



Rusper: Hills and Forest

Distance: 6 km=3¾ miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

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Map: Explorer 134 (Crawley, Horsham)

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Village, woodland, meadows, views

In Brief

The quiet village of Rusper, hidden away from all the main Sussex high-ways, has two unusual honours, geographically speaking. It is the *highest* village in the traditional county of Sussex (that means East or West). Secondly, don't think of bringing your lilo or bucket and spade because of all Sussex villages, Rusper is the *furthest from the sea*. [This walk was previously designed as a pub walk to the Royal Oak which has since closed.](#)



As well as a delightful cluster of period houses and cottages, Rusper boasts an excellent pub, the *Star Inn*, dating from 1486. (Plus one just outside the village, *The Lamb*, visited on another walk in this series.) The pub boasts a priest hole, where Catholic priests used to hide during the reign of good Queen Bess. It also has a large inglenook fireplace and a wishing well. It specializes in authentic native Greek food, with stiffado, slow roasted lamb shoulder and moussaka. To enquire at the *Star Inn*, ring 01293-871264.

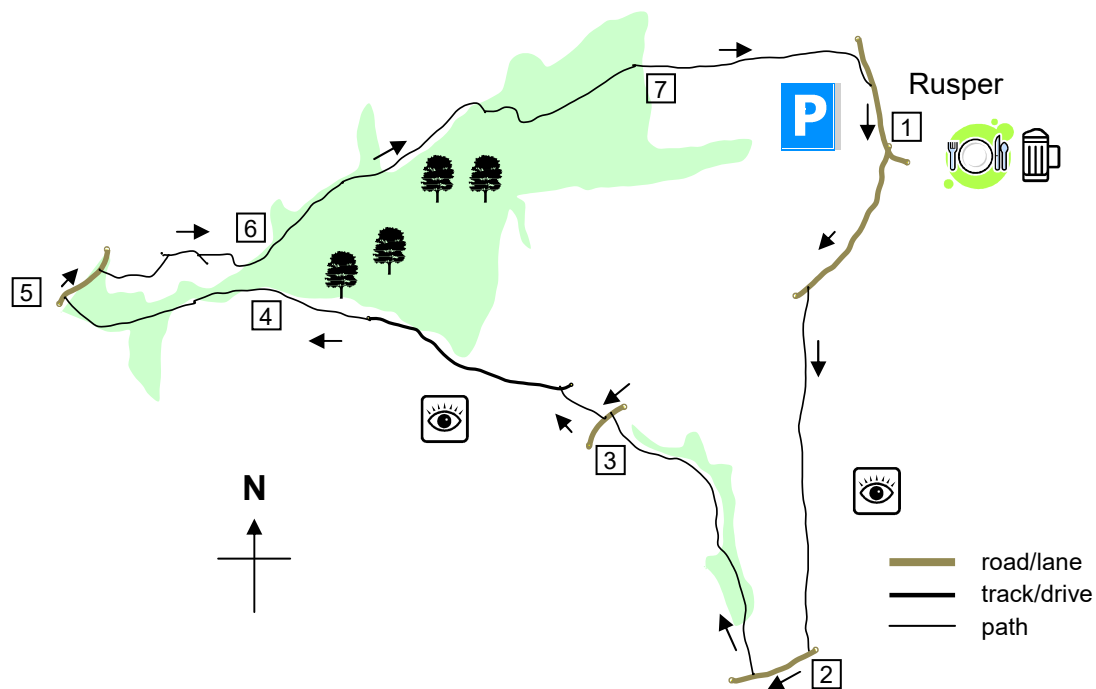


There is a tiny patch of nettles that might catch you with legs uncovered. A short section through horse pastures can get very muddy if there has been any rain recently, making boots necessary; otherwise, the going underfoot is quite easy. Your dog can come too.

The walk begins in **Rusper village (postcode RH12 4PX)**: park on the roadside or in the car park near the church. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The area around Rusper was settled by farmers around 700 AD migrating from the coast to summer pastures. The name is originally "ruh spaer" or "rough enclosures". In the 1100s a small Benedictine convent, known as Rusper Priory was founded for no more than 10 nuns. It was closed down by – guess who – Henry VIII. The gates to the nunnery, all that is left, can be seen from the Horsham road. The convent's cemetery was found there by chance by workmen in 1840 and amongst the 40 or so female skeletons were various treasures, including a unique 12th-century Limoges enamelled chalice which can be seen today in the British Museum.

The Walk



- 1** Go along the main road to the *Star Inn* and fork **right** on the road, signposted *Roffey, Horsham*. Go past the primary school and ignore a footpath on the left at *Millfield House*. Just after *Pucks Croft* and a dirt drive, fork **left** on a signposted footpath. **Initial mud quickly clears**. The footpath runs through a woodland of oaks, horsechestnuts and beeches. Keep straight on, avoiding paths on the right, to go by an avoidable stile into an open heath with young oaks and good views ahead. The River Mole runs in the valley to your right. Go through a large metal kissing gate and down the centre of a beautiful open horse pasture dotted with large trees. Go through another gate and down a ragged meadow. At the bottom, go through a kissing gate to a drive. *On your left is Baldhorns Park Farm with its "Garden of Reflections" created singlehandedly by Paris-born New York-raised designer/sculptress Allison Armour*. Turn **right** on the drive.
- 2** The drive goes over a bridge across the River Mole and runs beside an old mill pond on your right. Immediately after the pond, at a 3-way fingerpost, turn **right** through a large (open) gate, going past a tennis court with the gardens of *Baldhorns Park* visible on your right. Follow the fingerpost down into a wood which in springtime is thick with bluebells. Go over a two-plank bridge and up a small mound into a field. Continue along the right-hand side of the field and, at the corner, keep left round the side until, after another 500m, you reach a road. Go through a modern kissing gate and turn **left** on the road.
- 3** In just 15m, go **right** at a signpost onto a narrow path. The footpath runs by a field on the left, goes over the stile and reaches a farm track. Veer **left** on the track and follow it between fields, heading for the left-hand corner of woodland about 250m distant that stretches to your right. *You have fine views ahead in the distance to the Greensand Hills and the long outline of Blackdown just to their left*. On reaching a corner of a wood at a fingerpost, keep straight ahead with the wood on your right. In the next field, keep ahead on a grassy path keeping the young hawthorn hedge on your left.

Where this hedge bears away to the left, continue ahead, now on a narrower path on the right-hand side of a magnificent large meadow dotted with oak trees. The path goes down a dip and up again. Keep ahead at a 3-way fingerpost.

- 4 Go through a small wooden gate into woodland, then on an enclosed grassy path. Go down to a wooden gate into a small garden. Go over a little bridge across a stream and keep ahead through a gate, out to a tarmac lane. Turn **right** on the lane, passing the ex-*Royal Oak* pub.

You may see a *footpath closed* notice at the start of the next section. But this walk has been kept open following the advice of local walkers. The “landslip” has been easily bypassed. See the blue text in the next two paragraphs.

- 5 Continue along the lane, going past the fine half-timbered *Howells*. Just after a driveway, turn **right** at signpost onto a path marked as the Sussex Border Path (SBP), going over a bridge and a stile. [2015: a repair had been botched and this stile was a bit tricky but the landlord has now repaired it (May 2016)!] *The SBP is a long-distance footpath that follow the entire inland borders of both Sussexes.* Go along the right-hand side of a small rather clumpy meadow and over a stile into a grassy meadow. Cross the meadow keeping near the fence on the left. Go over a stile, or through a gate, and turn **right** on a track. The footpath soon runs by a fence to the left of an outhouse, then along the right-hand side of a meadow which in early summer shimmers with buttercups. About half way along the side, go over a stile on the **right**, then turn **left** to go over a stile on the far side beside a large wooden gate. Veer **left** into Horsegills Wood.

- 6 Stay on the main path through this spectacular wood [2014: badly damaged after the storms, but still passable, with a fallen tree at the start, easily bypassed], beside a stream on the right. In 300m, the bank has been eroded but the path is now clear and runs a safe distance from the bank. After 400m, the path rises to a gate, temporarily leaves the wood and runs along the right-hand side of a field. You may need to lift two hooks on fences separating the horse paddocks. Because of the hooves, the field is briefly muddy after rain. In about 300m, you meet a gate on the **right**. Go through the gate and **left** at a fingerpost. The narrow path winds down through the wood to cross a stream by means of a metal footbridge. It then goes up steps and becomes much wider and straighter. At the end of the wood, go through a large wooden gate (easier than the stile).

- 7 Continue ahead along the right-hand side of a large meadow by a fence. Go through a large (unneeded) wooden gate, then a smaller wooden gate, beside a playing field and out almost to the road. Just before the road, turn **right** on a footpath made of paving slabs. This takes you to the car park, the church of St Mary Magdalene and the centre of the village where the walk began. As well as the *Star Inn*, the village also has a village store.



Getting there

By car: If coming from the **London area**, take the A24 through Dorking, following signs to *Worthing*; stay on the A24 at the Beare Green roundabout; at the next big roundabout, ignore a sharp left to Capel and take the next left signposted *Rusper*. Follow the winding road to the village. If coming from **Horsham**, take the Rusper Road from the centre, go straight on over two big roundabouts and keep following signs to Rusper. If coming from **Crawley**, find the Rusper Road in Ifield Green and follow road signs to the village.

Rusper is poorly served by bus. There are local minicab firms offering a reasonable deal.

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