



**WILDBOUNDS**

# **WILD CAMPING ESCAPES LONDON**

Five great wild camping spots that are  
less than 90 minutes from London



WILDBOUNDS

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# ABOUT US

WildBounds is a growing team of adventurous folk, united by a shared passion for the outdoors, for adventures big and small, and for discovering the stories behind the people and places that inspire us.

We believe passionately that to live life to the fullest, we must challenge ourselves, push ourselves beyond the bounds of our comfort zone – push ourselves to our outer, wild bounds.

The [WildBounds Store](#) brings you exceptional gear from independent brands – brands with an interesting story and a focus on craftsmanship and sustainability.

The [WildBounds Journal](#) brings you inspirational stories on active sport pursuits and outdoor adventures, culture and lifestyle.

We are 100% independent and based in the UK.

# WELCOME...

“Wild camping is escapism in its purest form; it is losing yourself in nature; it is getting far away from roads, cities, shops and mobile-phone reception; and, ultimately, it is just good, old-fashioned, adventurous fun.”

– James Michael Forrest, adventurer, hiker and author

## GREETINGS, ADVENTURER.

Since you're reading this, we take it you're interested in wild camping, which is awesome. But we know that for first-timers, it can be hard to know where, when and how to start. And even for experienced wild campers, one of the toughest decisions is working out where to go. That's why we've put together this selection of amazing wild camping spots that are all located within a couple of hours of London by car, train or bus.

Why London? Well, if you live or work in London, you've probably experienced a desire to escape the city once in a while. We get it – we've been there too. And wild camping is the perfect getaway. With that in mind, we've picked five wild camping spots that ought to be the perfect antidote. It includes a couple of places to pitch up for epic views and well as some beautiful hidden pockets of pristine woodland.

Let's be clear: we're letting you in on our favourite secret wild camping spots here. Please don't let us down. That means camping responsibly and abiding by leave no trace principles. If you need a little help with that, we've collated all our hard-earned knowledge and experience, and enlisted some wild camping experts, to put together an online wild camping guide. This contains plenty of practical advice for first-time wild campers.

## BEFORE YOU HEAD OUT, READ...

[Essential wild camping kit](#)

[How to find the perfect wild camping pitch](#)

[Is wild camping legal?](#)

[Leave no trace: what you need to know](#)

[Axe murderers & other wild camping myths](#)

[What to do if you get moved on](#)

All good? Then read on. We've got everything you need for a great wild camp, with info on how to reach each spot, suggested routes to walk, local amenities, stuff to look out for and plenty more.

We hope you enjoy your night in the great outdoors. If so, be sure to take some pictures! Hit us up on Insta [@wildbounds](#), or tag your posts [#stayboundless](#).

Thanks for downloading this guide – and stay boundless.

**WildBounds**

# 05

## GREAT WILD CAMPING SPOTS NEAR LONDON



# COOMBE HILL

## CHILTERN

# #1

At 260 metres (853 ft) above sea level, this is the highest point in the Chilterns, with panoramic views across the Aylesbury Vale. The top of the hill is marked by the striking Boer War Monument, and on a clear day you'll be able to see as far as Oxford and Didcot and across to the edge of the North Wessex Downs. It also overlooks Chequers, the countryside residence of the Prime Minister.

### The walk-in

It's a short walk up from Wendover to the Boer War Monument that sits atop Coombe Hill. Alternatively, use it as a stop off point on a longer walk along the Ridgeway National Trail, which runs for 87 miles from Avebury in the west, following the spine of the Chiltern Hills to Ivinghoe Beacon, just northwest of London.

### Where to pitch

This is a popular National Trust site with a car park near the top of the hill, meaning it can get busy on a sunny weekend. However, stay until it is dark, set up in the tree line on the edge of the hill and you'll get views for miles. Pitch late and leave early, and you'll be fine up here.

### Local amenities

There are plenty of places to grab dinner and a drink or stock up on snacks in Wendover, and if you get up to Coombe Hill early enough you might catch the ice cream van in the car park.

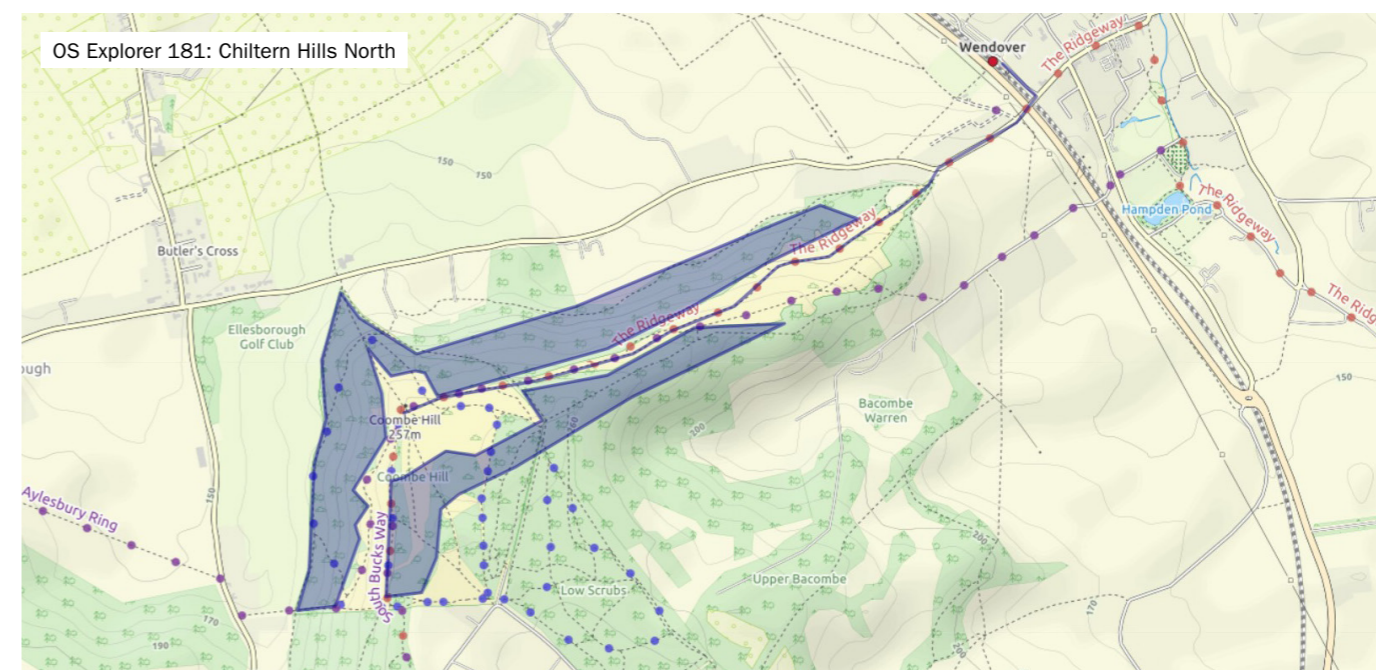


### Nature and wildlife

Coombe Hill is designated an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) for its chalk grassland and acid heathland. This area is home to more than 30 species of wildflower and 28 species of butterfly. You may well also spot red kites overhead.

## HOW TO GET THERE FROM LONDON

The easiest way is to hop on a train. Wendover station is just 45 minutes from London, with regular trains from London Marylebone.



# EPPING FOREST

## LONDON

# #2

Sitting right on the edge of London, this spot is really easy to get to. You can be losing yourself in the forest just half an hour after leaving central London.

This area of ancient woodland has been here since Neolithic times and embankments of two Iron Age earthworks can still be found in the woodland. In Tudor times, Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I are rumoured to have gone hunting in the forest and you can still visit Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, which sits at the southern end of the forest near Chingford.

Queen Victoria declared Epping Forest 'the people's forest' in the late 1880s, and local commoners can still graze cattle (albeit via an application process) there.

Stretching 12 miles from north to south, this is a great place to escape the city for long walk and a night under the stars. Get yourself a tent with a big porch and it's a great spot for some bikepacking within London as well – you can take your bike on the overground or cycle in from wherever you are in London.



### The walk-in

Whichever direction you're coming from we'd suggest just setting off to explore, leaving plenty of time to enjoy this beautiful expanse of nature on the edge of the city.

### Where to pitch

It's a big place but can still be busy with walkers and cyclists in the day. However, if you turn up later and head off the trail, you should be able to find a nice discreet spot. It's likely to be busier and more open at the south end of the forest, where there's a visitor's centre and lake, so we'd recommend heading further into the forest for a quieter pitch.

### Local amenities

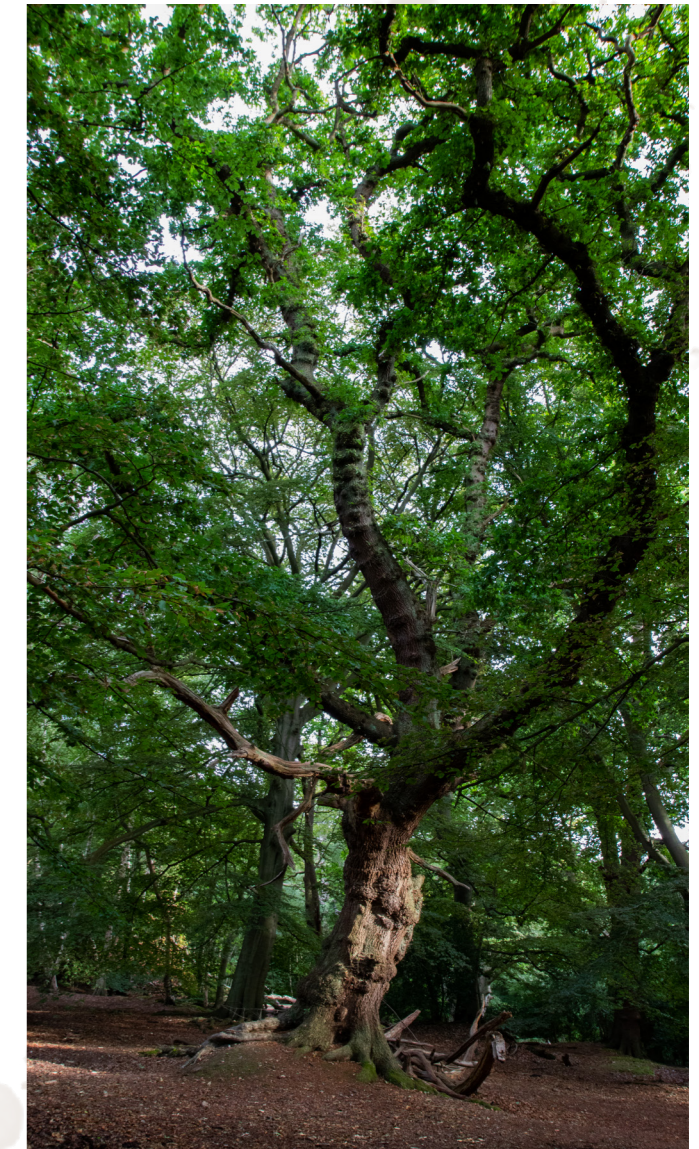
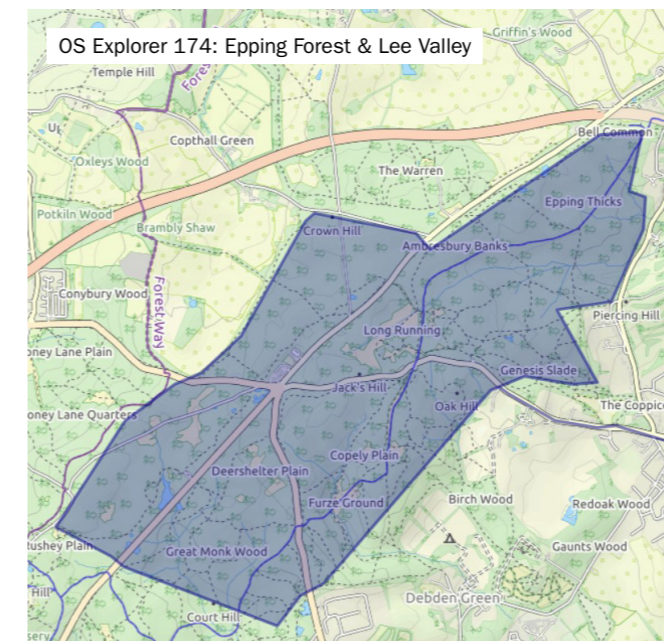
There's a pub and bike café at High Beach near the crossroads in the middle of the forest, and if you're coming from Chingford there's also a nice cafe at Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. You're not far from anything though given that you're basically still in London.



### HOW TO GET THERE FROM LONDON

From Liverpool Street you can catch the overground out to Chingford (30 mins), which drops you off at the southern edge of the forest.

Alternatively take the central line out to Loughton or Theydon Bois and you'll end up a short walk away from the eastern edge of the forest. Depending whereabouts in London you're coming from (and how much time you've got), walking or biking here would definitely be doable too.



# HADLEIGH CASTLE

ESSEX

# #3

This lovely spot on the Essex coast is easily accessible from London. Less than an hour by train, it's a destination that is ideal for a mid-week microadventure that will let you be back in time for work the next morning. We'd recommend looking for a spot just off the main trail, near the small path that runs along the treeline beneath the castle itself.

Only overlooked by the ruined remnants of the castle, you can enjoy sweeping views out across the fields over to Canvey Island and beyond to Kent. On a clear day you should also be able to make out the shadowy outline of the London skyline over to the west.



## The walk-in

From Benfleet station it's just over a 2 mile walk to the castle, and you can quickly join a footpath that takes you along the bottom of Benfleet Downs, following the line of the railway as it continues along the coast to Leigh-on-Sea and beyond. As you're nearing the castle there'll be a path to the left that'll take you up a short, steepish slope to the castle ruins.

If you stay on the train to Leigh-on-Sea it's just over a mile along a footpath that quickly joins up with the Saffron Trail, which leads directly to the remnants of the castle.

## Where to pitch

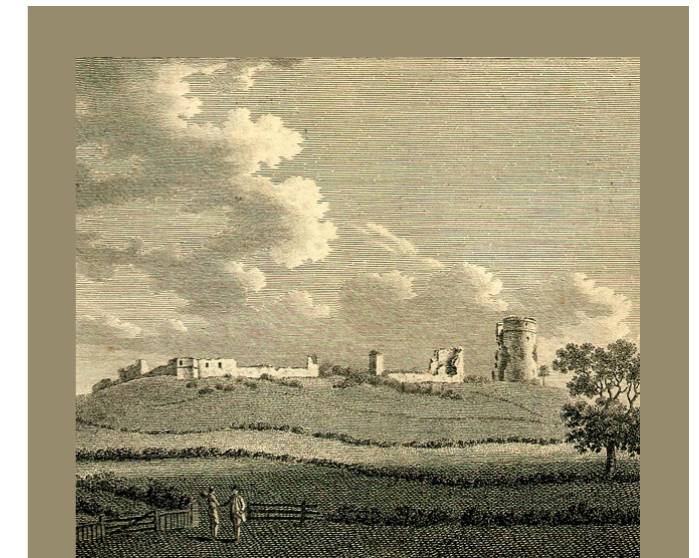
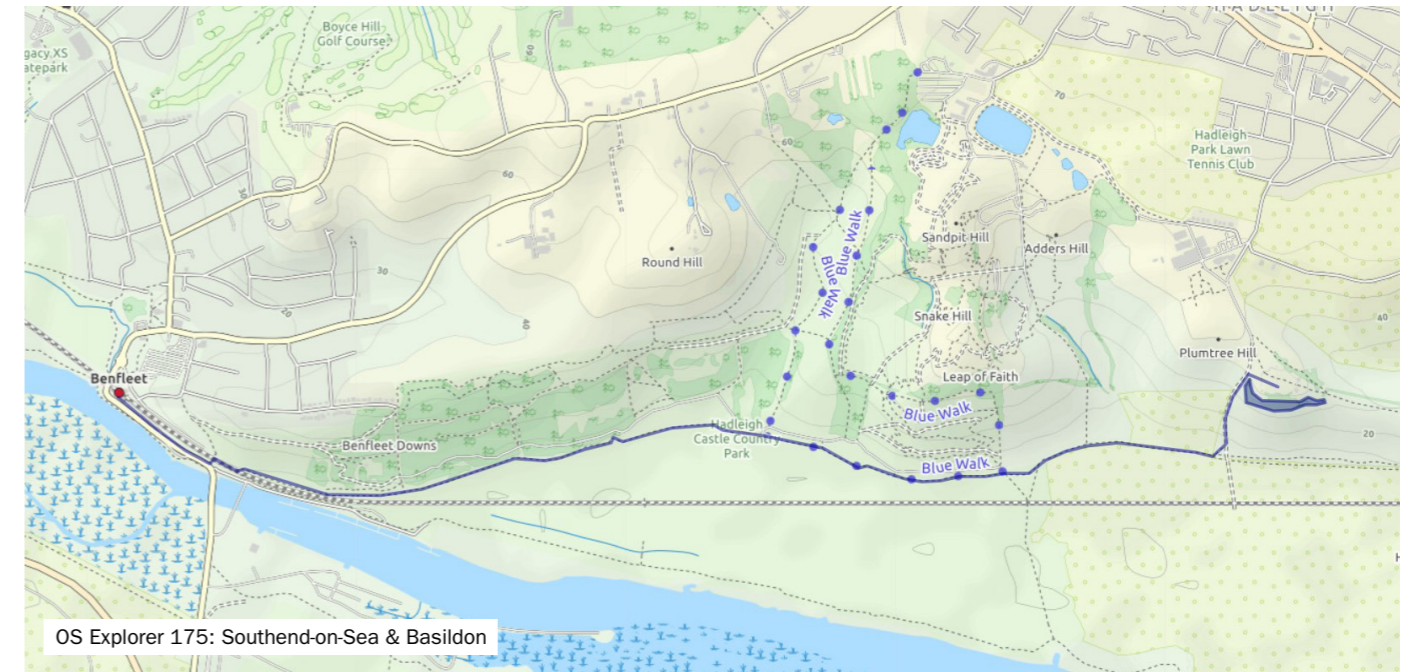
We found the grounds around the castle itself to be fairly busy on the sunny August evening we were there, with an outdoor yoga class just finishing up and a few small groups enjoying the sunset, but there's a small path that traces the bottom of the tree line beneath the castle which is much quieter. There are a few patches of grass along the edge of the path that would make a lovely camping spot, with views across to Canvey Island, and across the estuary to Kent.

## Local amenities

Benfleet and Leigh-on-Sea both have a good selection of pubs, shops and cafes so you should have plenty of options for a pre-camp dinner or breakfast the next morning. If you have time we'd recommend heading into Leigh-on-Sea for fish and chips by the sea, before heading up to the castle for sunset.

## HOW TO GET THERE FROM LONDON

Get the C2C train from London Fenchurch Street to either Benfleet (45 mins) or Leigh-on-Sea (50 mins).



## History and heritage

An English Heritage site, the romantic ruins of Hadleigh Castle date from the 13th and 14th centuries. The castle was extensively refortified in the mid-1300s by Edward III, subsequently becoming a preferred residence for the king. The castle's prominent drum towers command excellent views out over the Essex marshes, and one tower was later used by Georgian revenue men looking out for smugglers.

# FIVE HUNDRED ACRE WOOD

## HIGH WEALD

# #4

Five Hundred Acre Wood is the home of Winnie the Pooh and sits within the wider Ashdown Forest, a huge area of mostly open heathland within the Kent and Sussex High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Camping here for the night gives you the chance to spend a day exploring the area where you can enjoy stunning views of Sussex countryside, stop for a friendly game of poohsticks at the original Poohsticks Bridge and spot some local wildlife (if you're lucky, you might catch sight of deer darting through the trees).

### The walk-in

It's about a six-mile walk from Eridge with the route initially following the route of the High Weald Landscape Trail before you join the Wealdway and follow it down to the Five Hundred Acre Wood.

### Where to pitch

On the walk in it can look slightly unwelcoming, and signs make clear that the wood is private. However, take a map and look for the open access land, marked in orange on an OS map. Head off the path at this point to start exploring and you'll find a relatively dense woodland with loads of great spots to camp for the night.

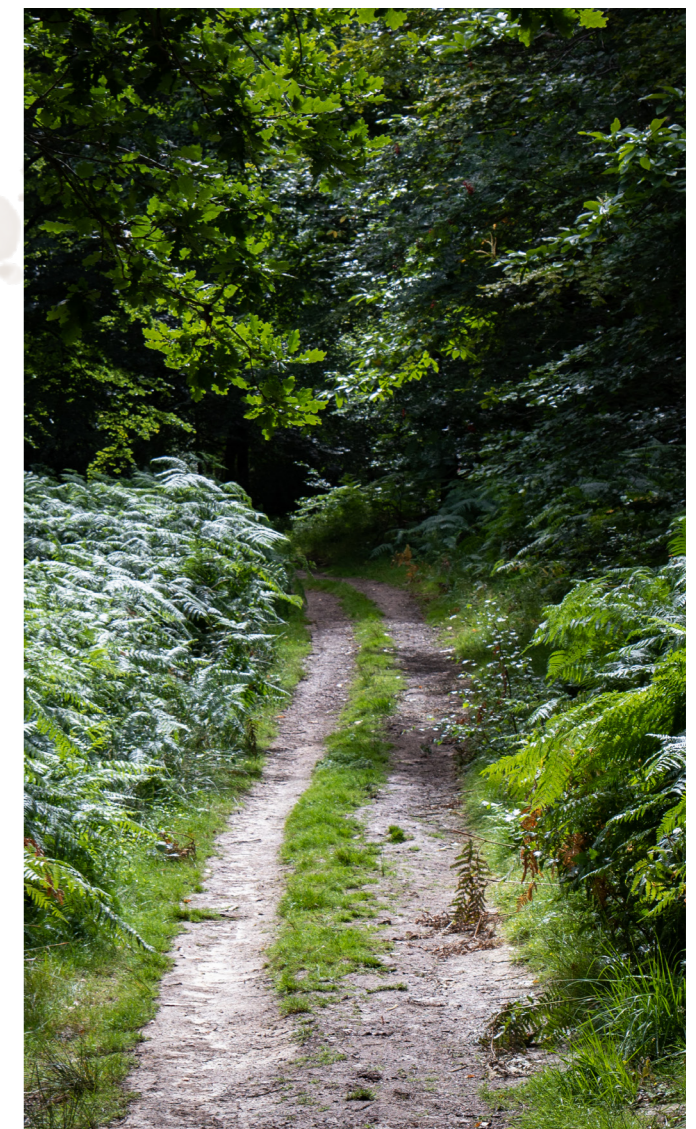
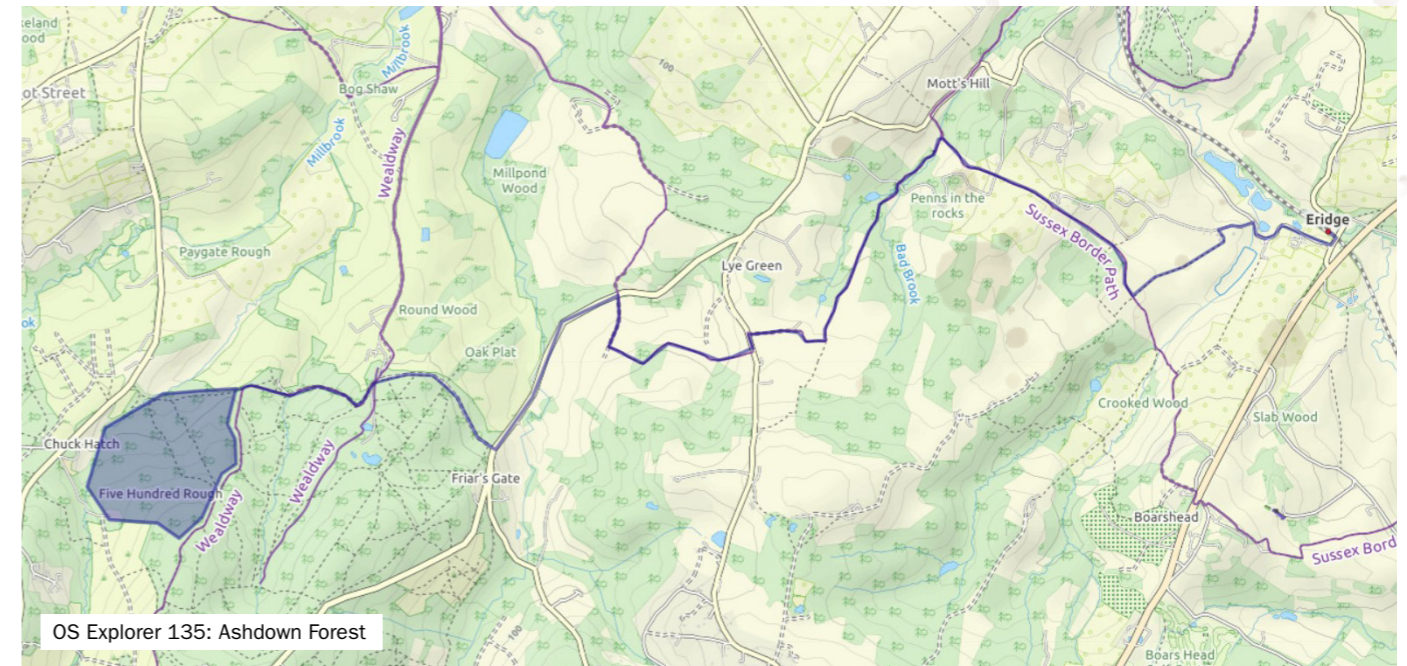
### Local amenities

Head north on the Wealdway and in about 2 miles you get to Witherham, a small village with a pub. Nearby Hartfield also has a shop and the Pooh Corner tea room, as well as another pub.



## HOW TO GET THERE FROM LONDON

The closest station is Eridge, with trains taking just under an hour from London Bridge.



# CHANCTONBURY RING

# #5

## SOUTH DOWNS

Chanctonbury Ring is a small Iron Age hill fort sitting atop Chanctonbury Hill on the South Downs. The top of the hill is marked by a distinctive circle of beech trees. The site has long been associated with mysterious forces and it's rumoured that if you run backwards round the ring six times on a midsummer night you can summon the devil (though we didn't fancy trying!).

This is a beautiful spot to camp, whether as a night away from the city or as part of a longer exploration of the South Downs. At 238 metres (781 ft) it's an easy climb, but you're still rewarded with gorgeous views of the Sussex Downs stretching out to the sea past Worthing.



### The walk-in

Being slightly more remote this one has a bit of a longer walk in from the train station, and it's about 6 miles from Worthing. From the station you head north, away from the coast, and walk through the town until you join a footpath leading up to the Cissbury Ring. From here you continue along footpaths crossing fields and farmland until you reach the South Downs Way where it's just a short walk along the ridgeway to the circle of trees atop Chanctonbury Hill.

### Where to pitch

There are a few options for camping spots, so it's worth walking all the way round the ring before you pick your camp. Wherever you choose you're guaranteed a great view out over the South Downs. There are also a few clearings in the woods themselves if you want somewhere a bit more sheltered.

### Local amenities

It's probably best to pick up any supplies in Worthing before you set off as you're unlikely to pass through any other places to stop for food on the walk up to Chanctonbury Hill. Worthing has plenty of shops, takeaways and pubs within easy reach of the station.

If you're not coming from Worthing and are stopping here as part of longer walk on the South Downs Way then you're just over 2 miles from Steyning to the East, a small town with a choice of pubs, cafes and shops. In the other direction, Washington is about 2 miles away and has a nice-looking country pub with a large beer garden.



### Myths and legends

Chanctonbury Ring has long been connected with reports of paranormal activity. In October 1972, three people reported seeing a dull red glow emanating from a large object hanging over the trees. As it moved further away, they reported that 'the top was illuminated by a blue light and there were four small square what looked like windows in the side of the object'. When the UFO reached the edge of the trees, it hovered briefly and then shot up into the sky, soon being lost from sight.

## HOW TO GET THERE FROM LONDON

The closest major train station is Worthing, which is about an hour and a half from London Victoria or an hour and forty from London St Pancras.

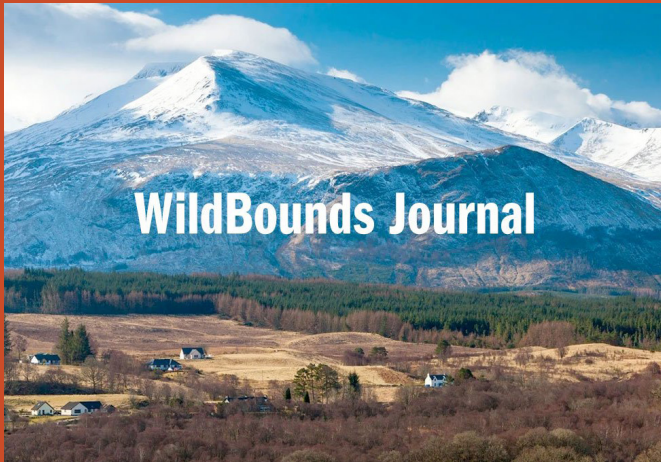






Coming soon...

# WILD CAMPING ESCAPES: BRISTOL



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