



The first edition of this guide was researched and written by **JOHN CURTIN** (left) who lives at the foot of the North Downs Way in Abinger Hammer, Surrey.

The second and third editions were rewalked and 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. Henry has been writing guidebooks for over a quarter of a century and is the author of: *Kilimanjaro, Coast to Coast Path*,

Hadrian's Wall Path, *Cleveland Way*, *London LOOP*, *Dales Way* and all three books in the *South-West Coast Path* series. He's also updated *Offa's Dyke*, *Pembrokeshire Coast Path*, *Cotswold Way*, *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 16 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 (pp51-3). 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 – Cover: Newlands Corner (©BT) **This page:** Daisy and companion pause to admire the scenery from the viewpoint (see p144), before Hollingbourne.

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INTRODUCTION

About the North Downs Way

History 11 – How difficult is the North Downs Way? 12

How long do you need? 12 – When to go 13

PART 1: PLANNING YOUR WALK

Practical information for the walker

Route finding 17 – Accommodation 19 – Food and drink 22

Money 23 – Other services 24 – Information for foreign visitors 24

Walking companies 25 – Taking dogs along the North Downs Way 27

Budgeting 27

Itineraries

Village and town facilities table 28

Suggested itineraries 30 – Which direction? 33

Highlights (Day and weekend walks) 32 – Side trips 34

What to take

Keep your luggage light 34 – How to carry it 34 – Footwear 35

Clothes 35 – Toiletries 36 – First-aid kit 37 – General items 37

Camping gear 38 – Money 38 – Maps 38 – Recommended reading 39

Getting to and from the North Downs Way

National transport 40 – Local transport 40 – Getting to Britain 41

Public transport map 46

PART 2: MINIMUM IMPACT WALKING & OUTDOOR SAFETY

Minimum impact walking

Access 48 – The Countryside Code 49 – Economic impact 49

Environmental impact 49

Outdoor safety

Avoidance of hazards 51 – Blisters 52 – Hypothermia, Hyperthermia
& Sunburn 52 – Personal safety 53 – Other users 53

PART 3: THE ENVIRONMENT & NATURE

Conserving the North Downs Way

Natural England 54 – Campaigning & conservation organisations 56

Fauna and flora

Mammals 56 – Birds 57 – Reptiles 59 – Butterflies 59

Trees 59 – Flowers 60

PART 4: ROUTE GUIDE AND MAPS

Using this guide Trail maps 63 – Accommodation 64

Farnham 65

Farnham to Guildford 68 (Seale 68, Puttenham 68
Compton 72, Shalford 76, Guildford 77)

Guildford to Dorking 80 (Chilworth 82, Albury 82,
Newlands Corner 82, Shere 84, Denbies Wine Estate 90, Dorking 92)

Dorking to Oxted 94 (Box Hill & Box Hill Village 96,
Reigate Hill 98, Redhill 98, Merstham 101, Oxted 106)

Oxted (Chalk Pit Lane) to Otford 108 (Westerham 110,
Knockholt Pound 114, Dunton Green 118, Otford 118)

Otford to Rochester 120 (Kemsing 120, Wrotham 124,
Cuxton 130, Rochester 132)

Rochester to Hollingbourne 136 (Aylesford 138, Detling 142,
Thurnham 142, Hollingbourne 146)

Hollingbourne to Boughton Lees 146 (Harrietsham 148,
Lenham 148, Charing 150, Westwell 154, Eastwell Park & Boughton
Lees 156)

NORTHERN ROUTE

Boughton Lees to Chilham 159 (Chilham 160)

Chilham to Canterbury 162 (Chartham 162, Canterbury 166)

Canterbury to Shepherdswell 174 (Bridge 174,
Shepherdswell 176)

Shepherdswell to Dover 180

Dover 184

SOUTHERN ROUTE

Boughton Lees to Etchinghill 186 (Wye 188, Brabourne 191,
Stowting 192, Etchinghill 194)

Etchinghill to Dover 194 (Capel-le-Ferne 194)

APPENDICES

A: GPS & what3words waypoints 201 **B: Taking a dog** 203

INDEX 205

OVERVIEW MAPS & PROFILES 209



ABOUT THIS BOOK

This guidebook contains all the information you need. The hard work has been done for you so you can plan your trip without having to consult numerous websites and other books and maps.

When you're packed and ready to go, there's comprehensive public transport information to get you to and from the trail and detailed maps (1:20,000) and town plans to help you find your way along it.

- Where to stay: from campsites to luxurious hotels
- Details of walking companies if you'd prefer an organised holiday and luggage-transfer services if you just want your luggage carried
- Itineraries for all levels of walkers
- Answers to all your questions: when to go, how challenging it is, what to pack and the approximate cost of the whole walking holiday.
- Walking times and GPS waypoints
- Cafés, pubs, tearooms, takeaways and restaurants as well as shops and supermarkets for supplies
- Rail, bus and taxi information for all places along the path
- Street plans of the main towns and villages
- Historical, cultural and geographical background information

■ MINIMUM IMPACT FOR MAXIMUM INSIGHT

Nature's peace will flow into you as the sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their freshness into you and storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves. **John Muir** (one of the world's earliest and most influential environmentalists, born in 1838)

It is no surprise that, since the time of John Muir, walkers and adventurers have been concerned about the natural environment; this book seeks to continue that tradition. By developing a deeper ecological awareness through a better understanding of nature and by supporting rural economies, local businesses, sensitive forms of transport and low-impact methods of farming and land-use we can all do our bit for a brighter future.

As we work harder and live our lives at an ever faster pace a walking holiday is a chance to escape from the daily grind and the natural pace gives us time to think and relax. This can have a positive impact not only on our own well-being but also on that of the area we pass through. There can be few activities as 'environmentally friendly' as walking.

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 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 those hills.

It’s probably just as well that they don’t know, or else they may be tempted to swerve rashly onto the hard shoulder, screech to a halt and run straight up those same verdant slopes – which, if everyone did so, would have dire consequences for the smooth running of UK transport network’s south-eastern division. 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. Extending for 131.6 miles (211.6km) if taking the northern route via Canterbury – or 124.2 miles (200km) for the shorter southern finish – it’s no coincidence that the North Downs Way is shadowed for much of its length by these major thoroughfares; because for several millennia



At the top of St Martha's Hill, St Martha's Church (see p80), also known as the Pilgrims' Church, is one of the landmarks of the North Downs Way.



Above: Kit's Coty (see p138), a 5000-year-old burial site, lies just a few yards off the trail in a beautiful flower-filled meadow.

would have followed this trail. By following the line of this natural geological phenomenon they would have found it easy to orientate themselves and avoid getting lost – something that walkers still appreciate today!

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

cathedrals lie on or just off the trail, not to mention several **archbishops' 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 **Pilgrims' Way** that worshippers followed from Winchester to Canterbury. It wasn't only pilgrims and traders who took

advantage of this ancient trackway, however. The list of **authors** who found inspiration on the Downs reads like a veritable *Who's Who*. Writers such as Geoffrey Chaucer (who wrote about people on the Pilgrims' Way, of course), John Bunyan, Lewis Carroll, Jonathan Swift, William Cobbett, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, Rudyard Kipling, JM Barrie, Henry James, Max Beerbohm, George Meredith, Edmund Spenser, John

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**



Above: Among the abandoned WWII (and earlier) defences you'll pass on the south coast is this intriguing 'Listening Ear Mirror' (see p199).

advantage of this ancient trackway, however. The list of **authors** who found inspiration on the Downs reads like a veritable *Who's Who*. Writers such as Geoffrey Chaucer (who wrote about people on the Pilgrims' Way, of course), John Bunyan, Lewis Carroll, Jonathan Swift, William Cobbett, Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, Rudyard Kipling, JM Barrie, Henry James, Max Beerbohm, George Meredith, Edmund Spenser, John



Keats, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Wilfrid Blunt all found inspiration from both the North Downs and the trail that runs along its length. And throughout this book we have, on occasion, quoted some of them directly.

Science has also benefitted from the Downs, with the home of **Charles Darwin** lying to the north of the trail. Darwin lived with his family for over forty years at the appropriately named Down House and it was here that he would take daily walks around the gardens in order to work on his theories; ideas that would eventually coalesce into *On the Origin of the Species*, the book that not only made his name (while simultaneously scandalising Victorian society with its decidedly secular viewpoint) but which also completely changed the course of science.



Above: Pilgrim sculpture outside the gates of Chilham Castle (see p160), one of several such statues along the Way. **Below:** Many of the buildings in the attractive old centre of Canterbury date back several hundred years.





Above: National Trail milestones, such as this one in the woods above the White Horse Stone outside Aylesford, crop up regularly along the path. **Below:** You can see all the way down to the English Channel from the Millennium Stone above Wye Crown (see p188).

It's not difficult to see what inspired them. The North Downs is a refuge for nature in what was, even in their day, the most populated and developed corner of the British Isles. The trail itself spends most of its time on the top of the chalky ridge, an area of short grazed grass and thick woodland, stooping only to cross five rivers that bisect the Downs at various points. It's a path that is a veritable haven for wildflowers, as well as several mammals and insects which have been eradicated from much of the rest of the south-east.

But has this natural beauty of the North Downs Way been compromised by the proximity of the motorways? Not to any great degree, in this author's opinion at least. For one thing, the path actually takes you through two sizeable National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) – the Surrey Hills and the Kent Downs. Furthermore, the roads, where they are visible, are usually



far enough away to render the noise of the traffic to a barely audible hum – a hum that serves to emphasise rather than detract from the sense of tranquillity at the top of the Downs. Plus, of course, the proximity of such major roads means that transport along the way is, by the standards of the sixteen National Trails of England and Wales, fairly plentiful – allowing you a lot of flexibility when planning your trail.

So there you have it: a splendid two-week jaunt along the course of a spectacular geological feature, following a trail that's replete with history, ancient buildings and beautiful scenery – and all within a short train ride from London.

History

The North Downs Way was officially opened as a national trail in 1978 by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Donald Coggan. The route follows the chalk ridge that forms the North Downs between Farnham and Dover. It also follows, in parts, the Pilgrims' Way, reputedly taken by pilgrims to the shrine of St Thomas à Becket at Canterbury Cathedral, though its existence on maps only appeared from the late 19th century. In all likelihood prehistoric man used trackways along the North Downs which were also later used by drovers and traders keen to avoid toll roads. It is a natural route east to the Continent.



trail. You may also want to take a day off. Canterbury is the obvious choice, of course, though both Guildford and Rochester are worth at least half a day each which will add to the time needed.

See pp31-2 for some suggested itineraries based on different walking speeds. Alternatively, cherry-pick the best **day** and **weekend walks** (pp32-3) which benefit from easy access and excellent transport links.

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

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 parts of the trail may be 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 on there is a tapestry of green before the views become obscured later in the

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





Above: A highlight of this walk, **Canterbury Cathedral** (see p167) was founded in 597. After the murder of Archbishop Thomas à Becket in 1170 the cathedral became one of the most important pilgrimage centres in the medieval world. Following the Pilgrims' Way from London, people came to make offerings at his tomb. The impressive Perpendicular nave was completed in 1405. (Photos © Bryn Thomas). **Below:** Poppies provide a colourful border to many of the fields en route, such as here just outside Detling.



PLANNING YOUR WALK

1

Practical information for the walker

ROUTE FINDING

There is little chance of becoming lost for long on the trail. Not only are you following the top of a natural – and obvious – chalk ridge but you're following in the footsteps of tens of thousands of people who have walked this way before you, from neolithic settlers to pilgrims and trekkers, so it's fair to say the path is pretty well established. There's also plenty of signage with signposts and waymark posts positioned at very frequent intervals. Indeed, such is their regularity that you actually start to doubt you're on the right path if, after a few hundred metres, you don't see one; and if you haven't seen a North Downs Way sign or waymark for 15 minutes or more, it's pretty safe to say that you really have come off the trail. But if and when the signage does fail you, the aim of this book is to keep you on the correct path with detailed instructions on the maps at key points.

Any slightly tricky directions not immediately obvious on the ground are noted on the appropriate trail guide maps in Part 4 of this book. In most cases the path is obvious and well trodden and certainly on weekends, in particular, there are bound to be other walkers about to point you in the right direction. A compass is not necessary.

Do remember that summer foliage may obscure signs or they may go missing so it's best to read ahead in the trail guide and refer to the maps occasionally to confirm your location.

ELECTRONIC NAVIGATION AIDS AND MAPPING APPS

I never carried a compass, preferring to rely on a good sense of direction ... I never bothered to understand how a compass works or what it is supposed to do ... To me a compass is a gadget, and I don't get on well with gadgets of any sort.

Alfred Wainwright

While Wainwright's acolytes may scoff, most walkers will accept GPS technology as a well-established and incredibly useful navigational aid. With a clear view of the sky, a **GPS receiver** will establish your position as well as elevation in a variety of formats, including the British OS grid system, anywhere on earth to an accuracy of within a few metres. Most **smartphones** have a GPS receiver built in and can receive a GPS satellite signal from space as well as estimate its position often as accurately using mobile data signals from hilltop



To install these Trailblazer waypoints onto Maps.me you'll first need to convert the .gpx format file to .kml format before loading it into maps.me. Use an online website such as gpx2kml.com to do this then email the kml file to your phone and open it in maps.me.

Note that using mapping apps drains your battery quickly, so you will need to use them sparingly or carry a spare battery pack to recharge your phone towards the end of the day. You can extend your phone's battery life by turning on airplane mode. For these reasons it's important to understand that **treating GPS as a complete replacement for maps, a compass and common sense is a mistake**. Every electronic device is susceptible to battery failure or some electronic malfunction that might leave you in the dark.

ACCOMMODATION

The route guide (Part 4) lists a comprehensive selection of places to stay along the full length of the trail and often in each town or village there are several options though these may require a detour off the route. In the ever-more populated and prosperous south-east, low-cost accommodation is increasingly hard to find and should always be booked well in advance. Proximity to London, soaring property values and a healthy demand for rooms from business travellers drives prices up.

Camping


Official campsites are few and far between on the North Downs Way. Of those sites that could be described as serving the North Downs Way, many are a fair distance from the actual trail. They also vary widely in what they offer: some sites have no facilities, others have coin-operated showers and laundry facilities, whilst others are swish holiday parks with some tent spaces.

Given the paucity of 'official campsites', one option is to look at the website campspace.com, where homeowners advertise the possibility of pitching a tent on their property in return for a small fee. All of which is useful, of course, but they're not cheap – around £14-30 per night for a spot in someone's back garden seems to be the going rate – and there still aren't really enough to make camping every night a viable option unless you illegally wild camp (see below).

It's a rare trekker who would want to camp every night anyway, particularly as there is always the temptation to have a hot bath in a cosy B&B and rest your head on a feather pillow. If you're camping you'll be carrying a heavier pack which can slow you down and could add an extra day and additional costs to your walk.

Wild camping Camping on land that is not a recognised campsite is possible along the route – though do note that it's also, officially, illegal. You must try to obtain the landowner's permission first but this is often impossible as you won't know who the landowner is, or even if you do you may not be able to find the relevant person. The amount of cultivated arable land in Kent reduces the num-

Airbnb

The rise and rise of Airbnb ( airbnb.co.uk) has seen private homes and apartments opened up to overnight travellers on an informal basis. While accommodation is primarily based in cities, the concept is spreading to tourist hotspots in more rural areas, but do check thoroughly what you are getting and the precise location. While the first couple of options listed may be in the area you're after, others may be far too far afield for walkers. Be aware that these places are not registered B&Bs, so standards may vary, yet prices may not necessarily be any lower. Note that we do not review Airbnb accommodation in this guide, as they tend to 'come and go'.

FOOD AND DRINK

Breakfast and lunch


If staying in a B&B, guesthouse or hotel you may be served an enormous **full English breakfast** – often bacon, sausages, eggs, sometimes baked beans, maybe black pudding, all fried and washed down with lashings of tea or coffee and of course accompanied by buttered toast and marmalade. It's great but two weeks of this and you're ready for the cardiac unit.


However, some places offer a lighter **continental breakfast** which you may prefer first thing in the morning and some also are happy to provide vegetarian/vegan breakfasts with prior warning. If requested in advance, and for an additional cost (or instead of breakfast, if you are planning an early start), many places can also provide you with a **packed lunch**.


Alternatively, breakfast and packed lunches can be bought along the Way from one of the many great cafés and bakeries, or made yourself from supermarket or village store ingredients. Remember that certain stretches of the walk


BEER AND WINE

Farnham had five breweries and Guildford had nine during the heyday of brewing in the 19th century. But now most pubs and brewers are owned by one of the international conglomerates although there are still some independent ones.

The **Hogs Back Brewery** ( hogsback.co.uk) survives as a small independent brewery and has a thriving mail-order service for its bottle-conditioned ales. A particular favourite is the classic Tongham TEA (Traditional English Ale) at 4.2%.

Beer is also produced by **Surrey Hills Brewery** ( surreyhills.co.uk), who are based on the Denbies Wine Estate (see p90), the largest vineyard in Britain. Their winery tour and tasting is highly recommended. Their Surrey Gold is a delicate 11.5% white aperitif wine, perfect on a summer evening.

Located on the Surrey/Kent border at the highest point of the North Downs Way is more recent arrival **Titsey Brewing Co** ( titseybrewingco.com), established in 2017.

Finally, in Kent the granddaddy of them all is **Shepherd Neame** ( shepherdneame.co.uk), with beers from Britain's oldest brewer and still a family company.

as banks, ATMs, outdoor equipment shops, pharmacies/chemists, tourist information centres and public toilets.

WALKING COMPANIES

If you want to carry just a day pack, consider one of the following companies

● **Travel/medical insurance** Even though the UK left the European Union in 2020, the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) entitled EU nationals (on production of a valid card) to necessary medical treatment under the UK's National Health Service (NHS) while on a temporary visit here. However, this is not likely to be the case for EU nationals once their EHIC card has expired; check on [nhs.uk/nhs-services](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services) (click on: 'Visiting-or-moving-to-England') before you come to the UK.

Also, this is not a substitute for proper medical cover on your travel insurance for unforeseen bills and for getting you home should that be necessary.

Also consider cover for loss or theft of personal belongings, especially if you're camping or staying in bunkhouses, as there may be times when you'll have to leave your luggage unattended.

● **Weights and measures** In Britain, milk can be sold in pints (1 pint = 568ml), as can beer in pubs, though most other **liquids** including petrol (gasoline) and diesel are sold in litres. Distances on road and path signs are given in miles (1 mile = 1.6km) rather than kilometres, and yards (1yd = 0.9m) rather than metres.

The population remains divided between those who still use inches (1 inch = 2.5cm), feet (1ft = 0.3m) and yards for **distances** and those who are happy with millimetres, centimetres and metres; you'll often be told that 'it's only a hundred yards or so' to somewhere, rather than a hundred metres or so.

Most food is sold in metric weights (g and kg) but the imperial weights of pounds (lb: 1lb = 453g) and ounces (oz: 1oz = 28g) are frequently displayed too. The **weather** – a frequent topic of conversation – is also an issue: while most forecasts predict temperatures in Celsius (C), some older people continue to think in terms of Fahrenheit (F; see the temperature chart on p15 for conversions).

● **Smoking & vaping** The ban on smoking in public places relates not only to pubs and restaurants, but also to B&Bs, hostels and hotels. These latter have the right to designate one or more bedrooms where the occupants can smoke, but the ban is in force in all enclosed areas open to the public – even in a private home such as a B&B. Should you be foolhardy enough to light up in a no-smoking area, which includes pretty well any indoor public place, you could be fined £50, but it's the owners of the premises who suffer most if they fail to stop you, with a potential fine of £2500.

Although the ban does not apply to vaping, premises can and do impose their own restrictions on the use of e-cigarettes indoors.

● **Time** During the winter, the whole of Britain is on Greenwich Meantime (GMT). The clocks move one hour forward on the last Sunday in March, remaining on British Summer Time (BST) until the last Sunday in October.

● **Telephone** The international country access code for Britain is **44** followed by the area code minus the first 0, and then the number you require. Within Britain, to call a landline number with the same code as the landline phone you are calling from, the code can be omitted: dial the number only. If you're using a mobile phone that is registered overseas, consider buying a local SIM card to keep costs down.

● **Emergency services** For police, ambulance, fire or coastguard dial **999** or **112**.

Weekend (two-day) walks

● **Farnham to Dorking** 24¾ miles/40km (see pp68-92) This is easy walking through farmland, heath and woodland to overnight in Guildford (12 miles/19.3km).

After a climb to St Martha's – the Pilgrims' Church – with wonderful views and a further climb across Albury Downs the path gains the ridgeline at Newlands Corner, and follows a mostly wooded drove road to descend through England's largest vineyard, Denbies Wine Estate, with views to Box Hill on the outskirts of Dorking. Two castles, one cathedral, a gallery to eminent Victorian artist, George Frederic Watts, a Gilbert Scott church, WWII fortifications, good wine, and views that stretch for miles on a clear day – not bad for two days' walking.

● **Charing to Canterbury** 16¾ miles/27.2km (see pp150-69) Follow in the footsteps of pilgrims passing the ruined archbishop's palace in Charing to follow the Pilgrims' Way emerging from dense woodland into the tranquil landscape of Eastwell. Climb to Soakham Downs with extensive views over the Stour valley and emerge from the King's Wood to overnight in Chilham with its remarkably preserved medieval square (10½ miles/16.9km).

The following day's walk is through Kent's orchard country before arriving at Canterbury, worth at least a day's exploration (6½ miles/10.3km).

Itineraries

To help you plan your walk there is a planning map (see map inside back cover) and the table of village/town facilities (pp28-31); the latter gives a snapshot of the essential information you will need regarding accommodation possibilities and services. Alternatively, you could follow or adapt the suggested itineraries (pp30-1). There is also a list of recommended linear day and weekend walks (above) which cover the best of the North Downs Way, all of which are well served by public transport. The public transport map and tables are on pp42-7.

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.

If you find it hard to get accommodation at a stop to suit the length of your day's walk it may be worth considering staying in a place for two nights and getting a taxi to and from where you left off the night before.

WHICH DIRECTION?

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 and the reverse timings are on our maps) but there are advantages in doing it west to east. 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. Certainly, the seafront at Dover is a far more fitting and dramatic end to your odyssey than the side of the A31 in Farnham.

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 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 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, p81) with the South Downs Way, near Steyning (and on for another five miles to Shoreham and the seaside).

What to take

What you take depends on personal preference and experience. For those new to long-distance walking the suggestions below are a guide. What you must ensure is that you have all the equipment necessary to make the trip safe and comfortable.

KEEP YOUR LUGGAGE LIGHT

There are a few ways to do this. Buy the lightest equipment you can afford. Choose the smaller of pack sizes so you don't overpack (see below). Before packing lay out only what you deem essential. With the exception of the first-aid kit (see p37) ask whether or not you will use the item every day. If not, consider very carefully whether or not to pack it. Remember on the North Downs Way you are not so far away from a town or village that you can't get something you've forgotten even if it does mean interrupting your walk. If you have booked a self-guided holiday (see p26) your main luggage is likely to be transferred to your next accommodation stop and you can instead head off onto the trail with just the essentials you need for the day.

HOW TO CARRY IT

The size and type of backpack you carry will depend on how you plan to walk the North Downs Way. If you are day hiking, or have booked a self-guided hol-


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 easily accessible by public transport.



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 many places on or near the path. You can expect at least one train an hour and from some mainline stations up to four an hour. Trains to stations on or close to the North Downs Way depart from London Waterloo, London Victoria, London Charing Cross, London Bridge and, less frequently, St Pancras & St Pancras International.

All timetable and fare information can be found at **National Rail Enquiries** ( nationalrail.co.uk), or through the relevant operator (see box pp42-3).

Tickets can be bought online through the relevant operator, or at  thetrainline.com. For the cheapest fares book well in advance.

Train tickets are available that include bus travel at your destination: see the Plusbus website ( plusbus.info). If you think you'll want a taxi when you arrive look at  traintaxi.co.uk or consult the town guides in this book, many of which have taxi numbers in their transport sections.

Coach

National Express ( nationalexpress.com) is the principal coach (long-distance bus) operator in Britain. Coach travel is generally cheaper but takes longer than travel by train.

Whilst there are excellent services between London, Dover and Canterbury (London to Dover/Deal via Canterbury NX007; London to Ramsgate via Canterbury NX022) there are none to Farnham but the NX030 calls at Guildford (London to Fareham via Portsmouth).

Car

The south-east of England is criss-crossed by roads and motorways and the North Downs Way itself crosses the M25, M20, M23 and M2 on its journey east to Dover. Whilst driving might seem an easy option, long-term parking will be more of an issue. With such an abundance of public transport in this region, it's usually best to leave the car at home.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

The number of railway stations and bus services on or close to the route opens up the possibility of linear walks throughout the length of the North Downs Way

151	Nu-Venture	Chatham to West Malling via Rochester , Strood & Cuxton , Mon-Fri 11/day, Sat 7/day, Sun 5/day
155	Arriva	Chatham to Borsal via Rochester , daily 8-10/day
172	Nu-Venture	Chatham to Wainscott via Rochester & Strood, Mon-Fri 3/day
173/197	Nu-Venture	Chatham to Strood via Rochester , Mon-Sat 5-7/day
222	Autocar	Tonbridge to Borough Green , Mon-Fri 5/day, 1-2/day continue to/start from Wrotham
236	Metrobus	East Grinstead to Oxted via Lingfield & Westerham , Mon-Fri 4/day
246	TfL	Bromley to Westerham via Hayes & Biggin Hill, Mon-Sat 2/hr, Sun 1/hr
306	Red Route	Gravesend to Trosley Country Park (Vigo Village), Mon-Sat 2/day
308	Red Route	Gravesend to Sevenoaks via Trosley Country Park (Vigo Village), Mon-Sat 5-6/day
400	Metrobus	East Grinstead to Caterham via Crawley, Gatwick Airport & Redhill , Mon-Sat approx 1/hr, Sun 9/day
405	TfL	Redhill to Croydon via Merstham & Purley, Mon-Sat 3-4/hr, Sun 2/hr
410	Metrobus	Redhill to Hurst Green via Oxted , Mon-Sat 2/hr, Sun 8/day
420	Metrobus	Crawley to Sutton via Gatwick Airport, Redhill & Reigate , Mon-Fri 10/day, Sat 13/day, Sun 5/day
430/435	Metrobus	Merstham circular route via Redhill & Reigate , Mon-Sat 2/hr, Sun 1/hr
460	Metrobus	Crawley to Epsom via Gatwick Airport, Redhill & Reigate , Mon-Sat approx 1/hr, Sun 6/day
465	TfL	Kingston-upon-Thames to Dorking via Denbies Wine Estate , Mon-Sat 2/hr, Sun 1/hr
594/595	Metrobus	Oxted to Westerham , Mon-Fri 12/day, Sat 9/day
666	Stagecoach	Ashford to Faversham via Boughton Lees & Canterbury , Mon-Fri 10/day, Sat 6/day

Operator contact details

- **Arriva Kent & Surrey** (☎ arrivabus.co.uk/kent-and-surrey)
- **Autocar Bus & Coach Services** (☎ 01892-833830)
- **Compass Travel** (☎ compass-travel.co.uk)
- **Go Bus** (☎ go-coach.co.uk)
- **Metrobus** (☎ 01273 886200, ☐ metrobus.co.uk)
- **Nu-Venture** (☎ 01622-882288, ☐ nu-venture.online)
- **Red Route Buses** (☎ redroutebuses.co.uk)
- **Stagecoach** (☐ stagecoachbus.com/timetables)
- **TfL** (☐ tfl.gov.uk)

2

MINIMUM IMPACT & OUTDOOR SAFETY

The south-east of England is a congested place and having protected landscapes such as the North Downs to get away to is a valuable resource. The countryside is becoming ever more popular for recreation and walkers should be aware of their responsibilities to help protect the countryside and minimise their impact on it.

ACCESS

The right of access to open land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), dubbed ‘freedom or right to roam’ by the press and walkers alike, was first rolled out in the south-east in 2004 and came into effect in full throughout England and Wales in 2005. Walkers have the legal right to access on foot to defined areas of uncultivated open country, basically mountain, moorland, downland and heathland. However, the act does **not** give walkers the right to wander over private land, including farmland, woodland, paddocks or gardens.

So when you are on the North Downs Way keep to designated footpaths and follow the ‘acorn’ signs. There are, however, areas of open access land adjacent to the trail, notably land managed by the National Trust, the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust and areas of registered common land such as St Martha’s Hill (Map 7, p81) and Newlands Corner (Map 8, p83).

Rights of access have also been created over areas such as the open land north of Hollingbourne (see Map 42, p145). But the effect of the Act on the North Downs is not so significant when compared to the large tracts of land now accessible in the Peak District, or the opening up of land on the South Downs between Poynings and Upper Beeding which now have permanent access rights rather than permissive access which could be withdrawn at any time.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Buy local

Rural businesses and communities in Britain have been hit hard in recent years by a seemingly endless series of crises. Most people are aware of the Countryside Code – not dropping litter and closing the gate behind you are still as pertinent as ever – but in light of the economic pressures that local countryside businesses are under, there is

Wild camping

There is no general right to camp on land in England. You must first obtain the permission of the landowner and in the absence of this you may be trespassing. Camping outside official sites on National Trust land is against its bye-laws. Much of the North Downs Way is heavily wooded. Most open land is private farmland and much of this is arable cropland. The opportunities for wild camping are therefore limited. But wild camping provides the walker with a uniquely fulfilling experience of living in a simple and sustainable way in which the habitual activities of cooking, eating, washing and sleeping take on greater importance. Follow these suggestions:

- **Be discreet** Camp alone or in small groups, spend only one night in each place and pitch your tent, tarp or bivvy late and move off early.
- **Never light a fire** The deep burn caused by camp fires, no matter how small, damages the turf which can take years to recover. Cook on a camp stove instead.
- **Don't use soap or detergent** There's no need to use soap; even biodegradable soaps and detergents pollute streams. You won't be away from a shower for more than a day or so. Wash up without detergent; use a plastic or metal scourer, or failing that, a handful of fine pebbles or some bracken or grass.
- **Leave no trace** Learn the skill of moving on without leaving any sign of having been there: no moved rocks, ripped up vegetation or dug drainage ditches. Make a final check of your campsite before departing; pick up any litter that you or anyone else has left, so leaving the place in a better state than you found it.

Outdoor safety

AVOIDANCE OF HAZARDS

The North Downs Way is not a difficult or dangerous walk and with common sense as well as good planning and preparation most hazards can be avoided. This information is just as important for those out on a day walk as for those walking the entire trail. To ensure a safe and stress-free trip **follow the Countryside Code** (see box p49) and:

- Before going out **get information** about where and when you can go;
- Check **weather forecasts** on your phone and by visiting one of the online forecasts such as bbc.co.uk/weather or metoffice.gov.uk;
- Make sure that **somebody knows your plans** for every day you are on the trail. This could be a friend or relative whom you have promised to call every night, or the owners of the B&Bs that you plan to stay in at the end of each day's walk. That way, if you fail to turn up or call that evening, they can raise the alarm;
- **Stick to the path** and avoid old quarries or taking shortcuts on steep sections of the escarpment;
- **Check your location** regularly on the map; it's unlikely that you'll lose your way on the Downs but it'll save you missing a turning to a village and the frus-

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 embankment 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, National Landscapes, manages some of the National Nature Reserves and enforces existing regulations. Natural England also manages England's National Trails.

There are 34 **National Landscapes**, previously known as 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** (surreyhills.org) and **Kent Downs** (kentdowns.org.uk).

Of the 219 **national nature reserves** (NNRs) in England, only Wye Downs, at the eastern end on the southern route, is actually on the Way. **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, p87), Ranmore Common, White Downs and Denbies Hillside (Map 11, p88 and Map 12, p89), Box Hill (Map 13, p91), Kemsing Downs



REPTILES

Reptiles have had a bad rap ever since slithering into the Garden of Eden. Britain's only poisonous snake, the **adder** (*Vipera berus*) is recognised by its zig-zag body pattern. They pose very little risk to walkers but dogs can get bitten when snakes come out of hibernation to warm themselves, often on a sunny path. They only bite when provoked, preferring to hide instead, and the venom is designed to kill small mammals such as mice, voles and shrews, so deaths in humans are very rare (14 attributed to adder bites since 1876) but a bite can be extremely unpleasant and occasionally dangerous for children or the elderly. Adders are a measure of the health of an environment and Kent Reptile & Amphibian Group (kentarg.org) has projects in Kent recording their distribution. The **common lizard** (*Lacerta vivipara*) may sometimes be seen basking in the sun and is harmless.

BUTTERFLIES

Two species that are dependant on the chalk grassland for their survival are the **Adonis blue** (*Polyommatus bellargus*) and the **chalk hill blue** (*Polyommatus coridon*). Both feed on horseshoe vetch and August is a good time to spot them. The best butterfly spotting is on Box Hill where over two-thirds of the British butterfly species have been recorded.

Two species you may see are the **brimstone** (*Gonepteryx rhamni*) and the less common **white admiral** (*Limenitis camilla*) which is in fact predominantly black with white banded wings. Look for it on woodland edges and in brambles where it feeds on honeysuckle. The male brimstone is easy to identify – it's bright yellow. The name butterfly may have come from this and it's said the brighter the brimstone the better the summer will be. Expect to see it along Albury Downs (see Map 8, p83).

Chances are you'll see, at some point on the walk, the familiar orange-winged **small tortoiseshell** (*Aglais urticae*) common in many gardens and urban parks.

TREES

The number of trees and the amount of woodland along the North Downs Way are a striking feature of this walk. Surrey is England's most wooded county but since 1600 much of its ancient woodland has been felled for fuel and building material or cleared for agriculture.

Since the mid 20th century, 88% of coppiced woodland has disappeared. But coppicing and old woodland skills are making a comeback and the northern slopes of the North Downs Way remain heavily wooded.

Much of the woodland is mixed deciduous, historically made up largely of **oak** (*Quercus petraea*) and **ash** (*Fraxinus excelsior*), although that is changing with the inexorable spread of the fungal disease 'ash dieback' which has been killing ash trees in the UK since 2012.

ROUTE GUIDE & MAPS

4

Using this guide

This trail guide has been described from west to east and divided into stages. There are seven stages to the point at which the northern and southern routes diverge, then a further four for the northern route or two for the southern route. Each stage is approximately a day's walk in length though that doesn't mean you have to divide the trail up this way; with such good transport links and plenty of accommodation, you can of course divide the trail up however you wish. Much will depend on the speed you walk at, your interests and where you stay.

There is excellent access by public transport if you're doing the walk in day stages or from a fixed base. See p30 for some suggested itineraries.

To enable you to plan your own itinerary **practical information** is presented clearly on the trail maps. This includes walking times for both directions, places to stay, camp and eat, as well as shops where you can buy supplies. Further service **details** are given in the text under the entry for each place. For an overview of this information see the village and town facilities table on pp28-31.

For **map profiles** see the colour pages at the end of the book.

TRAIL MAPS [for key map see inside back cover;
for map symbols key see inside front cover]

Scale and walking times

The trail maps are to a scale of 1:20,000 (1cm = 200m; 3¹/₈ inches = one mile). Walking times are given along the side of each map and the arrow shows the direction to which the time refers. Black triangles indicate the points between which the times have been taken. **See box below for note on walking times.** The times on the maps are there as an aid to planning your walk not to judge your ability. There are many variables which will affect your speed including weather,

❏ IMPORTANT NOTE – WALKING TIMES

Unless otherwise specified, **all times in this book refer only to the time spent walking.** You will need to add 20-30% to allow for rests, photography, checking the map, drinking water etc, not to mention time to simply stand and stare. When planning the day's hike count on 5-7 hours' actual walking.



DIRECTION INDICATORS ON MAP SIDE BARS



Walking in an easterly direction from Farnham to Dover



Route to Dover continues on Map 5



Walking in a westerly direction from Dover to Farnham



Route to Farnham continues on Map 8

ground conditions, whether you are walking alone or with company and how many photos you take along the way.

Up or down?

Other than when on a track or bridleway the trail is shown as a dotted line. An arrow across the trail indicates the slope; two arrows show that it is steep. Note that the arrow points towards the higher part of the trail. If, for example, you are walking from A (at 80m) to B (at 200m) and the trail between the two is short and steep, it would be shown thus: A --- >> --- B. Reversed arrow heads indicate a downward gradient.

Accommodation

The accommodation shown on the maps is either on the trail or within easy reach of it. Some hosts are prepared to collect walkers from points on the trail where the accommodation is a mile or two off the path and it is worth asking if this is possible when booking. There may be a fee for this service, but if not, an offer to pay petrol money will generally be appreciated.

Details of each place are given in the accompanying text. The number and type of rooms is given for each one: **S** = single bed, **T** = twin beds, **D** = double bed or twin beds put together, **Tr/Qd** = triple/quad ie rooms that can sleep up to three/four people, but note that this often means two people sharing a double bed and the other(s) in bunk beds; these rooms can also be used as doubles or twins.

Rates given are **per person (pp)** based on two people sharing a room for a one-night stay – rates are almost always discounted for a longer stay. Where a single room (**sgl**) is available the rate for that is quoted if different from the per person rate. The rate for single occupancy (**sgl occ**) of a double/twin is generally higher, and the rate for three or more sharing a room may be lower. Unless specified, rates are for **bed and breakfast (B&B)**. At some places the only option is a **room rate**; this will be the same whether one or two people share. Don't bank on negotiating a discount in the off-season; year-round demand from business travellers, holidaymakers and weekenders for accommodation along and near the North Downs Way keeps prices high. But some of the larger establishments catering to business travellers may offer a lower weekend rate; it's worth checking when you book. See p27 for more details on prices.

Almost all places to stay and/or eat offer free **wi-fi** nowadays so this is only specified where that isn't the case. The text also mentions whether the premises have a **bath** (♫) available in, or for, at least one room; if packed lunches (🍽) can be provided (usually subject to preorder and an additional cost); and whether **dogs** (🐕) are welcome. Most places will not take more than one dog in a room, subject to prior arrangement. Many make an additional charge (usually per night but occasionally per stay), while others may require a deposit which is refundable if the dog doesn't make a mess. See also pp203-5.



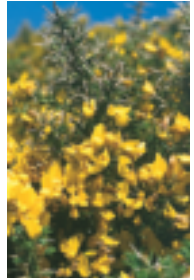
Common Ragwort
Senecio jacobaea



Cowslip
Primula veris



Yarrow
Achillea millefolium



Gorse
Ulex europaeus



Bird's-foot trefoil
Lotus corniculatus



Meadow Buttercup
Ranunculus acris



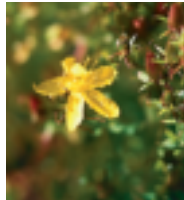
Marsh Marigold
(Kingcup)
Caltha palustris



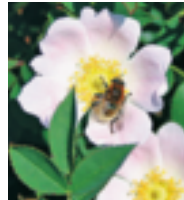
Herb-Robert
Geranium robertianum



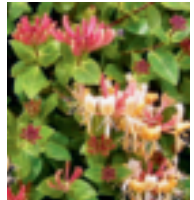
Primrose
Primula vulgaris



St John's Wort
Hypericum perforatum



Dog Rose
Rosa canina



Honeysuckle
Lonicera periclymenum



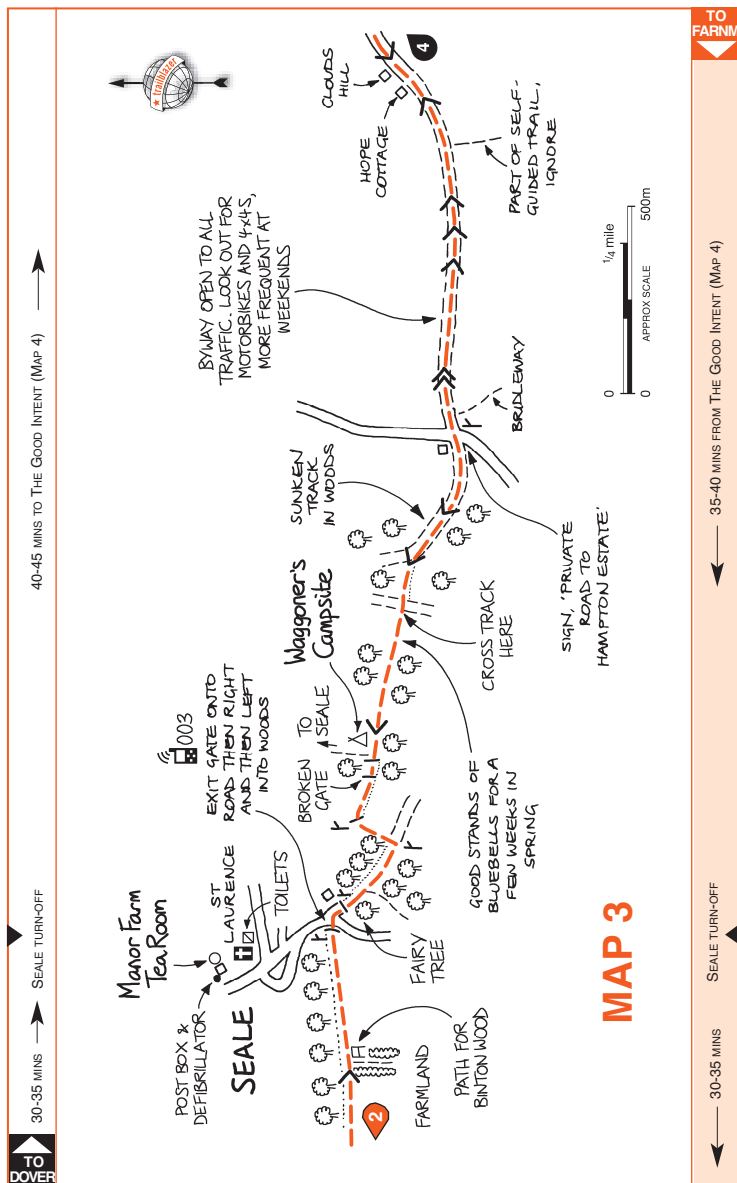
Bluebell
Hyacinthoides non-scripta



Common Knapweed
Centaurea nigra



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



📍 BRAVE NEW PUTTENHAM?

‘Puttenham was a modest little village nine stories high, with silos, a poultry farm, and a small vitamin-D factory.’

Thus did **Aldous Huxley** imagine the future of Puttenham (Map 4) in his 1932 work, *Brave New World*. His vision may still come to pass, of course, though if it does, this long village, lined with pretty brick, stone, timber and tile-hung cottages, would have to undergo a complete transformation.

for three. The barn is a listed building restored using sustainable materials and solar energy. A sleeping bag is essential but can be hired (£5). Kitchen, toilet and shower facilities are available.

For a meal there’s **The Good Intent** (☎ 01483-923434, 🌐 goodintentputtenham.co.uk; food Mon noon-2.30pm, Tue-Sat noon-2.30pm & 6.9pm, Sun noon-6pm; 🐾), a popular low-beamed pub with inglenook fireplace which does a good line in standard

pub food (sandwiches £6.95-10.95).

Note that **The Little Coffee Pantry** (fb; Thur-Sun 9am-2pm), advertised on the trail, is almost 1½ miles away in the Upper Car Park on Suffield Lane, a significant detour for walkers; you’re better off in the pub or continuing along the trail to the tea shop at **Compton** (Map 5).

Stagecoach’s **bus** No 65 (Alton to Guildford; see pp44-7) stops by The Good Intent.

In our experience, most walkers prefer the words ‘cream’ and ‘tea’ to ‘green’ and ‘tee’, so having departed Puttenham from opposite **The Pickled Pig** (closed for refurbishment at the time of writing), and after marching briskly past golf course and woodland bordering Puttenham Heath – geologically unusual in this area of chalk – it is with some relief to find yourself emerging onto the outskirts of **Compton** and its fine tea shop.

COMPTON [MAP 5, p74]

The trail brings you out just below **Watts Gallery** (☎ 01483-810235, 🌐 wattsgallery.org.uk; daily 10.30am-4pm; £15, an intimate space exhibiting works of Victorian artist and sculptor George Frederic Watts, which is well worth a visit.

Also on Down Lane is the red-brick **Watts Cemetery Chapel** (daily 10am-5pm; free), built by Watts’s wife. His remains are interred in the cloister nearby. The floral forms, tendrils and crosses on the exterior reveal the Art Nouveau, Celtic, Romanesque and Egyptian influences. Don’t miss the incredible interior, with every available surface decorated with red, silver and gold images and angels.

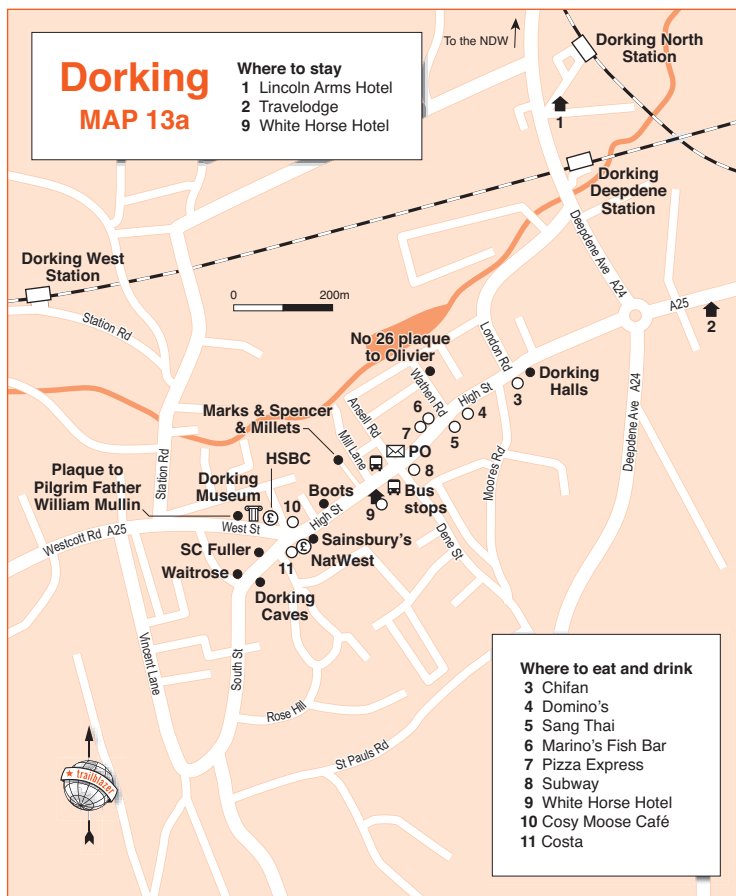
Continuing south to the village, the 11th century **parish church of St Nicholas** is worth a visit, particularly to see the two-storey sanctuary with a magnificent vault

and nine-arch balustrade above it.

Next door to the Watts Gallery, in the former pottery workshop of Compton Potters Guild, is **Compton Tea Shop** (☎ 01483-813590; daily 10am-5pm), just the place for goeey Welsh rarebit (from £8.95).

Upmarket eatery **The Withies Inn** (off Map 5; ☎ 01483-421158, 🌐 thewithiesinn.com; Mon-Thur 7-9.30am, noon-5pm & 6-9pm, Fri-Sat 8-10am, noon-5pm & 6-9pm, Sun 8-10am and noon-3pm; advance booking only for breakfast) lies outside the village; evening mains start at £18.50 for a vegetarian mushroom stroganoff with rice. They also have smart **B&B** rooms (7D en suite) that start at £70-85pp (sgl occ full room rate).

There’s a **bus** stop outside the gallery, with Stagecoach’s No 46 (see pp44-7) calling here.



Where to stay

Coming into town off the A24, about 300m to the east along the A25, is a **Travelodge** (☎ 0871-984 6026, 🌐 travelodge.co.uk; 55 rooms, all en suite; 🛏; 🐾; see also p21).

Centrally located on the High St is the characterful 13th century **White Horse Hotel** (☎ 01306-881138, 🌐 whitehorse.dorking.com; 9S/25D/19D or T, 3 luxury rooms, all en suite; 🛏; 🐾) with room only prices varying but in the range of £49.50

to £79.50pp (sgl occ full room rate).

If your legs just won't carry you any further coming into town along the A24 from the trail there is always **The Lincoln Arms Hotel** (☎ 01306-882820, 🌐 lincolnarms.co.uk; 4S/3D/10T/3Tr, all en suite; 🛏) next to Dorking Station. It's seen a few incarnations but has always been a station hotel. Room only rates are from £30pp (sgl from £45).

Climbing behind Cuxton, with views over the Medway, the trail emerges to cross the Medway Bridge. There are in fact two – a road bridge carrying the M2 and another carrying the Channel Tunnel rail link. There is a dedicated pedestrian and cycle crossing running alongside the M2. It's horrible, to be sure, the scream of traffic is loud enough to shake your fillings loose and make your ears bleed, but distract yourself from the noise and fumes by looking instead at the river below and the outline of **Rochester**, with its cathedral and castle, in the distance.


ROCHESTER [MAP 36a, p135]

As you've just passed the halfway point – and have also reached the most northerly point on the trail – it's a good excuse to visit Rochester, a 40-minute walk off the path, and perhaps celebrate with a day off and a good meal.


Sometimes referred to as the city of Great Expectations, the great Victorian novelist, **Charles Dickens** (see box p130), is to Rochester what Mickey Mouse is to Disney.

With two Dickens' festivals a year, in July and December, accommodation goes fast. But this commercialism aside there's plenty to see including a Norman castle, England's second oldest cathedral and a wonderful Restoration house.


What to see and do

For **tourist information**,  visitmedway.org is useful and has links to all the essential sights of Rochester, including:



Rochester Castle (Tue-Sun & bank hols 10am-6pm; £8.50) is reckoned to be one of the country's best-preserved Norman castles. Started in the 11th century by Bishop Gundolf there are excellent views from the top of the 113ft tower over the Medway and the cathedral.

Guildhall Museum ( 01634-332900, Tue-Sat 10am-5pm; £5) is strong on local Medway history.

On the High St, **Eastgate House** (£6.50) is a Grade 1 listed 16th century townhouse whose gardens host Charles Dickens' Swiss chalet which was moved from one of his previous residences in the nearby village of Higham. The house is occasionally open to the public at some weekends.


Rochester Cathedral ( rochester.cathedral.org; Mon-Sat 10am-4pm, Sun 1-3pm) was founded in AD604 and is the second oldest cathedral in England (after Canterbury Cathedral). It has a pleasant **café** (see Where to eat).


Also well worth seeing is the **Restoration House & Gardens** ( 01634-848520,  restorationhouse.co.uk; mid Jun-Sep Thur & Fri only, 10am-5pm; £12, garden only £6) at 17-19 Crow Lane. The house, a 17th-century mansion house, takes its name from King Charles II's stay there on the eve of the Restoration. It's privately owned and superbly maintained, filled with period furniture and a good collection of English portraits. It is said to have been Dickens' inspiration for Satis House in *Great Expectations*.

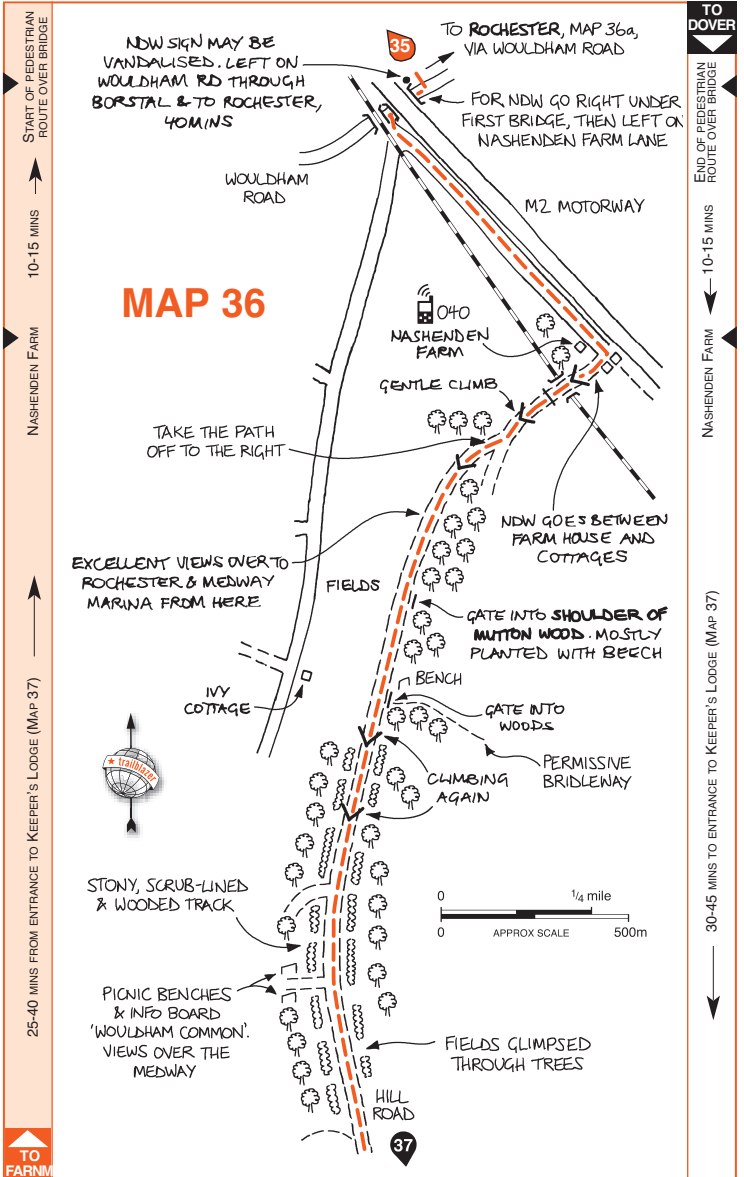
Finally, there's a **Huguenot Museum** ( 01634-789347,  huguenotmuseum.org; Tue-Sat 11am-4pm, Bank Hol Mons 10am-4pm; £5.50) on the first floor of the former tourist office; the office has shut but the museum, for the time being, clings on.

Services

The **post office** (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm, Sat to 4.30pm, Sun 10am-1pm) is in the newsagent's at 190-192 High St.

For any ailments there is **Paydens Chemists** ( 01634-842838; Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm, Sat 9am-1pm).

For **food provisions**, Austen's of Rochester (; Mon-Sat 9am-4.30pm, Sun 10.30am-4pm) is a traditional greengrocer's; while in Strood, over the ornate 'Lion Bridge' at the northern end of the High St, is a Tesco **supermarket** (Mon-Sat 6am-midnight, Sun 10am-4pm).



The Blue Boar Lane car park hosts the monthly **Farmers' Market**, on the third Sunday of each month.

Transport

The **railway station** has regular services (operated by Southeastern Railway and Thameslink) to several London stations, as well as to Canterbury East and Dover Priory; see box pp42-3 for details.

Arriva's **bus** No 155 (Chatham to Bostal) calls at Warden Rd and Star Hill. Nu-Venture's No 142 stops on Delce Rd and their Nos 151, 172 & 173, which also serve Chatham, stop at the railway station. See pp42-7 for details.

For a taxi call **Vokes** (☎ 01634-222222, 📧 vokestaxis.co.uk).

Where to stay

Travelodge and Premier Inn both have branches serving Rochester, with rooms starting at around £30. **Travelodge** (☎ 08719 846555, 📧 travelodge.co.uk; 81 en suite rooms; 🍷; 🚗) is the most convenient for the city, east of the railway just three minutes from the main centre on Cory's Rd. **Premier Inn** (Map 35; ☎ 0333 321 8451, 📧 premierinn.com; 161 en suite rooms; 🍷), on the other hand, lies north of the River Medway (Rochester Medway Valley Leisure Park) and is more convenient for the trail itself: heading east, rather than taking the turn-off leaving the A228 to cross the Medway Bridge, instead continue along the A228 to a second roundabout and turn right here to join Roman Way, before taking another right at the river to take you back west along Chariot Way by the river to the Premier Inn.

In the centre of Rochester there's Grade II listed **Gordon House Hotel** (☎ 01634-831000; 2T/9T/2Qd, all en suite; 🍷; Wi-Fi some rooms). Rooms cost £37.50-42.50pp (sgl occ full room rate).

There's also a Wetherspoons pub, **The Golden Lion** (☎ 01634-405402, 📧 jdwwetherspoon.com; 6D/3D or T, all en suite; 🍷), further along the High St at 147-151. Room-only rates, starting at £31.25pp (sgl occ full room rate), are reasonable given the central location, and a compre-

hensive breakfast menu is available downstairs in the bar for an additional cost (from £2.35 for a bacon butty).

Where to eat and drink

There are several good independent cafés in town in addition to the usual **Costa** outlet (Mon-Fri 6.30am-7.30pm, Sat from 7am, Sun 7.30am-6pm). Our favourite is **Leonards** (☎ 01634-843881; Mon-Sat 10.30am-4.30pm, Sun 11am-3.30pm; 🍷) at the back of the gallery-cum-bookshop, Store 104. The lunch menu usually consists of just a few items but they serve the best coffee in town and their cake cabinet includes such delights as a lemon-and-meringue 'cruffin' (a muffin made with croissant pastry; £4.50). It's a real find.

Another good option is **Deaf Cat Coffee** (Mon-Sat 9am-5pm, Sun 10am-5pm) at 83 High St. It doesn't offer much in the way of food except a few pre-made sandwiches and other snacks but what it does, it does well, namely some first-rate coffees and teas.

Around the corner from the High St in an enviable location near the cathedral and with outside seating, **Jaggers** (☎ 01634-7806455, 📧 jaggersrochester.co.uk; Thur & Sun 10am-5pm, Fri & Sat to 11pm, takeaway only for orders after 7pm) has transformed itself from a crêperie into a cocktail bar and coffee house, though one with a substantial and diverse menu too including tapas, salads and sandwiches as well as the crêpes and waffles in which they originally specialised.

Try the traditional **Peggotty's Parlour** (📧 peggottysparlour.co.uk; Tue-Fri 10am-4pm, Sat to 4.30pm, Sun 11am-4pm); it's easy to miss, being located on the first floor, but while the menu is largely traditional and the food is fine (sandwiches from £6), it's the elevated location opposite the cathedral that is the biggest draw.

For somewhere that's both right in the heart of Rochester, and yet an escape from it, the cathedral's own **Café in the Crypt** (📧 rochester cathedral.org/cafe; Mon-Sat 10am-4pm) offers handmade sandwiches, jacket potatoes and an array of cakes that are, appropriately enough, quite heavenly.



The Quills (☎ 01634-407402, 📍 thequills.co.uk; Mon-Thur 9am-9.30pm, Fri & Sat to 11pm, Sun to 8.30pm), towards the northern end of the High St, lists some great burgers on its menu starting at £12.99 for its cheeseburger.

Speaking of burgers, **Chuck and Blade** (☎ 01634-780190, 📍 chuckandblade.com; Mon-Thur 11.30am-9pm, Fri to 10pm, Sat 9am-10pm, Sun 9am-9pm) claim to make the 'juiciest, filthiest hand-made burgers in Kent', starting at £9 for the halloumi burger and rising to £16 for the quadzilla, a cheeseburger of monster proportions.

Unsurprisingly, cheese also features heavily on the menu of **The Cheese Room** (☎ 01634-845270, 📍 thecheeseroomroches.co.uk). This establishment actually has two premises, a restaurant known as Cheese Room Botanicals at No 60 (Tue 10am-5pm, Wed & Thur to 10pm, Fri & Sat 9am-11pm, Sun 9am-5pm) which does great (and thankfully cheese-free) breakfasts, with the Full English £11, and a deli-cum-café (daily 9am-4pm; ☎) with some great bread and delicious takeaway cheese scones (from £1.30).

For a meaty slap-up meal, at 79 High St is **Brettingtons** (☎ 01634-400192, 📍 brettingtons.com; daily noon-9pm), a steak and lobster bar with steaks from £30 for a 10oz sirloin.

At the other end of the price range,

food at **The Golden Lion** (see Where to stay; daily 8am-midnight) is, as with all Wetherspoons-owned places, unquestionably great value, though remember that dogs aren't allowed.

There are several **Italian** restaurants in town, ranging from the familiar, such as **Pizza Express** (21-23 High St; ☎ 01634-812171, 📍 pizzaexpress.com; Sun-Wed 11.30am-10pm, Thur-Sat to 11pm), to the independent one-offs, such as the smart **Don Vincenzo** (☎ 01634-408373, 📍 donvincenzo.co.uk; Mon noon-3pm & 6-9pm, Tue-Fri noon-3pm & 6-10pm, Sat noon-4pm & 6-10pm, Sun noon-8pm) with pizzas from £11.50 and, at the end of the street opposite the bridge, **Padrino** (☎ 01634-553370, 📍 padrino-pizza.com; Mon, Tue & Thur 4-10pm, Fri to 11pm, Sat 10am-11pm, Sun 11am-8pm), with pizzas from £10. They also do takeaway and delivery.

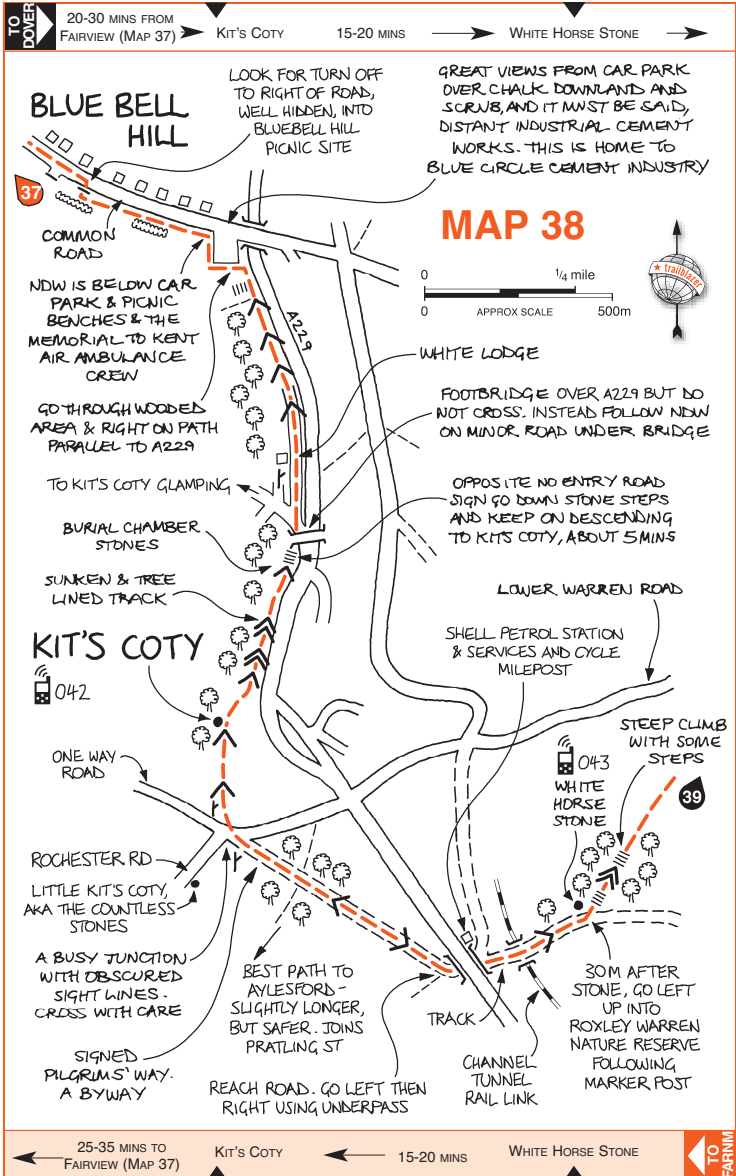
There is a good **Indian** restaurant, the sophisticated **Cumin Club** (☎ 01634-400880, 📍 cuminclub.com; Tue-Sun & bank hols 5-10.30pm) at the southern end of the High St; and, at the northern end, **Raj of India** (☎ 01634-844489, 📍 rajofindia.rochester.co.uk; daily noon-2pm & 6pm-midnight). Both also do takeaway and delivery.

For more traditional **takeaway** fare there's **The Gordon Chippy** (📍 gordonchippy.co.uk; Tue-Thur noon-9pm, Fri & Sat to 10pm, Sun to 8pm).

ROCHESTER TO HOLLINGBOURNE

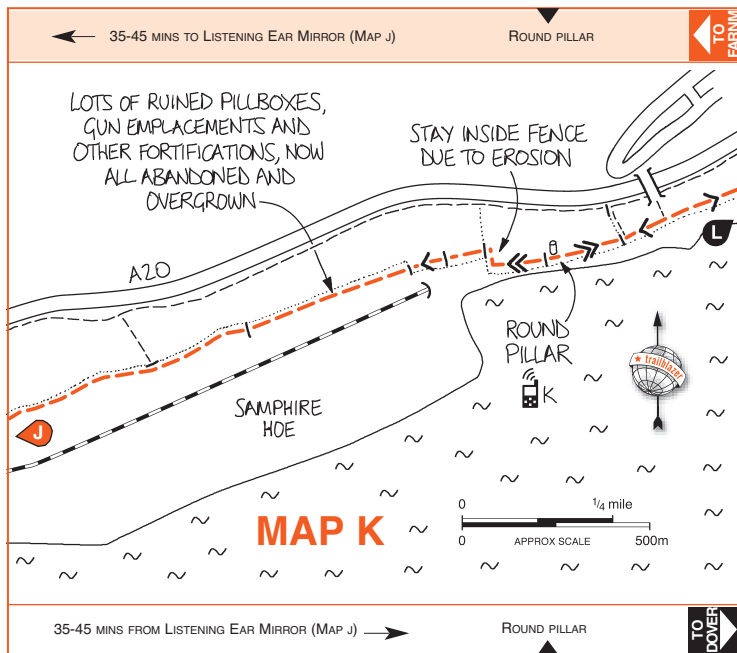
[MAPS 36-42]

There's a lot of interest on this **14.8-mile/23.8km (4½hrs to 6hrs)** section including several Neolithic sites, Kent's oldest village, the chance to stay with friars at Aylesford Friary and visit the ruins of a motte-and-bailey castle at Thurnham. The walking is seldom strenuous and occasionally blissful, and after the traumas of walking alongside the M2 yesterday, you'll be pleased to know that there are only two A roads to cross today (the A229 and A249), both easily negotiated via an underpass and bridge respectively. And though their distant roar remains audible for several miles, it's the beauty of the Kent countryside – and the ancient stone constructions that lie hidden within – that lingers in the memory long after you've taken off your boots at the end of the day. Refreshments directly on (or very near) the trail can be found at: the Robin Hood pub (Map 37), just an hour or so into the stage; at the petrol station shop



The clifftop walking begins in earnest now as, accompanied for most of its length by its fellow national trail, the England Coast Path, the North Downs Way soars above the Channel atop the famed **White Cliffs of Dover**.

After several exhilarating miles of this the path finally drops, heads inland and crosses the A20 via an underpass to negotiate the outskirts of Dover. What initially seems like an uninteresting route soon proves to be anything but as the trail leads you via the **foundations of a small medieval chapel** (Map L) built,

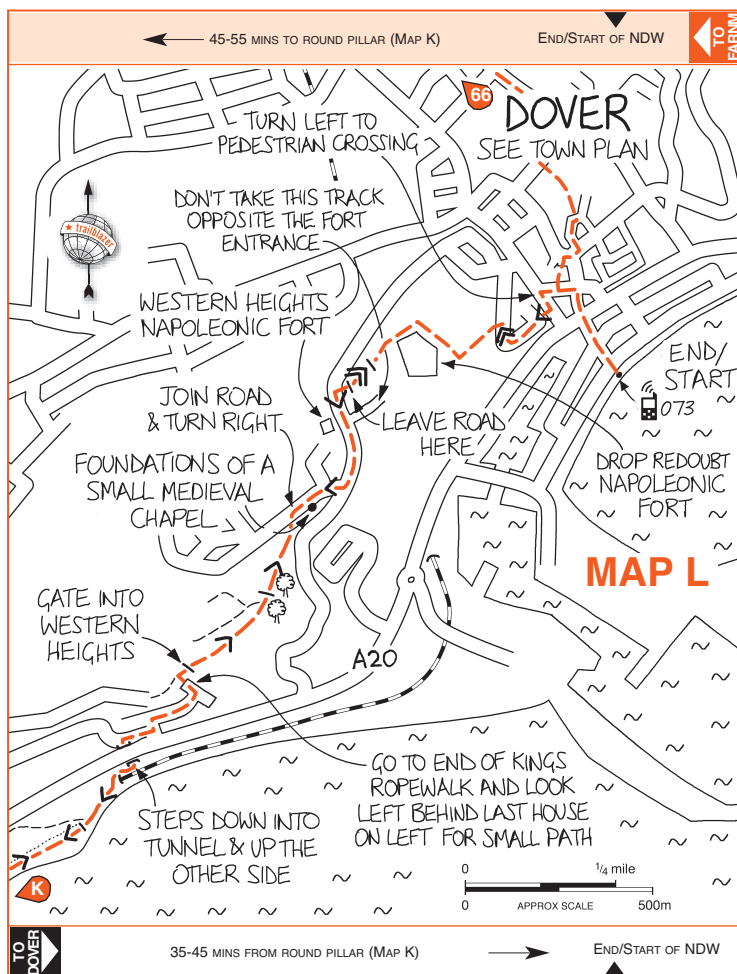


CLIFFS HAVE EARS ...

As you join the England Coast Path, look to your right and if the day is clear you should be able to discern the chalky undulations of the French coast across the Channel. It perhaps comes as little surprise, therefore, to find these last few miles dotted with various pillboxes, gun emplacements and other fortifications. Most striking of all, perhaps, is the '**Listening Ear Mirror**' (Map J; also known as Abbot's Cliff sound mirror), a large square concrete construction, concave on one side, that was built between the wars to act as an early warning system: the shape of the mirror allowing those who stand beneath it to detect the noise of approaching enemy planes from afar. Though several are still standing, they never actually saw active service – radar was brought in soon after and proved a much more reliable and precise system.

possibly, by the Knights Templar, as well as two huge Napoleonic Forts, the second of which, the **Drop Redoubt**, is mightily impressive, particularly when viewed from the trail which passes above it. From here it's a mere tumble down the hill to **Dover** town centre (see pp184-6), from where you can turn left to the main square and the tourist office; or right towards the seafront and the **official end of the North Downs Way**.

It's a lovely ending, to a lovely, lovely walk.



APPENDIX A: GPS & WHAT3WORDS WAYPOINTS


Each waypoint below was taken on the route at the reference number marked on the maps in the route guide. **GPS coordinates** and **what3words references** that correspond to these waypoints are listed here and may be particularly useful in an emergency (see p52). Gpx files for waypoints can be downloaded from [trailblazer-guides.com](https://www.trailblazer-guides.com).

WAYPOINT & GRID REFERENCE	DESCRIPTION	WHAT3WORDS REFERENCE
001 N51° 12.771' W0° 47.621'	Western end of NDW	///magpie.squaring.comic
002 N51° 13.007' W0° 44.421'	Bridge off road	///cone.washed.frog
003 N51° 13.236' W0° 42.944'	Turn-off to Seale	///tamed.noses.puppy
004 N51° 13.318' W0° 40.087'	The Good Intent at Puttenham	///blazed.eggshell.roadblock
005 N51° 13.218' W0° 37.856'	Junction near Watts Gallery	///greyhound.crowds.duet
006 N51° 13.503' W0° 34.603'	Turn-off after bridge to Guildford	///myself.stow.traded
007 N51° 13.490' W0° 31.779'	St Martha's Church	///zones.upset.frogs
008 N51° 13.894' W0° 30.491'	Path to Countryside Centre, Newlands Cnr	///atom.earth.closer
009 N51° 13.833' W0° 27.918'	Hollister Cottage	///pits.nights.flats
010 N51° 13.757' W0° 27.547'	Turn-off to Shere	///hats.tribe.length
011 N51° 13.963' W0° 26.479'	First large concrete bowl	///parks.landed.edgy
012 N51° 13.991' W0° 23.744'	Turn-off to the right off path	///cares.tools.nearly
013 N51° 14.466' W0° 21.789'	Junction in Ranmore Common	///punch.civic.luxury
014 N51° 15.180' W0° 19.372'	Underpass under A24	///rice.salon.mouth
015 N51° 15.385' W0° 15.707'	Path leaves road north of Betchworth Stn	///admits.stews.losses
016 N51° 15.394' W0° 12.988'	Water tower	///flame.guises.gets
017 N51° 15.362' W0° 11.535'	Car park and snack bar	///fresh.basin.food
018 N51° 15.617' W0° 10.745'	Stonehenge-like slabs	///visit.joins.courier
019 N51° 15.902' W0° 09.185'	Quality St, Merstham	///cheat.harsh.hook
020 N51° 16.058' W0° 06.050'	Whitehill Tower	///sizes.estate.pounds
021 N51° 15.658' W0° 05.061'	Finger post, Gravelly Hill	///props.race.cried
022 N51° 15.935' W0° 03.312'	Entrance to Marden Park & Church Woods	///error.pepper.cheese
023 N51° 16.236' W0° 00.980'	Chalk Pit Lane to Oxted	///pack.upon.purely
024 N51° 17.098' E0° 01.477'	Mole End	///crops.such.clear
025 N51° 17.050' E0° 03.886'	A233	///maple.basis.deputy
026 N51° 17.539' E0° 05.003'	Gate by telegraph pole	///lazy.ruled.rents
027 N51° 18.111' E0° 06.054'	Stile after Melrose	///lonely.wheels.riches
028 N51° 18.702' E0° 07.697'	Turn-off to Knockholt Pound	///slate.lodge.bonus
029 N51° 18.785' E0° 11.273'	Oxford Heritage Centre	///jeeps.metals.crop
030 N51° 18.761' E0° 13.844'	Turn-off to Kemsing	///jukebox.unit.quiet
031 N51° 18.932' E0° 15.618'	Milestone	///cure.bottle.couches
032 N51° 18.661' E0° 18.715'	Path behind some public bins	///filled.loose.family
033 N51° 18.847' E0° 19.793'	Hognore Farmhouse	///full.stuck.drops

Cleaning up after your dog

It is extremely important that dog owners behave in a responsible way when walking the path. Dog excrement should be cleaned up. In towns, villages and fields where animals graze or which will be cut for silage, hay etc, you need to pick up and bag the excrement.

Staying (and eating) with your dog

In this guide we have used the symbol  to denote where a place welcomes dogs. However, this always needs to be arranged in advance and some places may charge extra. Many B&B-style places have only one or two rooms suitable for people with dogs; hostels (both YHA and independent) do not permit them unless they are an assistance (guide) dog; smaller campsites tend to accept them, but some of the larger holiday parks do not – however, in either case it is likely the dog will have to be on a lead. Before you turn up always double check whether the place you would like to stay accepts dogs and whether there is space for them. When it comes to eating, some cafés accept dogs and most landlords allow dogs in at least a section of their pubs, though few restaurants do. Make sure you always ask first and ensure your dog is on a lead and secured to your table or a radiator so it doesn't run around.

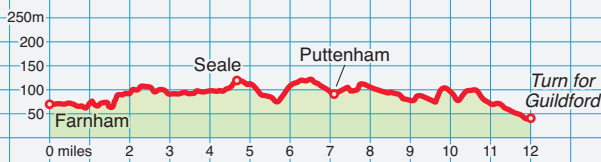
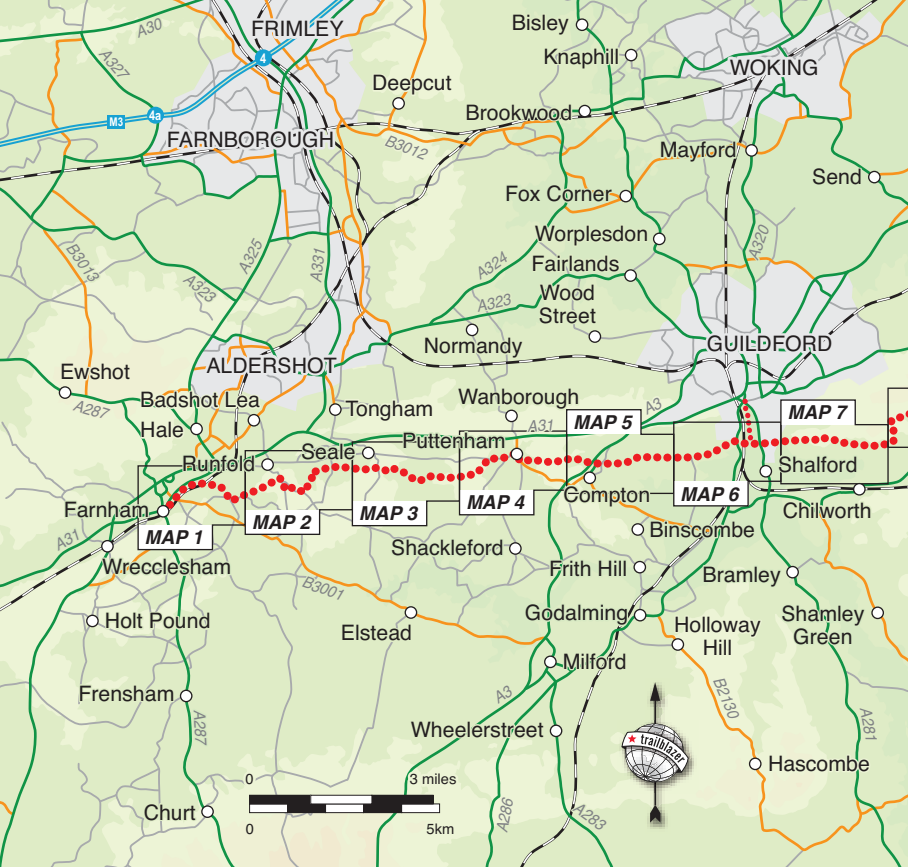
Henry Stedman

INDEX

Page references in **bold red** type refer to maps

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Abbot's Cliff Sound Mirror 198, 199</p> <p>access rights 48</p> <p>accommodation 19-22, 64
<i>see also place name</i></p> <p>Airbnb 22</p> <p>Albury 82</p> <p>Albury Downs 82, 83</p> <p>alternative routes:
 northern 156, 159-86
 southern 156, 186-200</p> <p>apps: drinking water 23
 field guides 39
 maps 17-18, 19, 39</p> <p>Areas of Outstanding
 Natural Beauty (AONBs)
 54</p> <p>Ashley 180, 182</p> <p>ATMs 23, 24, 38</p> <p>Aylesford 138, 140, 140</p> <p>B&Bs (Bed & breakfasts)
 20-1, 27</p> <p>Backpackers' Club 38</p> <p>backpacks 34</p> <p>bank holidays 24</p> | <p>banks 23, 24</p> <p>Battle of Britain memorial
 194, 197</p> <p>beers 22</p> <p>Bekesbourne 173</p> <p>Betsom's Hill 110, 112</p> <p>birds 57-8</p> <p>Blean ancient woodland 164</p> <p>blisters 52</p> <p>Blue Bell Hill 137, 139</p> <p>booking accommodation 20</p> <p>books 39</p> <p>boots 35, 52</p> <p>Botley Hill 107, 108, 110</p> <p>Boughton Aluph 158, 160</p> <p>Boughton Lees 154, 156,
 157, 186</p> <p>Box Hill 91, 96</p> <p>Box Hill Village 95, 96</p> <p>breweries 22</p> <p>Brabourne 188, 191</p> <p>Bridge 174, 175</p> <p>British Summer Time
 (BST) 25</p> <p>budgeting 27</p> <p>bunkhouses 20, 27</p> | <p>burial sites, stones & tombs
 96, 120, 126, 138, 139</p> <p>bus services 40, 44-5, 46-7</p> <p>business hours 24</p> <p>butterflies 59, 96, 174</p> <p>Caesar's Camp 194, 196</p> <p>campaigning organisations
 56</p> <p>camping 19-20, 27</p> <p>camping gear 38</p> <p>camping supplies 23</p> <p>Canterbury 162, 165, 166-7,
 168-9, 170-2</p> <p>Capel-le-Ferne 194, 197</p> <p>cash machines <i>see</i> ATMs</p> <p>Caterham viewpoint 104,
 104</p> <p>Chantry Wood 80, 81</p> <p>Charing 150, 152</p> <p>Chartham/Chartham Hatch
 162, 164</p> <p>Chartwell 114</p> <p>Chevening & Chevening
 House 114, 116</p> <p>Chilham 160, 161</p> |
|--|--|---|

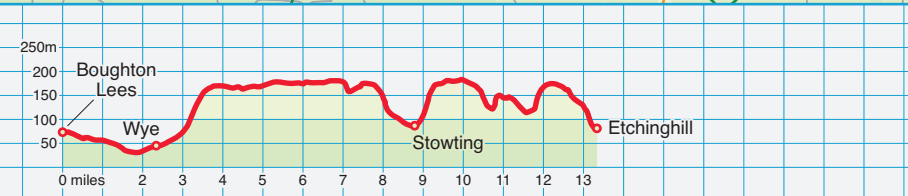
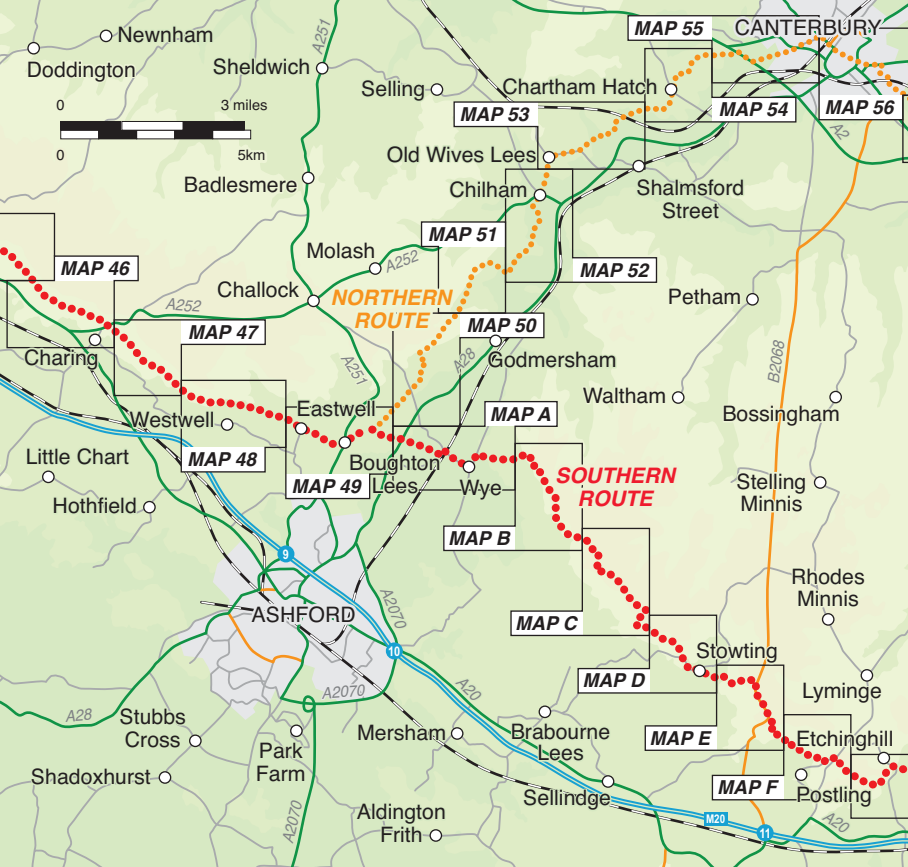
- Old Wives Lees 162, **163**
 online information 38
 Otford **117**, 118-19, **119**
 Oxted 106, 108, **109**
 Oxted Downs 104, **107**
- Patrixbourne **173**, 174
 Pilgrims' Church 82
 Pilgrims' Way 11, **75**, **125**,
 126, **139**, **143**, 146, **147**,
 148, **153**, 154, **155**, 166,
 171, 174
 book 39
 pillboxes **81**, **87**, **88**, 96, 98,
99, **196**, **197**, 199, **199**
 Postling 188, 193, **193**
 post offices 23, 24
 public transport 40-5, **46-7**,
 49
 pubs 21, 23, 24, 27
 Puttenham 68, 72, **73**
- Quarry Hangers Nature
 Reserve 101, **103**
 Quebec House **113**, 114
- rail services 40, 41, 42-3
 rainfall 15
 Ramblers 38
 Ranmore Common 88, **89**
 Redhill 98, **100**, 100-1
 Reigate Fort 98, **99**
 Reigate Hill 98, **99**
 restaurants *see place name*
 reptiles 59
 Rochester 130, 132, 134,
135, 136
 route finding 17
 Roxley Warren Nature
 Reserve **139**, 142
 RSPB 56
 rucksacks 34
 Ryarsh 126
- safety 51-3
 school holidays 24
 Seale 68, **71**
 seasons 13-15
 Shalford **75**, 76, **76**
 Shepherdswell 176, **179**,
 180
 Shere 84, 86, **86**
- shops 24
 Shoulder of Mutton Wood
133, 137
 side trips 33-4
 signposts 17
 Society of Sunday Tramps
 108
 Southern route 156, 186-200
 Sites of Special Scientific
 Interest (SSSIs) 55
 smoking 25
 Soakham Downs **158**, 160
 solar system model, Otford
117, 118
 Stepping Stones **91**, 94
 St Barnabas, church,
 Ranmore 88, **89**, 90
 St Martha's, church **81**, 82
 St Martha's Hill 80, **81**, 86
 St Mary's Church, Eastwell
 154, **157**
 St Mary's Church,
 Westerham 110, **111**
 Stowting **191**, 192, 193
 Sugar Loaf Hill 194, **197**
 sunburn 52
 Surrey Hills AONB 54
 Surrey Maginot Line 98
 Surrey (architecture) style
 86
- Tandridge Hill 104, **105**
 tank traps 98
 taxi services 40
see also place name
 telephones 25
 temperatures 15
 Thurnham 142, **143**
 Thurnham Castle, remains
 of 142, **143**
 Titsey Plantation **107**, 110
 toilets 50
 torches 37, 52
 tourist information centres
 (TICs) 38
 town facilities table 28-31
 tracklogs 18
 trail information 38
 trail maps 63-4
 trains *see rail services*
 travel insurance 24-5
 trees 59-60
- Trosley Country Park **125**,
 126
- Upper Bush **129**, 130
- village facilities table 28-31
 vineyard 88, 90, **91**
- Waldershare Park 180, **181**
 walkers' organisations 38
 walking companies 25-6
 walking poles 37
 walking season 13-15
 walking times 63
 wartime defences 98
see also pillboxes
 water, drinking 23, 52
 tap **91**
 Watts Cemetery Chapel &
 Watts Gallery 72, **74**
 waymark posts 17
 waypoints 18-19, 201-3
 weather forecasts 51
 weekend walks 33
 weights and measures 25
 Westerham 110, 113, **113**,
 114
 Westwell & Westwell
 Downs 154, **155**
 what3words 18, 52, 201-3
 whistles 37, 52
 White Cliffs of Dover 184,
 199
 White Horse Stone 138,
139, 142
 Whitehill Tower 101, **103**,
 104
 wild camping 19-20, 51
 wildlife 50
 Wildlife Trusts 56
 Womenswold 174, **177**
 Woolage Village 174, **177**
 Wrotham **123**, 124, 126
 Wye **187**, 188
 Wye Crown 188, **189**
 Wye Downs National
 Nature Reserve 54, 188,
189
- Youth Hostel Association
 (YHA) 20



Maps 1-6 Farnham to Guildford

12 miles/19.3km – 3¾hrs-5hrs

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



Maps A-G

Boughton Lees to Etchinghill

13.3 miles/21.5km – 4½hrs-5½hrs

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

Farnham



North Downs Way

FARNHAM to DOVER via CANTERBURY or FOLKESTONE

MAP KEY Map 1 – p69 Farnham

Map 2 – p70 Furze Hill

Map 3 – p71 Seale

Map 4 – p73 Puttenham

Map 5 – p74 Compton

Map 6 – p75 Shalford

Map 7 – p81 Chilworth

Map 8 – p83 Newlands Corner

Map 9 – p85 Shere

Map 10 – p87 Hackhurst Downs

Map 11 – p88 Pickett's Hole

Map 12 – p89 Rammore Common

Map 13 – p91 Box Hill

Map 14 – p95 Box Hill Village

Map 15 – p97 Bucklands Hills

Map 16 – p99 Reigate Hill

Map 17 – p102 Mersham

Map 18 – p103 Quarry Hangers NR

Map 19 – p104 Caterham Viewpoint

Map 20 – p105 Tandridge Hill

Map 21 – p107 Chalk Pit Lane

Map 22 – p111 Church Hill

Map 23 – p112 Betsons Hill

Map 24 – p115 Knockholt

Map 25 – p116 Chevening

Map 26 – p117 Otford & Dunton Green

Map 27 – p121 Kemsing

Map 28 – p122 Cotman's Ash

Map 29 – p123 Wrotham

Map 30 – p124 Hogrove Wood

Map 31 – p125 Trosley Country Park

Map 32 – p127 Holly Hill

Map 33 – p128 Wingate Wood

Map 34 – p129 Cuxton

Map 35 – p131 River Medway

Map 36 – p133 S of Mutton Wood

Map 37 – p137 Robin Hood pub

Map 38 – p139 Blue Bell Hill

Map 39 – p141 Harp Farm

Map 40 – p143 Thurnham

Map 41 – p144 Coldbowl Farm

Map 42 – p145 Hollingbourne

Map 43 – p147 Mile Hill

Map 44 – p149 Lenham

Map 45 – p151 Cobham Farm

Map 46 – p152 Charing

Map 47 – p153 Beacon Hill Quarry

Map 48 – p155 Westwell

Map 49 – p157 Boughton Lees

Map 50 – p158 Soakham Downs

Map 51 – p159 Godmersham Park

Map 52 – p161 Chilham

Map 53 – p163 Old Wives Lees

Map 54 – p164 Chartham Hatch

Map 55 – p165 Canterbury (outsights)

Map 56 – pp168-9 Canterbury centre

Map 57 – p173 Patricbourne

Map 58 – p175 Bridge

Map 59 – p176 Barham Downs

Map 60 – p177 Womenswold

Map 61 – p178 Longlane Farm

Map 62 – p179 Shepherdswell

Map 63 – p181 Waldershare Park

Map 64 – p182 Ashley

Map 65 – p183 Dover (outsights)

Map 66 – p185 Dover centre

Map 67 – p187 Wye

Map 68 – p189 Wye Crown

Map 69 – p190 Beacon

Map 70 – p191 Stowling

Map 71 – p192 Car park

Map 72 – p193 Postling

Map 73 – p195 Etchingham

Map 74 – p196 Cliffs above Folkestone

Map 75 – p197 Battle of Britain memorial

Map 76 – p198 Listening ear mirror

Map 77 – p199 Round pillar

Map 78 – p200 Dover centre

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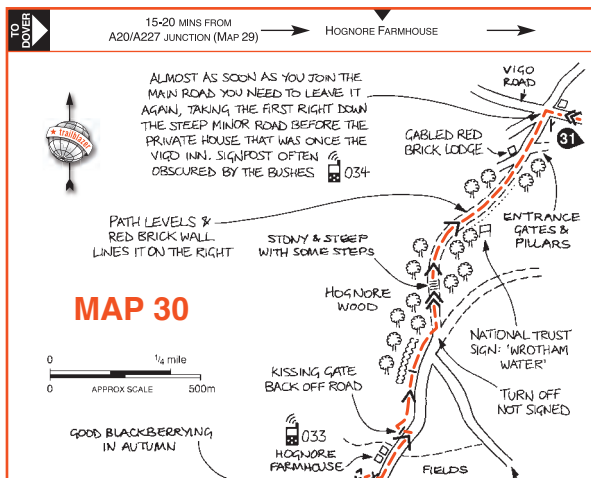
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