

CYCLE LEWES and the district

Cycling in Lewes has boomed in recent years, with the creation of many new paths and increasing use of bikes as the go-to means of transport for local people.

Parents often use Dutch-style cargo bikes on the school run, and the explosion in e-bikes is making cycling in Lewes accessible to all. Lewes, the largest town in the South Downs National Park, is surrounded by rolling hills and winding river valleys. Cycling is the perfect way to discover this stunning landscape.

This map has been created by local cyclists. On the town side of the map, we pick out some useful back routes, and the district side details rides of easy to moderate difficulty, mostly along quiet roads and dedicated cycle paths. Local landmarks, resources for cyclists, tips and advice are also included. **Enjoy the ride!**



FIFTH EDITION

CYCLE LEWES and the surrounding area



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Please be aware that, despite all efforts to verify and check all the content, you use the information contained on this map at your own risk.

Introduction

Cycling in Lewes isn't as hard as it might look at first. Yes, there are hills and busy roads, but there are also ways to avoid most of them. This side of the map shows some of the routes used by local cyclists – for shopping, going to school, commuting as well as for leisure.

Sometimes you may want to push your bike up a steep section or along a stretch of footpath, but cycling around town will often be quicker than a similar journey by car. Cycling is cheaper than joining a gym – and you don't have to pay for petrol or parking.

At the edge of this map, links to routes featured on the other side are arrowed off. For more resources about cycling, together with news and campaigns, see cyclelewes.org.uk

We recommend that you use this map in conjunction with Ordnance Survey maps – either the Landranger or Explorer range.

LOCAL CYCLING INFORMATION

■ East Sussex Cyclists' Touring Club – local group for Cycling UK; organised rides. eastsussexctc.org.uk

■ Travel Log Lewes – for news of cycling, walking and public transport in the area. travelloglewes.co.uk

■ Cycle Seahaven – rides, events, campaigning and training in Seaford, Newhaven and Peacehaven areas. cycleseahaven.org.uk

■ Get Bikery – community eCargo bike project hiring bikes and trailers for local households and businesses. getbikery.org

■ On Yer Bike Mike offers cycle training for all ages, 07740 94789. onyerbikemike.co.uk

■ Contact East Sussex County Council about problems with public rights of way, cycle paths or roads. eastsussexhighways.com

CYCLE SHOPS/SERVICES

■ Dr Bike, Harvey's Yard (by the brewery), Lewes: free cycle maintenance (charge made for parts) most Sat

mornings 9.30am–12.30pm. drbikelewes.com

■ Lewes Cycleshack 53 Cliffe High Street, Lewes – cycle repairs, new bikes and equipment for sale. 01273 479688. lewescycleshack.co.uk

■ Mr Cycles 26 Clinton Place, Seaford 01323 893130. mrcycles.co.uk

■ Bikerepairbox – workshop for bike repairs and servicing, Lewes area. 07947 054005. bikerepairbox.com

■ Cuckmere Cycle Company, Exceat. Bike hire, accessible bikes, repairs, sales, guided rides. 07943 954458. cuckmerecycle.co

CYCLING OUT OF TOWN

Lewes is surrounded by a wonderful network of country lanes and off-road routes, leading to dozens of places of interest, to visit, eat and drink.

■ Take extra care for the first couple of miles out of Lewes where you may have to ride on main roads. Avoid the worst of the traffic by setting off early at weekends, or after the morning rush midweek.

■ You can avoid cycling out of Lewes by taking the train to a country station such as Southease, Berwick, Glynde, Cocksbridge or Plumpton.

■ Carry one or two inner tubes in the right size for your tyres and learn how to change them – it's much easier than repairing a puncture out on the road. You'll also need a couple of spanners and tyre levers and a bicycle pump.

OFF-ROAD CYCLING

Lewes is in the middle of some of the best off-road cycling country in England, with a superb network of bridleways on and around the South Downs. Some are better than others for cycling.

This map highlights some off-road routes where the surface is generally passable for cyclists, divided into easier paths which can be cycled all year round and more challenging ones which may be muddy or bumpy.



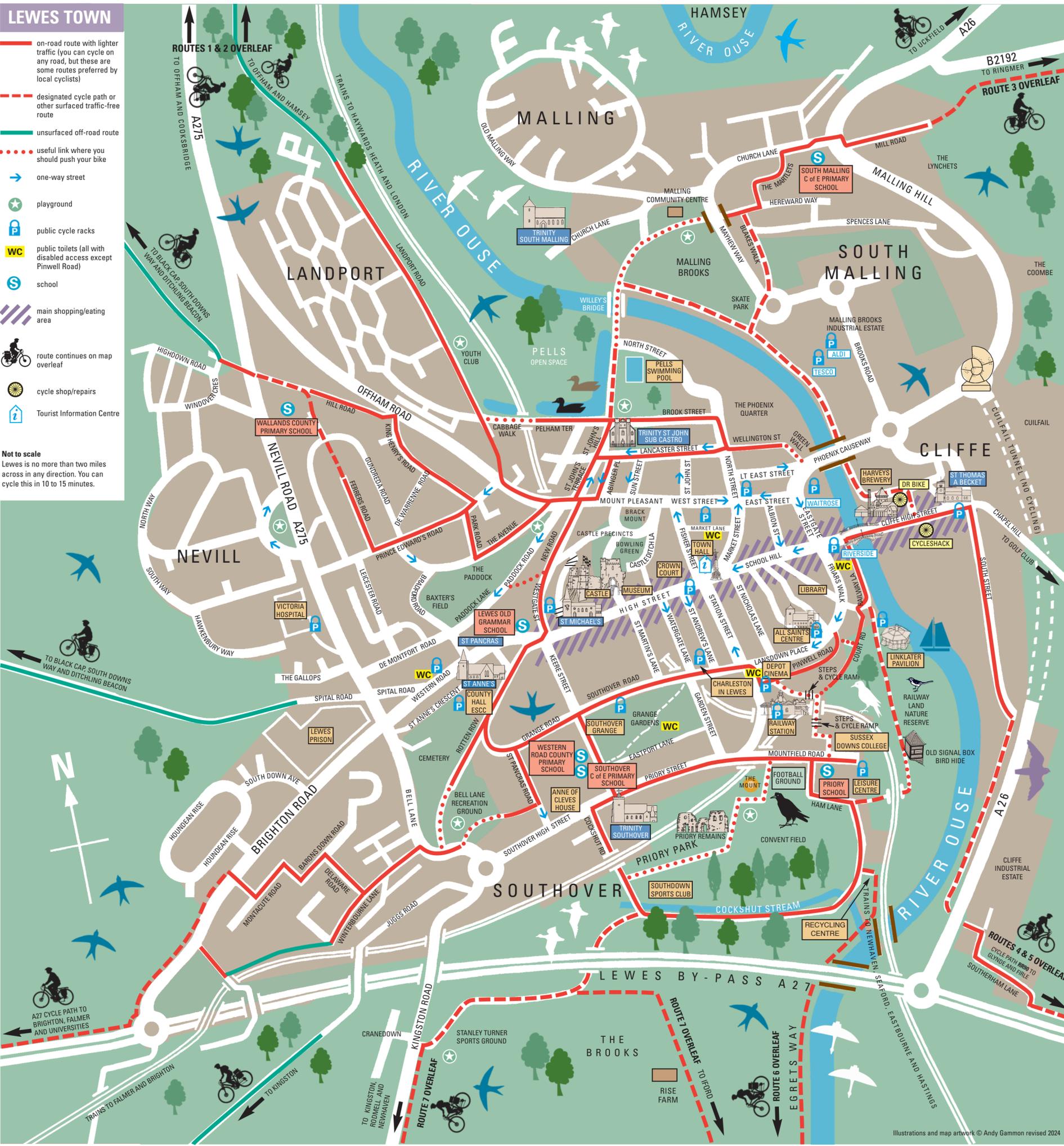
On the South Downs Way, above Kingston and the Ouse Valley (photo: Martin Carr)



LEWES TOWN

- on-road route with lighter traffic (you can cycle on any road, but these are routes preferred by local cyclists)
- designated cycle path or other surfaced traffic-free route
- unsurfaced off-road route
- useful link where you should push your bike
- one-way street
- playground
- public cycle racks
- public toilets (all with disabled access except Pinwell Road)
- school
- main shopping/eating area
- route continues on map overleaf
- cycle shop/repairs
- Tourist Information Centre

Not to scale
Lewes is no more than two miles across in any direction. You can cycle this in 10 to 15 minutes.



Illustrations and map artwork © Andy Gammon revised 2024

See the town map for how to join these routes from Lewes.

On the map we have featured seven numbered recommended rides, Routes 1-7. See visitlewes.co.uk/things-to-do/cycling for route directions, maps, GPX files and other information for each of these, or scan the QR code. For more routes see thelivingcoastbybike.co.uk and sdnpeast.bybikes.co.uk

Route 1: East Chiltington and Ditchling (16km/10 miles each way). For more experienced cyclists, with undulating sections and a mixture of offroad and busier roads. Very steep ascent up to join South Downs Way for spectacular offroad return route to Lewes, but you can return along the roads to avoid this. Choice of outward routes from Lewes (see town map): either the offroad route via Landport through beautiful woods (can be muddy) or along the A275, routes rejoin at Offham. Beyond Cooksbridge, quiet country lanes leading to the charming old village of Ditchling with its Museum of Art + Craft, tea rooms and pubs, and a stony section along route of Roman road between East Chiltington and Streat; also pub at East Chiltington.

Route 2: Barcombe circular (17km/10.6 miles). Starts from Offham Church, itself reached by the routes to Offham used for Route 1 (offroad through woods or along busier A275). Follows lanes through peaceful Low Weald countryside, passing Barcombe Mills – a beautiful spot with tree-shaded millponds and access to the riverbank. The broken red line on the map shows an offroad detour along the old railway track to the riverside Anchor Inn. Another add-on is to Hamsey, a tiny village with its ancient church on a rise above the River Ouse. Pub and shop at Barcombe, and the riverside Anchor Inn on route extension. Can extend into Route 3.

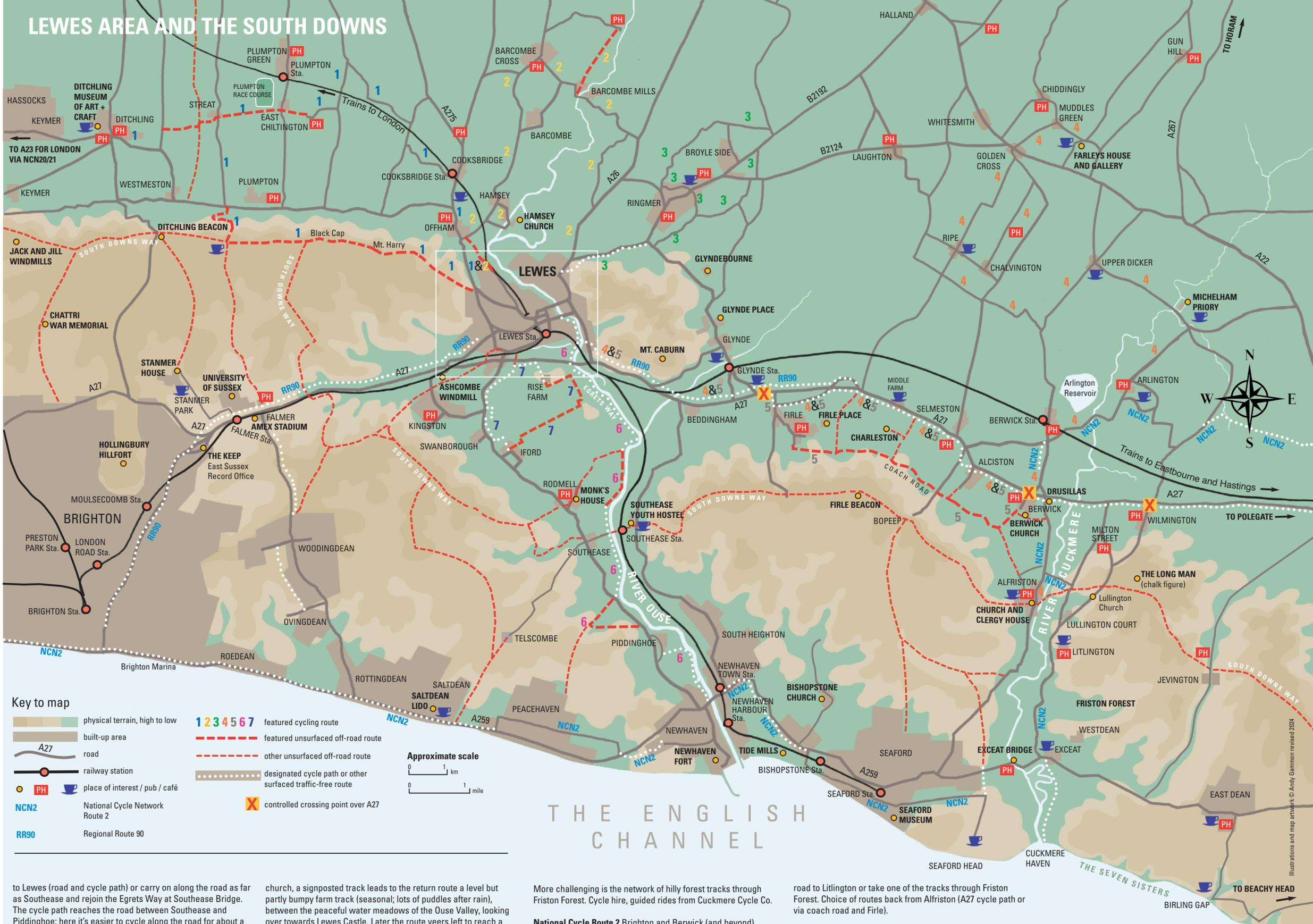
Route 3: Ringmer and around (23km/14.5 miles). Generally easy, traffic-free to Ringmer along the cycle path that is separated from the B2192 by a hedge, and then mostly quiet lanes skirting the village via Gote Lane, Potato Lane, Rushy Green and Half Mile Drive. After a couple of short sections busier roads there are distant views from Green Lane of the South Downs. One short steep section up and down Mill Road at the Lewes end. Can extend to Glynde (taking Neaves Lane, off Potato Lane) and Route 4; mostly gently undulating with brief hills. Shop and pubs at Ringmer, accessed via Springett Avenue.

Route 4: Arlington and Ripe (26km/16 miles). Vintage country lane territory, gentle or no gradients. Take the train to Berwick and start from there (or for a longer ride, follow A27 cycle route to Glynde, then keep on cycle path on north side of road. Arlington has a lovely churchyard, and the medieval church itself is full of interest, and you can also pay a visit to Michelham Priory, a moated manor house built out of the ruins of a priory and within glorious grounds. You can extend by crossing the A22 via traffic island at Golden Cross to Muddles Green, Chiddingly and Gun Hill; Farleys House and Gallery is the former home of surrealist painter Roland Penrose and photographer Lee Miller (open to public). Plenty of pubs along the way, and cafés at Michelham Priory, Farleys House, Upper Dicker and Arlington.

Route 5: Charleston and the Coach Road (26km/16 miles; shorter if starting/finishing from Glynde or Berwick stations). A27 cycle path from Lewes eastwards as far as the Charleston turning, and return on the unsurfaced Coach Road, which preceded the modern A27 and runs beneath the South Downs escarpment. Charleston itself is the remarkable house where the Bloomsbury Group of artists and writers lived and worked in the early 20th century (gardens open free of charge; entrance fee for the house). Can extend eastwards via the A27 cycle path and Coach Road (adds 11km/7 miles) to Berwick church, the interior of which is lavishly decorated with work by the Bloomsbury artists. The return route passes through Firle, the wonderfully unspoilt estate village for Firle Place (also open to the public). Pubs at Selmeston (accessed from the cycle path), Berwick (south side of A27) and Firle, and a café at Charleston.

Route 6: Egrets Way (15km/9 miles each way Lewes to Newhaven). Almost entirely offroad, following the River Ouse from Lewes to the sea, although between Southease and Piddinghoe there is a section where you either need to cycle along the road or take the hilly offroad route west of the road. Mostly well surfaced, but the section between the turn-off to Rodmell and Southease Bridge is bumpy and can be particularly difficult after rain, so requires offroad tyres. We advise that those on road cycles follow leave the Egrets Way at the signpost for Rodmell, join the road and either return

LEWES AREA AND THE SOUTH DOWNS



to Lewes (road and cycle path) or carry on along the road as far as Southease and rejoin the Egrets Way at Southease Bridge. The cycle path reaches the road between Southease and Piddinghoe: here it's easier to cycle along the road for about a mile, although there is a steep off-road alternative on the west side of the road that arcs round to Piddinghoe. Look out for the 18th-century brick bottle kiln by the road just before you branch off through Piddinghoe. At the far end of the village the route leads left along a track to rejoin the river. In Newhaven, continue along the west side of the harbour to visit Newhaven Fort and the beach. Pub at Rodmell and a café just off route at the youth hostel east of Southease Bridge.

Route 7: Rise Farm and Iford (9km/5.5 miles). Almost totally level circuit, and almost all off-road. Take the surfaced Kingston bike path from the Southdown Sport Club, and continue along the gravel path along the side of a field, past sewage works to a tarmac road. Follow the road uphill almost to the main road, then take the surfaced track left to Iford village. Shortly before the

church, a signposted track leads to the return route a level but partly bumpy farm track (seasonal; lots of puddles after rain), between the peaceful water meadows of the Ouse Valley, looking over towards Lewes Castle. Later the route veers left to reach a surfaced road leading through Rise Farm and back into Lewes. For a shorter traffic-free ride, start by going through Rise Farm and going as far as Iford, then return the same way.

OTHER CYCLE RIDES
Starter options along dedicated cycle paths Good rides for families and those new to cycling include to Kingston (see town side of map), Stanmer Park, the Egrets Way south along the River Ouse from Lewes to the Rodmell turn-off, Route 3 along the cycle path as far as Ringmer, Route 5 between Firle and Selmeston, and Route 7 (seasonal).

Cuckmere Haven and Friston Forest A very easy short concrete path runs from the car park by the A259 at Exceat (in the southeast corner of this map) to the sea at Cuckmere Haven.

More challenging is the network of hilly forest tracks through Friston Forest. Cycle hire, guided rides from Cuckmere Cycle Co.

National Cycle Route 2 Brighton and Berwick (and beyond), along roads and cycle path, with some busier roads around Newhaven. Runs below the cliffs between Brighton and Saltdean signposted around back roads in Peacehaven, crossing the A259 and dropping into Newhaven; then on parallel cycle path to Bishopstone, with optional diversion into Ouse Valley Nature Reserve; continues along Cuckmere Valley past Alfriston and Berwick station.

Bopeep, Cuckmere Haven and Alfriston Downs and sea All in one excellent hilly offroad route: Lewes east to Bopeep (either via Firle and the Coach Road or via the A27 cycle path to Alciston), then off-road over the South Downs, mostly downhill to north side of Seaford, left downhill on A259 with sweeping views of the Cuckmere River meanders, then Exceat (for detour to Cuckmere Haven and perhaps a swim in the sea). Then either

road to Litlington or take one of the tracks through Friston Forest. Choice of routes back from Alfriston (A27 cycle path or via coach road and Firle).

South Downs Way The long-distance bridlepath from Winchester to Eastbourne is a magnificent off-road cycle route, with several access points around Lewes, including Southease, Kingston, Firle and Alfriston. Most ascents are demanding but the going on the top is generally easier. Good circuits include South Downs Way west from Lewes to Ditchling Beacon, then south to Stanmer, then cross A23 via Falmer, and take bike path uphill to top, turning left just before Woodingdean, then via Kingston to Lewes; and Lewes to Kingston via Ashcombe Windmill to South Downs Way, then turn left on it, drop to Rodmell and return either along road or along Egrets Way.

Lewes to Falmer cycle path alongside A23 Not a pretty ride, but useful for getting to the universities at Falmer, and to Brighton.

North of Barcombe Scenic cycling on undulating back roads extending towards Chailey and the Ashdown Forest in the High Weald.

Cuckoo Trail (17km/10.5 miles each way) A hugely popular family ride, east of this map area, mostly on an old railway track (Heathfield to Polegate). Shared with walkers and horse riders. You can get to Polegate by train or via the A27 cycle path.

A27 crossing points east of Lewes Use the pedestrian/cyclist lights near the entrance to Firle village; by the Wilmington/ Arlington crossroads; and by the Berwick/ Alfriston roundabout.

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