

## Wild Walk – Devils Dyke

**Map:** OL11 1:25000 - Brighton and Hove

**Distance:** 7.6 Miles/12.2KM

**Time Taken:** 3-4 Hours

**Total Scint:** 1069ft/325m

### Transport Links

**Car:** National Trust car park at start, free for national trust members.

**Public Transport:** Bus 77 from Brighton Station (Stop E) every 76 minutes.

### Directions

1. Walk along the path alongside the road until crossroads with South Downs Way. Turn left to traverse the edge of the dyke. Cross the road at Saddlescombe and continue along South Downs Way.
2. Turn right onto the Sussex Border Path. Follow for approx. 800m until the crossroads, then turn left down Varncombe Hill.
3. Cross the road and keep to the edge of the field until the top. Keep straight and cross the next road. Follow track past the golf course as it turns into the Monarch's way.
4. Turn right just before the bridge and keep on the path for just over 2km.
5. Take a right at Fulking Hill, then follow the clear path back to Devils Dyke car park.

### Words

According to local folklore, the Devil dug the dyke to drown the people of Sussex for converting to Christianity. If he succeeded in digging the trench to the sea before dawn, Cuthman of Steyning's soul would be his; however, if he failed, the Devil was never to bother the people of Sussex again. Using a candle and a cockerel, Cuthman tricked the Devil into thinking dawn had broken early. Believing he had lost, he ran away in disgrace.

We took a left from the road along the South Downs Way, an ancient pilgrimage route, and walked along the edge of the dyke to Saddlescombe. Starting the walk this way, it feels counterintuitive to walk away from the fantastic vista of the Sussex countryside, but it's certainly worth it to finish on those views.

I'm walking with my sister and dad today, and they struggle to open the gate over the road. The farm and shop have an extensive history dating back to the 1630s, so it's certainly worth a mooch.

Advancing up the hill, we took a right turn along the Sussex Border Path. The fragrant wildflowers were in full bloom, filling the air with floral freshness.

Descending Varncombe hill, the landscape of chalk and sandstone was apparent in the scree littering the path.

We crossed the road and hopped over a stile. The path on the map follows the field boundary at a right angle, so it's tempting to walk straight across to cut the corner, but the gradual climb around the edge is much kinder on the thighs than the steep incline of the middle.

The track running along the Brighton and Hove Golf Club provides a perfect opportunity for a water break and the ceremonial opening of the fruit pastilles.

The track leads us through the picturesque Sussex farmlands and towards the City of Brighton. The smell of freshly cropped fields is soon replaced with that distinct smell that comes with keeping horses, and we're now walking through a working yard.

The roaring A27 acts as a physical barrier between our walking party and bustling Brighton as we turn off in favour of the more enticing green scenery.

The following two kilometres from the road is a steady trudge up a track between fields. The sea glints in the sunshine to my left and the postcard-perfect English countryside to my right.

Fulking hill prompts some puns and wordplay in our small collective until the pub by the car park emerges in the distance.

The final stretch to our finish line takes us along the edge of the south downs with a sheer drop into the suddenly flat Sussex landscape.

As I stroll back towards the pub, a pint of Aspalls firmly set in my mind as my finishing medal, I wonder how a cockerel and a candle can trick an all-knowing being into believing dawn had struck. Perhaps the Devil isn't as cunning as once thought? Either way, Sussex has been supposedly safe from satanic shenanigans since.