

## SOUTH DOWNS TREKATHON United Kingdom – East Sussex

*This is an Open Trekathon; you can take part on the date shown and raise money for a charity of your choice. Itineraries for bespoke trips (run for sole charities) may differ slightly, and will have different dates and pricing schedules.*

**Duration:** 1 day

**Trip Grade:** Tough

**Date:** Saturday 7 May 2011

<b>Cost:</b>	<b>2011</b>
Trip Cost	£49
Suggested Minimum Fundraising Target for your chosen charity*	£100

\*Choosing to do the Trekathon as a fundraising challenge is entirely at your discretion. We have recommended a fundraising target but you are free to raise any amount. This is to be sent direct to your chosen charity; we do not handle sponsorship monies.

The South Downs National Park, although only designated a National Park in 2010, has been enjoyed by walkers and cyclists for decades. Its varied landscapes see a higher number of visitors than any of England's nine other National Parks.

Our route starts in the lovely old town of Lewes and follows part of the famously scenic South Downs Way. We walk over rolling hills and high ridges dotted with long barrows and ancient earthworks, often accompanied by magnificent vistas down to the sea. We tackle stiff climbs and descents before our spectacular final stretch over the famous white chalk cliffs of the Seven Sisters, before finishing on the



highest chalk sea cliff in England – the beautiful headland of Beachy Head, near Eastbourne.

**This is a tough event over rolling downs and cliffs; at 26 miles, it forms an enormous challenge for walkers. You can run or jog if you prefer and there is also a half-distance option.**

There will be full support throughout the challenge with marshals and water stops along the route.

### ITINERARY

Our challenging day starts from the market town of Lewes, an old Roman settlement with a castle dating back to Saxon times and re-built after the Norman invasion. We set off early in the morning – essential for completing the distance – from Lewes Castle, and head southwest towards the downs. It's not long before we're climbing uphill, with some steep sections in the first few miles. Walking along a ridge with wonderful views inland to the downs and south to the coast, we skirt the pretty village of Rodmell, descending to cross the River Ouse.

It's not long before we climb up high again, steeply at first and then more gradually to Beddingham Hill and its twin radio masts. The land drops away steeply inland to form deep combes; the views are very picturesque and you can soak them up as you stop to catch your breath! Inland, the downs are dotted with occasional farms and small villages, in contrast to the more built-up coastal belt to our south.

Our route now contours along a beautiful ridge, with impressive views in all directions. It's not long before we climb a little higher to reach our halfway mark, and the highest point of our day, at Firle Beacon (217m). Firle Beacon is a *Marilyn* – the term given to a hill which is 150m higher than its surroundings, regardless of actual height – and is one of only 11 in the southeast.

This is a great point for a rest and a snack before we head downhill via the ancient, well-preserved Long Burgh long barrow to the small village of Alfriston. Alfriston is very pretty, with lots of authentic timbered buildings, and attracts many tourists. We walk through the village, crossing and then following Cuckmere River as it winds its way to the coast. This is our first flat section of any length! The riverside scenery is very different and we will feel refreshed for the change, and the respite to our leg muscles!

Cuckmere Haven, where the river meets the English Channel, is a common film location: with its backdrop of white chalk cliffs, its beach is often used to depict Dover. Second World War pillboxes and other remains show its role in the country's defence. From here, we take the South Downs Way over the Seven Sisters, a series of rolling chalk cliffs – the most well-known section of our day, and arguably the most spectacular. Some of the ascents and descents before us are steep and arduous, others more gradual, but with every climb our destination grows nearer and it's not long before we can see it in the distance. The views over the sea are wonderful on a clear day and will encourage you to keep going!

Dipping right down to the abandoned National Trust hamlet of Birling Gap, with its nineteenth-century fishermen's cottages clustered perilously close to the eroding cliffs, we climb again. We pass Belle Tout lighthouse and then make a last uphill effort to the top of Beachy Head. We've made it, and earned a powerful sense of achievement that will never leave us!

We have time to celebrate with our fellow participants and enjoy the views before returning home.



**Total distance: 26 miles / 42 km**

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Tour Cost includes:

- Experienced Discover Adventure leaders and support staff throughout to manage the event safely and enjoyably
- Marshalling stops with water and snacks
- Optional transfer from Beachy Head to start point

### It does not include:

- personal insurance (optional)
- any parking fees or transport costs
- accommodation if required
- packed lunch & water-bottles

Approx. £50 is recommended for personal expenses. We strongly recommend you carry a credit card in case of personal emergency.

A coach transfer will take us from Beachy Head – where you can park – to the start in Lewes. There are good rail links to both Lewes and Eastbourne if you prefer to travel by train.

## WALKING INFORMATION & TRAINING

Groups may set off at staggered intervals (depending on numbers) but you can go at your own pace. The full 26-mile walk should take approximately 8-10 hours for fit and strong walkers; other should allow longer. It may take some walkers up to 12 hours or more.

There is a half-distance option, starting at Firle Beacon (transfers to this start point also available from Beachy Head). Walking from the halfway point should take approx 4-6 hours to walk (again depending on your fitness).

This is not a competitive event! You can go at your own pace, but if we are concerned about you being able to finish the distance safely, we will recommend you stop early.

### Terrain

We trek mainly on grass or gravel paths but there are some small tarmac roads and at least one main road crossing. Some sections may be muddy. There are many hills of varying length and gradient, and little true flat terrain.

The environment we walk through needs the respect of all its users to be preserved. Please walk on the path surface rather than on the vegetation growing beside it, don't remove stones from the paths and don't take short-cuts. Please follow the Countryside Code.

## Weather

Average temperatures and rainfall for East Sussex in June-Sept: 24 – 11 °C; 69mm

Be prepared for any weather! This may only be a one-day event, but you still need appropriate, good quality footwear



and clothing to cope with the weather conditions and the length of walk.

## Clothing & Equipment

We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list

on registration, as well as details on useful discounts you are entitled to as a Discover Adventure customer. We are always available if you need advice.

Each person should bring a small daypack to carry lunch, camera, waterproofs, sun cream, a warm fleece and any other items needed during the day.

## Training

This is a long and tough one-day walk and it is consequently vital that you train sufficiently for it. We will supply you with a thorough training guide once you have registered. The more training that you do the more you will enjoy the experience!

## Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with radios and emergency mobile phones, medical kit and other safety apparatus where necessary. They always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. Our leaders are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary should local conditions dictate.

Pre-trip administration – such as compulsory medical questionnaires – is all done with your safety in mind.

## WORLDWIDE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Long before Responsible or Sustainable Tourism became a recognised phrase, we designed and ran our trips to ensure they made minimum impact on the environment and a positive impact on the local communities we pass through. AITO, our Trade Association, has recognised the work we do in this area and has awarded us 4 stars as a Responsible Tour Operator.

## Discover Adventure Projects

We are supporting a tree-planting project in Peru and a children's home in Tanzania on a long-term basis. If you would like to 'give something back' please consider donating £5 to our projects when you sign up. Please see our website for more details.

## Carbon Offsetting

We encourage all our customers to offset emissions connected with their trip. You can offset at any time in the lead-up to departure by visiting Climate Care via our website and making a donation to a worthwhile project supported by them. Alternatively, if you wish to take more practical action in the UK you can volunteer for a day with BTCV and work on an environmental project local to you. Work may include construction footpaths, dry stone walling, creating wildlife habitats or planting trees in your community. Make your volunteer pledge by going to [www.btcv.org/dapledge](http://www.btcv.org/dapledge)



For further information please contact the office using the details below.

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