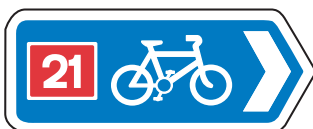


Cycling in East Sussex:
Avenue Verte Route Guide

Ashdown Forest & Crowborough circular



This route and the Forest Way route (Map 5) both describe a circle around Crowborough on roads across the High Weald, an area of old rocks revealed by the erosion of the huge chalk cap that used to cover the whole of Southern England millions of years ago. This is not a ride for the faint-hearted – if it's not up, it's down on a maze of Sussex lanes.

Groombridge – Duddleswell

Leaving Groombridge on National Cycle Network Route 21 (NCN 21) you soon join the B2188 just past Motts Hill as you head south through Five Hundred Acre Wood, made famous in the 'Winnie the Pooh' books.

The lush pastures and woodland give way to a landscape of gorse and ferns as you climb up through Ashdown Forest but you will eventually be rewarded with a fabulous descent, offering an opportunity to stop for refreshments near to Duddleswell.

Fairwarp – Butchers Cross

Turning off the B2026 at Fairwarp takes you on to a series of much quieter lanes, past many fine tile-hung houses. Watch out for the decorated crests of Oldland Hall, just before dropping down through the Ford and up through woodland towards Butcher's Cross.

Butcher's Cross – Eridge

Having negotiated the A267 at Butcher's Cross you rejoin NCN 21 along what's known as Avenue Verte, the Anglo-French cycle route from London to Paris. Continuing north through the quaint villages of Rotherfield and Blackdon via

a rough gravel track will eventually bring you towards the village of Eridge near the Kent border.

Places of Interest ❖❖❖

Rotherfield The first reference to Rotherfield is in AD792, when Duke Berthoald bequeathed a church on his estate of Ritheramfeld. The church was dedicated to Saint Dionysius, a French saint to whose monastery Berthoald had made a pilgrimage in order to have his illness cured. The original wooden church was replaced in the 11th century by a stone structure, with additions in the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. By this time the dedication to St Dionysius had been corrupted to St Denys.

Ashdown Forest The largest and best-preserved area of heathland in the South East. Once the hunting playground of kings, today it is an area of open access where you can wander freely.

A closer look at the **High Weald's** 'routeways' reveals a unique, radiating network – created by farmers moving their pigs to the woodland for fattening in autumn. These drove routes are now preserved as footpaths, bridleways and roads – and are often deeply sunken from centuries of use. In 1086, when the practice was already past its peak, Domesday records indicate that around 150,000 pigs would have been driven to and from the woods of the High and Low Weald annually. That's 30,000 more than the total human population of the High Weald today! However, with their heavy clay soils

and steep slopes, many High Weald meadows have never been ploughed up to grow crops. Compared to many areas of Britain, the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) still has a relatively large number of ancient, undisturbed, wildflower-rich hay meadows and pastures. These unimproved grasslands are some of our most important habitats for wildlife conservation, supporting a huge range of grasses and wildflowers which are home to a wide variety of insects and other creatures.

Starting point

Eridge

Distance

29 miles / 47 kilometres

Off road/rough sections

There is a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile gravel section alongside the A26 to the northeast of Eridge Station

Grade

Strenuous, with over 800 metres of climbing

Major climbs

Eleven climbs of 40-150 metres, the longest takes you to the top of Ashdown Forest and the High Weald on Black Hill

Refreshments

Eridge Station, Friars Gate (on the B2188), Duddleswell, Fairwarp, High Hurstwood, Rotherfield

Tourist Information Centres

Royal Tunbridge Wells: 01892 515675
Ashdown Forest Llama Park: 01825 712040

Cycle Hire and Shops

Forest Row:
Future Cycles: 01342 822847

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