

DEVIL'S DYKE AND POYNINGS, WEST SUSSEX



Strenuous Terrain

**3 miles
Circular
1.5 hours**

301015



Access Notes

- The paths are firm for the most part but the sections through woodland can be very muddy after rain and in winter.**
- The final stretch of path follows a narrow exposed ridge path with a steep drop to the side (not for the faint-hearted), so take particular care with children.**
- The walk includes one long, steady descent and one long ascent via a very steep flight of steps set into the woodland.**
- You will need to negotiate four stiles (all with dog-gates or open fencing alongside) plus some gates.**
- The chalk downs are sometimes used for grazing sheep or cattle to help with conservation so take care with dogs.**
- There are toilets in the car park at the start of the walk.**



Hi, I'm Dulcie and this is my West Sussex Weekends walk.

It's a 3 mile circular walk taking in Devil's Dyke, the South Downs Way and the small village of Poynings. There are stunning panoramic views as you explore the longest, deepest and widest dry valley in the UK. To read my full story visit www.west-sussex-weekends.com so I can tell you why I think you will love this walk and what highlights to expect. The West Sussex Weekends website is a great resource where you will also find ideas for places to stay, eat and drink plus plenty more inspirational stories to tempt you to explore more corners of West Sussex.

Getting there

The walk starts and finishes from the National Trust car park alongside the Devil's Dyke pub. The car park is £2 per day (correct August 2014) or free for National Trust members. Leave the A27 at the junction signed for A2038 to Hove. Turn north on the small road (Devil's Dyke Road) signed for Devil's Dyke. At the first fork keep left (signed for Devil's Dyke). Ignore the small car parks off this road, simply keep ahead until you reach a sharp right-hand bend with a side road branching ahead. Take this side road and you will come to the pub and car park ahead. (Note: there are car park spaces on both sides of the pub).

Nearest post code **BN1 8YJ** (this will bring you to Devil's Dyke Road but short of the pub and car park).

Walk Sections



Start to Saddlescombe Farm



From the Devil's Dyke car park and pub, walk back down

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the access road, making use of the stone path within the grass verge on the left. After just a few yards, IGNORE the first bridleway signed off to the left. Keep ahead along the road and take time to enjoy the views along the V-shaped valley of Devil's Dyke to the left.

At nearly a mile long, Devil's Dyke is the longest, deepest and widest dry valley in the UK. The valley was carved out about 10,000 years ago. Permafrost conditions meant the chalk was permanently frozen so water from snowmelt on the hilltops couldn't permeate the rock. Instead it carved out the valley we see today as it flowed down over the land. Local legend tells quite a different story. This area, The Weald, was fairly isolated and one of the last areas to be converted to Christianity back in the 600s. The devil, furious at losing his last stronghold, vowed to drown the people using the water of the sea. He made a deal with St Cuthman; if he could complete digging a trench through the hills to the sea in one night the people would drown, but if he failed to complete his trench in one night he would flee and leave the people in peace. The devil began his work but St Cuthman used a rooster and lantern to fool the devil into thinking dawn had come early. The devil fled the scene leaving Devil's Dyke as his part-completed trench.

Further along the road you will come to a National Trust sign on the left for Summer Down, Devil's Dyke Estate and a marked crossroads where the South Downs Way crosses the road. Turn left through the gate, signed to Ditchling Beacon. (Note: you may come across livestock grazing from this point).

Follow the path ahead between haw bushes. Stay on the obvious stone path, the South Downs Way, marked with the acorn symbol which designates a national trail. Just before you reach the Summer Down car park ahead, fork left heading steadily downhill (still signed as the South Downs Way). Follow the stone path with a line of trees on the left. Eventually this path swings hard left and leads you out via a gate to reach a parking area by the road, with Saddlescombe Farm opposite.

1 → 2 Saddlescombe Farm to Concrete Footbridge



Turn left along the grass verge and ignore the signs for the South Downs Way off to the right. Instead keep ahead for a few more yards to reach a public footpath sign on the left. Turn left here, down the grass bank and over a stile. Bear right to join the tarmac path which heads steadily downhill and swings right.

Just before the tarmac path begins to swing left you will reach a fork with a waymark post. Fork left here, to join the narrower stone path (marked with a black arrow) which runs alongside the power lines on the left. A little way along, the path swings right down into a tunnel of trees to reach a stile. Cross this and follow the path under the trees, taking care of the tree roots underfoot.

You will emerge to a T-junction with a bridleway. Turn right and follow the path passing a pond on the left. When you reach a fork, take the left-hand branch marked with the yellow footpath arrow. Follow this path with the sunken lake visible through the trees on the left and fenced fields on the right.

Cross the stile ahead and continue along the left-hand edge of an open field, with the lake still on the left. A little way along, turn left (marked as the footpath) to cross a concrete footbridge over the water. Take a moment here to enjoy the views across the lake which is home to lots of birds plus dragonflies and damselflies in the summer months.

2 → 3 Concrete Footbridge to End



Keep ahead and cross the next stile to reach a large open field. Turn right along the right-hand boundary. Follow the boundary as it swings right to reach a wide wooden gate with a footpath marker alongside. Pass through this gate and keep ahead to reach a T-junction with the village road in Poynings.

Turn left along the lane and you will soon be able to join a raised tarmac pavement on the right-hand side of the road. Follow the lane passing The Royal Oak pub (we stopped for a beer in the back garden...lovely) and several houses. Immediately after Dyke Lane House, a half-timbered house on the left, turn left onto the signed bridleway along Dyke Lane. Follow the lane between properties and then keep ahead on the narrow stone path through the tunnel of trees.

At the top of the slope you will come to a fork in the path, with a National Trust sign alongside. Keep right here and the path leads you steeply uphill via a flight of steps. Take care as the steps are fairly uneven and can be slippery. At the top of the first flight of steps you will see a kissing gate on the right. Pass through this and continue up more steep steps.

As you emerge from the trees the gradient becomes less steep and you will have glorious views to the right. On clear days you will easily be able to make out the chalk ridge of the North Downs. Follow the narrow chalk ridge path, taking care as the slope down to the right is very steep. Some way along you will reach a fork, keep right staying on the main chalk ridge path climbing steadily.

Towards the top, the path swings left to reach a kissing gate. Pass through this and walk ahead along the grass path to reach the stone bench which marks the Devil's Dyke viewpoint. Take time to appreciate the views from here. On clear days you will be able to see the main Surrey Hills (including Leith Hill, Box Hill and Hascombe Hill) as well as the Isle of Wight. The famous painter, John Constable, described the view from Devil's Dyke as 'the grandest view in the world'. Keep ahead for a short distance further to reach the car park and pub where the walk began.

If you enjoyed this walk, remember to visit www.west-sussex-weekends.com where you will also find ideas for places to stay, eat and drink plus plenty more inspirational stories to tempt you to explore more corners of West Sussex.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a

