

# Wildlife Walk... 4 miles

## White Cliffs of Dover

Discover the spectacular coast and countryside of south east Kent and stroll along the famous White Cliffs of Dover. Walking from Langdon Cliffs to South Foreland Lighthouse, you'll see great numbers of butterflies and wildflowers. Summer is also a great time to encounter the cliff-side antics of kittiwake, fulmar and peregrine.

### Getting there

**Foot:** signed paths from  port, and town centre. Located on the Saxon Shore Way path.

**Bike:** National Cycle Network route 1 runs close by. See [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

**Bus:** no.13 Dover – Deal to within 1 mile. Alight at Upper Road.

**Rail:** Dover Priory  is 1½ miles away.

**Road:** east of Dover off the A2. Take the A258 towards the town centre and follow signs, or from the A20, go straight over four roundabouts, turn left at the second set of lights and then right at the next lights. After ½ ml turn right into Upper Road.

**Start point and map:** grid ref – TR336422 – OS Landranger 179 and Explorer 138

### Facilities and contact

'Gateway to the White Cliffs' Visitor Centre, café, shop, WCs and family activity packs.

Tel: 01304 202756, postcode: CT16 1HJ

### Points of interest

- **Plants:** chalk grassland is a great habitat for wildflowers. It used to cover large parts of Europe but today only fragments remain, mainly in England and France. Exmoor ponies graze the grass at Langdon Cliffs, helping to keep it short and prevent scrub invading and smothering the wildflowers. In spring look out for the rare early spider orchid, it can only be found on the south coast.
- **Insects:** this area is well-known for its butterflies, especially the small, adonis and chalkhill blues. Red admiral, painted lady and clouded yellow can be seen in large numbers during migration when some come to the UK from Europe or Africa. July is the month to spot several rare moths like the day-flying straw belle. Also look out for Britain's largest fly, the endangered hornet robberfly, ermine moth caterpillar overwintering in hawthorn bushes, and a recent colonist, the wasp spider.
- **Birds:** As well as kittiwake, fulmar live here in summer and you may see a peregrine falcon swooping from the cliff walls where they breed. They hunt pigeons to feed their fledglings. Some areas of scrub have been left to grow as they provide shelter for warblers like the whitethroat, and for colourful seed eaters, linnets and yellowhammers.



Watch out in summer for kittiwakes breeding on tiny ledges on precipitous cliffs. They can be very noisy birds. Also listen out for the melodies of skylark and meadow pipit filling the air.



Look out for the yellow flowers of wild cabbage, from which our garden varieties were bred. Spring and summer also bring the colourful blooms of greater knapweed, horseshoe vetch and oxtongue broomrape (a parasitic plant living on the hawkweed oxtongue).



As the name suggests, the chalkhill blue butterfly is commonly found in chalk grassland habitats where it can find its favourite plant, the horseshoe vetch.

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**'The white cliffs might be England's greatest landmark, but they also form the backbone for one of the Trust's top ten sites for rare plants and other wildlife'**

*Simon Humphreys, NT Nature Conservation Advisor*

## Route and directions

1. From 'Gateway to the White Cliffs' visitor centre, head east to the coast path with the sea on your right.

The cliffs are being eroded by 5-10cm every year although in winter storms several tonnes can fall. The battering of the sea means the cliffs stay white; otherwise they would become covered in green vegetation. Here you can also see the remains of the Convict and Military Prison above the Port of Dover.

2. Keep on this path looking out for where the chalk cliffs meet the English Channel and take in magnificent views of the French coast from the rim of Langdon Hole. On a clear day you can see 21 miles across the Channel.

The chalk downland habitat along the cliff tops is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) due to the fantastic array of flora and insect life which thrives here. Above Fan Bay look out for pyramidal and fragrant orchids in June.

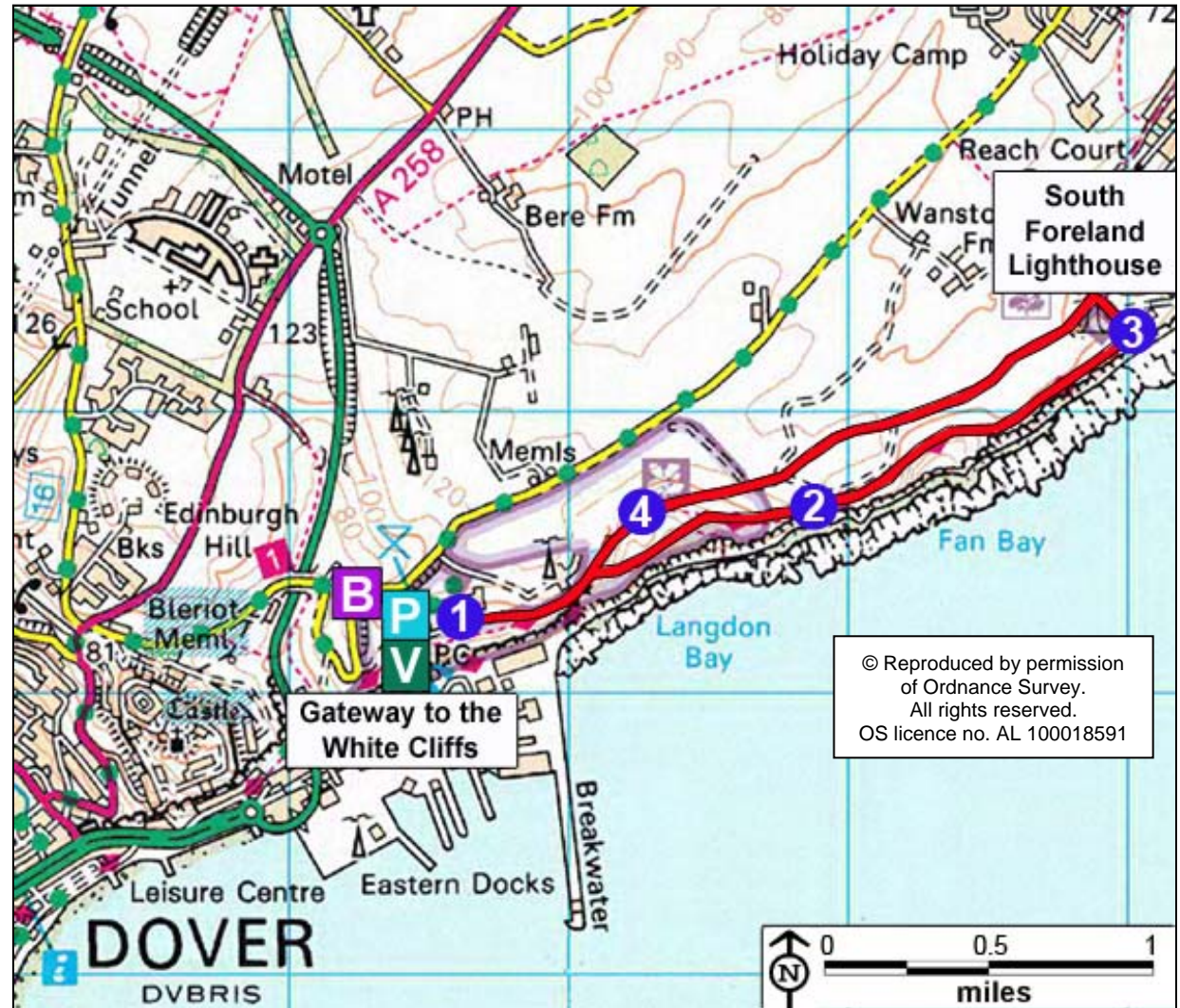
3. South Foreland Lighthouse was built in 1843 on a spot where lighthouses have stood for over 350 years. It helped mariners navigate the infamous Goodwin Sands until it was decommissioned in 1988. It is famed for being the first electrically lit lighthouse and the site of the first ever international radio broadcast.

Lighthouses replaced simple beacon fires lit along the cliffs. The remains of a Roman lighthouse (Pharos) can be seen within the grounds of Dover Castle, near the church.

4. Return to 'Gateway to the White Cliffs' visitor centre, following a surfaced path just inland, this time keeping the sea on your left.

## Distance, terrain and accessibility

Four miles on naturally uneven and undulating surfaces with some steep slopes. Height gain of 107 metres. Do not approach the cliff edge as it can crumble at any time and take special care when the ground is wet as the grass and exposed chalk can become very slippery.



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Find out more at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)