

DAY TRIPS FROM LONDON

The Sussex day guide

The South Downs and the Sussex coast are south of London, and one day trip can combine a hill-top view, a farm, the chalk cliffs, Brighton and the sea. There is one page for each of the eight stops: what it is, what to see, what fits in the time you have, and where to find toilets and food.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1

Check how long your tour gives you at each stop. Your tour's page lists the stops and the time at each one.

2

On the stop's page, tap how long your tour stops there: the route shows what fits.

3

Set a phone alarm 10 minutes before you need to be back at the bus.

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BEFORE YOU ARRIVE · READ THIS ON THE WAY

Seven Sisters and Brighton in two minutes

A LITTLE HISTORY

MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO

Chalk from an ancient sea

The chalk of the South Downs is made from tiny sea creatures that lived in a warm ancient sea. Their remains sank and hardened into rock. Later the land was pushed up, and waves cut the white cliffs.

1750

Dr Russell promotes sea water

In 1750 Lewes doctor Richard Russell urged people to drink and bathe in sea water for many illnesses. Brighton was the nearest coast town, so visitors came, and the town grew.

1815 TO 1823

Nash builds a palace

In 1815 the Prince Regent asked John Nash to rebuild his seaside villa. Nash added an iron frame to carry the domes and minarets. The inside was finished in 1823.

1841

The railway reaches Brighton

In 1841 the railway from London to Brighton opened. Journeys became easier and cheaper, and many more people came to the seafront.

Devil's Dyke

A giant valley and big views

WHY STOP HERE

Picture a huge green valley that a legend says the Devil dug. Devil's Dyke is a dry valley (a valley with no river) on the South Downs, five miles (8 km) north of Brighton. This is the part of the day for open air and wide views. The valley is close to the car park, so it suits a short look or a longer walk.

DON'T MISS

A very large dry valley

The steep sides of the valley, and the banks of the hill fort as you walk round the hill.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
10 min	**The view from the top** · 10 min here · free **DON'T MISS** — Wide views across the South Downs. The painter John Constable called this view "the grandest view in the world".
20 min	**The Dyke valley** · 10 min here · free — A dry valley nearly a mile long, with a living carpet of chalk grassland flowers on its slopes.
30 min	**The hill fort** · 10 min here · free — The earth banks (ramparts) of an Iron Age hill fort can be seen as you walk round the hill.
40 min	**Gliders and kites** · 10 min here · free — The National Trust says Devil's Dyke is one of Europe's finest sites for paragliding and hang-gliding, so you may see gliders overhead.
50 min	**The Victorian funfair site** · 10 min here · free — The remains of the Victorian funfair, and the concrete footings of the cable car pylons on the slopes.

TOILETS	The South Downs National Park Authority lists toilets at Devil's Dyke, but the National Trust shows no toilets of its own there. Ask at the pub by the car park who runs them and whether they are free.
FOOD	The Trust lists a pub by the car park, which is not run by the Trust, so check its hours. The Trust lists no cafe or shop at the Dyke itself. The Park Authority names a farm cafe at Saddlescombe Farm, a 30 to 45 minute walk away.

Middle Farm

Local food, cider and a tea break

WHY STOP HERE

Picture a courtyard of old farm buildings, with a cup of tea in your hand. Middle Farm is a working family farm in East Sussex, with a farm shop, a cider barn and a tearoom. It stands beside the A27 road, near the village of Firle. It is a place to rest and taste local food and drink.

DON'T MISS

A barn full of cider and perry

The draught taps, grouped from dry to sweet, and the bottles on the shelves.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
20 min	**The farm shop** · 20 min here · free — Food and drink from Sussex makers, a deli with many cheeses, and a butcher's shop.
30 min	**The cheese counter** · 10 min here · free — The deli counter in the farm shop sells cheeses made in Sussex, such as Brighton Blue and Sussex Marble.
45 min	**The cider barn** · 15 min here · free DON'T MISS — Draught ciders and perries, bottles, English wines and meads, and apple juice pressed that morning.
75 min	**The Open Farm** · 30 min here · **own ticket** — Highland cows, alpacas, pigs, goats, donkeys and Nellie the shire horse.

TOILETS	Yes. The toilet block is opposite the duck pond. It has a large accessible cubicle with a shelf for baby changing. The farm does not list a charge.
FOOD	On site. The tearoom serves a small breakfast menu, light lunches, cream teas, cakes and scones, with hot pasties and sausage rolls all day. The farm shop, deli and cider barn sell food and drink to take away. You are also welcome to bring a picnic to the benches outside the gift shop or farm shop.

Beachy Head

Big cliffs and sea views

WHY STOP HERE

Imagine a high white chalk headland (a point of land that sticks out into the sea) with the red and white striped lighthouse far below. Beachy Head rises above Eastbourne, and this is the part of the day for a big sea view and fresh air. The cliff top gives wide views at once, so it suits a short look or a longer walk.

DON'T MISS

The UK's highest chalk sea cliff

The long white line of cliffs running west along the coast, seen from well back from the edge.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
10 min	**The cliff-top view** · 10 min here · free **DON'T MISS** — A high chalk edge above the sea, with wide open views along the Sussex coast.
15 min	**The newer lighthouse** · 5 min here · free — A red and white striped lighthouse at the foot of the cliffs. It replaced Belle Tout in 1902.
20 min	**Belle Tout Lighthouse** · 5 min here · free — An old lighthouse on the cliff top, moved 17 metres (56 feet) back from the edge in 1999.
80 min	**Beachy Head Experience** · 60 min here · **own ticket** — A visitor centre with an exhibition about the cliffs and their lighthouses, a model of the cliffs and a green screen flight video.

TOILETS	Yes. Eastbourne Borough Council lists public toilets at Beachy Head. The visitor centre says the main toilets and the accessible toilet are in the main car park. Public toilets take a small contactless payment, and the accessible toilet is free with a RADAR key (checked 30 October 2026).
FOOD	The visitor centre pages list no cafe of their own. They point to two neighbours, the Beachy Head pub next door for meals and a bar, and Cadence Clubhouse for coffee or a bite to eat. Both are separate businesses, so check their hours (checked 30 October 2026).

Seven Sisters

Chalk cliffs, a river and sea air

WHY STOP HERE

Picture white chalk cliffs (chalk is a soft white rock) rising from the sea on the Sussex coast, with the Cuckmere river winding through a green valley beside them. This is the part of the day for big views and a walk in fresh air. The cliffs run for several miles, with different viewpoints along the coast.

DON'T MISS

White cliffs made from tiny sea creatures

Dark bands of flint (a hard stone) running through the white chalk. Stay at least 5 metres (16 feet) back from the edge.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
20 min	**The Seven Sisters cliffs** · 20 min here · free DON'T MISS — A line of steep white chalk cliffs, with bands of dark flint, meeting the English Channel (the sea between England and France).
35 min	**The visitor centre at Exceat** · 15 min here · free — The place to start, with gifts, maps and books, free wi-fi, a traditional Sussex shepherd's hut and a Grade II listed K6 telephone box (the classic British phone box) for photographs.
65 min	**Cuckmere Haven and the river bends** · 30 min here · free — The old river bends in the valley floor, the lakes between them, and the shingle beach where the river reaches the sea.
80 min	**Second World War defences** · 15 min here · free — Concrete pill boxes along the path to the beach, and anti-tank blocks called Dragon's Teeth near the lagoons.
95 min	**Chalk grassland and wildlife** · 15 min here · free — Short, springy grass full of wild flowers and butterflies in summer, grazed by sheep, ponies and cattle.
140 min	**The view from Seaford Head** · 45 min here · free — The classic view back across the Cuckmere valley to the cliffs. Seaford Head is a separate nature reserve on the west side of the river.

Has a page of its own: Birling Gap (20 min, page 7)

TOILETS	Yes. Free public toilets stand next to the visitor centre, including an accessible Changing Places toilet. In winter, from late October to March, they open 7 am to 6 pm, and from April to October they open 7 am to 9 pm (checked 30 October 2026). There are no toilets at the beach or along the cliffs.
FOOD	At the visitor centre. The Grab and Go sells takeaway snacks, sandwiches, hot and cold drinks and ice cream, and the independently run Saltmarsh Café next door serves sit-down meals from 9 am. A seasonal ice cream van stands in the south car park. Opening hours (checked 30 October 2026): the Grab and Go is open 10 am to 4 pm from late October to March.

Birling Gap

A café, a beach and cliff views

WHY STOP HERE

Picture a cup of tea with white chalk cliffs outside the window. Birling Gap is a National Trust place on the Seven Sisters coast, with a cliff-top café and shop by the car park. Steps lead down to a beach with rock pools. The cliff edge keeps moving back, so the Trust asks everyone to stay well away from it.

DON'T MISS

A cliff that keeps moving back

The gentle bay in the cliff line, and heaps of new white chalk on the beach. Stay at least 5 metres (16 feet) back from the edge.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
15 min	**The Seven Sisters from the cliff top** · 15 min here · free **DON'T MISS** — White chalk cliffs and the open sea, with the South Downs rolling inland.
35 min	**The beach and rock pools** · 20 min here · free — A shingle beach, a flat shelf of rock and rock pools at low tide, below white cliffs.
45 min	**The coastguard cottages and lookout site** · 10 min here · free — The old coastguard buildings, and a mossy patch with bricks on the cliff top where a lookout tower stood until 1991.
50 min	**Belle Tout Lighthouse in the distance** · 5 min here · free — The old lighthouse on the cliff top, seen from the cliff path. It was moved inland in March 1999 to escape the receding coastline.
70 min	**The cliff-top café and shop** · 20 min here · **own ticket** — A café with hot food, cream teas and cakes, and a shop with gifts and local products.

TOILETS	Yes. An outside toilet block stands by the car park, and an accessible toilet is in the main building when the café is open. Opening hours (checked 30 October 2026): the outside block opens 10 am to 4 pm from November to March, and 9:30 am to 6 pm from April to October. All toilets close on 24 and 25 December.
FOOD	At the National Trust café by the car park. It serves breakfast baps, soup, sausage rolls, pasties, cakes and cream teas, with hot and cold drinks all day and picnic tables overlooking the sea. Vegan choices are on the menu. Opening hours (checked 4 November 2026): 10 am to 4 pm.

Brighton

Lanes, shops and the seafront

WHY STOP HERE

Come to Brighton for sea air and a lively seafront. It began as a small fishing town and became a fashionable resort. You can wander the Lanes (a maze of narrow alleys and small shops) and walk on the pebble beach. The Royal Pavilion and the pier have their own guides.

DON'T MISS

A royal resort and its squares

The creamy-coloured terraces along the seafront, and the squares of Brunswick Town in Hove.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
30 min	**The Lanes** · 30 min here · free **DON'T MISS** — A maze of narrow alleys (called twittens) and hidden squares, some from the late 1500s, with jewellers, independent shops and places to eat. In summer, buskers play and restaurants put tables outside.
60 min	**The seafront and pebble beach** · 30 min here · free — A long promenade with cafés, galleries in the beach arches, and a steep pebble beach.
90 min	**North Laine** · 30 min here · free — Colourful streets of independent shops, cafés and outdoor stalls, with street art.
135 min	**Brighton i360** · 45 min here · **own ticket** — A tall viewing tower on the seafront. A glass pod rises slowly for views over the city, the sea and the South Downs.
180 min	**Brighton Museum and Art Gallery** · 45 min here · **own ticket** — A museum in the Pavilion Gardens, a few minutes from the seafront, with displays from the deep past to today.
195 min	**Brighton Fishing Museum** · 15 min here · free — A small museum in two beach arches west of the pier about the fishing trade, with boats and recordings of fishing people.

Has a page of its own: The Royal Pavilion (90 min, page 9) · Brighton Palace Pier (45 min, page 10)

TOILETS	Yes. Brighton & Hove City Council lists public toilets at Royal Pavilion Gardens, Shelter Hall, West Pier Arches by the i360, and Dalton's Bastion east of the pier. The Pavilion says its garden toilets are closed at present (checked 30 October 2026), so use the others. The council's page gives each one's hours, charge and access.
FOOD	Almost everywhere. The Lanes have cafés, pubs and restaurants, many with outdoor tables in summer. The seafront has Shelter Hall, a food hall, and fish and chips. The Royal Pavilion's own café is closed until further notice (checked 30 October 2026).

Royal Pavilion

A palace like no other

WHY STOP HERE

Come for a seaside palace like no other. Outside, it has domes and minarets (thin towers) in an Indian style. Inside, the rooms are Chinese in style, with dragons and a huge chandelier. You buy your own ticket to go inside.

DON'T MISS

Domes and minarets by Nash

The large onion dome (a rounded dome with a point) over the Saloon, with a minaret at each corner.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
10 min	**The Banqueting Room** · 10 min here · in the entry ticket **DON'T MISS** — A chandelier 9.1 metres long with six silvered dragons, above a table set for a royal dessert.
20 min	**The Music Room** · 10 min here · in the entry ticket — Red and gold walls, silvered dragons and lotus-shaped chandeliers under a domed ceiling. The King's piano of 1821 is in the gallery next door.
30 min	**The Saloon** · 10 min here · in the entry ticket — The grandest room, in red, gold and blue, with hand-applied platinum leaf on pearl-white walls. It was restored in 2018 to its original design.
40 min	**The Great Kitchen** · 10 min here · in the entry ticket — The King's Kitchen, with iron columns topped by painted copper palm leaves, and an open fire that cooked five spit-roast meats at once.
55 min	**The Indian Hospital Gallery** · 15 min here · in the entry ticket — Photographs, letters and film about the palace as a First World War hospital for Indian soldiers.
70 min	**The garden** · 15 min here · free — A garden designed by John Nash with winding paths and plants from China, now a calm green space beside the palace.

TOILETS	Yes, inside. An accessible toilet is on the ground floor near the ticket desk, and more are in the basement (15 steps) and on the first floor. The garden toilets are closed at present (checked 30 October 2026). The council also lists public toilets at Royal Pavilion Gardens.
FOOD	No, not at the Pavilion. Its café is closed until further notice (checked 30 October 2026). The Lanes and North Laine are a few minutes' walk away, with many places to eat.

Brighton Palace Pier

Funfair rides and sea views

WHY STOP HERE

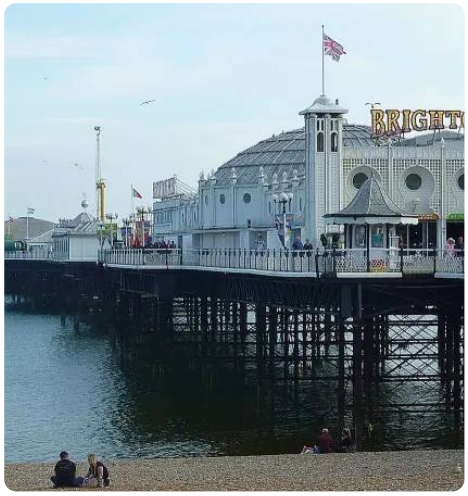
Picture a long wooden deck with the sea moving under your feet. Brighton Palace Pier opened in 1899 and reaches out from the Brighton seafront. You can walk along it, watch the funfair, eat seaside snacks and look back at the city.

DON'T MISS

Built to look like a palace

The clock over the entrance arch, which Historic England dates to 1930.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
20 min	**The walk along the deck** · 20 min here · free **DON'T MISS** — Sea on both sides, the Brighton seafront behind you, and fairground rides ahead.
35 min	**The Palace of Fun** · 15 min here · free — The largest original building left on the pier, once the Winter Garden. The pier calls its arcade the largest in Brighton.
65 min	**The funfair rides** · 30 min here · **own ticket** — A rollercoaster, Galloper's Carousel, the helter skelter and other seaside rides.
80 min	**Seaside snacks** · 15 min here · **own ticket** — Kiosks along the pier sell donuts made in front of you, crepes, candyfloss and takeaway fish and chips.
90 min	**The view back to Brighton** · 10 min here · free — From the sea end you see the whole seafront, with the city rising behind it.

TOILETS	Yes. The pier has public toilets with baby changing, and three accessible toilets with changing facilities. They are in the Palace of Fun arcade, in the Palm Court Restaurant and next to the men's public toilet in the rides area. The pier does not say whether the toilets are free.
FOOD	On the pier itself. Kiosks sell donuts, crepes, candyfloss, milkshakes, fish and chips, hot dogs and burgers to take away. Starling's Roost Café serves coffee and cakes, and there is also the Palm Court Restaurant (checked 30 October 2026).

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See every Seven Sisters and Brighton day trip side by side.
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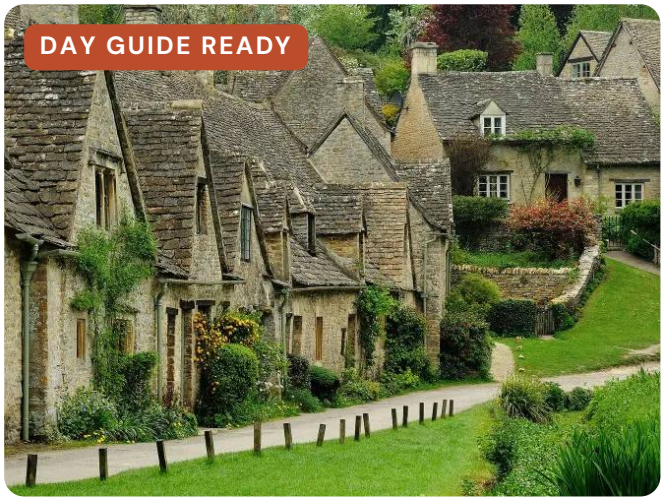

THE COTSWOLDS

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Up to about 153 km · 95 miles

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HAMPTON COURT



HATFIELD

Sources

Where each page's facts come from, by stop. Each name is a link to the source.

DEVIL'S DYKE

National Trust: Devil's Dyke

National Trust: things to see and do at Devil's Dyke

National Trust: the history of Devil's Dyke

South Downs National Park Authority: South Downs Way walk, Pyecombe to Devil's Dyke

MIDDLE FARM

Middle Farm: cider barn

Middle Farm: opening times

Middle Farm: farm shop

Middle Farm: frequently asked questions

BEACHY HEAD

Visit Eastbourne (Eastbourne Borough Council): Beachy Head

Beachy Head Experience: the experience

South Downs National Park Authority: Beachy Head to Birling Gap

Beachy Head Experience: admission and opening

Eastbourne Borough Council: public toilets

Beachy Head Experience: visiting us

SEVEN SISTERS

Seven Sisters Country Park: new National Nature Reserve

Seven Sisters Country Park: cliff and river safety

Sussex Wildlife Trust: Seaford Head

Seven Sisters Country Park: accessible trails

Seven Sisters Country Park: cultural heritage

Seven Sisters Country Park: plan your visit

Seven Sisters Country Park: wildlife spotting

BIRLING GAP

National Trust: shifting shores at Birling Gap

National Trust: visiting Birling Gap safely

National Trust: Birling Gap and the Seven Sisters

National Trust: bounding up to Belle Tout at Birling Gap

National Trust: eating and shopping at Birling Gap

BRIGHTON

Brighton & Hove Museums: the history of the Royal Pavilion

VisitBrighton: the Lanes

Brighton & Hove City Council: sea swimming safety

Brighton i360: frequently asked questions

VisitBrighton: North Laine

Brighton & Hove Museums: Brighton Museum plan your visit

Brighton Fishing Quarter: the museum

Brighton & Hove City Council: public toilets

ROYAL PAVILION

Historic England: the Royal Pavilion (Grade I listed), list entry 1380680

Brighton & Hove Museums: the Banqueting Room

Brighton & Hove Museums: the Music Room

Brighton & Hove Museums: the Saloon

Brighton & Hove Museums: the Great Kitchen

Brighton & Hove Museums: the Indian Hospital Gallery

Brighton & Hove Museums: the Royal Pavilion Garden

Brighton & Hove Museums: plan your visit to the Royal Pavilion

BRIGHTON PALACE PIER

Historic England: The Palace Pier, list entry 1381700

Brighton Palace Pier: accessibility

Brighton Palace Pier: rides and attractions

Brighton Palace Pier: kiosks

Brighton Palace Pier

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3	**Devil's Dyke: The view from the top**	Devil's Dyke MMB 01	mattbuck (category)	CC BY-SA 4.0	Wikimedia Commons
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5	**Beachy Head: The cliff-top view**	Beachy Head March 2017 01	Arild Vågen	CC BY-SA 4.0	Wikimedia Commons
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9	**Royal Pavilion: The Banqueting Room**	Royal Pavilion, Brighton (interior) 10	Simon Burchell	CC BY-SA 4.0	Wikimedia Commons
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