

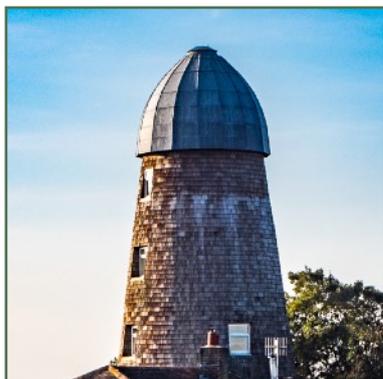
The Highdown and Highdown Hill, West Sussex



Moderate Terrain

2.5 miles
Circular
1.5 hours

140119



Access Notes



1. The walk includes several steady climbs and descents throughout, but there are no particularly steep parts.
2. It follows an exposed ridge-top path so be prepared for bracing winds.
3. The paths are a mixture of grassland paths and tracks plus a stretch of tree-lined bridleway which can have some surface mud. You will need to negotiate a couple of kissing gates, but there are no stiles on route.
4. You will not be sharing any of the paths with livestock. Dogs are welcome on Highdown Hill, in fact it is a popular dog walking spot that is ideal for sociable dogs.

The Highdown was originally a grand three-storey family home, built in the 1820s, and today has been restored to a beautiful pub with guest bedrooms.

A 2.5 mile circular walk from The Highdown pub close to Goring-by-Sea in West Sussex. The walking route takes full advantage of this stunning location, following the line of the chalk ridge with far-reaching views to the sea on one side and to the downs on the other. Along the way you will see the Miller's Tomb, an old hillfort, pretty chalkland flowers and a converted windmill, plus there is chance to explore the Highdown formal gardens should you wish.

Getting there

The Highdown is located just north of the A259, accessed from the east-bound carriageway of this main road along its own dedicated access lane. This access lane is marked with brown tourism signs for the Highdown Gardens and Hotel. Continue to the top of this access lane and you will find the pub on your left (with its own car park) and also a free public countryside car park on the right (which is the best place to park whilst you are following the walk).

Approximate post code **BN12 6FB**.

Walk Sections



Start to Miller's Tomb



The walk begins in the public countryside car park at the top of the Highdown access lane. (From the pub, turn left to continue further along the access lane and this will swing right to enter the car park). Stand in the car park with the Highdown Gardens entrance on your left (more about that later) and walk ahead through the staggered barrier to enter the open grassland.

Go straight ahead on the worn path, which swings left



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with the gardens boundary on your left. After swinging left, you will see a fork in the path. Take the right-hand branch which passes between two circular clumps of dense undergrowth. As you emerge from these clumps, pass a bench on your left and then fork left, heading for the set of three benches. Behind these three benches, you will find the Miller's Tomb.

This is a good point to pause and enjoy the views before you continue the walk. The single table-topped tomb here is the last resting place of Highdown miller and reputed smuggler, John Olliver. Born in Lancing in 1709, Olliver may have worked for the Customs Service as a young man and, if so, it was a good apprenticeship for his later smuggling activities. John took over as miller of Highdown on the death of his father in 1750, who had been miller before him. Legend states that Olliver used the sails of the windmill to signal to smuggling vessels out at sea. The eccentric miller had this tomb erected nearly thirty years before his demise at the grand old age of 84 (in 1793). The mill, which was probably sited close to one of the clumps of trees, was blown down in a storm in 1826 and never rebuilt.



path, with the views to the south coast on your left and views to the South Downs on your right. This grass path leads you steadily downhill, passing a clump of scrub on your left, to reach a footpath fingerpost and kissing gate.

Go through this gate and continue directly ahead on the raised grass track between fields. Further along, this track bears right then left, to continue with the field boundary on your right. Keep ahead to reach a field corner with a converted windmill property directly ahead.

1 → 2 Miller's Tomb to Highdown Hill



Pass to the left of the tomb and go through the kissing gate within the flint wall. This wall marks the ancient boundary between Goring and Ferring parishes. You are now entering the National Trust site. Go straight ahead across the tree-lined path junction, passing an information board on your right. As you enter the next area of grass hillside, bear slightly right to head up the hill towards a fingerpost sign.

As you reach this bridleway fingerpost, pass immediately to the left of it and continue ahead on the path, with scrub to your right and views to the south coast on your left. Stay alongside the scrub on your right as your route forks right, passing over the earthwork rings of the Highdown Hill hillfort. Keep straight ahead through the centre of the old fort to pass the concrete trig point marking the hill summit, just across to your right.

Highdown Hill sits at only 81 metres above sea level but its unique position as the only hill on the Sussex coastal plain, gives it commanding views along the coast, from Beachy Head in the east, to the Isle of Wight in the west. Although there is little to substantiate the charming claim that Highdown was once the traditional burial ground of the kings of Sussex, it is a very important archaeological site and one steeped in local folklore. The ditch and embankment were first cut sometime in the late Bronze Age (about 1000 BC) and then re-cut at a later date before the Roman occupation in 43 AD. The question still remains as to whether this was a fortified enclosure, a ritual site, or simply a pound for livestock. It may, of course, have been all three! Archaeological works have uncovered 86 human burials (complete with spears, shields, jewellery and other burial goods) all dating from the fifth century, making it one of the largest early Saxon cemeteries ever discovered in the country. Highdown was an important ritual site for generations of local people. As late as 1830 a Midsummer Bonfire was being lit here on Highdown.

2 → 3 Highdown Hill to Windmill

With the trig point just across to your right, continue ahead on the

3 → 4 Windmill to Path Junction



In this field corner, turn left to join an enclosed path between fences, with a horse paddock on your right. At the end of the enclosed path you will reach a T-junction with public bridleway. Turn left to join this bridleway. If you glance through the hedgerow on your right, you will have a view down over the slopes of Highdown Vineyard.

Continue ahead on the bridleway, which is lined with beautiful rich hedgerows. You will emerge to a couple of fingerposts marking a junction of paths. Ignore the footpath up the steps to your left and, a few paces later (at the T-junction), turn left to follow the bridleway leading uphill.

4 → 5 Path Junction to End

As you emerge out from the tall hedgerows, continue for just a few paces to reach a wide hedgerow gap on your left. Fork left through this gap and follow the grass path climbing up the hillside. After only about 20 paces, fork right to join a more level path through the grassland (with the hedgerow and views down to your right).

Keep ahead to reach a fingerpost marking a staggered crossroads where your path crosses the public bridleway. Do NOT join the bridleway, instead go straight ahead on the grass path. The path leads you past a square sunken reservoir on your right to reach the path junction by the information board that you passed earlier. From this point you will be retracing your steps back to the start. Go ahead through the kissing gate, pass the tomb on your left and follow the path leading you between the scrub clumps.

Continue with the hedgerow on your right to reach the countryside car park. You may wish to explore the formal Highdown Gardens if you have time (opening times vary with the seasons, an honesty box for entrance donations is in place but note that dogs are not allowed in the gardens). Exit the car park via the vehicle exit and you will reach The Highdown on your right for some well-earned hospitality.



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 particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

