4 Night Discover More of the South Downs



Trip style:
Small group holidays

Destination:
South Downs

Walking Grade
1

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Explore Sussex and the South Downs like a local with this fascinating small-group tour. Your adventure begins in spectacular fashion with a visit to the mighty Hever Castle and ride on the Bluebell Railway. Over the course of three days, you'll also get to uncover the area's rich history and heritage at Amberley Museum and understand the local wildlife at RSPB Pulborough Brooks.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Exclusive small-group tours with expert guides
- Exploring Hever Castle on a private tour
- Discovering the area's rich heritage at Amberley Museum
- Seeing the Roman mosaics at Bignor Roman Villa
- A more personalised experience thanks to small group sizes (maximum 15 people in 2026 and 16 people in 2027)

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Comfortable en-suite accommodation in our country house
- Cream tea on arrival day
- Cooked and continental breakfast every morning
- Daily packed lunches
- Three-course evening meals, plus tea & coffee
- Guided sightseeing with an experienced HF Holidays leader
- All transport included in the itinerary
- All entrance fees (other than National Trust & English Heritage properties)
- Easy-to-follow routes, maps and information in our Discovery Point if you want to explore independently

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 **Arrival Day**

Check-in at the hotel is available from 16:00. If you are a member you can arrive at the house from 14:00. Enjoy a complimentary cream tea at 16:30 and meet other guests.

Day 2 **Bignor Roman Villa & WWT Arundel**

Housing some of the most detailed and complete Roman mosaics in the UK, the exhibition and museum at Bignor shine a light on Sussex's ancient past. We'll explore the site with a specialist guide to delve into the history of the Villa and the area's Roman heritage. In the afternoon, we will visit WWT Arundel, a wetlands reserve home to a wide variety of flora and fauna species. We'll take a guided tour with a site expert before enjoying some free time to explore further.

Day 3 **Amberley Museum & Wiston Estate**

This morning, we will leap forward over several centuries to find out more about the region's past at Amberley Museum. The site brings together a range of traditional craftspeople, heritage exhibitions, and more, so there will be plenty to explore on both a guided visit and during some free time. Later in the day, we will visit the Wiston Estate. Spread over 6000 acres of downland, the estate covers a huge landscape of protected woods and farmland. Once there, we will visit the Wiston winery on an award-winning tour with an expert guide. The South Downs are known for their chalky terroir; one which produces exceptional English wines. So, after our tour, there will be a tutored tasting of a selection of Wiston wines before we return to Abingworth Hall.

Day 4 **Hever Castle & Bluebell Railway**

Today's trip takes us just over the Kentish border to Hever Castle, once home to the Boleyn family and its most infamous member, Anne. A site expert will join our group here for a private tour of the castle to learn about its storied past and how the team aim to conserve the site today. There will be free time at Hever to enjoy the gardens before we hop aboard the Bluebell Railway to break up our return journey to Abingworth.

Day 5 Departure Day

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making your way home.

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 1

Short, easy walks on level paths with no stiles. Ideal for relaxed walking and active sightseeing. Typically, 2-3 miles (3-5km) or less, with little if any ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

Abingworth Hall, Thakeham

Country living just got cosier at this former farmhouse. Abingworth Hall is just a skip away from the village of Thakeham at the foot of the South Downs – a landscape of ancient woodland, hidden valleys, chalky cliffs, and high-backed hills so deserving of its national park status finally bestowed in 2010. While the views from the doorstep are as wow-worthy as you'd expect, the walking opportunities around the sightseeing greats such as Devil's Dyke, Seven Sisters Country Park, Kingley Vale, Parham House, and the Clayton Windmills (known locally as Jack and Jill) are equally standout. You'll also be within easy driving distance of several historic towns and cities, most fabulously Arundel, Chichester, and Brighton.

About

· 27 well-appointed guest rooms · Exclusive occupancy: 37 guests minimum · Check in from 4:00pm · For members check in from 2:00pm · Full-board (including cream tea on arrival) · Free Wi-Fi · Free on-site parking · Boot room and drying room · Travel cot & high chair · Discovery Point offering a wide range of local area maps, route guides, and information for self-guided walks · Books and games to borrow · Licensed bar · Three lounges · Heated outdoor pool (open May to September*) · Electric vehicle charging point - Please note, you will need to bring your own cables to use this EV charging point

Then & now

Some 800 years of history are encapsulated within Abingworth Hall's walls. Parish records reference Roger of Abingworth in 1231, but this was very much a working farm until the 19th century (the 1861 census citied farmer Edward Upperland as the owner of 'Abingworth Place'). Later converted into a three-storey residence complete with an ornamental lake, it was advertised in 1905 as 'a residential estate with pleasure grounds, agricultural buildings, dwelling house, eight cottages, fertile meadow, arable lands, orchards, and market gardens'. Following a fire, the house was completely rebuilt in 1910 by new owner, Charles Stanley Peach – an architect most famous for designing the Centre Court stadium at Wimbledon in 1921. In 1913, ownership transferred to Sir Oswald Ernald Mosley, grandfather of notorious fascist Oswald Mosley, and later to Captain Frank Elliot Stobart whose wife, Faith, landscaped the gardens that remain today. In 1945, the estate was purchased by mushroom-growers AG Lingfield and the house renamed Abingworth Hall. It has been part of our HF Holidays line-up since 1994.

Nowadays, there's 27 well-appointed guest rooms in two categories (Classic and Premium), a dining room for a range of dishes made with fresh and seasonal ingredients, and three comfortable lounges – the largest of which opens onto an attractive conservatory and a licensed bar. There's also a ballroom, books and games to borrow during your stay, a handy boot and drying room, and a Discovery Point offering a wide range of local area maps, route guides, and easy-to-follow information for self-guided walks. Elsewhere, there's eight acres of lovely gardens and an outdoor heated pool (open from May to September*).

Check-In & Check-Out

You are welcome to check in from 4pm at the earliest. HF Members can check in earlier, from 2pm. On arrival, you'll enjoy a complimentary cream tea and get to meet your fellow guests, our HF Holidays Leaders, and the rest of the friendly team. Check out 10am.

FOOD & DRINK

Dining

Seasonal dining, tailored for you

Our team of skilled chefs design our dinner menus to showcase the best of each season, from warming winter comfort food to vibrant summer dishes, including vegetarian, vegan and high-protein options. We also source fruit and vegetables within a 40-mile radius of each house, open every break with a Chef's Special menu inspired by dishes and flavours of the local area, and are able to adapt dishes to suit special dietary requirements.

Welcome Cream Tea

What better way to start your stay than with a cream tea, served fresh on arrival to make you feel instantly at home. A quintessentially English tradition, our scones are baked in-house and served with preserves and clotted cream, providing the perfect opportunity to meet fellow walkers.

A hearty breakfast to start the day

Start the day with a freshly-prepared cooked breakfast and a wide choice from our continental buffet, including hot drinks, juices and fresh fruit. Our team offer a quick and friendly service, leaving you fuelled and ready for your day's adventures.

Our famous picnic lunch

Our personalised picnic lunches are perfect for a day out walking, ready to enjoy when hunger strikes. Choose from a large selection of fresh sandwiches and salads, freshly baked cakes and snacks, including the ever-popular Freddos chocolate bar! Everything is designed to fit neatly into your rucksack, and all of the packaging we provide is recyclable or compostable.

3-course evening meals

Our à la carte evening menus feature a wide choice of starters, mains, and desserts, made with seasonal ingredients and, wherever possible, herbs and vegetables from our own gardens. Shared around sociable tables, dinners are relaxed occasions, with drinks available to order at the table or from the bar, and a traditional Sunday roast to round off the week.

ROOMS

Your room at Abingworth Hall

Designed with your comfort in mind, Abingworth Hall has 27 well-appointed guest rooms available in two categories: Classic and Premium.

Classic Rooms are comfortable en-suite guest rooms, ideal for a peaceful night's sleep. Amenities include free Wi-Fi, tea and coffee-making facilities, toiletries (hand wash, shampoo, and shower gel), and a TV.

Premium Rooms are more spacious en-suite guest rooms*. Amenities include free Wi-Fi, tea and coffee-making facilities, toiletries (hand wash, shampoo, body lotion, shower gel), and a 32-inch TV. Extras include bathrobes, slippers.

We love: The Premium Rooms for views of the impossibly pretty surroundings.

The **Choose Your Room** service is available at our UK country houses, allowing you the option of choosing and confirming a specific room for an extra charge of £30 per room. This is subject to availability. Upgrade supplements apply.

Room supplements

Premium single	Premium double/twin	Choose your room
£20 pppn	£20 pppn	£30 per room

*Views and layout reflect each properties unique character and location

*Please note, pool opening hours are: 07:00am – 09:00am and 16:00pm – 18:30pm

ACCESSIBILITY

For accessibility and assistance information, please contact our expert team on 020 3974 8865 or view the accessibility information online for Abingworth Hall

ABOUT YOUR STAY

A warm welcome
We want you to feel comfortable from the moment you arrive. You'll find a welcome pack in your room with guest registration forms, menus, order forms for dinners and picnic lunches, the Wi-Fi password, and the front door code. Our houses are locked at night, so we recommend noting the Duty Manager's number on arrival in case of an emergency (or getting locked out).

Evening entertainment

While evening entertainment varies from house to house, HF Holidays Inter-House Quiz night held after dinner on Wednesdays is a weekly staple. Your HF Holidays leader may be around for tips on guided and self-guided waking routes as well as visit-worthy local attractions.

Helping you enjoy the Great Outdoors - A natural focus on walks

Walks talks and Discovery Points
Our founder, country pastor turned social innovator, Thomas Arthur Leonard, was passionate about encouraging people to explore the countryside. His legacy continues in HF's continued focus on walking. Many guests choose to travel with us on guided or self-guided walking holidays, and as such, evenings at our houses are often busy with walk leaders hosting various briefings and talks. On guided walking holiday arrival days, there are walking information briefings before dinner, and for the duration of any guided walking holiday there will be a Walks Talk before (or on occasion after dinner), to go through the following day's walk options. Self-guided walking guests, and those on special interest holidays (where there is free time to explore independently), are of course welcome to also join in these Walks Talks - please talk to the team locally if you have any queries. Our Discovery Points are filled with handy maps and route notes, designed to ensure everyone, not just those booked on a guided walking holiday, can enjoy the beautiful countryside settings that our HF houses enjoy.

The walking day
Prior to setting off on guided walks, our HF Holidays Leaders run through a short safety briefing. There's also an up-to-date weather forecast on display at the house to ensure walkers have appropriate clothing and footwear. If you choose to do your own walks or are on a self-guided walking holiday, we ask that you please complete an Independent Walker Card each day. These can be found near the Discovery Point in the house.

TRAVEL DETAILS

Address

Abingworth Hall
Storrington Road
Thakeham
West Sussex RH20 3EF

Tel: +44 (0)1798 813636

By train

The nearest station is Pulborough.

Pulborough station has a short platform, so you'll need to check the departure boards for which carriage to sit in.

National Rail have up-to-date routes and train times.

By taxi

The six-mile journey from Pulborough railway station takes about 15 minutes.

It's best to avoid arriving at Pulborough station between 2:50pm and 3:20pm as there may not be any taxis available due to school pick-ups.

For pricing, please contact the taxi company directly.

MJ Cars
You can pre-book a taxi from with MJ Cars*. We recommend booking your taxi at least seven days in advance by contacting:

Tel: +44 (0)1903 745414
Email: mjcars@btconnect.com

A return journey can be arranged on your behalf by the HF Holidays House Manager at Abingworth Hall.

*MJ Cars is not owned or managed by HF Holidays.

Sue's Private Hire
You can pre-book a taxi with Sue's Private Hire* by phone, text or email. Please pre-book asap as there are no taxis based at Pulborough Station. Your journey will be mostly with a lady driver and an electric car.

Tel: +44 (0)1798 874848 / +44 (0)7918 137066
Email:- sueph520@yahoo.com

*Sue's Private Hire is not owned or managed by HF Holidays and prices are subject to change

By car

From the M25
Take either the A24 or the M23 and then the A264 towards Horsham. At the Great Daux roundabout go south on the A24 towards Worthing. Go straight over two roundabouts and then at the traffic lights turn right onto the A272 to Billingshurst and Petersfield. After three miles turn left onto the B2139. Abingworth Hall is approximately four miles from this junction on the left hand side (go past Abingworth Meadows and Thakeham Pre-School).

From the M27
Continue onto the A27 around Chichester. At the second roundabout take the first exit on to the A29, then the second exit on to the B2139 to Storrington. At the mini roundabout, take the second exit onto the A283. Continue through Storrington then turn onto the B2139 towards Thakeham. Continue straight ahead at the traffic lights, and then take the first exit at the mini roundabout then the first exit. Continue down this road until you reach Abingworth Hall on the right.

By air

The nearest airport is Gatwick Airport.

The easiest way to get from Gatwick Airport to Abingworth Hall is by taxi, a 29-mile journey taking around 40 minutes.

LOCAL AREA

Places to visit in the South Downs

Whether you're enjoying a guided or self-guided walking holiday, there's always the opportunity to linger for longer. Here's our pick of the very best things to see and do within easy travelling distance of Abingworth Hall.

Arundel

Just a 30-minute drive away, this picturesque West Sussex market town is most famous for two landmarks: Arundel Castle and Arundel Cathedral. A short way from the town centre is the open-air Amberley Museum with over 40 exhibits spread across its 36 acres.

Arundel Wetlands Centre

A 30-minute drive away, this 60-acre nature reserve run by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust provides a protected habitat for swans, geese, ducks, and other beautiful wetland birds. Boat safaris are available, weather permitting.

Bignor Roman Villa

Home to some of the best-preserved Roman mosaics in the UK, this courtyard villa turned visitor attraction is the heart of the South Downs National Park. The land is still farmed by the family of George Tupper, the farmer who discovered the site whilst ploughing in 1811.

Pulborough Brooks Nature Reserve

Just four miles away, this nature-rich area is set in the sheltered Arun Valley within the South Downs National Park. Expect a great variety of habitats (wetlands, heathland, woodland) as well as some wonderful wildlife viewing. The visitor centre is open year-round.

Uppark House & Garden

A 50-minute drive away, this 17th century stately National Trust property set within intimate gardens and woodland overlooking the South Downs was loving restored following a fire in 1989. Interiors include Grand Tour paintings and a very impressive dolls' house.

Parham House & Gardens

Set the foot of the South Downs, this E-shaped Elizabethan mansion was built in 1557. Highlights include the deer park, mature trees, four-acre walled garden with herbaceous borders, and seven acres of landscaped pleasure grounds.

Fishbourne Roman Palace

Just a couple of miles outside Chichester, Britain's largest residential Roman building was one of the great archaeological discoveries of the 1960s. The palace is most famous for its collection of mosaics, many of which were identified early in the excavation campaign.

Petworth House & Park

Managed by the National Trust, this 17th century mansion set in a 700-acre deer park is a 30-minute drive away. The majestic grounds were designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and include the Ionic Rotunda erected in about 1765.

Weald & Download Living Museum

Having shot to fame as the filming location of the BBC's The Repair Shop, this open-air museum brings the history of Sussex to life with over 50 historic buildings. One highlight is the working watermill dating from the early 17th century.

Bluebell Railway

Running across 11 miles from Sheffield Park to East Grinstead in Sussex, stopping at Horsted Keynes and Kingscote, the UK's first preserved heritage line is ideal for those who like the romantic thrill of steam travel. Special events are hosted throughout the year.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

Weather conditions in the UK can vary throughout the day. Use the following list as a guide when preparing for your holiday.

Essentials

- Sturdy footwear with good grip for spending much of the day on your feet
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof overtrousers
- Sun hat
- Rucksack with a waterproof liner
- Water bottle with a capacity of at least 1 litre
- Sunscreen
- UV-protective sunglasses
- Mobile phone

Recommended

- First-aid kit, including plasters
- Sit mat
- Waterproof pouch for valuables
- Rubbish bags
- Wallet or purse
- Walking poles
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Waterproof rucksack liner
- Membership cards for English Heritage, the National Trust or similar heritage organisations in Scotland and Wales, if you are a member. These may be useful when visiting attractions during your itinerary or on your free day.

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip

you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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