

Welcome to Gatwick

Discover what's on our doorstep

South Downs National Park



ACTIVE & OUTDOORS

8 ways to discover the English coast and countryside near Gatwick Airport

You could simply stand and gaze at the beautiful coast and countryside around Gatwick. Or you could trail your fingers through the rivers, breathe the salty sea air and feel the wind on your face as you immerse yourself in the landscape.

Here are 8 unforgettable ways to discover in the coast and countryside.

www.gatwickairport.com/at-the-airport/flying-in/discover-local/

YOUR LONDON AIRPORT
Gatwick

1. Walk the trails

The countryside around Gatwick is crisscrossed with footpaths. For a long-distance challenge, trek the 100-mile (160km) South Downs Way National Trail across the rolling chalk hills of the South Downs National Park. You'll see pretty villages, Roman villas and soaring white cliffs. The even-longer North Downs Way (156 miles/251km) follows the footsteps of pilgrims to Kent's Canterbury Cathedral. The Greensand Way (108 miles/174km) follows the Greensand Ridge along the Surrey Hills.

[Website: www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk)

Shorter options are just as rewarding. Walk up Box Hill in the Surrey Hills for expansive views across the North Downs; there are regular free guided walks or easy-to-follow trails ranging from gentle to strenuous. In the spring, bluebells fill the shady woodland, in summer, look out for rare orchids and colourful butterflies.

[Website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/box-hill/lists/walks-at-box-hill](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/box-hill/lists/walks-at-box-hill)

2. Pedal power

Miles upon miles of cycle paths roll through southern England. The Cuckoo Trail is 14-mile (22km) route along a disused railway in East Sussex. It's relatively flat, traffic-free and passes through quaint villages, leafy woodland and sculptures – perfect for families. Get a direct train from Gatwick to Polegate (45 mins) where you can hire bikes.

[Website: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/country-side/walks/countryside-sites/cuckootrail/](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/country-side/walks/countryside-sites/cuckootrail/)

Culturally-inclined cyclists could cycle the Coastal Culture Trail, which links exciting contemporary art galleries in Eastbourne, Bexhill and Hastings. It takes approximately 4 hours to pedal the 18-mile (29km) trail (traffic free between Hastings and Bexhill). Take advantage of the one-way bike hire scheme run by Bexhill Bicycle Hire and Let's Bike in Eastbourne, and hire a taxi at a set fare to transport your luggage. Eastbourne, Hastings and Bexhill are all

connected by direct trains to Gatwick Airport. From Eastbourne, it's easy to join a cycle route up to the South Downs National Park.

[Website: www.coastalculturetrail.com/travel/bike](http://www.coastalculturetrail.com/travel/bike)

For a guided mountain biking ride, try the Surrey Hills Adventure Company and see the Surrey Hills from the trails.

[Website: www.thesurreyhillshillsadventurecompany.com](http://www.thesurreyhillshillsadventurecompany.com)

3. In a classic car

Can you picture a more memorable – or photogenic – way to see the English countryside than in a convertible 1927 Rolls Royce tourer? The Vintage Motoring Company offers chauffeur-driven tours in a hand-painted, Royal-blue beauty. Your chauffeur, dressed the part in a tie and cap and full of local information, will whisk you along Sussex's country lanes and past iconic views such as the bright white Seven Sisters cliffs.

Tours range from a 20-minute drive along Eastbourne's seafront, to a 2-hour expedition through countryside villages and reed-filled marshes. Bespoke trips are also available. Sit back to enjoy the view, the wind in your hair – and the fully licensed on-board minibar!

[Website: www.vintagemotoringcompany.co.uk](http://www.vintagemotoringcompany.co.uk)



MILES UPON MILES
OF CYCLE PATHS ROLL
THROUGH SOUTHERN
ENGLAND



Chichester, West Sussex

4. Take to the skies

Watch the fields, wildflower meadows and country lanes of the South Downs National Park unfurl beneath you as you soar like a bird on a tandem paragliding flight. Fly Sussex Paragliding runs paragliding experiences and pilot courses all year round. They have private training sites around the South Downs so

the views depend on the wind direction, but you could find yourself soaring over pretty Downs villages or chalky cliffs.

If you want to take to the skies all by yourself, invest in a one-day solo paragliding voucher and go from absolute beginner to solo flyer in one session. You'll learn to launch from higher and higher up the slope, and come back down to earth like a pro with a parachute landing roll. Meet at Fly Sussex's offices, a 5-min walk from Glynde station, which is 1 hour by rail from Gatwick Airport.

[Website: www.flysussex.com](http://www.flysussex.com)

5. On a canal boat

For much of the 19th century, heavily loaded cargo boats worked the Wey & Arun Canal, which runs for 23 miles (37km) between the River Wey in Surrey and the River Arun in West Sussex. The canal fell out of use in 1871, but 200 years later, 'London's Lost Route to the Sea' is being restored and re-opened for pleasure boats, bit by bit. The canal flows through 23 locks and idyllic countryside, beneath willow trees and along banks that, in spring, whirr with damselflies and butterflies. If you're lucky you might spot a heron among the wildflowers.

Every weekend from May to October, The Wey & Arun Canal Trust runs public boats cruises along the charming Loxwood Link section of the canal. For a truly English experience, book one of the special cruises, and nibble a cream



8. Aboard a steam train

A ride on the family friendly Bluebell Railway is a trip back in time. One of the UK's oldest heritage railways, it stretches for 11 miles (18km), chuffing under curved bridges and through the lush woods and countryside of the High Sussex Weald. Its vintage trains form one of the finest collections of steam locomotives and carriages in the country.



SEE BLUEBELLS
CARPETING THE
WOODLANDS AS YOU
STEAM PAST

The nostalgia extends to the railway's four stations. Sheffield Park Station has been restored to its 1880s splendour; disembark here to see the locomotives in the engine sheds and the interactive museum. Period drama fans will recognise Horsted Keynes station from Downton Abbey. Kingscote station has been restored to the mid-1950s era. The Bluebell Railway connects to the national network at East Grinstead.

Visit in late April-early May to see bluebells carpeting the woodlands as you steam past. If you've ever dreamed of becoming an engine driver, book a Footplate experiences for a hands-on ride.

Website: bluebell-railway.com

OUR PARTNERS:

Gatwick Airport

www.gatwickairport.com/at-the-airport/flying-in/discover-local/

Surrey

www.visitsurrey.com

South Downs National Park

www.southdowns.gov.uk

Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

www.surreyhills.org

West Sussex

www.experiencesussex.com

West Kent

www.visitsevenoaksdistrict.co.uk/see-and-do

East Sussex

www.visitengland.com/things-to-do/east-sussex



EXPLORE SOME
OF THE REGION'S
MOST BEAUTIFUL
WATERWAYS

tea or a Ploughman's supper as you watch the countryside drift by, or set sail with a glass of Pimm's in hand as the sun sets on a balmy summer's day. Boats depart from Loxwood.

Website: www.weyarun.org.uk

6. Paddle the waterways

Take to the rivers for a fish-eye view of Kent and Sussex. The Kayak Coach runs kayak and canoe trips along some of the region's most beautiful waterways. You can make your paddle as strenuous or as relaxed as you like – let the tide do the hard work for you on a paddle on the River Arun, or spike your adrenaline on canoe chutes on the Medway river. Spot kingfishers, swans, tempting riverside pubs and charming towns and villages on the River Ouse, and a huge white chalk horse carved into a hillside near the River Cuckmere.

Website: www.thekayakcoach.com

Another peaceful way to experience the countryside around Gatwick is on a stand-up paddleboard (SUP). The Surrey Hills Adventure Company runs introductions to this increasingly popular sport on a lagoon in Reigate and on the 12th-century Birtley House Estate near Guildford. If you've already got experience of SUP, you can book an SUP River Safari along canal sections of the idyllic River Wey. You don't need any SUP experience to join an SUP yoga session and listen to chirping frogs as you downward dog on a paddleboard.

Website: thesurreyhillsadventurecompany.com/

7. Stroll the piers

A unique example of Victorian engineering, Britain's heritage piers are both beautiful to look at – and fantastic places to view the coast from. Towering on stilts over the waves below, piers frequently house entertainment arcades, fairground rides, cafes and art installations. They are the height of traditional English seaside holidays with Punch & Judy shows, candy floss stalls and crabbing lines.

Website: www.piers.org.uk

Some of the best places for a walk over the waves are Worthing, Hastings and Eastbourne. Worthing's Art Deco pier won Pier of the Year 2019 thanks to its elegant appearance and historical significance; have tea and cake in the Southern Pavillion at the pier's edge. Having hosted performances by Jimi Hendrix, Pink Floyd and the Rolling Stones in the 60s and 70s, the newly renovated Hastings Pier won the prestigious Stirling Prize for architecture; go for fresh air and expansive sea views from the uniquely uncluttered open deck. Eastbourne's 300 metre (985ft) pier bedecked with blue-and-white buildings is the place to sit and eat fish and chips as you gaze at the sea.

Websites: www.worthingpier.co.uk | www.discoverworthing.uk/see-and-do-listing/beach-and-seafront/pier | www.facebook.com/hastingspierofficial | www.eastbournepier.com/index.html

The information in this guide is intended to assist visitors in choosing suitable places to visit. Information has been curated and produced by the Gateway Gatwick Group in good faith. Details were correct at time of going to press (July 2019). Whilst every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information shown in this publication, the Gateway Gatwick Group does not accept responsibility or liability for any of the claims made nor the information stated, especially opening times and dates.

The project was produced and funded by the Gateway Gatwick Group. A tourism partnership designed to support the local visitor economy around Gatwick Airport. Contributing partners include: Coastal West Sussex Partnership, Coast to Capital, East Sussex County Council, Gatwick Airport, Gatwick Diamond Initiative, Experience West Sussex Partnership, Rural West Sussex Partnership, West Kent Partnership (Sevenoaks District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council), South Downs National Park Authority and Surrey Hills AONB and Enterprises.

Thank you to all that provided photos, in particular: SDNPA – David Russell