



Heyshott, South Downs, East Dean

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

Region: West Sussex

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Refreshments: East Dean, Heyshott

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Maps: 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

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Hills, woodland, views, villages, pubs

In Brief

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 that the *Unicorn* in Heyshott is *closed on Monday* (for info ring 01730-813486). [The Star and Garter in East Dean has re-opened \(as Apr 2019\).](#) [It's always advisable to check](#) (their number is 01243-811318).

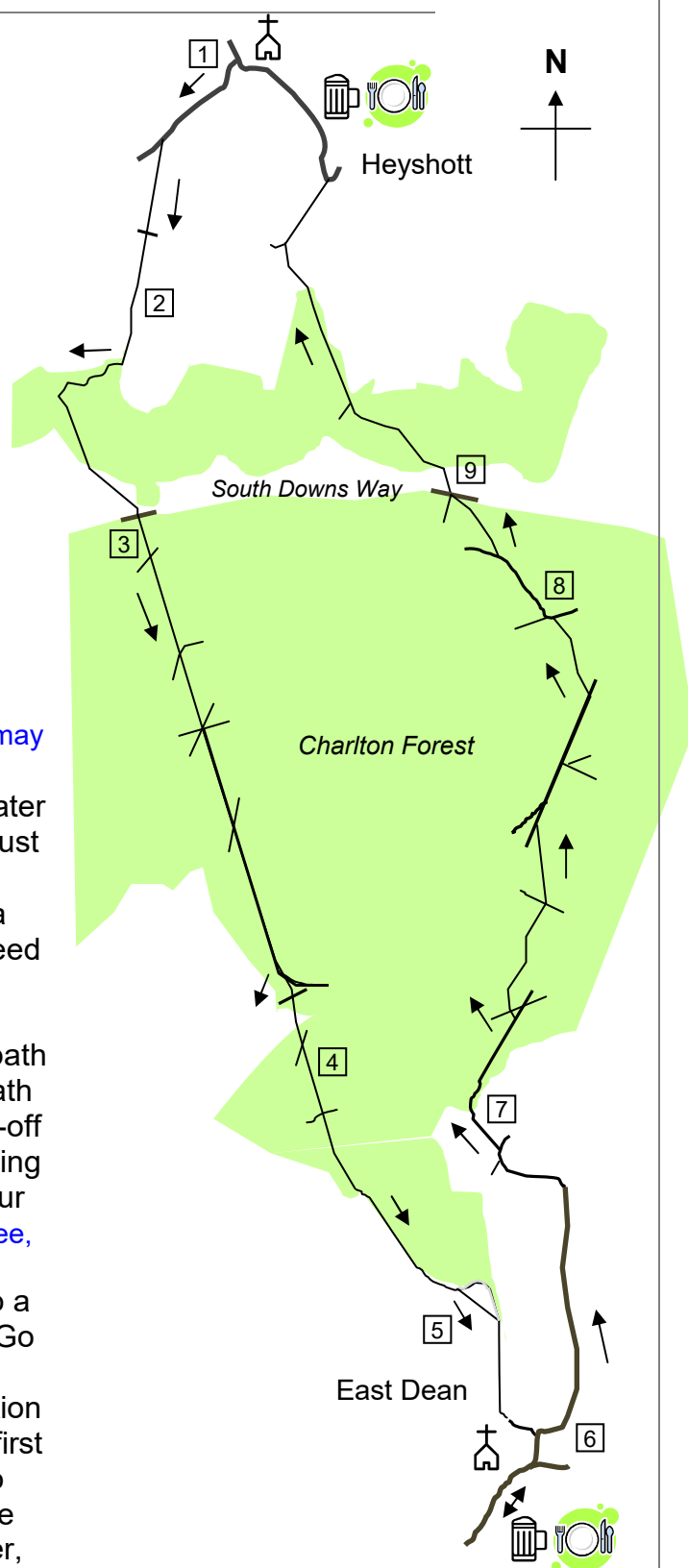


There are one or two short sections along this walk with nettles or scratchy undergrowth – enough to make shorts uncomfortable. Undergrowth is worse in summer. The ground underfoot is generally firm and dry, although possibly in wet conditions the path back to Heyshott at the end might have some muddy patches. The final descent into the village is quite stony 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**, www.w3w.co/fussy.bulge.shining. Alternatively, you can start in **East Dean**, postcode **PO18 0JG**, www.w3w.co/spots.generally.tinkle. 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, avoid a track on your left which goes past a flint farm building but, only 10m later, fork **left** at a post with a yellow arrow on a narrow path between bushes. (* If crops block the path, follow the lane, with this field on the left and turn **left** at a wooden sign saying "Path", as far as a wooden barrier, then turn right to join the track.)
- 2** [Jul 2022: some trees down in this section: you may need to steer round them.] Your path runs gradually uphill with a field on your left and later a green meadow on your right. After 300m, just as the meadow ends, turn **right** uphill, as indicated by a (very faded) yellow arrow on a post. Now the steep section begins! You need to follow the main path carefully because it twists about to make an easy gradient. Especially after about 170m, don't lose the path as it bends right and later left uphill. Your path shortly runs under yews, with a large fenced-off area on your left. Keep bearing **left**, continuing uphill, on a path that has a steep drop on your left. *Care! this path is now covered in chalk scree, and can be precarious and indistinct, and overgrown in summer.* Press on, ever upwards, to a wooden swing-gate soon visible up ahead. Go through the gate into a sheep meadow and diagonally **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 swing-gate here by a fingerpost [Jul 2022: missing] 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 see hoof prints, remember some landowners allow horses on footpaths, if they can cope with



stiles and narrow gates!) 350m further, at a wide gravel forestry track, go straight over. In another 250m, you are in the centre of a 6-point star junction, in a clearing in the very middle of Charlton Forest, the path on your left being another signed footpath. As always, keep straight ahead downhill. In 350m, as the track curves left, you reach a junction where a much narrower path forks off to the right by a marker post with a yellow arrow. Turn **right** here, descending to reach 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 two level diagonal crossing paths, both with yellow-arrowed marker posts. After about 150m further, you reach a 4-way fingerpost: keep straight ahead. *Note that you have crossed 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, by a yellow-arrowed marker post, running beside a large field on your right.



- 5 Follow the field edge, passing through a gate at a fence, till the edge begins to curve left. Now look for a marker post and veer diagonally **right** across the field as directed by the black-on-yellow arrow. (In case of overgrown or wet crops, you can simply stay on the edge and turn **right** in the bottom corner.) *Goodwood race course is visible up to your right (foliage permitting).* At the other side, take a path between posts marked with yellow and blue arrows, through trees, parallel to the field. Just before a wooden gate there is a seat on your left with a view of East Dean. Go through the gate into a sheep pasture and between high grass banks. At the bottom, turn **left** through a large metal gate (unhitching the chain on the 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 18th-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 work-shops with a totem pole. Ignore another bridleway on the right and stay on the lane as it bends left in front of Newhouse Farm. You soon pass *The Pheasantry* on your left and then more farm buildings. Keep straight ahead and, after you pass the last building on your left, turn **left** through a small metal gate on a wide path uphill between hedges [Jun 2024: climbing through a large fallen tree].

- 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 (with the *Literary Trail*) 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, where you reach a junction with a wide unmarked track (plus a narrower grassy path) 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 at a bend in a wide forestry track. Ignore a grassy path on your left and cross straight over, joining the wide forestry track. 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 field gate 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*.

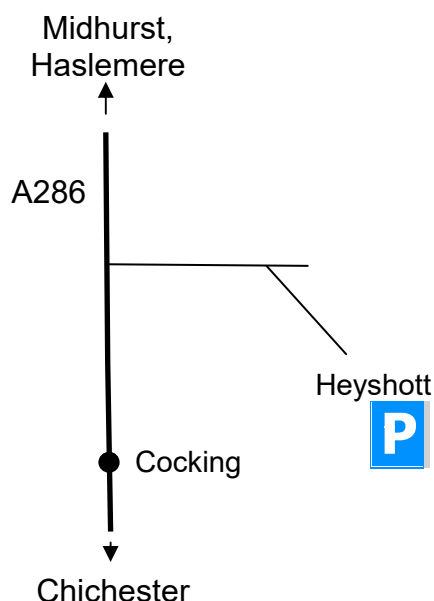


*The Unicorn is a very friendly freehouse offering the excellent Otter Amber ale and Harvey's Trundle, with a reasonable menu. It also offers afternoon tea in the garden. Note that the Unicorn is **closed in Monday**.*

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 Haslemere-Chichester road, 1½ south of Midhurst. Turn right at a signpost after 1 mile. Park near the church.



By bus: bus 99 from Chichester: pre-book on 01903-264776.

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