

Walk 3 - Friston Forest

THE WALK

This is an abbreviated itinerary from Patrick Coulcher's book "Wildlife Walks around the Cuckmere Valley". For the full listing of the flowers and wildlife on this walk together with many illustrations, please [buy the book online](#) or from bookshops across Sussex.

Distance: 8 kilometres.

Route: Car park on Exceat to Litlington Road – top of Charleston Bottom - Long Brow – Snap Hill - Friston Place - Beggar's Croft - Westdean - Car park.

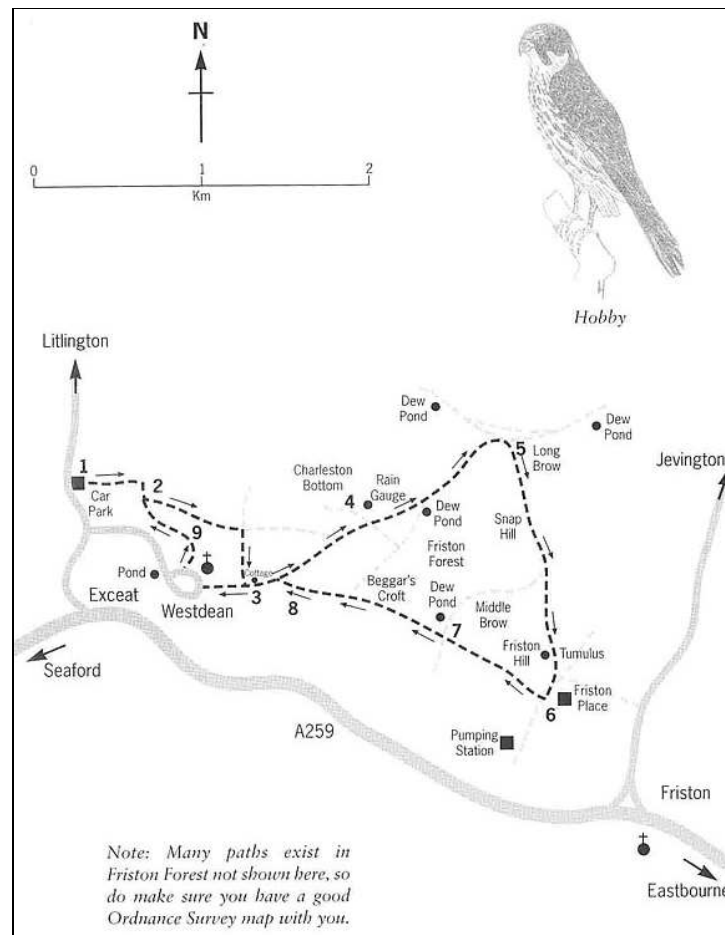
Map: OS Explorer 123: South Downs Way – Newhaven to Eastbourne.

Parking: Forest Walk car park 800 metres north of Exceat on Litlington Road at TQ 518002. There is a charge for parking.

Public Transport: None convenient.

Conditions: Easy walking on undulating flint or grassy tracks

Refreshments: Exceat Farmhouse, Seven Sisters Country Park Centre, Golden Galleon Public House, Exceat bridge.



Waypoints

1. From the north-east corner of the car park, take the broad track through the trees that leads uphill in an easterly direction. At the junction near the top turn right and then after about 60 metres turn left and follow the fairly straight broad track in an easterly direction. After about 100 metres you come across a wide indentation on the left of the track. Stop here awhile and examine the ground and grassy banks and count the many species of wild flowers to be found.
2. About 600 metres from this point, you will come across a broad path that crosses at right angles. Turn right and follow this southwards down hill for about 300 metres, until it dog-legs right to join a main track through the forest that runs west/east. The point at which you reach the main west/east Forest path is rich in wildlife
3. Follow the main track eastwards until you come to a cottage tucked away to your left behind a high hedge. Just beyond the cottage take the left fork (marked "to Jevington" in blue) and follow it gently uphill for about 700 metres.
4. The path rises gently uphill in a north-easterly direction and soon a gate beyond which is open downland above **Charleston Bottom**. Pass through the gate to a point beside a rain gauge, protected by a small circular barbed wire fence.

Enjoy the atmosphere here of open space and wide skies before following the path that leads across the plateau of grass to a gate that marks the Forest. On the other side of the gate the trees and shrubs close in and surround you, but after a few hundred metres the path joins a much wider one that emerged from the south-west. The path now widens out with grass verges on either side, a good place to look for wild flowers of all kinds.

5. Just to the south of the junction of the two paths is an old **dew pond**, half hidden by scrub and tall trees. There are many of these ponds in the forest. The wide path leads you on in almost a straight line to a point where many paths converge just to the west of **Long Brow** Here you are deep amidst this great forest and a great sense of isolation prevails. If you turn left here, you would soon come across another dew pond, and if you proceeded even further you would come to the head of **Charleston Bottom**, which in spring and summer is the breeding ground for many birds.

At point 5, take the right hand path that leads in a southerly direction with the tree covered **Snap Hill** on your right. The path leads you up and across some open downland on the spur of **Friston Hill**.

6. Turn right at the junction of the road and paths near **Friston Place**, and when just opposite the large country house itself, turn sharply right and head up hill and through the forest once again.
7. Soon you come across a wide made-up track just beyond **Middle Brow** which crosses at right angles.
8. After you cross the made-up track (used as a road for forestry vehicles) the path rises steeply. The path takes you on to the cottage on your right which you passed on the outward portion of your walk.

The path rises gently just beyond the cottage and stops just a few the point where earlier in the walk you joined this path. Follow the path down to the road to the old Norman Church in **Westdean**, and just beyond the church, turn right and follow the

road a short distance until you see a gate in front of you. Pass through the gate and follow the path uphill towards the woodland.

9. At the top, turn left along the edge of the wood and follow the sign "to Litlington" (9) (South Downs Way). The path takes you on through the forest with wide grassy margins in which grow many wild flowers.. Soon you find yourself at the point where a wide track leads down to the car park where you started.

Your walk has taken you through a large proportion of this great forest and I know that you will come away having experienced its sense of loneliness and great beauty. Take this walk at any time of the year and you will feel the changing moods of these woods and even amongst the snow of a still midwinter day the deep, soft silence of tall trees will somehow lift any lingering sense of melancholy. But time to move on to that great nature reserve of Lullington Heath just to the north for our next walk.