

Enjoy the great outdoors

... visit London's chalk downland



Healthy...

The best way to visit one of our beautiful chalk downlands is on foot. Not only will you get closer to wildlife, you'll also be taking one of the best forms of exercise

Walking reduces the risk of high blood pressure, bowel cancer, Alzheimer's, arthritis, anxiety and stress. It can also give some protection against non-insulin diabetes and also osteoporosis.

Just three 10 minute walks can be as good for you as 30 minutes of continuous exercise, so a brisk trip across your local chalk downland could be one of your sessions.

Chalk downlands are good for wildlife, and good for people.

Many health remedies have their origins in the chalk



Medicinal...



St John's Wort

St John's Wort was burnt in Midsummer Day fires dating back to prehistoric times. The huge bonfires were intended to purify communities and crops. The bonfires coincided with the feast of St John the Baptist (24 June) giving a saintly name to a pagan plant!

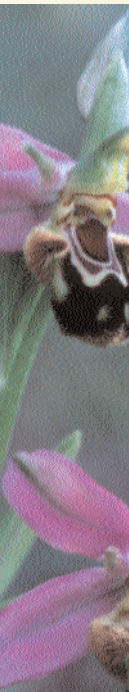
Modern herbal medicine still follows ancient tradition and uses the leaves of St John's Wort as a poultice and salve for wounds and burns



The flowers of **common valerian** have a strong vanilla perfume, yet its dried roots give off a stale rancid smell caused by valeric acid which can also be found in human perspiration! The roots also have strong sedative qualities and their extract is found in herbal tranquillisers. The smell is also popular with cats, producing the same response in them as cat mint!

Eyebright's flowers are shaped like tiny violets, mottled with purple and yellow blotches and stripes they look like the colour of a bruised eye. Compresses and tinctures made from them were used to help eye disorders.

Wild thyme contains thymol which is a powerful antiseptic. It was a key ingredient in Judges' posies and the Sovereign's Maundy Thursday posy, both intended to protect the carrier from the infectious diseases of the poor. Elizabethan women picked the flowering sprigs to scent their clothes and linen.



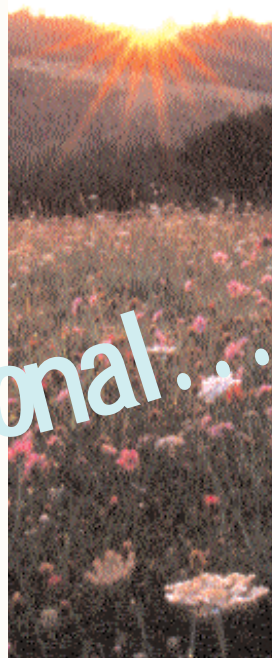
Chalk grassland is an ideal place to enjoy the great outdoors, whether you're walking the dog, taking a stroll with the children, jogging or just getting some fresh air



Common
valerian



Some
famous
names share a
love
of chalk
downland



Stroll and smell the air,
the chalk downlands have
a scent all of their own.



Sweet
briar
rose

Sweet-briar rose
has sticky apple-scented
leaves, and becomes
especially fragrant after rain.

Marjoram is the British version of the
oregano herb used in Mediterranean cooking,
though in our cooler climate it has a less earthy
fragrance. Its purple flowers are a favourite
with butterflies.

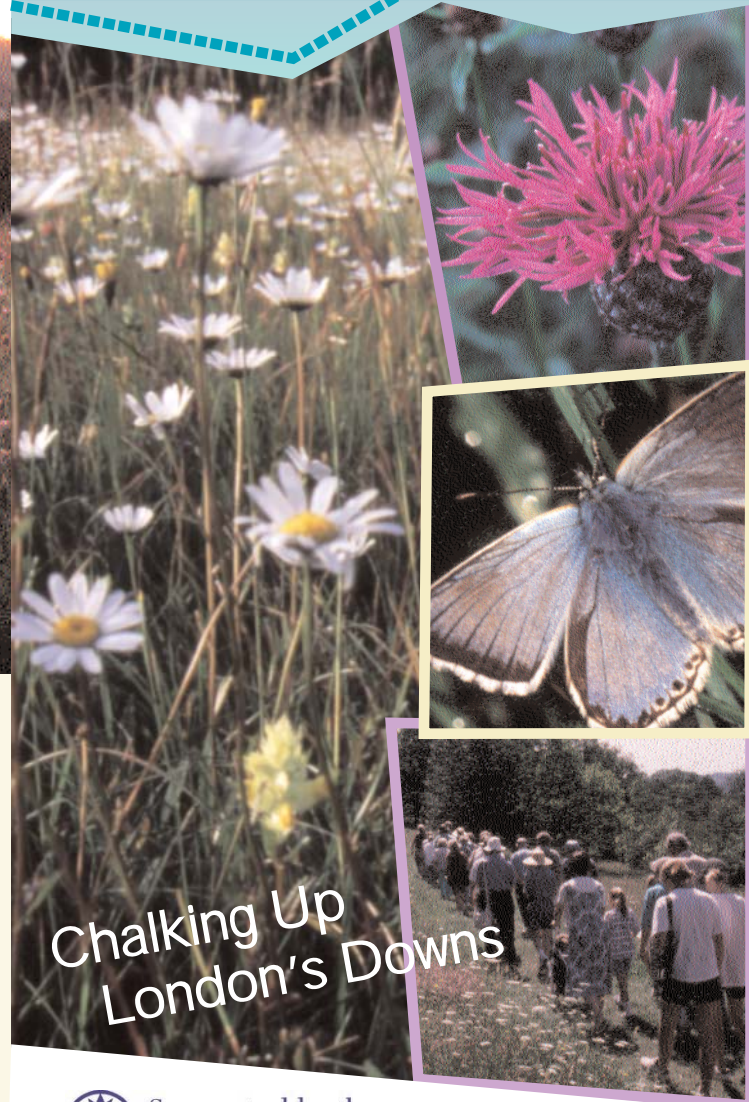
Inspirational...

Chalk downlands provided
Charles Darwin with
inspiration for his famous
work on evolution.

He often visited Downe Bank, then called
Orchis Bank, to study the **wild orchids**.
Those studies helped form the basis for his
scientific work and today's visitors can still
enjoy an 'entangled bank' described in the last
paragraph of 'The Origin of Species'.

The chalk landscape has inspired some of our
most well known artists, composers and
writers from Jane Austen to Charles Dickens
to JMW Turner and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Walk the CHALK



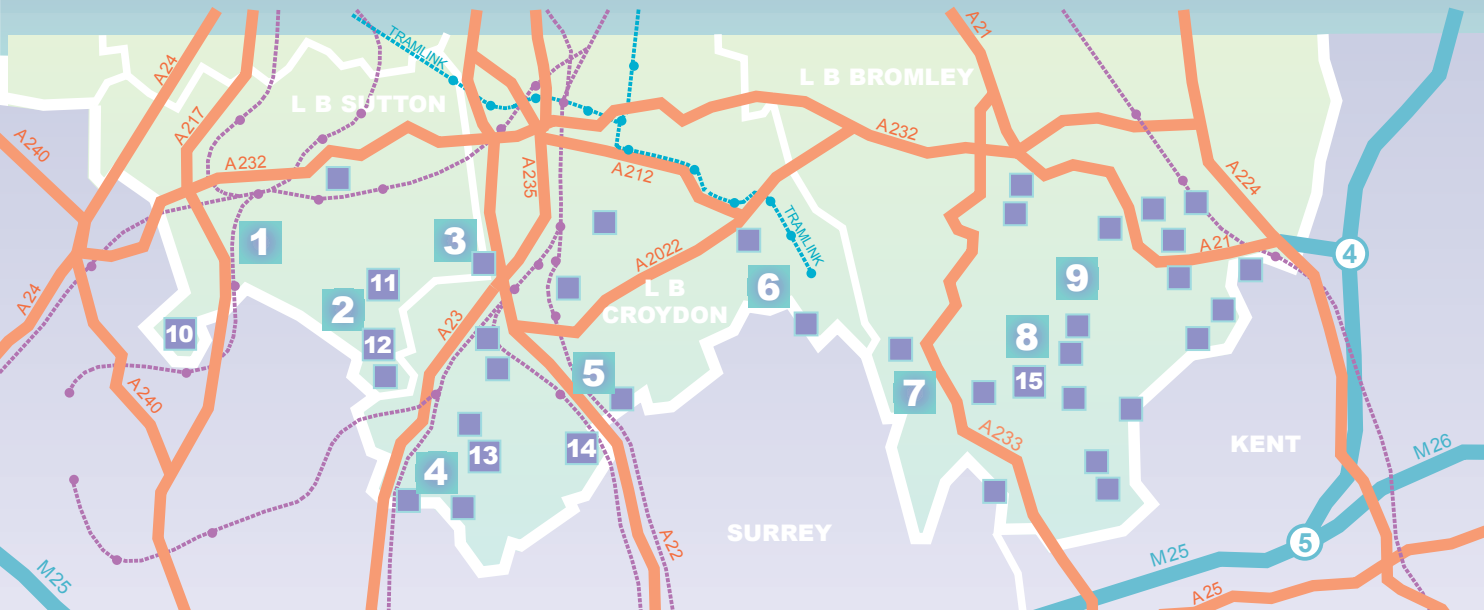
Chalking Up
London's Downs



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

London's Chalk Downland

The chalk downland of Bromley, Croydon and Sutton forms one of our most celebrated landscapes, and is well worth a visit.



1 Key Sites

(more details overleaf)

- 1 Devonshire Avenue Nature Area
- 2 The Oaks Park
- 3 Roundshaw Downs
- 4 Farthing Downs, New Hill and Happy Valley
- 5 Riddlesdown
- 6 Hutchinson's Bank
- 7 Saltbox Hill
- 8 Downe Bank
- 9 High Elms Nature Reserve

10 Other sites to enjoy

(telephone for more details)

LB Sutton 020 8770 6246

- 10 Cuddington Meadow
- 11 Wellfield Grassland
- 12 Carshalton Road Pastures

LB Croydon 020 8686 4433 x 2438

- 13 Coulsdon Memorial Recreation Ground
- 14 Kenley Common

LB Bromley 020 8313 4665

- 15 Blackbush Shaw

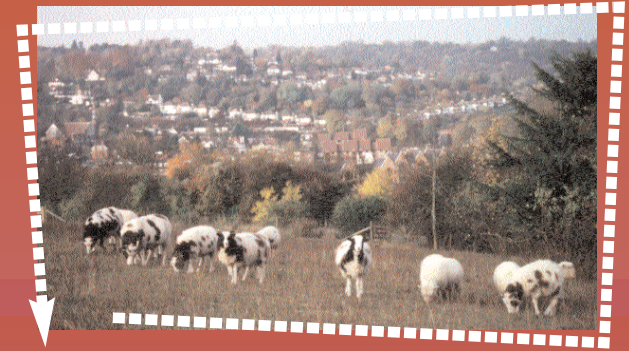
■ **Private Sites or Sites with restricted access**

Please remember . . .

- Avoid disturbing wildlife
- Take your litter home
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Keep to the paths where possible
- Keep your dogs under close control
- Take nothing but photographs
- Leave nothing but footprints

Photos by kind permission of: ● Andrew Scott
● Butterfly Conservation ● The Wildlife Trusts

Leaflet designed by:
Projects and Graphics L.B. Sutton 020 8770-6241



More than 95% of the UK's ancient flower-rich downland has been destroyed in just the last 50 years

Changes in farming over the last century have meant that chalk grassland was ploughed up as modern fertilizers made it possible to grow crops here. The downs have also become less grazed, and as a result of this neglect, bushes and trees have invaded the grassland transforming the previously open landscape into woodland. Downland was also lost to development - to feed our insatiable appetite for new roads, housing, sports facilities and industry.

It's not enough just to protect what flower-rich grassland survives, as even neglect alone can lead to the extinction of characteristic downland wildlife as it becomes covered by shrubs. Action by grazing or cutting is needed to keep the downland open.

We have 320 hectares of chalk grassland in south London. Many of these sites are small and isolated but a partnership of land owners and managers are working to ensure their survival.

Sheep and cattle are grazing some areas once again, and cutting is used where grazing isn't practical. Grassland is being restored by clearing invasive shrubs and trees, but patches are left providing food and shelter for insects and birds. This mosaic of grassland and bushes is richer in wildlife than windswept grassland alone.

- the healthy way to get close to wildlife