

South Downs Way Challenge...Virtually

Week 10 of the Virtual South Downs Way –Exceat to Eastbourne.

The Final Leg!

Today we begin our final leg of the South Downs Way at Exceat at the head of Cuckmere Haven, and look forward to the ups and downs of the Seven Sisters clifftops, taking in the Birling Gap along the way, and finishing our trek on the edge of Eastbourne.

Exceat was once at the head of a small guage rail line that took sea gravel from the Haven to the road further up the valley.

Cuckmere Haven itself is a floodplain, and as you gain altitude you may be able to make out the course of old waterways.

For three centuries this was a popular landing ground for smugglers, and in the last century was eyed by the Nazis as a potential landing ground for invading Nazi troops, such that defences were positioned in the water, on the beaches and on land, some of which are still visible today.



The South Downs Way takes us up the side of a hill called Haven Brow, then before you opens up the view of the Seven Sisters.



There are in fact now eight hills as the erosion of the cliffs is in the process of creating an additional rise at Went Hill, just before you reach the Birling Gap.

The natural erosion of these chalk cliffs keeps them white.

Enjoy the undulating, often steep sides of the sisters until you reach the Birling Gap , a National Trust property complete with Shop and cafe.

Here you can learn the story of this place that has been inhabited for thousands of years, and evokes the memories of smugglers and the stories of national defence over centuries.



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Uphill once again takes you along the highest chalk sea cliffs in Britain at Beachy Head.



You will pass by the Belle Tout lighthouse, built in 1832 and which, in 1999, was picked up and moved back 17 metres from the edge of the crumbling sea cliffs.

At 531 feet visitors are advised to keep away from the edge, but enjoy this last couple of miles of the South Downs as you pass by the viewpoint for the Beachy Head lighthouse far below, then past the welcome sight of the The Beachy Head pub (that was a listening post in the Second World War).

Thankfully from here the end of the walk is nearby and it is all downhill to the very edge of Eastbourne and journey's end.



7.5 miles completed today and 100 miles for the full South Downs Way experience. Congratulations!
