



The Devil's Dyke

Distance: 18 km=11 miles

or 12½ km=7½ miles or 9 km=5½ miles

moderate walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 3-jul-2014

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Refreshments: Devil's Dyke, Fulking, Poynings

Map: Explorer 122 (Steyping) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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High hills, views, woodland, villages, pubs

In Brief

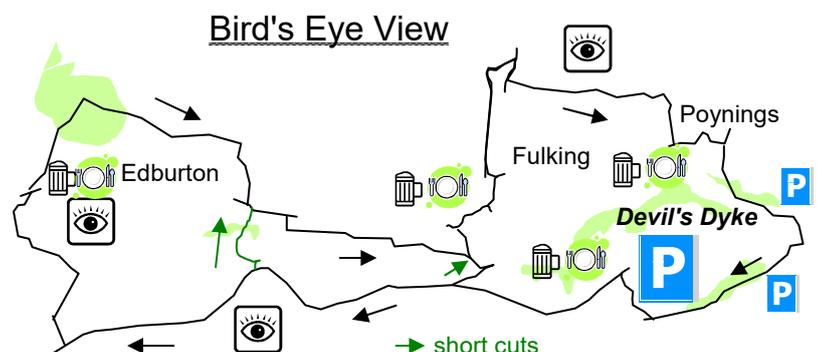
The Devil's Dyke near Brighton is one of the great attractions of the South Downs and families come in their thousands to take a snack and a drink and a stroll. Very few go much further along the Downs as on this walk. The *Devil's Dyke* pub is not bad, but the very best inns are to be found in the picturesque villages at the foot of the Downs visited on this walk. (To enquire at the *Shepherd and Dog* in Fulking, ring 01273 857382. For the *Royal Oak* in Poynings, ring 01273 857389.)

This walk has two shorter options. The **short walk** (9 km=5½ miles) takes a path soon after the Devil's Dyke directly down to the *Shepherd and Dog* in Fulking. The **middle walk** (12½ km=7½ miles) takes a short cut to Edburton. Only the **full walk** gives you some really stunning views westwards over the Adur valley which you would miss on the shorter walks.



There are no nettles on this walk to worry bare legs. You can do the shorter version in sensible walking shoes or trainers but boots are needed for the longer walks, especially in winter. This walk would be fine for a small or medium dog who can manage the stiles, most of which have a gap.

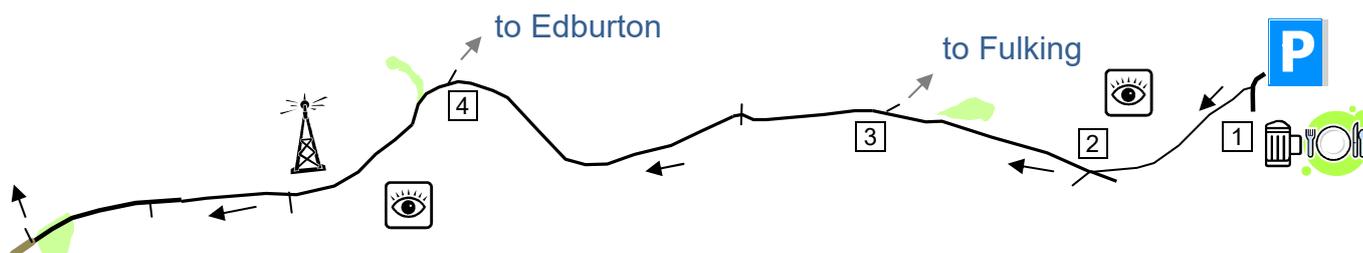
The walk begins at the National Trust large **Devil's Dyke car park** beside the Devil's Dyke pub/hotel, nearest postcode **BN1 8YJ**. There is a charge of £3 (2017) for the whole day, free to NT members. You do not have to use the pub to park here. There is also *free parking* along the Devil's Dyke Road. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Leg 1: The Devil to Truleigh Hill 4½ km=3 miles

The Devil's Dyke is a dry valley (since no river runs through it), the largest in the UK. But it was formed by a river of melt water at the tail end of the last glaciation about 18-14 thousand years ago, scraping the soil from the harder chalk below. This great V-shaped valley fascinated the Victorians as much as the visitors who swarm there today. They built a funfair, a single-track railway from near Hove, a cable car across the valley and a steep funicular from near Poynings. Now all this is left to nature and there are wonders here ranging from butterflies to orchids and much more.



- 1 Go out of the Devil's Dyke large car park and, just by the entrance to the car park, at a corner of the pub, by a fingerpost [Jun 2020: gone?], take a level path with fabulous views right, going through a wooden swing-gate. You pass on your left a small ruin. Continue over a hummock and follow a wonderful curving path leading round to a pair of gates after 600m.
- 2 Take the top gate and avoid a path forking left, part of the Surrey Border Path, continuing straight ahead. Soon you have the village of Fulking squarely in view down on your right. You pass a small wood of thorn trees on your right as the path descends. At the bottom of the slope go through a wooden gate, immediately passing a marker post.

Decision point. If you are doing the **short** walk, skip to near the end of this text and do the **Fulking Escape**.

- 3 Continue ahead, following a wire fence on your left. The path descends into the valley goes under power lines, through an open gate and up again. The path veers right again and descends, with a view of the transmitter on Truleigh Hill. You reach a small wooden gate.

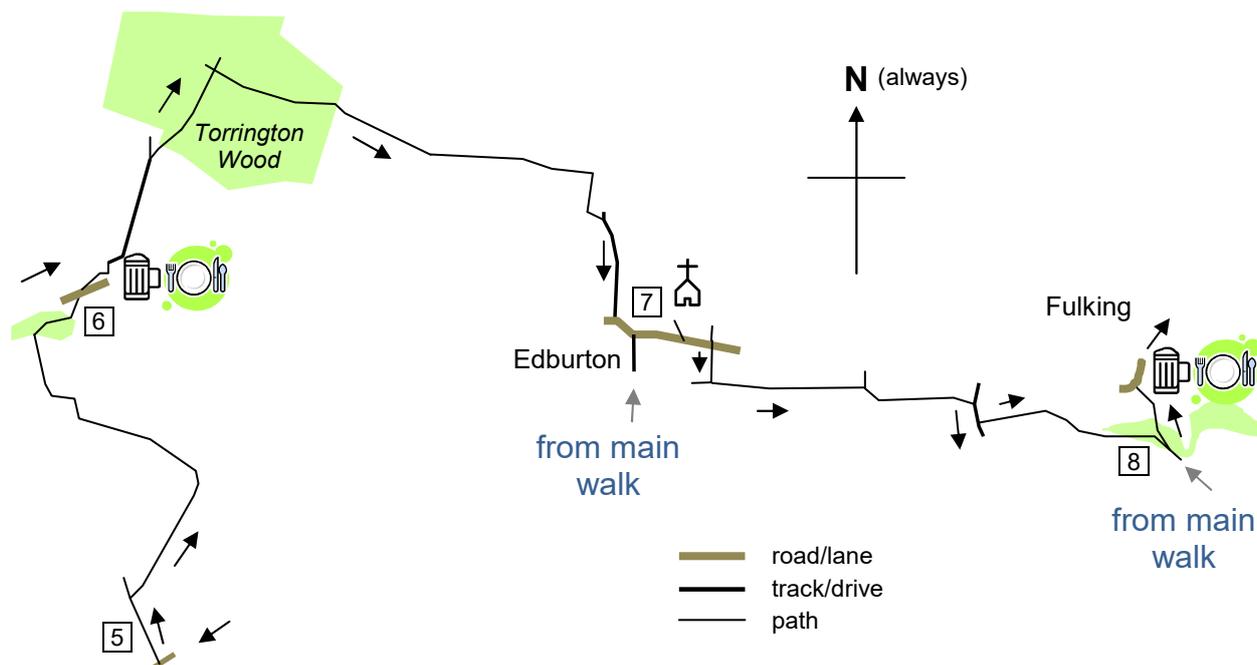
Decision point. If you are doing the **middle** walk, skip to near the end of this text and do the **Edburton Descent**.

- 4 Continue on the track which curves left uphill. **There are good views now of Portslade and Hove down on your left.** You soon pass the transmitter and after that some modern houses looking strangely out of place on Truleigh Hill. *During the Cold War, there was an underground nuclear bunker here.* At a 4-way fingerpost, keep straight ahead, still on the SDW. You pass the entrance drive to Truleigh House on your left and the Youth Hostel on your right. **The Youth Hostel has a café and opposite it is Truleigh Hill Field with a dew pond and picnic tables.** The track descends, runs through trees and emerges onto tarmac. Immediately **leave** the SDW at a 3-way fingerpost by turning **right** through a small wooden gate onto a bridleway. **A sign here points out the footpath to your left (not on your route) leading to the cabling site for the**



Rampion Offshore Wind Farm, which is visible 13km off the coast. In 2018 they found an Anglo-Saxon burial near here while constructing the cabling.

Leg 2: Truleigh Hill to Fulking 6½ km=4 miles



5 Follow this wide grassy path with terrific views left over the Adur valley. *The towns in the valley are Upper Beeding and Steyning (see the walk “Chanctonbury and Steyning” in this series) with the South Downs continuing beyond.* Continue straight ahead downhill, keeping to the **left**-hand side of a wire fence (*important!*), ignoring a fingerpost on your left. You soon arrive at a marker post with a blue arrow. Turn **right** here onto a narrow track, following the direction of a fingerpost, and stay on this track as it curves left around the edge of the steep hill with wide views left including the Golding Barn Raceway. After around 250m you pass a post with a blue arrow and reach a new pair of white UKPN posts and wire fencing enclosing a grassed access track. Continue ahead and slightly to your right towards two small wooden gates. Go through the left-hand gate and down a rather steep path between fences. Your path zigzags left-right. *In the meadow on your left there are orchids, some of which grow on the sides of the path.* Finally the path runs through woodland and comes out to a road.

6 Turn **right** on the road and in 30m fork **left** through Tottington Manor Farm. However, for a refreshing break, only 100m further along the road, the *Tottington Manor Hotel and pub* has now re-opened. Go diagonally through the yard, keep right by a wooden fence and turn **left** at the corner on a narrow path. Where the path comes out through a small metal gate, turn **right** on a tarmac drive which quickly bends left. When you reach *Torrington Cottages*, avoid a footpath left and keep ahead on a track, soon going through a small wooden gate into the woods. Avoid all turnings off until, after 300m, you come to a 4-way junction with a new fingerpost. Turn **right** here on a path which may be surprisingly muddy, with a few margins to enable you to skip around it. After 400m you go over a stile and emerge into a field: keep ahead along the left-hand side. In the far corner, go through a two wooden gates, straight across a tarmac drive and along the left-hand side of the next meadow. In the far corner, at a 3-way fingerpost, turn **right**, still on the left-hand side. In the next corner, turn **left** on a track

and immediately **right** on a tarmac drive. The drive leads to the village of Edburton, opposite a beautiful black-and-white cottage. Turn **left** on the road, passing in 25m a driveway on your right.

Here the **Edburton Descent** short cut re-joins the main walk.



7 On your right next is *Springs Smoked Salmon* where you can obtain tasty (but ordinary) snacks and drinks. A drive on your left will lead, as a short excursion, to St Andrew's Church, Edburton.

Edburton was named after Princess Edburga, born about the year 900, granddaughter of King Alfred the Great, who is credited with building an earlier church on this site. The current church was built in 1180.

[Feb 2017: The meadow used near the start here was very muddy and one walker used the road into Fulking instead.] Continue to meet the drive to Aburton Farm on your left and here turn **right** at a new fingerpost onto a bridleway. After going through a small wooden gate you come to a fingerpost. Turn **left**, soon arriving in a meadow. Continue straight ahead passing under wires. *This meadow is part of Fulking Escarpment belonging to the National Trust. You may have to skirt round some steers or heifers who are enjoying the shade and refuse to budge.* At the far end, go **right** over a stile and **left** up some steps over a bank on a narrow irregular path that leads out into a meadow that borders the steep hillside. *You will be walking about 1½ km to Fulking, always keeping on the left-hand side, not far from a fence, and avoiding the steep slopes on your right.* Keep following the path, up a low bank and onwards, keeping to the **left** of a marker post. *(The path through bushes may be muddy, although it depends on the season: be careful not to wander away to the right!)* The path descends, going down past a wire fence to a chalky track. Turn **right** on the track, going past another NT sign. In 60m, at a marker post, take the first **left** on a narrower path. This path leads through a rather untidy meadow and over a stile. As always, keep to the left side. This nice level path eventually crosses an open area and goes up a bank through shrubs, past a gatepost. You enter trees, then come out into the open hillside again with another NT sign. Turn very sharp **left** before the NT sign on a narrow path downhill into trees.

Here the **Fulking Escape** short cut re-joins the main walk.

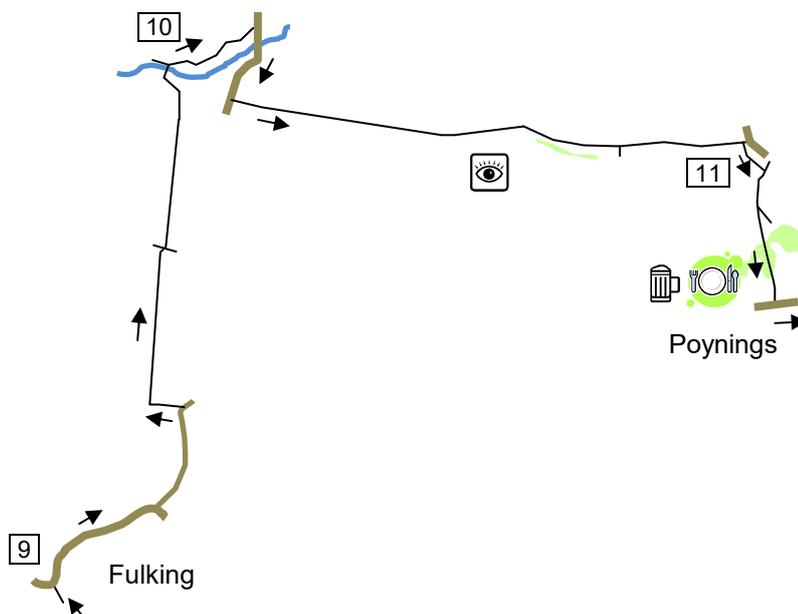


8 Your path goes down a series of natural and man-made steps, over a stile and alongside a wire fence with a field on your right. About 50m before the houses of Fulking your path suddenly goes **left** into the beer garden of the *Shepherd and Dog*. (This is not easily missed because the path straight ahead almost peters out.) Continue into the pub garden and turn **right** going over a little bridge and out through the car park. (Strictly, you should take a narrow parallel path on the right but it is a bit overgrown and why miss the garden anyway?) *On your right opposite the pub is a water fountain with a biblical quotation.*

Leg 3: Fulking to Poynings 3⅔ km=2⅓ miles

Fulking's name is Anglo-Saxon meaning "the people of Folc" or "the folk people". One famous resident is Nigel Kennedy who plays his electric violin at Fulking's annual Fair. One of the largest buildings in the village, the Croft, was the home of Dr William Moon. Born in 1818, he went blind from scarlet fever and invented an alphabet for the blind called The Moon Alphabet. A famous visitor was John Ruskin, the Victorian art critic and patron, who devised a way of delivering drinking water to all the village pumps. The local village fountain is dedicated to him.

The “Shepherd and Dog” pub is named after the shepherds who used to bathe their sheep in the stream outside. In the hallway is a fireplace near which the shepherds would sleep after a few beers. The local brew Ruskin’s Ram uses water directly from the stream outside the pub. Other real ales on tap might be Downland Breweries’ Devil’s Dyke, several Lake District brews and other rarities.



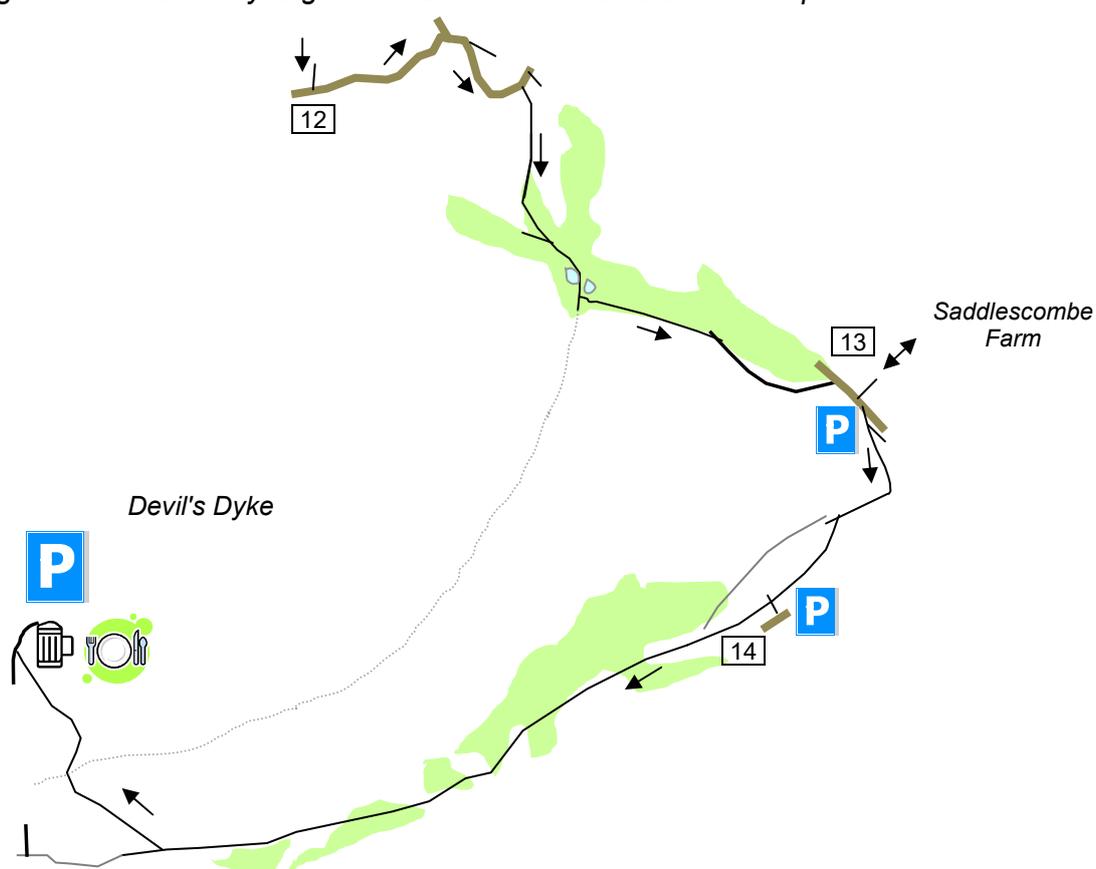
- 9 Turn **right** on the road through the village passing attractive cottages and the John Ruskin fountain. Just after a pump, continue ahead, avoiding a road on the right signposted *Poynings*. Just after the last house, turn **left** at a signpost through a small wooden gate [2016: lying on its side]. Turn **right** at the corner by a 3-way fingerpost, go over a stile and up the left-hand side of a meadow. At the other side go over a stile, cross a drive, keep ahead over two more stiles (one unneeded) and resume along the left-hand side of the next meadow. In the far corner, go over two stiles and continue along the left-hand side of a smaller pasture used for horses. Where the meadow elbows left, keep straight on up the opposite edge, go round a (broken) stile, crossing a wide bridge over a stream to a 3-way fingerpost.
- 10 Turn **right** at the fingerpost on a wide shady grass path that follows the course of the stream on your right. At the end, go over a stile to a lane. Turn **right** on the lane crossing the stream again. After a double bend and another 50m, go **left** at a fingerpost over a stile and straight across the centre of a pleasant grassy meadow, heading for the corner of a wood. At the far corner, go over a stile and straight across the centre of a large field in a wide grassy strip, with terrific views of the Downs. At the other side, go through a large metal gate (easier than the stile) and keep ahead towards a group of trees. Your path become a chalky track and takes you through a new metal kissing-gate to a junction of tracks and a 3-way fingerpost. Keep straight ahead on a gravel or concrete track passing various gardens and houses.
- 11 10m before the track meets a road ahead (*Poynings Road*), turn **right** by a yellow arrow on a narrow tarmac footpath. At a T-junction of paths, turn **right**, going over a stream leading you through a wooden swing-gate. Stay on the concrete path, avoiding a grassy path that forks left. Your path goes through another wooden swing-gate and uphill under trees. It takes you out beside the car park of the *Royal Oak* in *Poynings* and to the road and the pub itself.



Leg 4: Poynings to the Devil 3½ km=2 miles

The 8th-9th century Saxon village of Poynings, pronounced "Punnings", gets its name from an Old English verb "punian" meaning "to pound", referring to the two water mills that used to be here. It grew in popularity when the Victorians built a funicular from here up to the Devil's Dyke. The present-day church of the Holy Trinity was built after the death of Michael de Poynings in 1369 who left 200 marks for the purpose. The feeling of space inside comes from the church having no aisles and a chancel as high as the rest of the cruciform building. It contains a wall painting of the Ten Commandments.

The "Royal Oak" has been here since 1880. The kitchen staff change the menu often and chalk up new dishes on the board. Food is served **all day every day**. Steps lead up to large garden with a BBQ. Of the several ales on offer are Long Man APA and Poynings Pale Ale which is **exclusive** to this pub.



- 12** After a possible rest break, turn **left** along the road, using the tarmac footway which soon loses its tar, ending in a little stone arch. You are now in the centre of the village. The Holy Trinity church on your right is worth visiting. **Careful on entering: there are two steps down!** At the road junction, turn **right** in the direction of *Devil's Dyke*. Keep right with the road, avoiding a footpath on the left through Manor Farm (a holiday B&B and self-catering location). As the road curves left you will see two signed brideways on your **right**. Take the **first** of these. At first it runs by garden fences, then through trees and shrubs. A footpath joins from the right as you pass a pond on the right, then on the left. You reach a marker post with coloured arrows. **(Keeping straight on here would take you on a short cut along the bottom of the Dyke.)** Turn **left** here on a narrow path uphill, leading to a stile onto the open hillside. Keep straight ahead here up the steep bank to a stile in the wire fence. The wooded hilltop over the Devil's Dyke looms up on your right. **(To avoid the busy road ahead, ignore the stile and instead turn right onto**

a wide chalk path, pass through a kissing gate and follow the path until it comes out on the road opposite Saddlescombe Farm, below; otherwise... .) Cross over the stile to arrive at a small parking space by a NT sign for *Devil's Dyke*.

P You are now on Saddlescombe Road.

13 Turn **right** on the road, staying on this side for around 250m. *However, by crossing the road to a track opposite, you can visit Saddlescombe Farm, a National Trust site with a café and live exhibitions.* Ignore a metal gate on your right, but veer **right** after about 50m through a small parking area and go through a small wooden gate by a NT sign for *Summer Down*. Immediately avoid a left fork and stay on the main track. Your track passes a fenced enclosure on your left. Immediately take the **left** fork. This leads to the



P Devil's Dyke Summer Down car park. Continue with the car park on your left (unless you began the walk there).

14 (If you are starting the walk at the free Summer Down car park, it is easiest to exit by the small wooden swing-gate in the right-hand corner and turn **left up the slope**.) Continue on this fine grassy path, soon re-joining the South Downs Way (SDW). Your path soon runs between gorse bushes and you may have the company of cattle (who are well used to people). Your next destination is the Devil's Dyke pub/hotel and the end of the walk. (If you did *not* start at the main Devil's Dyke car park and you do *not* want refreshments, continue on the SDW, going through a wooden gate, or over a V-stile, across a lane, through a small metal gate and ahead towards gates in the distance; continue from section [2](#).) You will see people taking a right fork across the valley. To minimise gradients, stay on the path until you are opposite an antenna on your left. You can now see the pub, a large brown building. Fork **right** across the grass, passing the Devil's Dyke valley on your right and take a path up through a small wooden gate, through a car park and up to the pub and main car park where the walk began.



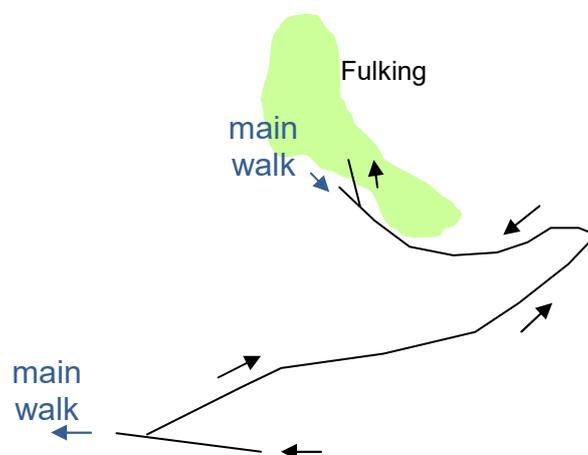
For final refreshments, the Devil's Dyke pub makes up for an ugly bungalow-style building and predictable food and drink with a matchless location and a chance to sit and relax on the terrace before departing.

Fulking Escape ½ km=⅓ mile

Take this short cut if you are doing the **short walk**, going direct to Fulking from the Devil's Dyke.

At the marker post, turn very sharp **right**, doubling back, on a narrow chalky path between steep sides. (It is also pleasant to go up the bank on your left and take a parallel high path.) The path gradually opens out, descends and curves left to meet a post with coloured arrows. Turn sharp **left** here, almost doubling back, in the direction of a NT *Fancy A Swift One* sign and a pink arrow. The path descends steeply and curves right to pass a NT sign for *Fulking Escarpment*. Fork **right** on a narrow path downhill into trees.

Now re-join the main walk at Leg 2 section [8](#).

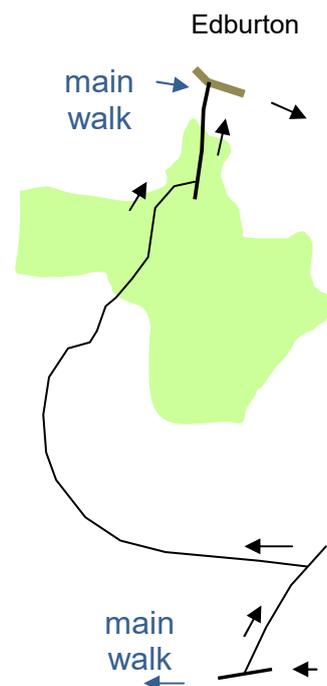


Edburton Descent $\frac{2}{3}$ km=0.4 mile

Take this short cut if you are doing the **middle** walk, going direct to Edburton but missing the amazing views from Truleigh Hill.

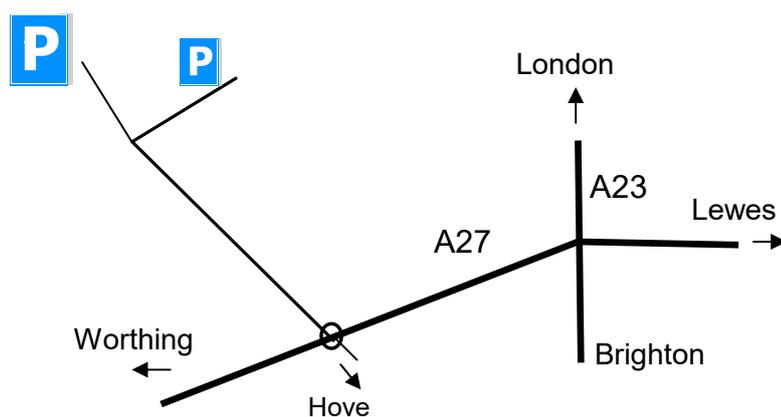
Just before the gate, go sharp **right** through a gap and follow a path that descends the side of the valley. In 80m, at a 3-way fingerpost, turn **left** on a narrow path which follows the descending line of a ridge. The path curves right round the valley, turns down right more steeply, zigzagging down through trees. It goes under wires and right over a stile, then down steps, beside a field, down a series of steps and a staircase to a drive. Turn **left** on the drive, going beside a metal gate and out to a road in the village of Edburton and turn **right**.

Now re-join the main walk at Leg 2 section 7.



Getting there

By car: to reach the Devil's Dyke by car, take the M23/A23 to just outside Brighton and turn west on the A27 (signed *Worthing*). In 1 mile, filter **left** for *Hove* A2038. At the roundabout, turn **right** going over the A27 (or left if coming from the west) and continue following signs for *Devil's Dyke*, keeping **left** after nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. After another $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles, as you pass a small red brick cottage on your left, the major road bends right. **However**, the Devil's Dyke car park is *straight ahead* on a tarmac lane. **But** if you want *free parking*, you can keep right here on the major road. The small Devil's Dyke Summer Down car park is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on your left. Should that be full, you can continue to a T-junction and turn left on the Saddlescombe Road where there is an informal parking area about 200m on your left.



By bus/train: the special Brighton-Devil's Dyke **bus 77** (no ordinary bus) runs from the Pier and the Railway Station very regularly at least during the warmer half of the year. Check the timetables.

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