England is affected by weather systems coming from the south-west containing a lot of rain.

DAYLIGHT HOURS

If walking in autumn, winter or early spring, you must take account of how far you can walk in the available light.



Crossing the River Medway alongside the thunderous M2 is perhaps the least pleasant part of the entire trail. Distract yourself from the motorway by looking north towards Rochester.





Itineraries

Most people tackle the North Downs Way west to east and Part 4 has been written that way. It's perfectly possible to walk it in the opposite direction (the way-marking is in place) but there are advantages in doing it west to east (see below).

To help you plan your walk there is a **planning map** (see map opposite inside back cover) and a **table of village/town facilities** (see pp28-9); the latter gives a snap shot of the essential information you will need regarding accommodation possibilities and services. You could follow or adapt one of the suggested itineraries (see below) which are based on preferred type of accommodation and walking speeds. There is also a list of recommended linear **day** and **weekend walks** on pp32-3 which cover the best of the North Downs Way, all of which are well served by public transport. The public transport map and table are on pp45-8.

Once you have an idea of your approach turn to **Part 4** for detailed information on accommodation, places to eat and other services in each village and town on the route. Also in Part 4 you will find summaries of the route to accompany the detailed trail maps.

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES

The itineraries in the boxes opposite are based on different accommodation types (camping, hostels/bunkhouses and B&Bs), with each one divided into three alternatives depending on your walking speed. They are only suggestions so you can adapt them to suit your circumstances. Some accommodation and public transport options may be a considerable distance off the trail and where this is the case it is noted in Part 4 and on the maps where appropriate. Be sure to add travelling time before and after the walk. This is especially important in winter when there are fewer hours of daylight.

WHICH DIRECTION?

Most walkers tackle the path west to east. There are a few advantages. The prevailing wind tends to be at your back as is the sun if you get a later start. As most others are going this direction, if you are walking alone but want some company you can fall in step with them. Also it's worth having a destination to look forward to and Canterbury, though not at the end, is a worthy penultimate goal. And like a river on its journey it seems natural to follow the route to the sea.

SIDE TRIPS

The North Downs Way is plenty long enough to satisfy energetic walkers. Yet the path cuts through a part of Britain that's packed with castles, grand country

CAMPING OR STAYING IN HOSTELS/CAMPING BARN

Relaxed			Medium			Fast		
Place	Approx Distance		Place	Approx Distance		Place	Approx Distance	
Night	miles	km		miles	km		miles	km
0 Farnham			Farnham			Farnham		
1 Puttenham	6.9	11.1	Holmbury	20.5	33	Ranmore	22.8	36.7
			St Mary (SM)			Common		
2 Holmbury SM	13.6	21.9	Merstham*	14.3	23	Oxted*	20.3	32.7
3 Redhill*	12.2	19.6	Westerham*	12.4	20	Wrotham	17.7	28.4
4 Oxted*	10.4	16.8	Wrotham	13.6	21.8	H'bourne*	26.5	42.6
5 Otford*	11.6	18.6	Rochester*	11.7	18.8	Canterbury	24.9	40.1
6 Ryarsh*	10.4	16.7	H'bourne*	14.8	23.8	Dover	19.4	31.2
7 Aylesford*	12.1	19.5	Westwell	10.6	17.1			
8 H'bourne*	10.1	16.2	Canterbury	14.3	23			
9 Westwell	10.6	17.1	Dover	19.4	31.2			
10 Chilham*	7.9	12.7						
11 Bridge*	10.1	16.3	* No campsites or hostels/bunkhouses but other accommodation is available					
12 Dover	15.7	25.2						

Note distances given are to nearest point on the trail to the campsite only. Please refer to the Route Guide (Part 4) to see how far you have to walk from there to the campsite.

STAYING IN B&B-STYLE ACCOMMODATION

Relaxed			Medium			Fast		
Place	Approx Distance		Place	Approx Distance		Place	Approx Distance	
Night	miles	km		miles	km		miles	km
0 Farnham			Farnham			Farnham		
1 Guildford	12	19.3	Newlands Corner	15.4	24.8	Shere	17.5	28.2
2 Dorking	12.9	20.7	Reigate Hill	17.3	27.8	Oxted	25.6	41.2
3 Reigate Hill	7.8	12.6	Dunton Green	20.3	32.7	Ryarsh	22	35.3
4 Westerham	14.5	23.4	Rochester	19.5	31.3	Harrietsham	24.5	39.4
5 Wrotham	13.6	21.8	Lenham	18.6	29.9	Chilham	16.2	26.7
6 Rochester	11.7	18.8	Chilham	14.7	23.7	Dover	25.8	41.5
7 Thurnham	10.5	16.9	Bridge	10.1	16.3			
8 Boughton Lees	16.9	25.9	Dover	15.7	25.2			
9 Canterbury	12.3	19.8						
10 Dover	19.4	31.2						

houses and sites of great antiquity. A glance at the Ordnance Survey map will give you some idea for side trips and possible walking trails to them as well as other long-distance paths such as the Greensand Way (Haslemere, Surrey, to

▣ HIGHLIGHTS – DAY WALKS & WEEKEND WALKS

There is nothing like walking the entire length of a long-distance path in one go but some people don't have the time and others want to experience only the best of what the trail has to offer. For details of public transport to and from the start and finish of each walk see pp45-8. The weekend walks can be split in two to suit day walkers, or combined and completed in a day by those who want a challenge. That would, however, leave little time for sightseeing which is a pity on this culturally rich route.

Day walks

● **Farnham to Guildford** 12 miles/19.3km (see pp70-80) Walk through farmland, woodland and along sandy bridleways to Guildford where there is plenty of sightseeing. Visit the ancient burial tumulus at Puttenham Heath, itself geologically unusual in this area of chalk, and stop at the excellent Watts Gallery and the Cemetery Chapel, Compton (see p78), where you can rest up for awhile at café.

● **Guildford to Shere** 5½ miles/8.9km (see pp84-90) A relaxed pace crossing the River Wey, the path climbs through woods (bluebell-filled in spring) to the top of St Martha's and Newlands Corner from where there are great views on a clear day. You can then detour to Shere, Surrey's prettiest village.



The lonely, enigmatic stones of Coldrum Barrow lie just off the trail and are one of several Neolithic structures along the Way.

● **Offord to Rochester** 17.8 miles/28.6km (see pp127-140) Not the prettiest or quietest of sections and one of the longest but it passes through Kemsing Downs, a significant chalk grassland habitat, the woods of Trosley Country Park, with a short detour to see one of Kent's best-known megaliths, Coldrum Barrow. Much of the walk is in woodland and surprisingly isolated from the industrial Medway valley towns and emerges by pretty Upper Bush into Cuxton before crossing the M2 and Channel Tunnel Rail link. Rochester is 35-40 minutes off the

trail from where there are fast train connections to London, Canterbury and Dover. Consider an overnight stay there – the Norman Castle, England's second oldest cathedral, and Restoration House are well worth visiting.

● **Charing to Chilham** 10½ miles/16.9km (see pp158-167) A stroll through a quintessential Kentish landscape, with oast-houses and orchards abounding, and finishing at the prettiest village on the trail. Great fun.

Hamstreet, near Ashford in Kent) and Weald Way (Gravesend in Kent to Eastbourne in East Sussex). A detailed description is beyond the scope of this book but you can find information online.

Those inspired to try more Downs walking may want to tackle the South Downs Way for which there is a Trailblazer guide (see p208). The Downs Link, a 32-mile bridleway utilising a disused railway line links the North Downs Way at St Martha's (see Map 7, p85) with the South Downs Way, near Steyning.

RECOMMENDED READING

Some of the following books can be found in the tourist information centres and they may also have a number of books about the towns and villages en route, usually printed by small, local publishers.

For a thematic treatment of the North Downs through the eyes of painters, poets and novelists Kent County Council produced a richly illustrated guide, *North Downs Way: An Inspirational Journey* by Gillian Duff, which you can still find on Abebooks and other second-hand retailers.

The North Downs Way by Belinda Knox (publisher Kneading) is a photographic guide to the Way.

The Pilgrims' Way: Fact and fiction of an ancient trackway by Derek Bright is about the various origins of The Pilgrims' Way and provides a great background resource for anyone walking this path.

If you are inspired to try out other long-distance walks, check out the other titles in the Trailblazer series; see p208.

Flora and fauna field guides

Collins *Bird Guide* with its beautiful illustrations of British and European birds continues to be the favourite field guide of both ornithologists and laymen alike. For a guide to the flora you'll encounter on the North Downs Way, *The Wild Flower Key* (Warne) by Francis Rose and Clare O'Reilly, is arranged to make it easy to identify unfamiliar flowers. Another in the Collins Gem series, *Wild Flowers*, is more pocket-sized and thus more suitable for walkers.

There are also several field guide apps for smart phones and tablets, including those that can aid in identifying birds by their song as well as by their appearance.

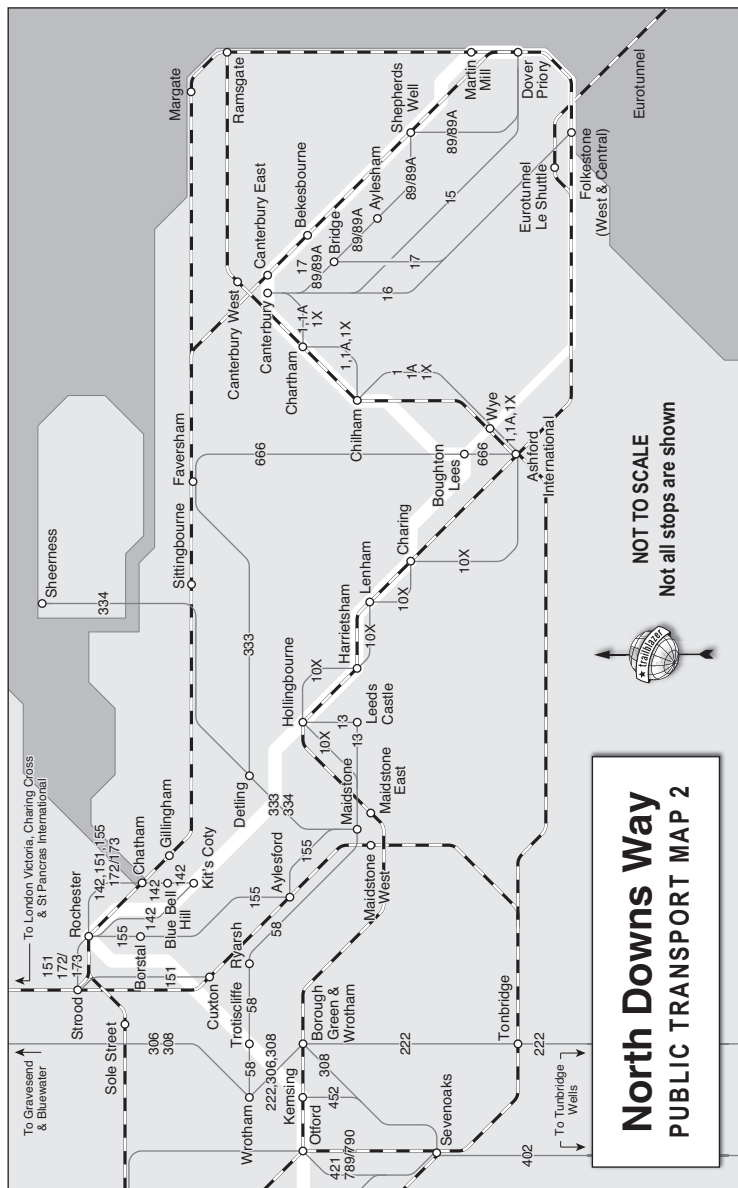
Getting to and from the North Downs Way

Surrey and Kent have excellent transport services and with its proximity to London the North Downs Way is one of the most easily accessible national trails. Travelling to it by public transport is convenient, reasonably inexpensive and makes sense.

NATIONAL TRANSPORT

Train

You are only ever an hour or two from London on the North Downs Way with convenient and frequent train services to Farnham, Guildford, Dorking, Redhill, Merstham, Oxted, Otford, Rochester, Hollingbourne, Harrietsham, Lenham, Charing, Chilham, Canterbury, Bekesbourne, Shepherds Well (for Shepherdswell) and Dover amongst other places.




THE ENVIRONMENT & NATURE



Conserving the North Downs Way

Britain is an overcrowded island, and England is the most densely populated part of it. The south-east has suffered a great deal of pressure from both over-population and competition for land use. The landscape of the North Downs in Surrey and Kent is the levee holding back London's sprawl.

Thankfully there are several bodies at local and national level whose job it is to protect and conserve that landscape for future generations.

NATURAL ENGLAND

The official responsibilities of Natural England ( gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england) are to 'enhance biodiversity and our landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas; promote access, recreation and public well-being, and contribute to the way natural resources are managed, so they can be enjoyed now and for future generations'. Essentially this organisation gives advice and information, designates Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, manages some of the National Nature Reserves and enforces existing regulations. Natural England also manages England's National Trails.

There are 37 **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)** in England, covering some 15% of the country. Their primary objective is conservation of the natural beauty of a landscape and responsibility for this falls to the local authority within whose boundary they fall. The North Downs Way passes through two: **Surrey Hills AONB** ( surreyhills.org) and **Kent Downs AONB** ( kentdowns.org.uk).

None of the 224 **national nature reserves (NNRs)** in England is actually on the route, though Wye Downs is on the alternative loop. **Local nature reserves (LNRs)** are designated and managed by local councils. The main wildlife sites/local nature reserves along the North Downs Way are Colekitchen Down (off Map 10, p92), Ranmore Common, White Downs and Denbies Hillside (Map 11, p93 and Map 12, p95), Box Hill (Map 13, p97), Kemsing Downs





Dog Rose
Rosa canina



Meadow Buttercup
Ranunculus acris



Gorse
Ulex europaeus



Tormontil
Potentilla erecta



Birdsfoot-trefoil
Lotus corniculatus



Ox-eye Daisy
Leucanthemum vulgare



St John's Wort
Hypericum perforatum



Primrose
Primula vulgaris



Cowslip
Primula veris



Common Ragwort
Senecio jacobaea



Red Admiral butterfly (*Vanessa atalanta*) on
Hemp Agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*)



The route guide

FARNHAM

[MAP 1a, p69]

The accident of the Surrey Hills made all men who wished to get to the south-western ports from the Thames Valley and the east pass through Farnham. Travellers going west and north from the Weald were equally compelled, if they would avoid the ridge, to pass through Farnham. The former had to come down north of the Hog's Back, the latter from the south of it, and it was ever at Farnham they met... and after Farnham the western tracks, now all in one, proceeded to the Straits of Dover.

Hilaire Belloc, *The Old Road*

Situated roughly halfway between Winchester and London, Farnham made its money from trade in wool, then corn, and in the 19th century its wealth came from brewing. Now it services well-off commuters but it also has a vibrant arts scene, a wonderful museum housed in a Grade 1 listed building and a fine medieval street pattern with a well-preserved Georgian streetscape in Castle St, West St and The Borough.

This is the reputed birthplace of William Cobbett, the 18th-century politician and author of *Rural Rides*, in which he writes glowingly of the area covered in the first stage of the North Downs Way; his actual home and birthplace is now a pub named after him just outside the centre in Bridge Square.

What to see and do

If you have the time, follow the comprehensive **Farnham Heritage Trail**; a free leaflet may be downloaded from www.farnham.gov.uk/discover/history-and-heritage/heritagetrail.

If you are time poor visit **Farnham Castle Keep** (☎ 01252-721194, www.english-heritage.co.uk; Mon-Fri 9am-5pm, Sat & Sun 10am-4pm; free).

Overlooking the town, construction was commenced in 1138 under Henry de Blois and it provided accommodation for the bishops of Winchester until 1955. Mary Tudor stayed here on her way to marry Philip of Spain in Winchester and Elizabeth I visited several times.

Another worthwhile place to visit is the **Museum of Farnham** (☎ 01252-715094, farnhammaltings.com/museum; Tue-Sat 10am-5pm; free); it's located in Wilmer House, West St, a graciously proportioned Grade 1 listed building, dating from 1718, with a pretty garden and the exhibits are well displayed.

There is a monthly market at **Farnham Maltings**, Bridge Square (☎ 01252-745444, farnhammaltings.com; first Sat in the month 9am-4.30pm; £1), which is also the focus of a thriving music and arts scene, and a **Farmers' Market** (see box p22), on the fourth Sunday of every month (10am-1.30pm), in the Central Car Park, off Victoria Rd.

Services

Tourist information is only available online (www.farnham.gov.uk/discover).

There are branches of various banks and building societies with **ATMs** on The Borough as well as a main **post office** (Mon, Wed-Fri 9am-5.30pm, Tue from 9.30am, Sat 9am-12.30pm); there is another post office on Station Hill.

Sainsbury's supermarket (Mon-Sat 7am-8pm, Sun 10am-4pm) is on South St and there is a **Boots pharmacy** (Mon-Sat 8.30am-6pm, Sun 10.30am-4pm) on The Borough.

Also on The Borough is **Breaking Free outdoor shop** (☎ 01252-724347, breakingfree.co.uk; Mon-Sat 9.30am-5.30pm), for last-minute gear purchases.

Transport

The **railway station**, on Station Hill, is about five minutes away. South Western Railway operate services (see box pp42-3) to Guildford (change at Aldershot) and direct to London Waterloo.

National Express **coach service** NX031 (see p44; London to Portsmouth) drops off at the bus stop on The Borough and picks up from the stop on South St.

Several Stagecoach **bus services** (pp45-8) call here: Nos 4 & 5 (to Aldershot); Nos 18 & 19 (Aldershot to Haslemere); No 46 (to Guildford); and No 65 (Alton to Guildford). The No 65 only stops on The Borough, but all the other services call also at Farnham railway station.

For a **taxi** try Farnham Station Taxis (☎ 01252-735735, 📧 farnhamstationtaxis.co.uk) or Home James (☎ 01252-722296, 📧 homejamestaxis.co.uk).

Where to stay

Farnham now has a hostel: **The Mulberry** (☎ 01252-726673, 📧 mulberryfarnham.co.uk; 1 x 2- / 3 x 4- / 1 x 5-bed dorms; wi-fi) sits near the station and has en suite dorms furnished with between three and six beds, with rates starting at £25pp – and you don't have to walk far from the pub in the evening!

For a great location and lodgings in an historic property at a fair price it's hard to beat **1 Park Row** (☎ 01252-710249, 📧 1parkrow.co.uk; 1S/1D shared bathroom, 2D/1T all en suite; wi-fi). B&B costs £34-44pp (sgl from £45, sgl occ £58-78). It's just off Castle St and next door to the popular Nelson Arms.

At No 73 Lodge Hill Rd, about 1.75km south of the station off Tilford Rd, is the spacious **High Wray** (☎ 01252-715589, 📧 c5555827.myzen.co.uk; 2T, shared bathroom; ☹; wi-fi; 🐾) charging from £30pp.

If location, not price, is your mantra try the 17th-century former coaching inn, **Bush Hotel** (☎ 01252-234800, 📧 www.mercure.com; 94D or T, all en suite; ☹; wi-fi; 🐾) on The Borough (though the entrance is round the corner on South St). Rates vary depending on demand, though the rack rates are seldom less than £50pp

(sgl occ room rate) without breakfast; online, however, you should be able to secure a room for around £40pp (sgl occ room rate); breakfast costs £10pp.

Smaller but still central, **The Bishop's Table** (☎ 01252-710222, 📧 www.bishops-table.com; 2S/1T/21D, all en suite; ☹; wi-fi) sits at the other end of The Borough at 27 West St. Room rates also vary according to demand but are around £45pp (sgl £75-80, sgl occ room rate); breakfast is available.

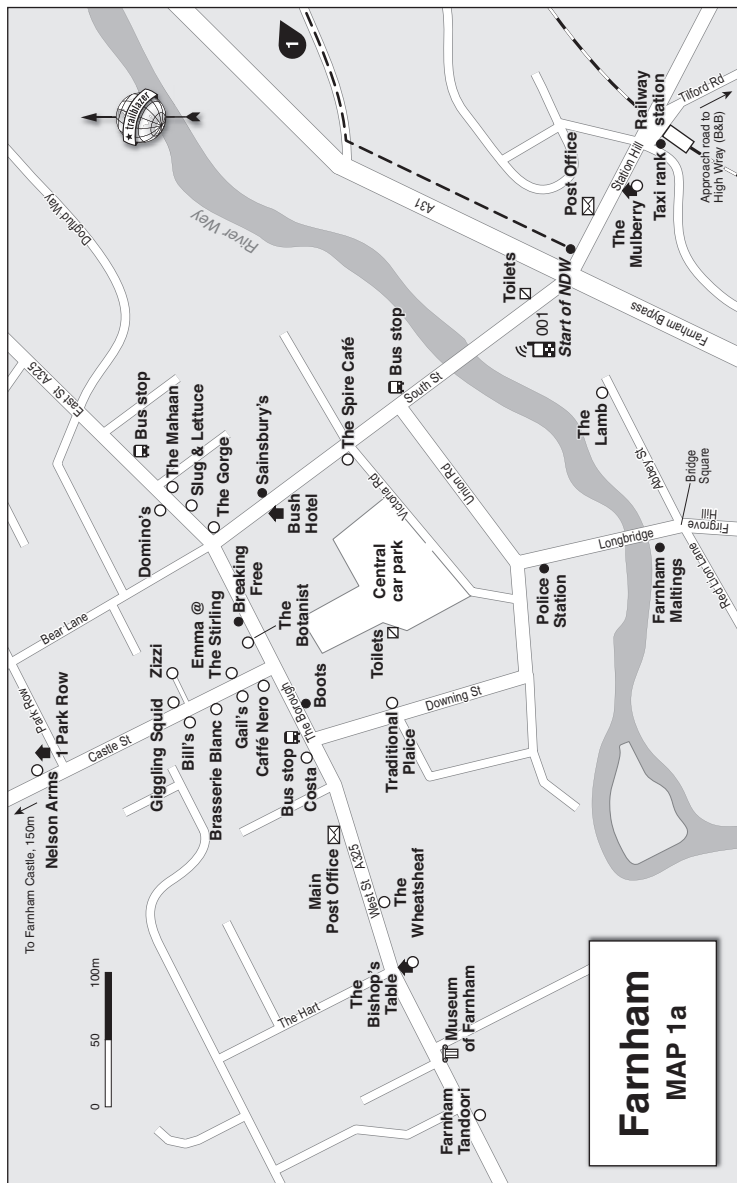
Where to eat and drink

For a **coffee**, there are the usual nationwide chain outlets such as **Caffè Nero** (Mon-Fri 7am-6.30pm, Sat 7.30am-6.30pm, Sun 7.30am-6pm), at the bottom of Castle St, and **Costa** (Mon-Sat 7am-7pm, Sun 9am-6pm) on West St. For something more independent, **The Spire Café** (Mon-Fri 10am-2pm, to noon on Sat) offers decent, warm coffee (£1.50) served by decent, warm people, as well as some great-value light meals (soups £2.50) served Monday-Friday only. Back on Castle St, you can grab a quick **sandwich** from the smart kiosk, **Emma @ The Stirling** (☎ 01252-727253; Mon-Fri 8am-4pm, Sat & Sun 9.30am-4pm, gen closed on Sun in winter) at the southern end of Castle St.

Castle St is also the best place to head for **breakfasts**. Near Caffè Nero is a branch of that upmarket eatery **Bill's** (☎ 01252-716589, 📧 bills-website.co.uk; Mon-Sat 8am-11pm, Sun to 10.30pm; wi-fi) charging £8.95 for their Full English; they also have some delicious lunchtime options (£10.50-15.95). Right by Caffè Nero, **Gail's** (☎ 01252-722955, 📧 gailsbread.co.uk/bakeries/farnham; Mon-Fri 7am-6pm, Sat, Sun & Bank Hols 8am-6pm) is a branch of an 'artisan bakery' chain, though one that also does a fine line in breakfasts with porridge (£4) and granola (£5.50).

If this is all a bit fancy, on the corner of South St and the A325 (East St) is **The Gorge** (☎ 01252-726070; Mon-Sat 7am-5pm, Sun 8.30am-4pm), where an all-day breakfast costs just £3.75.

Brasserie Blanc (☎ 01252-899970, 📧 brasserieblanc.com; Mon-Fri 9am-10pm,



Sat 8.30am-10.30pm, Sun 9am-9pm) is one of celebrity chef Raymond Blanc's babies. It's a cut above the quality – and cost – of your average trekker's repast with mains starting at around £14.90 for a chicken salad, though they do offer a couple of fixed price menus at lunchtime (£11.95 for two courses, £15.45 for three) that are better value. The food is lovely, of course, but maybe save this sort of fare for the end of your trek – otherwise you may never start!

Across the way, **Giggling Squid** (☎ 01252-727552, 🌐 gigglingssquid.com; Tue-Thur noon-10pm, Fri & Sat to 10.30pm, Sun & Mon to 9.30pm) is a Thai tapas restaurant at lunchtime, an unusual combination, though it reverts to a more typical Thai eatery at night, with that old favourite, green curry, for £9.95.

The Botanist (☎ 01252-718089, 🌐 thebotanist.uk.com; food Mon-Thur 11am-4pm & 6-11pm, Fri 11am-11pm, Sat & Sun 10am-11pm), on The Borough, has mains from £10.95 up to £19.95 for a whole rotisserie chicken plus trimmings.

For takeaway fare, fish & chip fans – and many walkers are – should make for **Traditional Plaice** (☎ 01252-718009; Mon-Sat 11.30am-2.15pm & 5-10pm), at 50 Downing St.

Indian food is at its best in Farnham at **The Mahaan** (☎ 01252-718171, 🌐 themaahan.co.uk; daily noon-2pm & 5.30-11.30pm) on East St, or try **Farnham Tandoori** (☎ 01252-716853, 🌐 farnham-tandoori.com; daily noon-2pm & 6-11.30pm, to midnight Fri & Sat), 47 West St, with the ubiquitous chicken tikka masala at £11.50.

Back on Castle St, **Zizzi** (☎ 01252-719231, 🌐 zizzi.co.uk; Mon-Sat 11.30am-11pm, Sun to 10.30pm) is a lively Italian joint with pizzas from £7.95; on the subject of pizzas, there's a branch of **Dominos** (☎

01252-717000, 🌐 www.dominos.co.uk/farnham; Mon-Thur 11am-11.30pm, Fri & Sat 11am-12.30am, Sun to 11pm) on East St.

As a former brewery town, you'd expect to find a number of pubs, including several that serve food too. **The Mulberry** (see Where to stay; Mon-Thur noon-2.30pm & 6-10pm, Fri & Sat noon-10pm, Sun noon-8pm; wi-fi; 🐕 bar area only), opposite the station, does a nice line in tasty burgers including a Man versus Mulberry challenge for £25: four 8oz burgers, four house cheeses, tomatoes, red onion, dill pickles, spicy salsa, pickled jalapeños, hash browns, onion rings, ketchup, mayo and mustard – eat it all and you win a T-shirt!

The Wheatsheaf (☎ 01252-717135, 🌐 thewheatsheaffarnham.co.uk; food Mon-Thur noon-2.30pm & 5.30-9.30pm, Fri & Sat noon-9.30pm, Sun noon-8.30pm) uses local ingredients to concoct some lovely dishes including a delicious chargrilled red onion, cherry tomato and brie tart (£12.95).

Nelson Arms (☎ 01252-712554, 🌐 nelson-arms.co.uk; food served Mon-Sat noon-2.30pm & 6-9.30pm, Sun noon-8pm), on Castle St, is a low-beamed gastropub dating back to the 16th century (so pre-Nelson) with mains from £10 for the honey and mustard roast ham, two fried eggs & hand-cut chips.

The Slug & Lettuce (🌐 www.slugandlettuce.co.uk/farnham; 🐌), on the A325 (East St), is a huge place, part of a chain and not to everyone's taste. Nevertheless, they serve good-value food (mains from £7.79, with a beef & ale pie for £9.99) and they do allow dogs.

For drinking only, **The Lamb** (☎ 01252-714133, 🌐 lambfarnham.co.uk; Mon-Fri 11am-11pm, Sat noon-midnight, Sun noon-10.30pm), on Abbey St, serves lovely Spitfire ale from Shepherd Neame.

FARNHAM TO GUILDFORD

[MAPS 1-6b]

Not too strenuous, very pretty and punctuated by plenty of points of interest – this first **12-mile/19.3km (3hrs 50mins to 4hrs 50mins)** to a reunion with the River Wey and the turn-off to Guildford) stage of the NDW is, in many ways, a microcosm of the whole trail.

(cont'd on p74)

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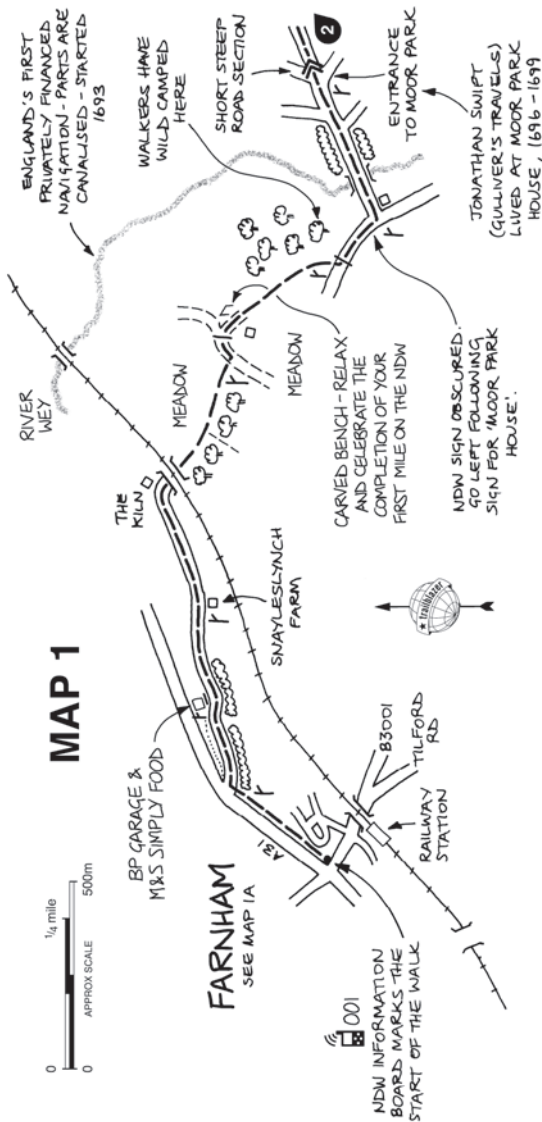
10-15 MINS

THE KILN

40-50 MINS TO BRIGHTON LANE TURN-OFF (MAP 2)



MAP 1



NDW INFORMATION BOARD

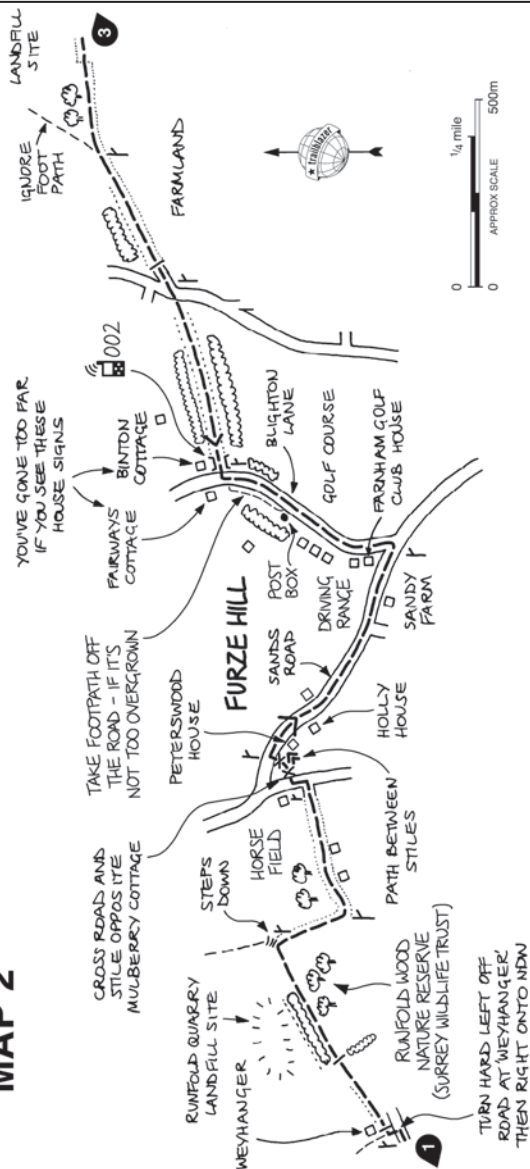
10-15 MINS

THE KILN

40-50 MINS FROM BRIGHTON LANE TURN-OFF (MAP 2)



MAP 2



40-50 MINS TO THE KILN (MAP 1)

BLIGHTON LANE TURN-OFF

30-35 MINS FROM SEALE TURN-OFF (MAP 3)

DOVER


[MAP 66]



'Neither Dover nor its Castle has anything of note to be said of them... and has it self an ill repaired, dangerous, and good for little harbour and peir, very chargeable and little worth.' **Daniel Defoe**, writing in 1724 in *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* [note: the spelling 'mistakes' are all Defoe's!]

'[Dover is] like other sea-port towns; but really much more clean, and with less blackguard people in it than I ever observed in any sea-port before. It is a most picturesque place, to be sure' **William Cobbett**, writing in 1823 in *Rural Rides*.

Dover struggles as a destination. People either pass through on the way to the Continent or use it as a gateway to somewhere else in England. As with any busy port town it has its fair share of life's flotsam and jetsam and after the cultural high point of Canterbury it's a disappointment. There's an impressive castle, a museum, a fine Roman house and a view of the White Cliffs but little else to keep you here long.

What to see and do

Dover Museum ( dovermuseum.co.uk; free; same phone and opening hours as the TIC, see Services), on Market Square in the tourist information centre, has extensive exhibits on the town's history since 1066 as well as the Bronze Age Boat Gallery, where you can see the remains of the oldest seagoing vessel, dating back to 1500BC.



Dover Castle ( 01304-211067,  english-heritage.org; Apr-Sep 10am-6pm, Oct 10am-5pm, Nov & Mar 10am-4pm though check on website as closed on certain days; £19.40) 'guardian of the gateway to England' is strategically placed on the White Cliffs of Dover. It's a prime site for English Heritage and the tours of the secret

tunnels used in the Napoleonic Wars and WWII are fascinating.

The **Roman Painted House** ( 01304-203279,  theromanpaintedhouse.org.uk; Jun-Sep Tue-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun 1-5pm, Apr-May Tue-Sat only; £3) was discovered in 1970 and reckoned to be one of the best-preserved Roman buildings in England largely because it was buried to make way for a new building in AD270. Over 400 sq metres of painted plaster survive.

Finally, a good view of the **White Cliffs of Dover** is free from the Prince of Wales pier by the Hoverport.

Services

The **tourist information centre** (TIC;  01304-201066,  whitecliffscountry.org.uk; Mon-Sat 9.30am-5pm, Easter-Sep Sun 10am-3pm) is on Market Square.

The **chemists** Boots (Mon-Thur 9am-5.30pm, Fri & Sat 8.45am-5.30pm, Sun 10am-4pm) and Superdrug (Mon-Sat 8.30am-5.30pm, Sun 10am-4pm) are on Cannon St, above Market Sq, and there are two banks (Barclays and Lloyds) with **ATMs** on Market Sq conveniently located in the heart of town and right on the trail.

There is a **post office** on Pencester Rd in a Costcutter (Mon-Sat 7am-10pm, Sun 8am-8pm) and a **Londis supermarket** (Mon-Thur 6am-10pm, Fri-Sun to 11pm) on the southern side of Market Square.

Transport

Trains operated by SE Railway (see box pp42-3) go from Dover Priory to London Victoria, Charing Cross and St Pancras.

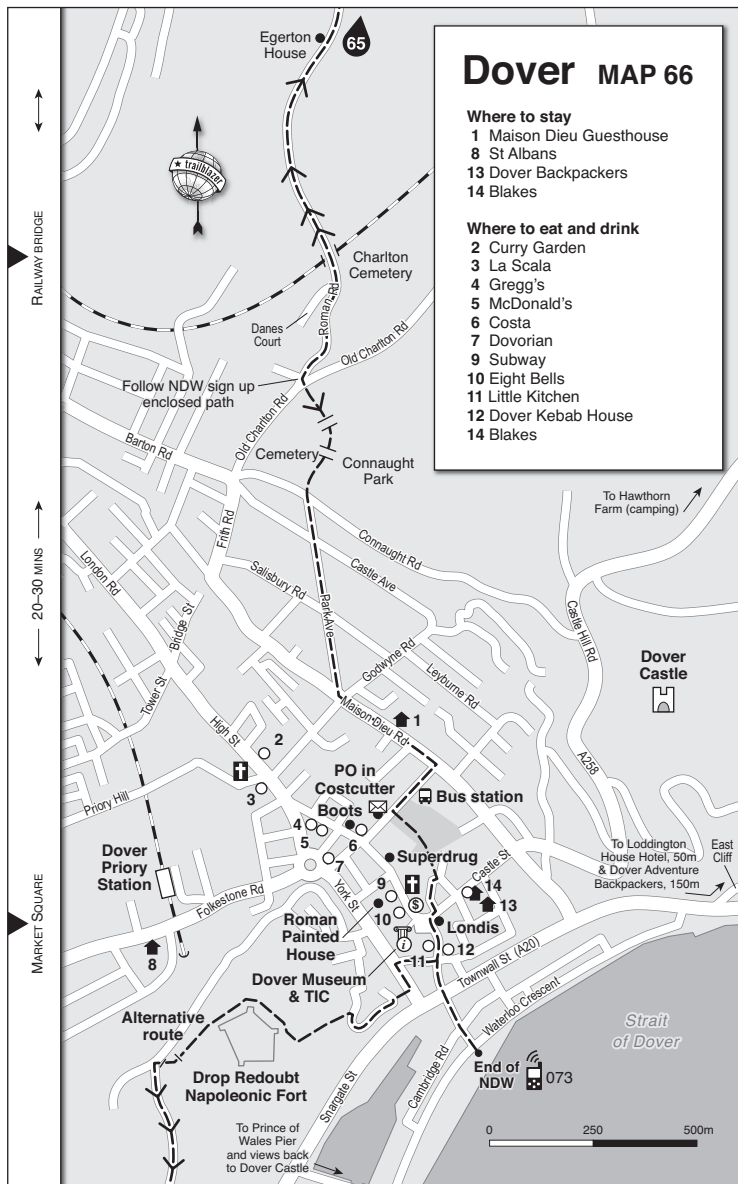
National Express coach service NX007 (see p44) operates to London via Canterbury from Pencester Rd **bus station**.

Stagecoach's **bus services** No 89/89A (to Canterbury/Aylesham) and 15 (to Canterbury) also call at Pencester Rd; see pp45-8.

(Opposite) Top: In Dover, by the end of the North Downs Way (see p189) is a bench with metal silhouettes of three local icons – James Bond creator Ian Fleming, Dame Vera Lynn, and 2012 Olympic torchbearer Jamie Clark. **Middle:** A former owner of Chilham Castle (see p169) replaced some of the high brick wall with railings, thereby allowing walkers glimpses of this splendid Jacobean home. **Bottom:** Many of the buildings in the centre of Canterbury are several hundred years old, such as this house, now a restaurant (see p180).

(Overleaf) Dating back to the 11th century, Dover Castle overlooks the town centre.





Where to stay

Campers will find the closest pitch is over three miles away at **Hawthorn Farm** (☎ 01304-852658, 📧 keatfarm.co.uk/holiday-park-homes/hawthorn-farm; Mar-Nov; wi-fi; 🐾), situated at Martin Mill, off the A258. To get there it's best to take the train to Martin Mill station (8 mins; 1-2/hr) and walk about 400m from there. Now part of the Keat Farm network of campsites, a pitch for a one-/two-man tent for walkers costs £16-17.

Dover Backpackers (☎ 01304-202108, 📧 doverbackpackers.wordpress.com; 2 x 2-/2 x 3-/1 x 4-/1 x 5-/1 x 6-bed rooms, some en suite; wi-fi; 🐾) is part of Castle Inn on Dolphin Lane which claims to be the 'last bar in Britain' and, as such, boasts that it has had three of The Beatles, Sir Cliff Richard and the actor Hugh Grant as guests! What they'd make of the place these days is anyone's guess for it's fair to say that the bar doesn't seem to attract quite the same calibre of customer. Online reviews are decidedly mixed, though it is cheap enough, with dorm beds starting at around £15pp, private rooms from £46. They also have a branch called **Dover Adventure Backpackers** (☎ 01304-215563; 1 x 6- / 1 x 10-bed dorm; one/two rooms sleeping four/five people; shared shower block) on East Cliff down by the ferry port; a dorm bed costs from £16pp, private rooms from £36. Use of kitchen facilities.

Walking into town on the trail, after turning left into Maison Dieu Rd, there is the walker friendly **Maison Dieu Guesthouse** (☎ 01304-204033, 📧 maison-dieu.co.uk; 1S/2D/1T/1D or T/1Qd, all en suite or with private facilities; wi-fi; Mar-Dec) charges £27.50-42.50pp (sgl from £40, sgl occ room rate). Breakfast is £7 extra.

St Albans (☎ 01304-206308, 📧 accommodation-dover.co.uk; 2S/4D, all en suite; wi-fi) is closest to the railway station. Room rates are £22.50-50pp (sgl £35-80, sgl occ room rate). Breakfast is only served in the main season and is an extra cost.

Out on East Cliff, at No 14, on the seafront below the Castle is **Loddington House Hotel** (☎ 01304-201947, 📧 lod-dingtonhousehotel.co.uk; 2T en suite, 3D private facilities; 🍷; wi-fi) which is really

an upmarket B&B. They charge £27.50-39.50pp (sgl occ rates on request).

Blakes (☎ 01304-202194, 📧 blakesof dover.com; 1D/2Qd, all en suite; wi-fi), at 52 Castle St, charges £32.50pp (sgl occ room rate) for room only. A continental/cooked breakfast costs £3.95/7.95.

Where to eat and drink

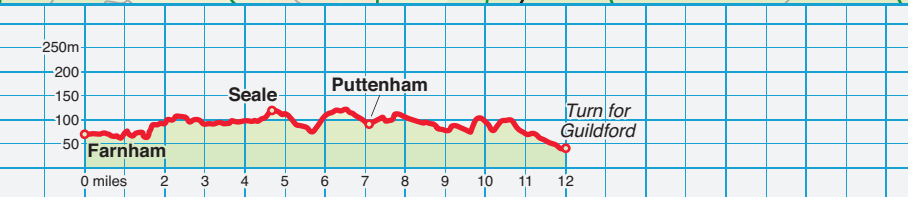
Dover is not a culinary centre. The town does have its fair share of representatives of the international and national chains, including **Costa** (Mon-Sat 7am-6.30pm, Sun 8.30am-5pm), **Subway** (Mon-Sat 7am-8pm, Sun 10am-6pm), **McDonald's** (daily 6am-9pm) and **Greggs** (Mon-Sat 7am-9.30pm, Sun 10am-6pm). Wetherspoon's also have a representative, **The Eight Bells** (☎ 01304-205030; food daily 8am-11pm) with good-value food served throughout the day and evening – though dogs are not allowed inside the pub.

For simple no frills cafeteria-style food supplied by a local outlet, try the spotless **Dovorian** (Mon-Fri 9am-6pm, Sat 9am-5.30pm) on Worthington St. The Formica-topped tables fill up fast at lunch-time when the blue-rinse brigade descend for large portions of their all-day breakfast (£5.95). They also run a chippy where haddock costs £7.50.

Curry Garden (☎ 01304-206357, 📧 currygardendover.co.uk; Mon-Wed & Fri 5.3-11pm, Sat & Sun noon-2.15pm & 5-11.30pm), on High St, dishes out the standard repertoire of curries (tandoori chicken from £6.99) and **La Scala** (☎ 01304-208044, 📧 lascalarestaurant.org.uk; Mon-Sat 6-10pm) is a friendly Italian restaurant where a bowl of pasta cooked with swordfish, onions tomatoes basil & white wine costs £10.95.

Little Kitchen (☎ 01304-201111; Mon-Sat 8am-3.30pm) is a fast-food restaurant and café just west of Market Square on King St. Across the road, for **takeaway** foods **Dover Kebab House** (☎ 01304-205676; daily 5pm-midnight) is the most convenient for Market Square.

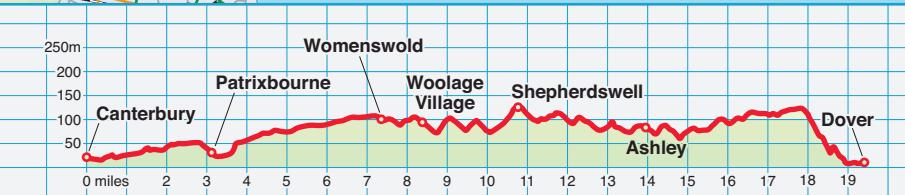
And if it's a glass of wine you're after try **Blakes** (see Where to stay) which serves food (Mon-Sat noon-11pm, Sun noon-9pm) and has good beer and a cellar bar (🐾).



Maps 1-6 Farnham to Guildford

12 miles/19.3km – 3hrs 50mins-4hrs 50mins

NOTE: Add 20-30% to these times to allow for stops



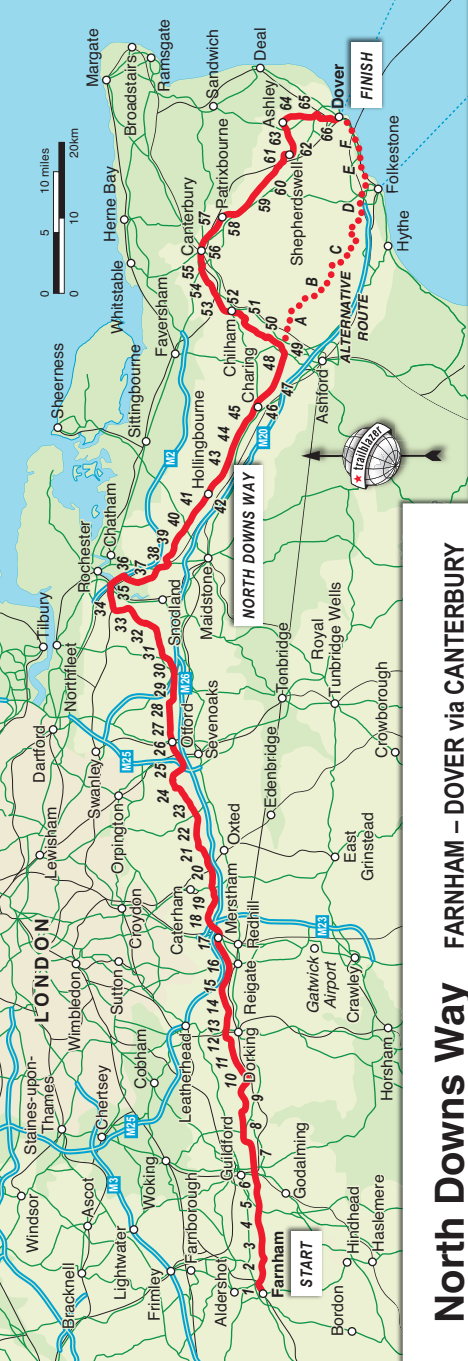
Maps 56-62, Canterbury to Shepherdswell

10.8 miles/17.4km – 2hrs 40 mins-3hrs 25 mins



Maps 62-66 Shepherdswell to Dover

8.6 miles/13.8km – 2hrs 35 mins-3¼hrs



North Downs Way – DOVER via CANTERBURY

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2
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The **North Downs Way** is a 131.6-mile (211.6km) National Trail that runs from Farnham in Surrey to Dover in Kent, partly following the old Pilgrims' Way to the shrine of St Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. It winds through the protected landscape of the Surrey Hills and the Kent Downs passing medieval churches, castles, Neolithic burial sites, vineyards and numerous WWII defences. There are literary associations with Swift, Cobbett, Charles Dickens and Jane Austen. It's not a difficult walk, with few steep ascents or descents.

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