

WHY THE SOUTH DOWNS AND WHATS ON OFFER ?



Downs - rounded and grass-covered hills in southern England that are typically composed of chalk. The name comes from the Old English *dūn* ("hill"). ... Chalk hills of similar type are called *Wolds* in Lincolnshire and in Yorkshire.

"The South Downs are the UK's latest National Park. At its core it is a range of chalk hills which stretch from Winchester in the west to Beachy Head and Eastbourne in the east – about 100 miles. To the north the area is called the Weald and has its own character based upon a geography of sands, clays and sandstone ridges with a range of small market towns such as Peterfield, Midhurst, Petworth, Billingshurst forming the gateways for roads crossing the Downs. To the south the chalk hills slope down to the South Coast to cities such as Brighton, and Worthing, and to the west to flat plains with Chichester and Portsmouth and Southampton."

I would like to share with you the soft beauty of the rounded Downland, the quiet lanes running between sparse hamlets and tiny villages with flint cottages, glistening clear chalk streams, and the wide vistas on the top of the hills. I'd like you to feel the change as we touch on the rich flora of the Sussex Weald. I'd like you to get a sense of Winchester, the old Wessex capital of England, and the naval city of Portsmouth surrounded by the sea. And I'd like to give you (and your bike) the chance to experience a ride in a steam train on the old Watercress line.

Using a single base there are four rides ...and you're free to book your own accommodation and to join whichever rides match your availability.

The cycling will be of distance and ascent roughly similar to that of the Cotswolds tour – 45 to 60 miles a day and 700 to 1,100 metres of climbing .

In addition there is an option for you to take a non-cycling day and maybe take the train down to Portsmouth to visit the world famous Naval Dockyard to see the Mary Rose, HMS Warrior and HMS Victory.

CONCEPT

This is not intended to be a 'classic moving on tour'. I appreciate we have a mix of people interested in riding who have different needs and challenges to our retired members and I wish to offer something which is structured or at least has a range of options so people are able to customize their involvement to meet their needs and desires.

Additionally I will not be doing a traditional 'belt-and-braces' organizational role. I will be doing this as a trip that interests me, and that is a personal refresher set of rides in an area which I think is lovely, interesting and different. My proposal to you is to offer up these rides & experiences as something you can share with me, but to do that in a way that is not prescriptive and in way that you can dip in and out as you want.

The format of the 'Tour' (?) is essentially 4 days / 3 nights from Tuesday to Friday where four day rides will be scheduled for you to pick and choose. These rides should offer you a range of sceneries, cycling challenges and experiences so as to show off the western end of the South Downs National Park. You can do all four or pick and chooseit is entirely up to you.

The rides will all start and finish in Petersfield So it is a centre-based 'tour' in a similar way that we did the Cotswolds tour centred on Witney. Hopefully there should be a sufficient range of bars and restaurants to offer a range of dining experiences, and a range of accommodation options.

You can choose how you travel there and back – choose to drive down to Petersfield with your bike, or as it has a mainline station on the Waterloo to Portsmouth line you could choose travel there and back by train. For the stronger tourers there is also the option to make your own way down – we have been to this area before and have experience of routing both to the east and west of Oxford and Newbury/Reading.

It is not my intention to book accommodation. The default accommodation is the Premier Inn on the outskirts of Petersfield – a 10 mins walk to the town centre. They do doubles and twins (a double with an additional single in the room) . If you are a singleton wanting to share the costs then let me know and I will try to buddy you up with someone.

I know for some members this is an area we have travelled through, and enjoyed before – even for them I think there is more to see and experience.

AND WITH UNLOCKING SCHEDULED FOR 19TH JULY HOPEFULLY EVENTHING WILL BE OPEN FOR US TO SEE AND EXPERIENCE

THE RIDES



The four routes are centred on Petersfield which is a focal point for the western end of the National Park, and they reach out to the west (Winchester), the north (Alton), the south (Portsmouth) and the east (West Sussex).

RIDE 1 - ALRESFORD AND ALTON – TUESDAY 20TH – 57 MILES

For people travelling down on the day they will need to make an early start to their journey to do this ride.

This is a day with an unusual option.

Initially we cycle out to the west through the Meon Valley and up to the Watercress town of New Alresford after 28 miles.

Once we have had a refreshment break in the Old Railway Station buffet in New Alresford there is then a choice to ride to Alton via Medstead the highest village in Hampshire (11 miles) or for a really unusual experience take the historic Watercress Line Steam Train to Alton (Note that the train tickets are £16). Whichever choice you take we will cycle back to Petersfield via Jane Austen's Chawton, and Gilbert White's Selbourne. (18 additional miles)





Routes here –

Cycle to New Alresford (28 miles) - <https://cycle.travel/map/journey/185887>

Cycle to Alton if not taking the Train (11 miles) - <https://cycle.travel/map/journey/185878>

Route from Alton to Petersfield(18 miles) - <https://cycle.travel/map/journey/185879>

RIDE 2 – PORTSMOUTH – WEDNESDAY 21ST – 55 MILES

This is a sightseeing overload day !

Making an early start to the day we will head south going all the way up to Butser Hill the highest point on the entire South Downs, move on to Broadhapenny Down, the ‘Home of Cricket’, pedal on to the Royal Armouries Museum (free entry) in Napoleonic era Fort Nelson overlooking the Solent, and then ride down to ancient Portchester Castle.



From Portchester the route makes its way down to Old Portsmouth, then Southsea Seafront and coming back up the eastern side of the island. The route then travels along the top of Langstone Harbour, through Havant and returns to Petersfield along the old coaching route back across the Downs.

Route here – <https://cycle.travel/map/journey/170515>

Note – although Portsmouth is always busy the majority of the route in the city on separated bike lanes so this should not be an issue.

There is a lot to stop and see so likely to be a long day.

RIDE 3 – WINCHESTER – THURSDAY 22ND – 55 MILES

This day takes us west along the Downs to King Alfred's Winchester capital of Wessex, with a chance to see the magnificent Winchester Cathedral, then travels back along the water meadow and Watercress beds of the Itchen Valley, and on to New Arlesford for a break. From the stop the route returns back via the 'Pub with No Name' giving a ride of 55 miles with 1100m of climb



Winchester Long Route - <https://cycle.travel/map/journey/185885>

Note - by this time people should be ridden-in enough to do the toughest days riding. It should also be quieter on the roads leading into Winchester City Centre.

RIDE 4 - WEST SUSSEX – FRIDAY 23RD JULY – 54 OR 33 MILES

This day is a bit of a geographical and scenic contrast as we ride east into the Sussex Weald to Midhurst, through the Polo Grounds of the Cowdray Estate, and then south to Cocking (no, it actually **is** called that !).



For there for people wanting to get away early to travel home there is a short self-guided route (total 33 miles) that diverts away from the longer route at Cocking and heads along the base of the Downs back to Petersfield

For the longer main route (total 46 miles) alternative we head further south into Chichester and then head back weaving in and out of the hills through the country lanes of the Sussex Downs.

West Sussex Long route - <https://cycle.travel/map/journey/171151>

West Sussex Short Route - <https://cycle.travel/map/journey/99175>

DATES

Aiming for Tuesday 20th July to Friday 23rd July 2021 after the Centenary BBQ

The Weather hopefully should be good and the Days should be long and suitable for relaxed riding, but away from peak holiday season and key dates in the Centenary Calendar.



ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

These are some of the reasonably obvious accommodation options – I make **NO** recommendations

Default Hotel

Premier Inn – a half mile walk from the centre – should have a lot of standard accommodation at a reasonable price. (Note – Premier Inns also acted very responsibly at the start of lockdown and refunded non-refundable bookings , in contrast to some of their competitors!)

This is a copy of Premier Inns Bike Policy

We're proud to say that every one of our hotels are bike friendly. Whether you want to keep your bike in your room or have it stored away safely, the choice is yours. We welcome clean bikes with dirt-free tyres but if your bike needs a little wipe down, ask at reception about local facilities to help you out. All we ask is you walk your bike around the hotel, lean it gently on the wall of your room and don't over crowd your room with lots of bikes.

Attached is a copy of a room booking form for the hotel giving the price / cancellation options as of 23rd June

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Premier Inn booking page. The page title is 'SOUTH DOWNS TOUR 2021 - PROPOSAL VERSION 5 - Microsoft Word'. The browser address bar shows a URL starting with 'https://www.premierinn.com'. The page content includes a 'Choose your rate' section with the following information:

Rate Type	Total Price
Flex	£322.00
Semi-Flex	£231.00
Standard	£191.50

A summary table on the right side of the page shows the following details:

Stay	Price
3 nights	See breakdown £191.50
Total	£191.50

A 'Book now' button is located below the summary table. The page also includes a 'Our rates explained' section and an 'Important information' section at the bottom.

Other Hotels

Langrish House – a premium country house hotel some 3 miles from the town

Pubs

The Drum – a pub in the town centre with what appears to be a few high quality rooms

The Good Intent – a pub on the edge of the town centre

The Half Moon – a pub about a mile from the town centre

B&B

80 Rushes Road – a private house near the station

GROUP EVENING MEALS

These are the eating places that look as if they could seat a large group

Spice Lounge – Indian Food with okay reviews

Red Lion – a good incarnation of a Wetherspoons pub with reasonable reports on food quality

Fez – Mediterranean food with good reviews and has a function room that can accommodate up to 15 people

Lemon Grass – Thai Food

This section is NOT part of the Tour and has been prepared purely to assist anyone deciding they might like to cycle down to Petersfield before the tour and/or then cycle back to Warwickshire following the tour

CYCLING THERE AND BACK OPTIONS

These are some route options **you might like to consider**. To keep things interesting the route down goes to the east of Oxford and the route back goes to the west.

CYCLING TO PETERSFIELD VIA WHEATLEY

DAY DOWN 1

Meet up in Southam and travel through Middleton Cheney and Bicester stopping overnight at Wheatley at the Travelodge hotel and use the adjacent Harvester for an evening meal. 49 miles plus the distance from your home to the Southam meetup point

<https://cycle.travel/map/journey/185883>

DAY DOWN2 –

Set off from Wheatley cross the Thames at Pangbourne and then travel through Hook and Alton and finally to the hotel(s) in Petersfield. 69 miles and 1100m of ascent

<https://cycle.travel/map/journey/185884>

CYCLING BACK TO WARWICKSHIRE VIA WITNEY

DAY BACK 1 – TUESDAY

Set off from Petersfield and travel to the west of Basingstoke and up to Thatcham avoiding Newbury and on up to Wantage and on to Witney. Choice of Restaurants and Hotels in Witney including our regular Witney Guest House. A challenging 76 miles and 1200m of ascent

<https://cycle.travel/map/journey/185881>

DAY BACK 2 - WEDNESDAY

A route we have used before from Witney via Enstone, Hook Norton and Wellesbourne to our dispersal point in Warwick. 48 miles and 800m of ascent plus travel to your homes

<https://cycle.travel/map/journey/185882>