Fancy Free Walks

point your feet on a new path

Sullington, Chantry and the South Downs

Distance: 10 km=6 miles — easy-to-moderate walking

Region: West Sussex — Date written: 5-aug-2010

Author: Hautboy — Last update: 7-oct-2026

Refreshments: Washington, Sullington Manor Farm

Maps: Explorer 121 (Arundel)

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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High hills, views, village

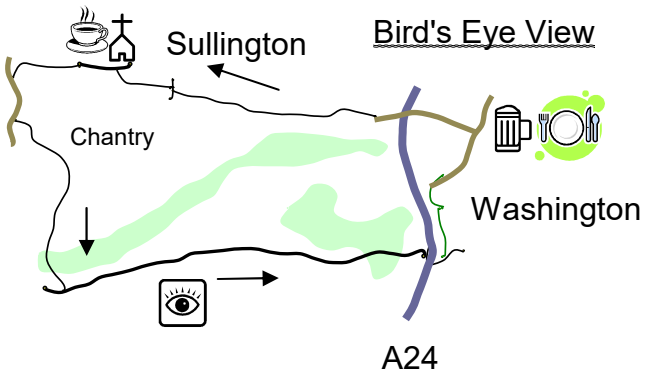
In Brief

This walk takes you along a beautiful stretch of the South Downs with extensive views all round. It begins with a lowland route, full of interesting features, including a Saxon church, through the valley.

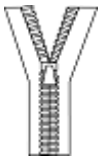
This walk was previously the western part of a longer 20 km=12½ mile walk taking in Chanctonbury and Steyning. That longer walk is now available as a **big zipper** by combining it with the walk *Chanctonbury, Steyning & the South Downs* with which the longer walk begins. **Zip points** are indicated in the guides.

The going is easy over the chalk downs and fairly level but with a steep climb in the middle. You may encounter some mud on the lower paths in the wetter seasons, where ankle boots will be an advantage. There are no nettles or brambles on this walk, so any reasonable attire will be fine. Your dog will also enjoy this walk if he is good with cattle and not too large (because of a stile or very stiff gate at the start of the walk).

The walk begins at the **Washington** car park, West Sussex, 1 km south of the village. The nearest **postcode** is **RH20 4AZ**, grid ref 120120, w3w:slimming.plans.targeted. But careful ! It is best to ignore the satnav for the last mile as it might lead you to the wrong car park. It is also possible to start in Washington village, e.g. near the village hall. For full details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

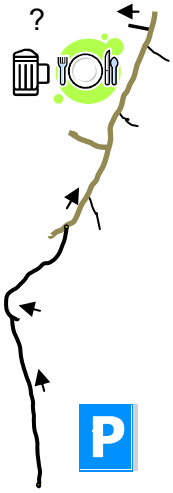


The Walk



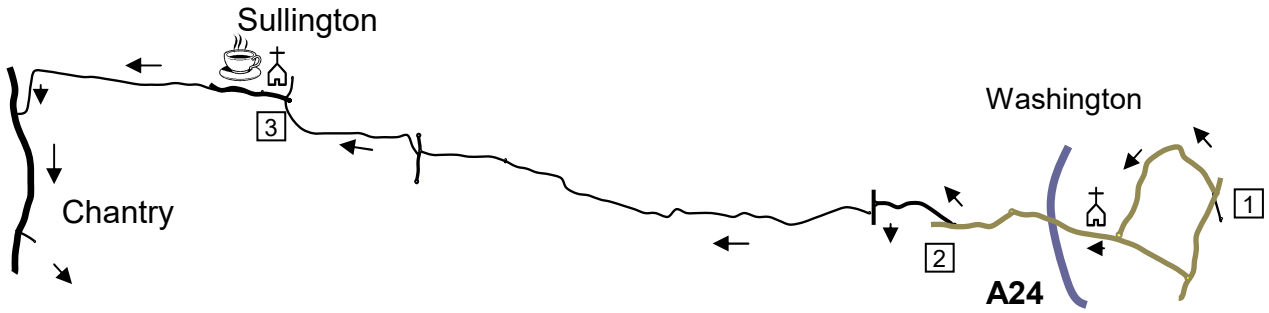
If you are continuing the **Big Zipper** walk, skip to the section called **The Low Road** below. Otherwise, start this walk with the short section immediately below.

Car Park to Village 1 km=⅔ mile



Starting in the Washington car park, go back to the entrance of the car park and turn **right** on a rough drive that runs parallel to the main road on your left. Ignore the right fork to some gates. As the drive curves right towards houses, look out for a marker and turn sharp **left** as indicated. (Some walkers take a short cut here via a path on the left before gates across a driveway ahead.) The path curves downhill and wheels right, gradually descending through a 1-bar wooden barrier to join the minor road that skirts the village. Turn **right** on the road (care! fast traffic). You can turn left on The Street, direct to the church, or follow the route described here by continuing to the (re-opened in 2020) *Frankland Arms*.

The Low Road 4 km=2½ miles



1 Turn **left** just after the *Frankland Arms* into School Lane. Ignore a road junction left and follow the lane round past a school. Eventually, turn **right** on the main street at a T-junction, going past St Mary's Church.

> *The name "Washington" means "homestead of Wassa's folk" and it has no special link to that other Washington (the one in County Durham). As far back as 946, the manor was granted to Ethelwold by King Edred. Many of the buildings are Grade II listed, especially Weaver's Cottage, Rose Cottage and Old Cottage. St Mary's Church was almost totally rebuilt in 1866 but the tower (an early Tudor bell tower with a Norman lean-to) is original.*

Avoid a footpath right and continue on the lane going over the busy A24, ignoring another footpath left. Soon after, at a fork, take the **right** fork. Just by a house on the right, turn **left** at a fingerpost, in the direction of the South Downs Way (SDW).

2 In just 10m, turn **right** on a bridleway, thus leaving the SDW. The path zig-zags and runs between fields. After the fields, go through a wooden gate (or simply step over the wooden bar beside it) onto a sandy path. Go **right** with the path and then, at a 3-way fingerpost, go **left** again on a path darkened by low trees. At the end, go through a wooden gate and cross

over a horse track. Turn **right** in the field and **left** round the edge. At the end, go through a farm gate and turn **right** to the church of St Mary, Sullington.

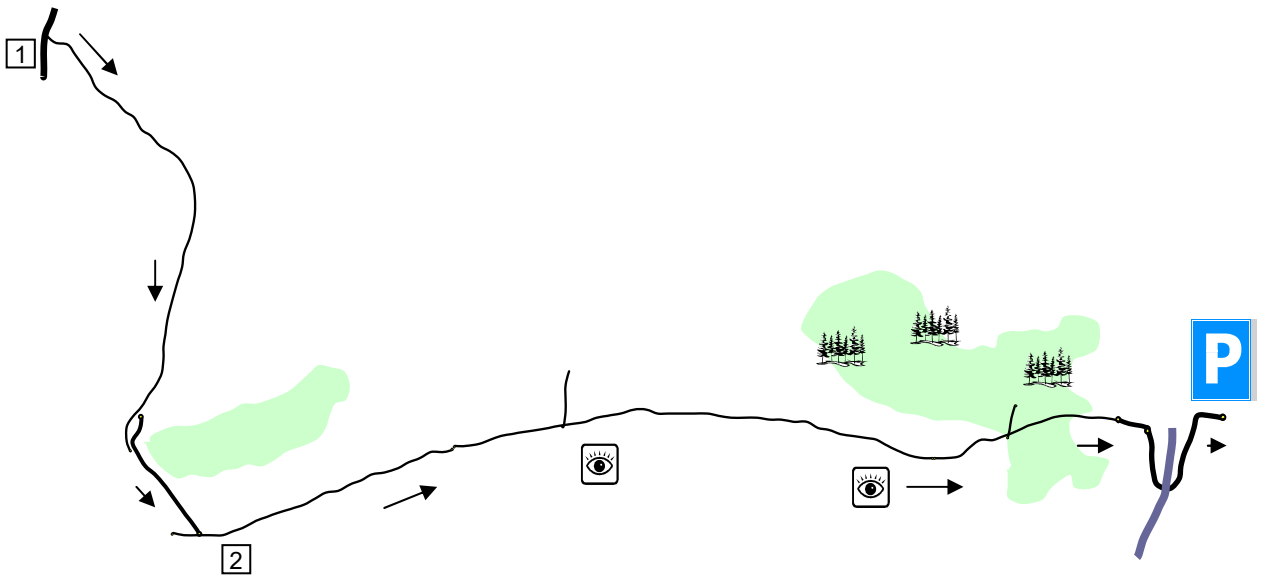
The little church of St Mary, Sullington has stood here for nearly 1000 years. It is set within a yew grove which is even older. The tower and nave are Saxon, dating from 1050, but they were altered by the Normans over the next 200 years. At the entrance is a marble effigy of a 13th-century knight in chain mail, believed to be a de Couvert, Lord of the Manor and a Crusader. In the church-yard there is one remaining 1200-year old yew tree. The church holds an annual festival end-June. The church is usually open (not in 2020).

Tiny Sullington ("farmstead near a willow and muddy pond") is like a lost village consisting of a few houses and a farm with a massive, weather-boarded, tithe barn with a fine tie-beam roof, dated 1665, now beautifully restored (2018) thanks to a National Lottery grant. The tithe barn (not open to the public) dates from around 1450 with an enormous roof and extension dating from 1685 and was repaired in 2013. The area has been inhabited since Neolithic times, as witnessed by several burial jars, and has seen Celtic, Roman and Saxon occupants. A hoard of Saxon silver was found nearby at Upper Chancton Farm.

The café at the Old Workshop, Sullington Manor Farm is open 10-4.30, not Mon (except B/Hol) or Tue from Easter to end-Sep (see their website for winter openings; dates are variable). In the café barn there is an exhibition of the history of Sullington and farming on the Downs, with photos and an interactive table for the children. Your dog is welcome in the barn and in the courtyard.

3 Continue in your original direction, with the church on your right, on a concrete drive and along the right-hand side of a meadow. At the end, the path wheels left into trees and descends to a small wooden gate. After 50m, go through a large metal gate to reach a lane. Turn **left** on the lane. *Immediately on your left is a stream and a little waterfall, products of the natural spring that feeds this valley.* Soon you pass on your left a large house with a stone bridge and waterfowl and on your right *The Chantry* with its portico and large windows. Immediately after *The Chantry*, turn **left** on a signposted footpath uphill into woodland.

The High Road 4 km=2½ miles



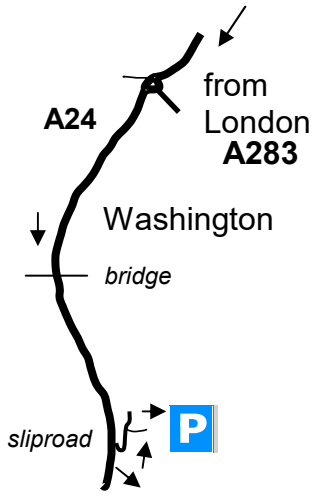
1 The path comes through a wooden gate and out onto a hillside, continuing uphill on a path between banks. After some distance, the path goes through a metal gate and continues upwards, still between banks. Walkers passed some quiet cattle. At a marker post, veer **right** onto a path that has been gradually joining from the left. Keep straight ahead on a grassy path, always climbing gently, heading roughly for a barn visible on the hilltop. After another marker post, avoid a metal gate on the right and gradually wheel **left**. At the last moment, merge with a path that has coming up from the left in the valley. Go through a metal gate and finally, at the top of the Downs, go through an unneeded gate and turn **left** on the path at the top.

The South Downs are a vast area of chalk downland in southern England (the others being the North Downs, Salisbury Plain and the Isle of Wight). They stretch from part of Hampshire through Sussex, ending in the cliffs at Beachy Head (see other walks in this series "Seven Sisters, Beachy Head, Eastbourne"). The South Downs are now a National Park (since 2010).

2 Continue on the South Downs Way (SDW). There is a chance of cattle along this route, mostly distant or on the other side of a fence (dog walkers note). After some pasture, the SDW goes through a wooden gate and between fields. At a fingerpost, go straight ahead in the direction of *South Downs Way A24 Crossing (the SDW can be done on horseback with small diversions)*. This fine scenic route takes a shrp left at a fingerpost and gradually approaches the dip in the Downs ahead marking your final destination, passing crop fields and horse meadows and beginning to descend. As you pass a large metal gate into woodland, ignore a branching side path. As you pass some houses, you will notice on the right a drinking fountain, one of several placed at widely spaced intervals along the SDW. Cross the A24* very carefully, as this is a busy stretch, and continue on the other side, leading within a few paces to the Washington car park where the walk began. (*Some walkers find it safer to go straight ahead, retracing part of the outward journey, back to the junction by the church; then straight ahead back to the road around the village; right and left on a rough track, back to the car park.)

Getting there

By car: the car park is just off the **A24** road. If coming from the north, about 10 miles=16 km from Worthing, you reach the **Washington roundabout**. Continue *straight ahead*, ignoring the left turn to Washington. 1 mile further, turn **left** on a sliproad, doubling back. The car park, which is unsigned, is 100 yds up a tarmac track, immediately on your right.



By bus: Bus 23 from Worthing or Horsham to Washington. Check the timetables.

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