4 Night South Downs Christmas & New Year Guided Walking Holiday



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
Festive breaks	South Downs	4, 5 & 7	72kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Spend the festive season in the South Downs and head out on winter walks that take you across a landscape of ancient woodland, chalky cliffs, and high hills. And when you're not busy exploring the wintry scenery of southern England, cosy up in Abingworth Hall – our charming country house just a skip away from the village of Thakeham. We pull out all the stops at this time of year and our houses welcome you with a sprinkling of festive cheer, seasonal food, and plenty of yuletide treats. So wrap up warm and step into Christmas with HF Holidays.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Getting into the festive spirit with a guided walking holiday
- A choice of winter walks with our experienced HF Holidays Leaders
- Discovering the stunning landscapes of South Downs on foot
- Staying in our cosy former farmhouse in Abingworth
- Enjoying festive fare and leaving all the organising to us
- A celebration dinner with all the trimmings on Christmas Day and New Year's Eve

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Comfortable en-suite accommodation in our country house
- Cream tea on arrival day
- Cooked or continental breakfast every morning
- Daily packed lunches
- Three-course evening meals, plus tea & coffee
- Guided walking with experienced HF Holidays Leaders
- Choice of three guided walks (each walking day) from March to October, and two from November to February
- All transport to and from walks where necessary
- Easy-to-follow routes, maps, and information in our Discovery Point if you want to explore independently

ITINERARY - CHRISTMAS

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 **Amberley and the South Downs**

Option 1 - Amberley & Parham Park

Distance: 6 miles (9.5km)

Ascent: 450 feet (140m)

In summary: Walk through the fields at the foot of the Downs from the picturesque village of Amberley back to Abingworth Hall, passing through the grounds of Parham House.

Highlight: Parham House is a fine Elizabethan residence, surrounded by an extensive deer park.

Option 2 - Amberley & The South Downs

Distance: 9 miles (14.5km)

Ascent: 850 feet (260m)

In summary: Walk from Amberley beside the River Arun, then follow the South Downs Way atop the Downs as far as Kithurst Hill. From here we descend through the fields to Abingworth Hall.

Highlight: Soak up the views from Rackham Hill where the panorama stretches north over the hills and woodland of the Weald, and south towards the English Channel.

Option 3 - Amberley & The South Downs Way

Distance: 12 miles (19km)

Ascent: 1,150 feet (360m)

In summary: Discover the peaceful River Arun then head along the top of the Downs following the South Downs Way as far as Barnsfarm Hill. Our route then turns north, crossing Washington Common, to return to Abingworth Hall.

Highlight: The chalk downlands are a rich habitat for wild flowers. Look out for rare orchids and Common Blue butterflies.

Day 3 **Pulborough**

Option 1 - Hurston Place & Nutbourne Common

Distance: 6½ miles (10.5km)

Ascent: 450 feet (140m)

In summary: We walk along the ridge to the west of the house to Hurston Place and then across West Sussex golf course to Nutbourne Common. We continue, eastwards, via West Chiltington to return to the house.

Highlight: Walking along the West Sussex Literary Trail.

Option 2 - Pulborough Brooks, Nutbourne & West Chiltington

Distance: 8½ miles (14km)

Ascent: 600 feet (180m)

In summary: We walk along the ridge to the west of the House and continue west to the RSPB reserve at Pulborough. We then head north, across Pulborough Brooks meadows, to Pulborough village. We continue east to the villages of Nutbourne and West Chiltington, to return to the house.

Highlight: The nature reserve at Pulborough Brooks is not to be missed.

Option 3 - Pulborough and Nutbourne

Distance: 11½ miles (18km)

Total ascent: 850 feet (260m)

In summary: This walk travels along the ridge to the west of the house and continue west to the RSPB reserve at Pulborough – and the opportunity for refreshments. We then head north, across Pulborough Brooks meadows, to Pulborough village. We continue north eventually to reach West Chiltington and return to the house.

Highlight: Stop to enjoy the RSPB reserve at Pulborough Brooks where sightings may include Sandpipers, Lapwing and Shoveler Ducks.

Day 4 Thakeham & The Knepp Esate

Option 1 - Thakeham, Warminghurst & Ashington

Distance: 6½ miles (10.5km)

Ascent: 400 feet (120m)

In summary: We walk to the nearby village of Thakeham and then, via Warminghurst church, across fields to Ashington. We return via woodland to the House.

Highlight: The gentle stroll through the woodland at the end of the walk.

Option 2 - The Knepp Estate from Abingworth

Distance: 10½ miles (16.5km)

Ascent: 500 feet (140m)

In summary: Leaving the house, we make our way to the outskirts of the pretty village of Thakeham. We continue across open farmland and through woodland to reach the south western edge of the Knepp Estate. In 2001 the Knepp Estate started a re-wilding project to turn farmland back into a natural habitat. The area is now home to an astonishing variety of species including rare birds such as nightingales and turtle doves. It is also home to the UK's only wild population of white storks which come here to breed in the summer months.

While walking here you may see grazing animals including Tamworth pigs, longhorn cattle and three species of deer: roe, fallow and red. We have time to explore some of Knepp's walking trails before turning for home via Warminghurst village.

Highlight: Exploring the Knepp Estate where there is a pioneering re-wilding project in progress.

Option 3 - Shipley & The Knepp Estate from Abingworth

Distance: 13½ miles (22km)

Ascent: 600 feet (180m)

In summary: We leave the house and make our way to the outskirts of the pretty village of Thakeham. Continuing across open farmland and through woodland, we reach the south western edge of the Knepp Estate where a pioneering re-wildling project has been in progress since 2001. The estate is now home to a diverse range of species and is the only place in the UK where white storks nest and breed. Grazing animals you may see include Tamworth pigs, longhorn cattle and three species of deer - red, roe and fallow. We continue to the village of Shipley with its beautifully restored windmill and ancient church before exploring the eastern part of the Knepp Estate. We return to the house via Warminghurst village.

Highlight: Shipley - this historic village was first mentioned in the Domesday Book. It has a beautifully restored windmill.

Day 5 Departure Day

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making your way home.

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 4

The most active Gentle grade, with longer walks, some ascent, and possible steps, stiles, or off-path uneven ground. Typically, 6-7 miles (10-12km) with around 1,000ft (300m) of ascent.



Moderate walking grade 5

Some walking experience needed. Full day walks which may include some short but steep ascents and descents throughout the day, and varied terrain. Regular stops. Typically, 8-9 miles (13-15km) with around 1,300ft (400m) of ascent.



Moderate walking grade 7

The most active moderate grade. Longer distances and short but steep ascents and descents possible throughout the day. Hill walking experience desirable. Typically, 11-12 miles (18-19km) with around 1,800ft (560m) of 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.

SAFETY ON YOUR HOLIDAY

Walking safety

Walks may be changed for safety reasons and are subject to a maximum and minimum number of guests.

Leaders always consider the safety of the group as a whole, and may need to alter or curtail the walk if the conditions dictate. Your leader may refuse to accept a guest where clothing, equipment or behaviour is unsuitable. In the event of a problem all leaders carry a mobile phone, first aid kit, group shelter, spare maps and a compass.

Please note: If you choose to leave the group your leader is no longer responsible for you.

If you have a particular health condition or disability please put this on your guest registration form. This information will be confidential to your leaders and the house manager, but leaders do need to take account of any issues when planning walks. Please carry a copy of these trip notes with you, or note down the contact phone number for your accommodation (details in the travel section) should you need them in case of emergency.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

Weather conditions in the UK can vary throughout the day, and conditions in the mountains may be cold and windy even in summer. Use the following list as a guide when preparing for your holiday.

Essentials

- Suitable waterproof walking boots with ankle support and good grip
- Waterproof, wind-resistant jacket with a hood, taped seams and a hydrostatic head rating of at least 10,000 mm
- Waterproof overtrousers
- Spare warm clothing, such as a synthetic insulated jacket
- Comfortable walking clothing (jeans & waterproof capes are not suitable)
- Warm mid-layers, such as fleeces
- Gloves and a warm hat, even in summer
- Rucksack with a waterproof liner
- Water bottle with a capacity of at least 1 litre
- Flask for hot drinks
- Sunscreen
- UV-protective sunglasses
- Spare high-energy food
- Head torch and spare batteries for holidays between October and March
- Passport (if applicable)
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy

Recommended

- Several base layers, with long or short sleeves
- Cushioned walking socks to avoid blisters
- First-aid kit, including plasters, insect repellent, a midge net and a tick-removal tool
- Sit mat
- Waterproof pouch for valuables
- Rubbish bags
- Wallet or purse

- Camera
- Walking poles
- Sun hat
- Gaiters
- Mobile Phones
- Swimwear (please see accommodation information for hotel facilities)
- 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.

Document produced: 4 November 2026