

Cycling in East Sussex:  
Avenue Verte Route Guide

# Forest Way & Ashdown Forest circular



**This circular route dissects Ashdown Forest, affording glorious views of the High Weald along the way. You'll be cycling along Avenue Verte, the network of cycle routes that links London with Paris, which includes seven miles of the Forest Way, a purpose built cycle path along a disused railway track.**

### **Crowborough – Groombridge**

Starting from Crowborough Station, you soon join a rollercoaster of tiny lanes that take you west through woodland and the villages of High Hurstwood and Fairwarp before a long climb north up to Chelwood Gate. A steady climb on a beautiful, quiet lane past Suttons Farm sets you up for a fantastic long descent from the high ridge running across Ashdown Forest down into Forest Row, leaving you with the best part of the ride – seven glorious flat, traffic-free miles along the Forest Way, a disused railway that takes you through Hartfield to the edge of Groombridge.

### **Groombridge – Crowborough**

From here the ride follows National Cycle Network Route 21 south along delightful quiet lanes. The route follows one of the tributaries of the River Medway, past Harrison's Rocks to Eridge Station, located on the Kent / Sussex border. From here a short section of gravel track keeps you away from the busy traffic of the A26 before a major climb up over Blackdon Hill. The final part of the ride takes you through Limekiln Wood along a rough track where nature is starting to take over, ending with a fast descent back to Crowborough.

## **Places of Interest** ❖❖❖

**Ashdown Forest** Lying at the heart of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Ashdown Forest covers 10 square miles. Despite what the name suggests, it is not thickly covered in trees. The word 'forest' actually comes from the Latin 'foris', a term meaning 'outside the common law' – in this case an area of land set aside for royal hunting. Echoes of the royal hunting legacy live on in Ashdown Forest with place names such as King's Standing, where the monarch reputedly took part in the chase.

**Crowborough** Sir Arthur Conan Doyle lived here and wrote his Sherlock Homes stories in the town. In 'The Valley of Fear,' Holmes investigates a murder at Birlstone Manor in Sussex, involving his enemy Professor Moriarty. The Manor is based on Groombridge Place.

**Forest Row** The village grew as a series of lodges to house royal hunting parties visiting Ashdown Forest. It later developed as a coaching halt on the London to Eastbourne road.

**Forest Way** The railway line was opened by the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway in 1866 as an extension of the Three Bridges to East Grinstead branch line. Forest Row was the busiest of the intermediate stations, dealing in minerals and general goods. It was finally closed as part of the Beeching cuts in 1966.

**Hartfield** Just off the Forest Way, Hartfield is a village with two ancient

inns, a 13th-century church and many houses built between the 16th and 18th centuries. Derived from the Saxon word 'feld' meaning open land, Hartfeld is literally 'open land where harts (deer) graze'. The site of Pooh Bridge, where Winnie the Pooh played Poohsticks with his friends in the series of books by AA Milne, is located nearby.

### **Starting point**

Crowborough

### **Distance**

39 miles / 63 kilometres

### **Off road/rough sections**

1. There is a  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile gravel section alongside the A26 to the northeast of Eridge Station
2. The Forest Way is a well-surfaced, traffic-free trail along a railway path, used for seven miles

### **Grade**

Moderate / Strenuous

### **Major climbs**

Four climbs of 70-110 metres and many shorter ones. The last 10 miles of the ride are either downhill to Forest Row or along the Forest Way

### **Refreshments**

Eridge Station, Jarvis Brook, High Hurstwood, Fairwarp, Forest Way, Hartfield, Groombridge

### **Tourist Information Centres**

Ashdown Forest Llama Park:  
01825 712040

### **Cycle Hire and Shops**

Forest Row: Future Cycles:  
01342 822847

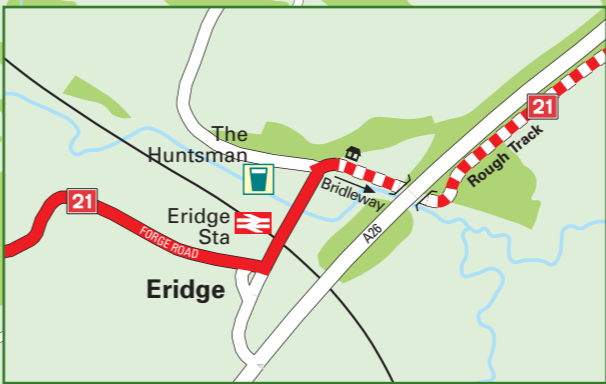
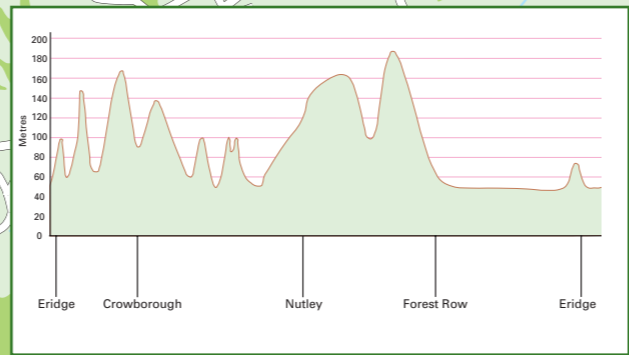
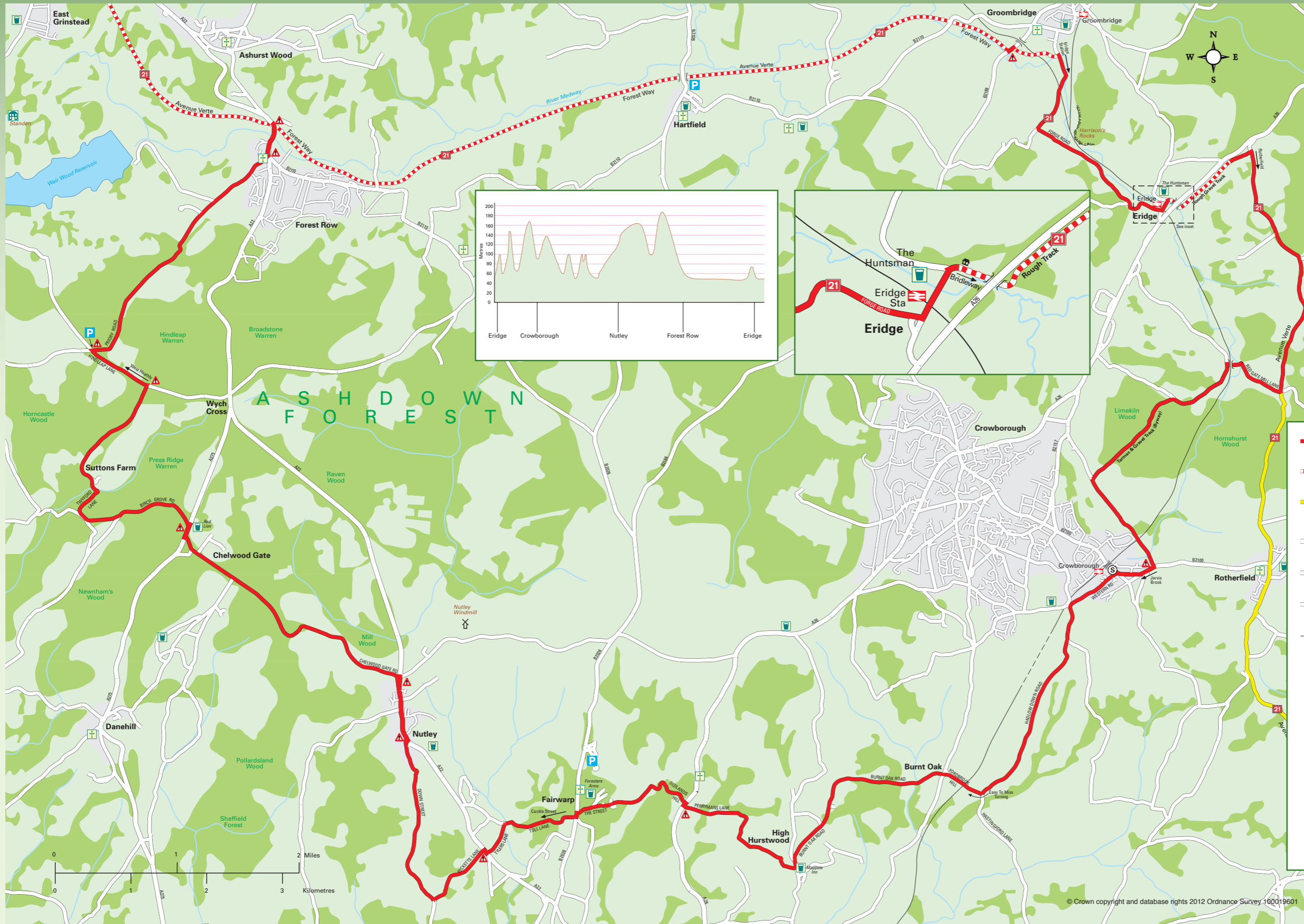
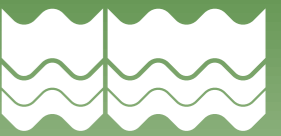
# Cycling in East Sussex

## Forest Way & Ashdown Forest circular



Avenue Verte

East Sussex  
County Council



- Circular Route (on road)
- Traffic-free route
- National Cycle Network (on road)
- A Road
- B Road
- Minor Road (arrow indicates steep hill pointing downhill)
- Railway
- Railway Station (with name)
- Church
- Pub
- House of Interest
- Car Parking
- Take Care!
- Follow Road Sign as Marked
- Start of route



© Crown copyright and database rights 2012 Ordnance Survey 100019601