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## Singleton and the South Downs

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Distance: 13½ km=8½ miles

easy-to-moderate walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 21-apr-2013

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Refreshments: Singleton, Hill Barn

Map: Explorer 120 (Chichester) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*Woodland, hills, views, village, seasonal bluebells and wild flowers*

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### In Brief

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This is a glorious circular walk over the South Downs to the photogenic village of Singleton with its charming pub. Half of the walk is through woodland, half in open country and downland, with masses of wild flowers. On the way the views over the valley and beyond are stunning enough for you to want to stop and admire.



In summer there is a patch of tall grass, concealing nettles and brambles, at the Drover Estate and you may need a stick to swoosh the undergrowth.



Apart from that, any kind of clothing should be fine. The ground underfoot is generally firm and dry. Recently (2023) the few stiles have been replaced by gates, making this walk fine, even for a large dog.



The walk begins at the **Cocking Hill car park**, close to **postcode GU29**



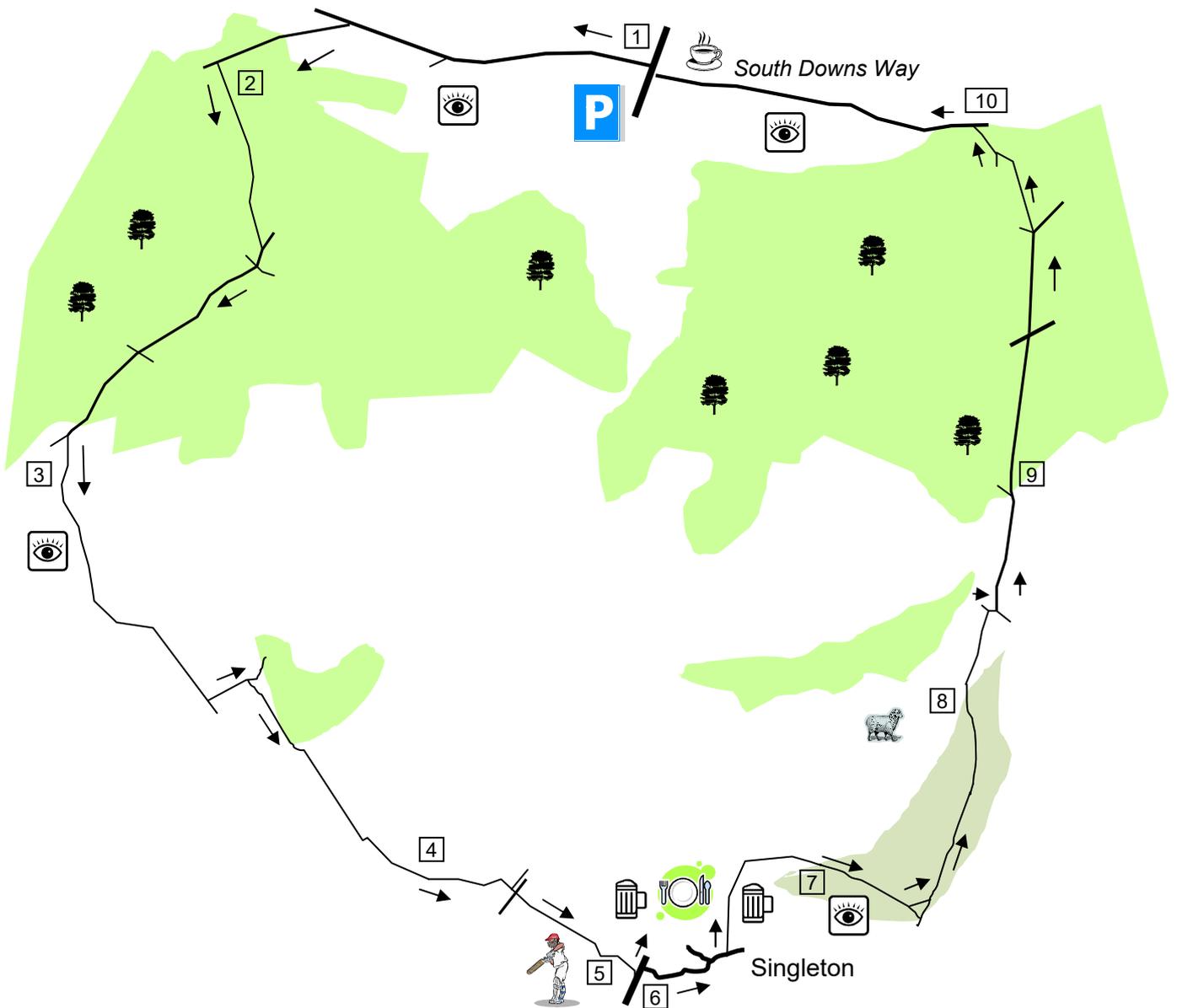
**OHT.** [www.w3w.co/acid.little.theory](http://www.w3w.co/acid.little.theory). **Warning! isolated car park, a known target: leave car visibly empty - see Guidelines.** This is on the west side of the main **A286** Midhurst-Chichester road, 1 km=0.6 miles south of **Cocking**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

### The Walk

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1

**See map overleaf.** From the car park, turn **left** (westwards) along the South Downs Way (SDW), a wide surfaced track. Ignore a byway on the right as you pass Hilltop Farm. The track rises gradually. 900m after the start, at a 2-way fingerpost, keep straight ahead to avoid a private track. 400m further, near the top of the slope, you come to a 4-way fingerpost. Fork **left** here, thus leaving the SDW and passing a large chalk ball (one of several in this area made by the sculptor Andy Goldsworthy). *Goodwood racecourse is visible over to your left. It is also worth taking a look behind at the view that has opened out before your woodland trek.* Continue past a metal barrier into woods [[Apr 2022: all felled as far as the chalky path](#)]. Just after the start of a field on your right, at a 3-way fingerpost, turn **left** on a wide chalky path.



- 2 Keep to the main path, going straight on through the wood, avoiding all side branches. You pass a 2-way fingerpost, followed by another, just before you enter a dark area of tall spruce. 800m from the turn, a track joins from the left and you reach an open area with a crossing track and fingerpost. Go straight over the track in the indicated direction. Your path immediately bends right, passing a sign for West Dean Estate. *This is a beautiful area with beech trees on your left, spruce on your right and, in late spring, bluebells in abundance.* Soon you go by a foresters' enclosure and a crossing path. Eventually, your path comes out of the trees into open country with extensive views.
- 3 Fork **left** away from the wood, on a farm track towards a solitary house. Continue past the house and continue uphill. About 800m after the house, you pass the barn and other buildings of Colworth Farm, now on a tarmac drive. 150m further, just after the last house, at a new signpost on your left, turn **left** a footpath, passing a field on your right. In 200m, at the far corner of the field, and 20m before a National Trust sign, at a fingerpost with yellow arrows, go **right** up a bank, over a stile, and take a narrow grassy

path running beside the field. The path leads you over another stile, through a hedgerow and along the left-hand side of the next field on a narrow fenced-off footpath. This path bends round to the left and past an unneeded stile to a National Trust sign for the Drover Estate. Turn **right** along the right-hand side of the next field. You pass under power lines and continue beside another field, reaching a gate. [The next section may be very overgrown in summer.](#)

- 4 Go through the gate, with Goodwood now clearly on view to your right. Follow the path down the right-hand side of a meadow, with Singleton visible in the valley below. Your path takes you steeply down a ridge, re-crossing the power lines, downhill, and finally down concrete steps to a 3-way fingerpost. Avoid a footpath on your left as you continue ahead over the course of the old railway. Your way is now a pleasant straight grassy path, with the rounded Levin Down, which you will later cross, visible to your left beyond the village. At the end, go through a gate to reach a track beside a cow pasture.
- 5 Turn immediately **right** to avoid any mud and go **left** over a sturdy bridge with handrails. Continue through a wooden gate, then **left** along the edge of the meadow. Your route into the village is through another wooden gate, and to the left of a converted barn, now a cricket pavilion. Go through a small wooden gate, along the track ahead and over the River Lavant to the main road. There is a wooden bench here where you can watch the ducks dabbling.

*As a diversion, by turning **right** carefully along the road, you reach in 300m the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, a large site displaying fifty ancient buildings saved from destruction, plus numerous farm exhibits and gardens. It is the site of the BBC "Repair Shop" programme.*

Cross the main A286 road very carefully and turn **left** for 20m. *Note the rock garden planted in 1913. Note also the unusual signpost which expresses the priorities of the local communities.* Fork **right** on a lane into the village.

*The village name is derived from an Anglo-Saxon word related to "sing", i.e. "burn" (cf German "sengen"), indicating a man-made forest clearing. There was a railway here between 1880 and 1953; the station is now a private house.*

- 6 As you pass the houses of the village, a lane on the right will take you to the nearly thousand-year-old St Mary's church, with its high vaulted roof with a tiny stained-glass window and its reredos of the Last Supper. Shortly you reach the *Partridge Inn*.



*The sign outside the Partridge Inn shows the eponymous bird as hunter and hunted. The inn is open all day every day, and at weekends the kitchen doesn't close. Sarah and Mark have created a thoughtful menu which regularly changes. You can pre-order a cream tea. Nearby Goodwood means that this establishment thrives on the summer racegoers. The inn welcomes walkers plus "four legged" ones (presumably not your horse!) with top-drawer sandwiches as an option. Foreign visitors have left favourable reviews. A thoroughly pleasant stopping place in a perfect setting.*



Continue along the lane and keep straight on at a road junction. (As a quick diversion, turning left will show you some of the best of the thatched cottages.) *Rose Cottage* offers B&B. Just after a river crossing and before a school, turn **left** at a signpost on a wide track, passing a cemetery and

going through a robust wooden gate. The path climbs steadily and veers right to the top where there is a wooden gate and a swing-gate. After these, turn immediately diagonally **right** up the grassy slope, heading for a wooded hilltop. *[Careful! Some walkers go wrong here: keep going uphill, not along the fence to your right.]* At the other side, go through two wooden gates onto the sheep-grazed hillside enclosure of Levin Down with an information tablet and, in early summer, early purple orchids.

7



Keep to the right by a fence, with good views of the valley down to your right. Your path descends a bit through blackthorn bushes and leads you through a small wooden gate and past a bench with views of the village of Charlton in the valley below. About 400m after entering the enclosure, and about 50m before a field ahead, leave the main footpath by taking a narrow **left** fork, the more level of the two paths. It meets a path running beside a fence, just before a wooden gate. Keep ahead through the gate and, in only 5m, fork **left** away from the fence on a rising path, as directed by a fingerpost. This is one of the loveliest sections of the walk with the green hillside, butterflies, hawthorn and scattered small juniper trees. After a small wooden gate, the path is now level. A new wooden gate in a thicket of hazels and willows marks your exit from the Nature Reserve. A final wooden gate takes you suddenly out into a vast grassy sheep meadow that seems to extend in all directions.

8

Turn **right** in the sheep meadow. Stay not far from the right-hand edge but veer away from the edge to cut the first corner (ignoring a wooden gate visible down in the corner) and go round the jutting edge. 30m further, at the far corner, go **right** through a small metal gate next to a large one. You now see three signposts close together. Keep ahead on the track past the first signpost and past the next which shows the way to five villages. At the **third** signpost, turn **left** on a bridleway between fields (in the direction of Heyshott, according to signpost no. 2, although you won't go that far). As a double check, your path has a wire fence on the left and a hedge on the right. In about 300m, at a marker post, a path joins you from the left and, 50m after, you enter the different dark world of Singleton Forest.

9

There are a number of paths fanning out ahead. Keep dead straight on, on a bridleway marked by a fingerpost with a blue arrow, ignoring all paths on your left and a minor overgrown path on the right. Your path goes steadily uphill through conifers. In nearly 700m, you reach a wide surfaced crossing track: go directly over it on a grassy path. In about 350m, you reach a fingerpost which directs you to veer right. **Leave** the official path here, by turning **left** on an unsigned path with pines visible in the distance. *(As a guide there is a hunter's high lookout clearly visible about 100m down the path.)* Now turn **immediately right** on a grassy path, a permissive rider's path. (Should this route be barred for any reason in the future, simply stay on the official bridleway and turn left when you reach the SDW.) In 150m, you join a path of beautiful grass coming in from the right. At a hunter's high lookout your path veers **left**. In 80m, bear **right** at a T-junction. This path comes out beside a large pair of metal gates and meets the wide SDW.

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Turn **left** on the SDW for your final easy section, with great views ahead. After some distance, the path goes through a metal gate and past Hill Barn which offers icecream, drinks and snacks. Continue on the SDW, now a rough lane, to reach the main road and the Cocking Hill car park where the walk began.

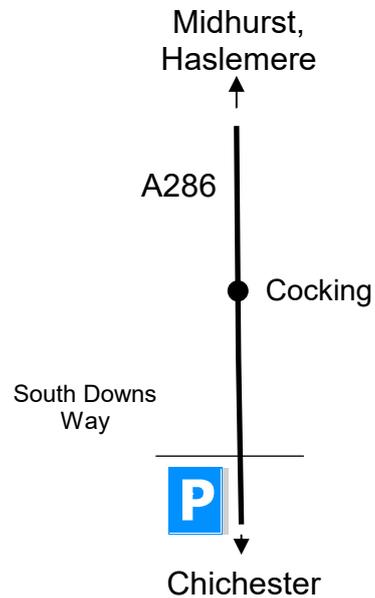


For final refreshments, the Blue Bell Inn just outside Cocking serves very acceptable food and draught beer.

## Getting there

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By car: the car park is easy to reach as it is directly on the A286 main Midhurst-Chichester road. 1 km=0.6 miles south of **Cocking**, look for a crossing track with a fingerpost and a sign for a Farm Shop. The entrance to the car park, if coming from the north, is on the right just past a bus stop.



By bus: Stagecoach bus 60 from Midhurst stops right outside the car park, including hourly on Sundays. Various buses run from Haslemere station to Midhurst. Check the timetables.

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