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## Heyshott, South Downs, East Dean

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Distance: 12½ km=7½ miles    moderate walking with long easy sections

Region: West Sussex

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Refreshments: East Dean, Heyshott

Map: Explorer 120 (Chichester) and 121 (Arundel)  
*but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*Hills, woodland, views, villages, pubs*

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### In Brief

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This is an unforgettable circular walk between two quiet downland villages. In between them is the escarpment of the South Downs, steep in the north and sloping gently down on the south side. There is a moderate climb at the start but, after that, the gradients are not too taxing. The terrain is mainly woodland but on the way you will be surprised by sudden views. There is an excellent friendly village pub, with good food, in each village. Note however that the *Unicorn* in Heyshott closes at 4pm on Sundays, making a start in East Dean a possible option. (This may change: ring the *Unicorn* at 01730-813486 for information. For the *Star and Garter*, the number is 01243-811318.)



There are no nettles on this walk, so any kind of clothing should be fine.



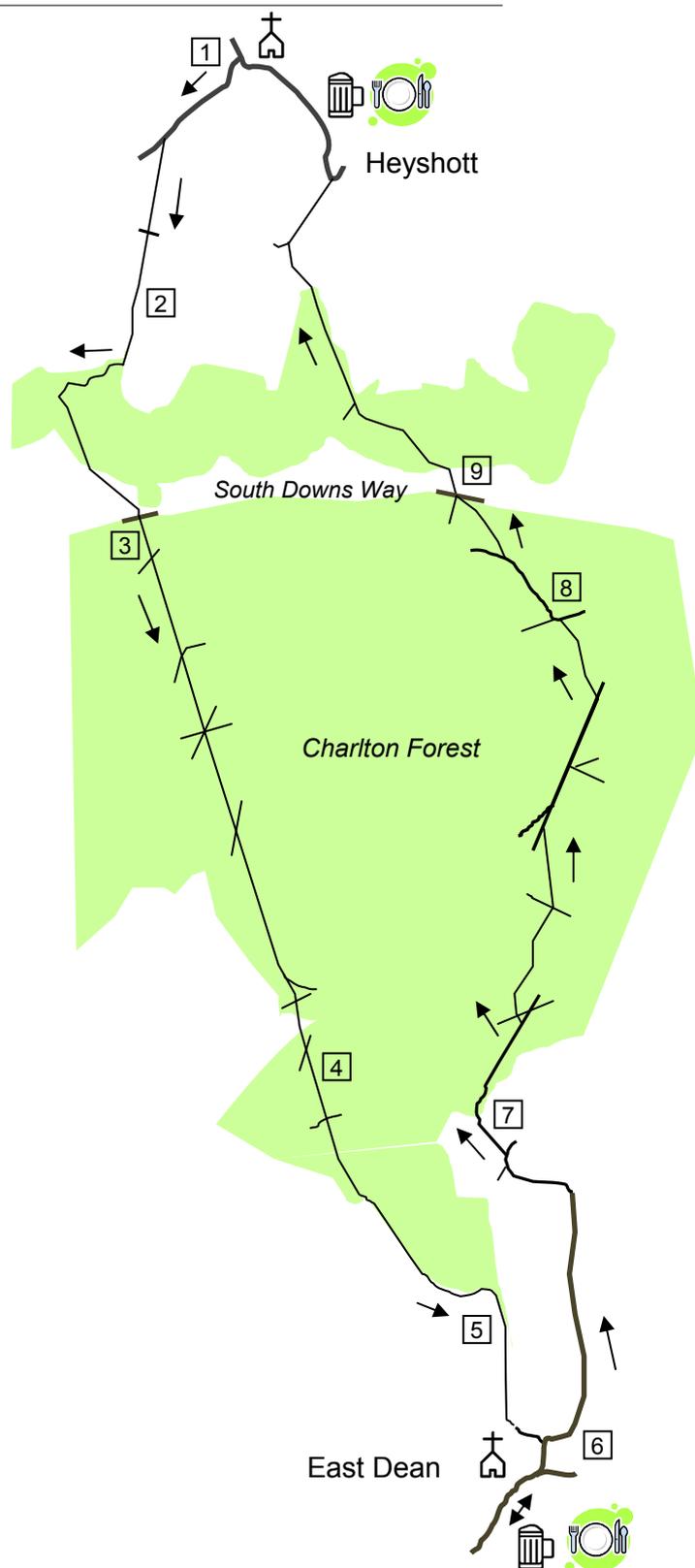
The ground underfoot is generally firm and dry, although possibly in wet conditions the path back to Heyshott at the end might have some muddy patches. The final descent into the village is quite steep and you may benefit from a hiking pole. There are *no roads to cross* and few stiles, so this walk should be fine for your dog.



The walk begins in the village of Heyshott, West Sussex, **postcode GU29 0DJ**. Alternatively, you can start in **East Dean, postcode PO18 0JG**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

## The Walk

- 1 Opposite Heyshott church, take a minor lane, with a green on your left passing a red phonebox and a clubhouse, ignoring a footpath on the left. The lane passes Leggs Farm and the unthatched *Old Thatch*. Ignore a footpath on the right. 60m further, at a fingerpost, veer **left** on a path across the centre of a field, parallel to the trees on your left. At the other side, go through a wooden barrier, over a byway and ahead on a track. As the track bends right after a building, immediately turn **left** at a post with a yellow arrow on a narrow path between bushes.
- 2 Your path runs gradually uphill with a field on your left. After 300m, suddenly there is a wire fence across your path. Turn **right** here uphill, as indicated by the yellow arrow. Now the steep section begins! You need to follow the main path carefully because it winds left-right several times to make an easy gradient. Especially after about 170m, don't lose the path as it bends right: you are reassured soon by a post with a yellow arrow pointing you left again uphill. Where your path shortly runs under yews, immediately veer **left** on a path that has a steep drop on your left. **Care! this path is now covered in chalk scree, and can be treacherous and indistinct.** Eventually your path leads you to a newish gate into a large meadow, nearly at the top. Go half **left** across the grass, in the direction of the yellow arrow. There are great views, first behind to the Greensand hills, then ahead to the remaining hills southwards. As you come over the crest, aim for near the top left corner, go through a kissing-gate here by a fingerpost to meet the wide South Downs Way (SDW).
- 3 Cross straight over the SDW and take a footpath opposite, a pleasant grassy path. Your route is straightforward from here and could be summarised as: **straight on for 3 km**. In 170m, your path goes over a crossing track by a 4-way fingerpost. (*In case you notice the hoof prints, remember horses are allowed on footpaths, depending on local bylaws, and so far as they can cope with any stiles and narrow gates!*) 350m



further, at a wide forestry track, go straight over. In another 250m, you are in the centre of a 6-point star junction, in the very middle of Charlton Forest, the path on your left being another signed footpath. As always, keep straight ahead downhill. In 350m, your path goes over a diagonal crossing path by a yellow arrow and rises gently. In 550m, the main track veers away left. Leave the main track here by taking the **right** fork (really straight ahead), a somewhat narrower path. The path descends shortly to a crossing bridleway by a metal barrier.

- 4 Go straight over the bridleway on an uphill path beside an open pasture on your right and onwards gently uphill. The path goes over a diagonal crossing path by a signpost, still uphill. At the top, the path goes over a crossing path. About 150m after, at a 4-way fingerpost, keep straight ahead. *Note that you are on the West Sussex Literary Trail. This is a 55-mile route from Horsham to Chichester along which you meet Shelley, Galsworthy, Belloc, Blake and Keats.* The path runs under beeches and comes out into the open, running beside a large field on your right.
- 5 The path descends and bends right at the bottom of the field. Keep straight on at a 3-way fingerpost. Stay tight to the left of the field and keep ahead between posts on a path that runs through bushes. *Goodwood race course is visible up to your right.* Go through a new wooden gate (or over a stile) and along a high grassy bank. At the bottom, turn **left** on a wide chalky track, bestrewn with primroses in spring. The track leads to a tarmac lane, Newhouse Lane, in East Dean. This lane will be your return route. Turn **right** on the lane, soon passing the church of All Saints on your right. At a T-junction, turn right on the main road into the village. The *Star and Garter* pub is a short distance on your left.



*The Star and Garter is an 18<sup>th</sup> century country pub, built from the local flint, boasting “fresh local fish and seafood” including “Selsey lobster and crab direct from the fishermen”. The several real ales are served direct from the barrel. It is also a superior B&B with three original bedrooms. However, since East Dean is so near Goodwood, it is advisable to book for food or a bed during the racing season: late May and last week of July.*

- 6 After possible refreshment and a quick tour of the village, return the way you came, turning **left** back onto Newhouse Lane. When you reach the footpath on the left where you joined the lane, ignore it and stay on this narrow quiet cul-de-sac lane, going past an attractive thatched cottage. Ignore a bridleway and later a footpath on the right, soon passing workshops with a totem pole. Ignore another bridleway on the right and stay on the lane as it bends left in front of Newhouse Farm. Just after *The Pheasantry*, **ignore** a fingerpost pointing left. Keep ahead past the last building and go **left**, as indicated by a blue arrow, through a small metal gate on a wide path uphill between hedges.
- 7 Soon you re-enter the great canopy of Charlton Forest and this will be your habitat until you reach the sharp escarpment at the other side of the Downs. At first trees are sparse as you go gradually uphill on the wide path. After 300m, follow the direction of a fingerpost by forking **left** uphill. You go over a crossing path into a wood of young beech. After 400m, at a 3-way fingerpost, a bridleway joins from the left and your route becomes a very wide straight forester's path leading gently up into the distance, quickly reinforced by another even wider track from the left. After 150m, you reach a junction with a wide unmarked track on the right: keep straight on. Just

over 200m further, at an angle on your left, is a level unsigned grassy path. Fork **left** on this wide path. *Don't miss this turn!*

- 8 At the end of the path, in 300m, you come to a junction. On your right and ahead is a wide forestry track at a bend. Bear slightly left onto the gravel forestry track, effectively straight on, avoiding a straight grassy path on your left. In nearly 300m, the track begins to curve round to the left. Leave the track here by keeping straight ahead on a much narrower rather rough grassy path uphill. This path is used by riders but in some places is almost indiscernible. Just keep going until you catch sight of a 4-way fingerpost at the top. This is the SDW again.
- 9 Go straight over the SDW through a small wooden gate and straight across the grass, a fraction left. Take a rough path down through a large wooden gate and follow a sunken path downhill. Heyshott, your final stop, is visible below. *Take great care on this path, especially in the wet, as it can be very slippery in patches.* You will be following this path for nearly 1 km, an easy gradual descent. A footpath joins from the left. Finally, the path runs between fields and curves right where another track joins from the left. You reach a road junction in the village: keep **left**, passing houses. Soon you reach the *Unicorn Inn*.



*The Unicorn is a very friendly freehouse offering the excellent Otter Amber ale and Harvey's Trundle, with a reasonable menu. It also offers afternoon tea in the garden. Note that the Unicorn closes at 4pm on Sundays.*

Continue on the road through this very scattered village until you reach the church where the walk began.

## Getting there

By car: Heyshott is signposted east from A286 Haselmere-Chichester road, 1½ south of Midhurst. Turn right at a signpost after 1 mile. Park near the church.

