



## WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **A New Perspective** Our annual photo competition returns for 2023 with a brand-new theme and some wonderful prizes up for grabs!
- **Palaces for Nature** Find out some novel ways to honour the King's Coronation.
- **Cake heaven** Discover some of the best walks in the National Park...with a yummy cake stop.
- **Carpe Diem!** Win a family ticket to see some of the finest Roman relics in the UK!

As always, please send your comments and ideas to us at [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)

## Win £250 as photo contest returns!

**Can you take an amazing photograph of the South Downs National Park that draws a collective 'wow'?**

We're launching our 2023 Annual Photo Competition with the theme of "A New Perspective" and a top prize of £250.

The rolling chalk hills, river valleys, forests, grassland and heaths, as well as the pretty towns, villages and cultural heritage, all provide plenty of photographic material and the challenge is now for people to put their own creative stamp on what they see.

Photographers, of all levels and abilities, are being challenged to capture a stunning view that shows off the magical beauty of the South Downs from their perspective.

Judges will be keen to see viewpoints that are a little bit out-of-the-ordinary and show off the South Downs in a way people may not have seen before.

First place prize is £250, with a runner-up prize of £100, and third prize of £50.

The National Park's photo competition also includes a wildlife category, with a top prize of £75 for a stunning shot of one or many of the beautiful creatures inhabiting the South Downs.



The mobile phone category returns this year, with £75 for an incredible phone picture of the National Park, covering either a "New Perspective" or wildlife.

Returning to judge the competition are award-winning professional photographers Rachael Talibart, Finn Hopson and Carlotta Luke, as well as Claire Blow, deputy editor of *Outdoor Photography* magazine.

The youth competition also returns this year for budding young photographers – with categories 10 years and under and 11 to 17. The prize for 10 years and under will be a family ticket to Birdworld, while the winner of the 11 to 17 category will win a family ticket to Marwell Wildlife.

Judge Rachael Talibart said: "I grew up in Sussex and the area that is now the South Downs National Park feels like home to me. It's also my favourite place to make photos! The National Park is full of variety, from spectacular vistas

## Unveiling of tree sculpture

to quiet, overlooked details and, of course, some wonderful wildlife. I'm looking forward, as always, to seeing everyone's entries and, in particular, I'm hoping to find a few surprises."

Carlotta Luke, who hails from Lewes, added: "This year's theme for the South Downs photo competition is a really great one. Our beautiful National Park means many different things to the people who love and use it. Show us your perspective on why you treasure the Park – or a view or detail that you think is unusual and gives us a new way of looking at our South Downs. I can't wait to see what we get sent!"

Entries close at midnight on Tuesday 31 October. Find out more and submit your entry at

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/photo-comp-2023/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/photo-comp-2023/)

To get you inspired here are some previous entries!



**A beautifully-gilded tree sculpture has been unveiled in a local park to symbolise the importance of our treescape.**

The English Elm, one of the oldest in the world, was destined for the incinerator after succumbing to Elm Disease.

However, a huge community effort led by artist Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva has seen the tree preserved and turned into thought-provoking art.

The striking sculpture was unveiled at Preston Park in Brighton, reuniting the tree with its "twin" elm that still stands nearby.

The pair, known locally as the Preston Twins, stood side-by-side at the city park for over 400 years after being planted in 1613 during the reign of King James 1.

Later in the year, the South Downs National Park will be donating two disease-resistant elms to Preston Park for future generations to enjoy. This is part of the Trees for the Downs initiative which aims to replace trees lost due to pests and diseases.

Claire Kerr, Countryside and Policy Manager, who leads nature recovery for the National Park Authority, said: "Brighton and Hove has 17,000 elm trees spread across its street, parks and open spaces. The city's collection of elms is extraordinary because it's more diverse than any other city in the world. In fact, Brighton and Hove, along with Edinburgh, are the remaining strongholds for elms in Britain."



"There are more than 125 varieties which include different height, leaf shape, girth and even colour. The tallest, widest and rarest, are recorded as champion trees in the Tree Register, a national database of notable trees. This includes the 'Twins' in Preston Park, one of which is now the Gilded Elm."

# King's coronation: Create a Palace for Nature!



**Whether it's a simple pot of herbs, or a blooming marvellous mini-meadow of wildflowers, every garden can have its own crowning glory to help wildlife.**

So, in honour of the coronation of King Charles III, we're encouraging people to get green-fingered and create their own 'Palaces for Nature.'

King Charles III maintains a reputation as a committed environmentalist, often speaking passionately on behalf of conservation causes, and taking bold action on climate change and nature loss.

Across the South Downs, we're working with landowners and land managers to increase the amount of land managed for **nature to 33%** by 2030. This will create new habitat for wildlife to survive and thrive.

Laura Warren, one third of **The 3 Grow Bags**, shares her ideas on what you can do to create 'Palaces for Nature' in honour King Charles.



## A 'Royal Herb Pot'

Wild herbs such as marjoram and thyme are the jewels in the crown of the chalk grassland of the South Downs National Park, being irresistible to our native bees and butterflies, and these plants are also very happy in a pot or window box so why not create your own 'Palace for Nature' with herbs?

May is a perfect time as herbs will take off much better if planted as it warms up in late spring.

It's tempting to use supermarket herb pots but their soft growth will suffer a setback if planted straight outdoors, so use properly hardened off plants from a nursery.

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Choose as big a pot as you can to provide a good deep root run and add about 25% grit into a standard peat-free compost to improve its drainage.

### Drought tolerant herbs

Use a mix of herbs that like the same growing conditions, such as rosemary, thyme, marjoram, sage and lavender.

All like sunny conditions and are relatively drought tolerant.



### Herbs for wetter soil

If you have a shadier, moister spot, you can plant either basil, chives or parsley.

Avoid mint in either of these collections as it is too vigorous, and taller herbs too, such as dill or fennel which would look out of proportion.

### A 'Patriotic' Pictorial Meadow

Pictorial Meadows are a specific type of flower-rich meadow mixes consisting of native and non-native species.

Each named mix has been selected for its colour, height and flowering period to produce waves of blooms throughout the summer.

As well as the uplifting visual impact, the meadows produce nectar and pollen for insects over a very long period and hibernation sites for invertebrates and seeds for birds over the winter.

Developed by Professor Nigel Dunnett of Sheffield University, Pictorial Meadows were used for the 'Superbloom' planting scheme around the Tower of London for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and are now being trialled in many urban settings to bring the joy and visual impact of meadows back into the lives of local families living in towns.

But you can also buy the mixes in small quantities for use in your own or a community garden – a 6g pack will give you 2 square meters of meadow and the 'Patriotic Mix' of red, white and blue seems tailor made for a 'Palace for Nature' to celebrate the coronation.



They'll need an area of bare soil, just raked to prepare a seedbed with no need to dig deeply, rotovate or fertilise. Once sown, don't cover the seed, just press it into the surface by walking over the patch with your feet close together in a methodical way, or if it's a larger area and you have such a thing, use a garden roller.

If it's dry, sprinkle water gently over the site to trigger germination, then it shouldn't ever need watering again.

The flowers will bloom in sequence over the summer, with the later blooming species rising up through the sward to mask the dying foliage of the earlier flowering species.

## History knowledge nuggets: Monarch's Way

**Cultural heritage lead Anooshka Rawden takes a look at the history of this remarkable route.**

If you're a regular walker across the South Downs you might occasionally see signage for the Monarch's Way that cuts through places like Hambledon, Kingley Vale, Arundel and ends at Shoreham.



This is the fourth longest waymarked route in England, and broadly follows the route taken by King Charles II as he fled to France to escape the Cromwellian forces following his defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. It's over 600 miles in total, and charts around six weeks in history in which Charles was a fugitive within the Kingdom.

The battle was part of the ongoing struggle by Charles to reclaim the Kingdom after the execution of his father, King Charles I, in 1649.

His passage to France was masterminded by Colonel Gunter, of Racton, west of Chichester, who made arrangements for the King to be smuggled to France.

After being recognised in Brighton by an over-excited pub landlord, Charles eventually reached Shoreham and was transported out to France on a ship called Surprise – which is incidentally why there is a ship on the Monarch's Way signs. There he was able to join his mother, Queen Henrietta Maria, living in exile since her husband's execution.

It was not until after the death of Cromwell and the political disruption of the inter-regnum that Charles could plan a return to power.



He returned to England nine years later, having passed his time in exile in France and Holland, being crowned Charles II on 23 April 1661.

The Monarch's Way wasn't established until 1994 by a man called Trevor Antill, and its route was published in a three-volume guide.

If you'd like to find out more about the history there's a really useful article here on the [Ramblers website](#).

To find out more about the Monarch's Way, including information on trail sections, visit [www.monarchsway.50megs.com](http://www.monarchsway.50megs.com)

## Huge hedgerow to link two National Parks



**An ambitious project has been launched to connect Hampshire's two National Parks, the South Downs and New Forest, with a 'nature corridor' of hedgerow.** Hedgerows play an enormously important role in boosting biodiversity, capturing carbon, improving food production and enhancing the rural community.

The countryside has lost over half of all hedgerows since 1945 and CPRE Hampshire believe it's time to turn this around.

The Hampshire Hedge will wind its way through the county and link woodlands, meadows, local nature reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). It will start from Copythorne in the New Forest and finish at Compton, near Winchester.

Ellie Banks, Hedgerow Officer at CPRE Hampshire, explains: "The Hampshire Hedge offers communities a great opportunity to work together to restore and plant hedges in their local areas. We provide training on the traditional crafts of hedgelaying and offer some great resources to help communities learn surveying and hedgerow management to achieve the full benefits of their rich offerings."



Andrew Lee, Director of Countryside Policy and Management for the National Park, said: "Whilst outside the National Park boundary, our Western Ranger Team will keep in close touch as the project develops and the idea fits beautifully with our People & Nature Network that was published in 2020."

The strategy aims to create a network of green infrastructure across the region to help, recognising that ecosystems do not follow administrative boundaries. Green infrastructure includes parks, gardens, rivers and streams, roadside verges, street trees, hedgerows, churchyards, allotments and nature reserves as well as wider green spaces.

# National Walking Month: best walks with a cake stop



**A country walk is never quite complete without a spot of well-earned cake.**

All that physical exertion is best rewarded with a sumptuous slice of Victoria sponge, lemon drizzle or coffee and walnut, or why not really treat yourself to a decadent afternoon tea with lashings of fresh clotted cream?

The National Park is blessed with some wonderful walks – and far from being a wilderness, it’s cake-lovers’ paradise with an assortment of bakeries, tea rooms and coffee shops.

So, to mark National Walking Month, we give you five fabulous walks with a cake stop. Happy walking and eating! 😊

## **St Catherine’s Hill, Winchester**

A dramatic 220ft climb reveals showstopping views of Winchester city and its famous cathedral, as well as the Itchen Valley floodplains and the downland it nestles in. At the summit are the earthworks of an Iron Age fort, buried ruins of the Norman chapel that gives the site its name, and a beautiful copse of beech trees. In the summer you’ll be able to hear the cackle of a woodpecker, spy buzzards and kestrels hunting in the valley below.

**The Handlebar café** is a fantastic spot for a bite to eat, serving up a variety of cakes, teacakes, locally sourced sausage rolls, pies and pastries. If travelling by car, Garnier Road is currently closed, but Winchester’s Park and Ride car park is just a short walk away.

## **Stansted Park, near Rowlands Castle**

If you’re looking for a magical English woodland, full of nooks and crannies and unexpected openings revealing awesome views of coast and country, this forest is a must-visit. Stansted covers 1,800 of ancient forest and at its heart is the majestic Stansted House, now run by an independent charitable trust set up by the 10th Earl of Bessborough.

Close to the stately home is an enchanting walled garden where you will find a beautifully restored Victorian glass

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house, which now houses **The Pavilion Tearoom**. Carrot cake, lemon and ginger crunch and freshly-baked scones are among its specialities!

[Download the Stansted walk leaflet](#)

## **Midhurst**

The magnificent Cowdray ruins dominate the water meadows in the thriving market town of Midhurst and were visited by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. Their existence today, thanks to restoration following a devastating fire in 1793, give many clues to life in Tudor times.

Situated at the heart of the National Park, tea rooms and bakeries are aplenty in this charming town, with everything from French-inspired pastries and Croque Monsieurs, to cakes made with produce sourced from South Downs farms. Don’t forget to check out the stocks and pillary in the old market square – a lovely spot to sit and enjoy the sunshine on a warm summer’s day. The tranquil South Pond, often visited by herons, and Midhurst Common are other hidden gems.

For a full list of eateries check out <https://visitmidhurst.com/eat-drink/>

[Download the Midhurst walk leaflet.](#)

## **Seven Sisters Country Park**



No matter how many times you visit this stretch of coastline, it always feels like there’s something new to see. If you’ve never been, you must! It’s one of the few undeveloped stretches

of the south coast and boasts breathtaking chalk cliffs, a meandering river valley and chalk grasslands laced with cultural heritage, such as the “lost village” of Exceat.

The National Park Authority has invested almost £2m renovating the visitor facilities, so a stop at the fascinating visitor centre and handy grab-and-go will set you up perfectly for a brisk walk along this stunning coast. A lazy lunch at the Saltmarsh Café is another option for cake indulgence.

[Download Seven Sisters walks](#)

## **Meon Valley Trail, Hampshire**

Once a railway line running from Fareham to Alton transporting local livestock and agricultural produce, the trail spans 11 miles through picturesque countryside, from West Meon in the north to Wickham in the south. Whether on foot or by bike, the Meon Valley Trail is perfect for all fitness levels and ideal if you have a children’s buggy or are travelling by mobility scooter.

Wickham is oozing with historic charm and has some of the finest tearooms you’ll find probably anywhere in England! A cream tea is a must if you visit its splendid Georgian square.

[Download the Meon Valley Trail walk](#)

# Connecting with nature to manage anxiety and stress



**Anxiety is something most people will experience in their lives and is in fact a very normal human emotion.**

Yet sometimes those feelings of intense worry can get out of control and escalate into something bigger.

Anxiety is the theme of this year's **Mental Health Awareness Week** (15 May to 21 May) and the National Park is sharing some simple tips to help manage anxiety by connecting with nature.

Kate Drake, Health and Wellbeing Officer, is offering five pathways to nature connectedness that can help boost your mental health.

It comes as the National Park Authority continues to forge ahead with its Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which was launched three years ago and aims to connect more people with the South Downs National Park as a "natural health service" for the South East.



Kate said: "Anxiety is one of the most common mental health issues and is a natural human response when we feel that we are under threat – almost like our own internal 'alarm' system.

"A recent mental health survey by the Mental Health Foundation showed that a quarter of adults surveyed said they felt so anxious that it stopped them from doing the things they want to do some or all of the time. Sixty per cent of the adult population feel this way at least some of the time. Yet, on a positive note, anxiety can be made easier to manage and connecting with nature is one of simplest, and, might I add, one of the most enjoyable and rewarding ways, to help tackle the issue.

"I want to offer some simple tips that are no by means a 'cure' for anxiety, but incorporating more nature connectedness into your day-to-day routine can certainly do wonders for your mental health, wellbeing and general mood. Exciting research is going on all the time, but we

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know that having the sensory experience of being in nature is deeply soothing for the mind and can give it a chance to rest and reset."

Kate's five pathways to nature connectedness are:

### 1. Senses

Tune into nature through your senses. Ideas include:

- Go into your garden or local park and listen to the sound of birds.
- Listen to the sound of the sea or trickling of a stream.
- Take a stroll through a green space and notice what you can see, hear, smell and touch (taste may be a bit more difficult!) Focus only on the present moment, not the past or future (phone on silent and in your pocket can help)



### 2. Emotion

Feel alive through the emotions and feelings nature brings. Ideas include:

- Exercise! Go for a walk, run or cycle on one of the 3,300km public footpaths in the National Park and breathe deeply, feeling the calming breeze on your face. Exercise is known to release feel-good hormones such as serotonin.
- Forest bathe – spend an hour or so in peaceful woodland and notice how your sense of urgency diminishes and calmness develops.

### 3. Beauty

Notice nature's beauty. Luckily, in the South Downs, we're spoiled for beauty:

- Head to a stunning location and soak up the picturesque views, such as St Catherine's Hill, Butser Hill, Devil's Dyke, Kingley Vale or Ditchling Beacon.
- Head to one of the National Park's many chalk grassland or heathland sites and look to see how many butterflies and birds you can see.

### 4. Meaning

Nature bringing meaning to our lives. Tips include:

- Keep a nature diary and jot down things you see and how you feel.
- Take photographs of wildlife and frame your best ones to display proudly in your home or as gifts for friends and family!
- Go for a walk with family or friend in nature and share experiences. Take a flask and a bite to eat and enjoy social time in green spaces.

### 5. Compassion

Caring and taking action for nature. Ideas include:

- Do some microvolunteering such as joining a litter pick or taking part in a wildlife survey.
- Help the environment by recycling, buying local where possible and using less water.

## Win a ticket to Roman Villa!

## Introducing Green South Downs



**An exciting new initiative has launched to recognise the business community's efforts to go green and be more sustainable.**

Businesses of all sizes across the region are being invited to apply for Green South Downs – a new programme that awards enterprises for taking steps towards helping the environment and local community.

It comes after a successful pilot scheme saw 19 businesses win gold, silver or bronze certificates for taking simple measures to help the planet, such as reducing carbon consumption, reducing water usage, volunteering and creating space for wildlife. Businesses that have so far received awards include a brewery, farm shop, museums, and holiday firms.

The scheme is being launched by the National Park Authority in partnership with Green Tourism.

Businesses that sign up to Green South Downs will receive a step-by-step bespoke package to help them on their journey and will receive training on sustainability and carbon literacy, as well as strategic support around waste management, climate action, nature, and energy.

Firms that have won awards in the pilot scheme are delighted with the journey they have been on.

Mark Griffiths, Woodfire Camping, based near Petworth, said: "We have found the whole process to be incredibly informative and useful and it's changed the way that Woodfire works."

The certification is based on Green Tourism's industry-leading assessment framework, which provides a holistic review of a business' sustainability performance, based on three areas: people, place, and planet.

Nick Heasman leads the Our South Downs enterprise team at the National Park – a initiative launched last year and growing by the month into a thriving business community for the region.

He said: "So many businesses are beginning, or thinking about, their journey to net zero and we want to give them a helping hand."

To apply and find out more visit [www.greentourism.com/green-south-downs](http://www.greentourism.com/green-south-downs)



**Imagine the excitement of George Tupper who in 1811 uncovered a Roman water basin after striking it with his plough.**

The stunning Roman villa was almost entirely excavated by John Hawkins who lived at nearby Bignor Park, and the antiquary, Samuel Lysons. Opened to the public in 1814, it rapidly became a tourist attraction, with nearly a thousand entries in the visitors' book in the first nine months.

Over 200 years on, Bignor Roman Villa is still managed by the Tupper family under the control of Trustees who continue to strive to maintain the site for the education and enjoyment of all who visit.

The site contains some of the best Roman mosaics to be found in Great Britain, both in terms of preservation, artistic merit and detailing.

The Greek-key-patterned northern corridor extends for some 79 ft (24m), making it the longest in Britain.

The villa hosts a variety of fun events during the year for people of all ages, including a sunflower maze in August and pumpkin weekends throughout October.

We've teamed up with **Bignor Roman Villa** to offer a family ticket (two adults and two children) for entry to the venue.

People signing up to the newsletter during May will be automatically entered into the draw.

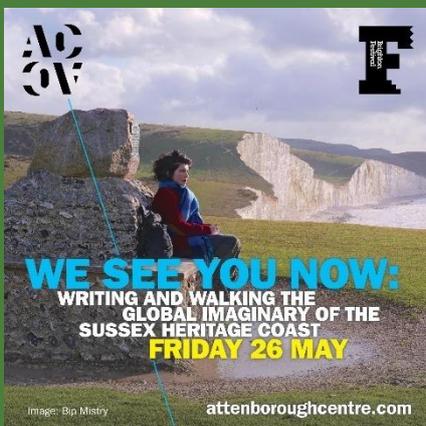
Those who are already signed up can email "Noviomagus Reginorum" to [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk) before midnight on 31 May.

Sign up to the newsletter **here** and see competition T&Cs **here**.



# Things to do in the South Downs this May

Please follow the links as booking may be necessary. Find these and more events across the National Park and submit your own events at [southdowns.gov.uk/events/](https://southdowns.gov.uk/events/)



- Join a HeartSmart walk at Midhurst and its beautiful South Pond on 16 May. This walk is suitable for beginners and you can book [here](#).
- On 13 and 14 May visitors to Amberley Museum will be able to 'turn back time' to the 1940s and experience a wonderful nostalgic atmosphere at [the Home Front & Military Vehicles Weekend](#). Tickets must be pre-booked online for this event.
- Head to St Hubert's "The Little Church in the Field", Idsworth, on 20 May for its Open Day between 2pm and 5pm. The Driftwood Folk Duo will be playing and there will be music-making in the church.
- The annual [Petworth Park Antiques & Fine Art Fair](#) runs from 19 until 21 May this year, when some 60 dealers with their latest acquisitions, put on a magnificent display for the fair's visitors. Housed in a specially designed marquee erected in the grounds of the National Trust's Petworth House in Petworth, West Sussex, antiques fair tickets enable visitors to park directly outside the marquee and also visit Petworth House to view some of the nation's art collection free-of-charge over the three days.
- Professional theatre company LynchPin Productions bring their London production of the award-winning play "[Apples in Winter](#)", by Jennifer Fawcett, to Petersfield Museum and Art Gallery on 24 May.
- Mammoth bones, human skulls, a glorious helmet buried in an ancient ship... Imagine what stories these ancient treasures might tell us if they had a voice! [Head to Butser's Great Roundhouse](#) for an afternoon of imaginative storytelling, bringing to life some of the most extraordinary archaeological finds from the distant past. Anthropologist and TV presenter Mary-Ann Ochota (Time Team, Mystic Britain) and award-winning storyteller Jason Buck weave together fact, fiction, and ancient myth to tell vivid and original tales on 26 May.
- Take a closer look at some of the native reptiles and amphibians that call our heaths home. This is a family-friendly walk at [Broxhead Common](#) on 30 May.

## [Pic credits](#)

P1 Jamie Fielding; P2 left Ron De'Ath, Tim Kahane, Adam Huttly