



PRESS RELEASE

North Downs Way Pilgrims Festival

Wye, 24-30th September 2018

bit.ly\PilgrimsFestival



Summer isn't over yet - join us for a week-long festival of events in Wye, **24-30th September 2018**, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the launch of the North Downs Way National Trail.

The North Downs Way Pilgrims Festival brings together the community to celebrate nature, mindfulness, heritage, literature, music, food, and all things relating to the trail's pilgrim heritage.

It promises to be a fantastic week for anyone wishing to be close to nature and experience local heritage and produce, or those who just want to take time out of busy lives to clear the head and the heart.

A packed programme of walks, heritage, literature, food, and beer

The festival finale sees a **parade** up to the Wye Crown with speakers and community joining together for the **40th anniversary of the North Downs Way National Trail**. With birthday cake and ribbons, **Des de Moor**, award-winning author of *The CAMRA Guide to London's Best Beer, Pubs and Bars* will toast the trail and we will hear from **Keith Chesterton** who walked the entire route in 1977 prior to its official opening.

The parade will be followed by the launch of the '**Ales of the Trail**' at the **Tickled Trout** pub by the gorgeous River Stour.

The week features a wide mix of events including author talks with celebrated authors such as **Guy Stagg**, whose book *The Crossway* recently featured on BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week, and **Katherine May** whose memoir, *The Electricity of Every Living*

Thing, describes the year in which she set out to walk the South West Coast Path, and discovered along the way she was autistic.

There's a screening of *Le Grand Voyage*, an award-winning film about a father and son's journey to Mecca,

On Saturday 29th September the stunning St Gregory & St Martin Church in Wye is the backdrop for a candlelit pilgrims feast with slow-roasted whole lamb and vegetarian options.

As you'd expect there are plenty of guided walks on offer with Wye situated in the heart of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which also celebrates its 50th Anniversary this year. There will be countryside experts to show you around and lead guided walks through spectacular scenery. **Refugee Tales** will be leading a walk sharing the testimonies of refugees at the Gatwick detention centre via professional writers, the **British Pilgrimage Trust** will be leading a "Bring Your Own Beliefs" pilgrimage from Elham to Wye, there's a map reading walk and workshop, a **Mindfulness Walk**, a **Well-Being and Nature Walk** and many more events opening up the experience and ethos of pilgrimage to all.

Local eateries will offer special pilgrim menus including the **Wife of Bath** restaurant specialising in Galician food with a nod to the world renowned pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela. Local breweries will be showing their '**Ales of the Trail**', a new partnership between breweries and the North Downs Way with beers such as **Bishops Finger**, **Pilgrims Progress** and **Good Heavens** available.

Peter Morris, North Downs Way National Trail Officer says "It's an exciting time for the Trail, this festival brings together all benefits of these national routes, the pilgrim heritage, local produce, community engagement, and celebrity interest in the nation's finest walking opportunities, it going to be a fantastic week".

Festival programme

Many events are free. Full details of events and links to book can be found here at bit.ly\PilgrimsFestival

- **Guided Heritage Walk from Chilham to Wye, Monday 24th September, 10.25am**
Get a taste of a pilgrimage on this 7 mile section of The Pilgrim's Way, the route from Winchester to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral.
- **The Poetry of Pilgrimage, Monday 24th September 11am – 1pm**
Local writer Victoria Field will introduce poems relating to the theme of pilgrimage and invite you to do some writing in response. No experience necessary.

- **Wye Arts Association – Le Grand Voyage, Tuesday 25th September, 7.30pm**
Le Grand Voyage is a 2004 film written and directed by Ismaël Ferroukhi portraying the relationship between father and son as they embark on a religious pilgrimage trip by car.
- **Mindfulness Guided Walk Tuesday 25th September, 3.30pm to 5.30pm**
A gentle circular walk focusing on the five senses of hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell to enhance our appreciation of our surroundings as we walk through them.
- **Author Talk, Pilgrimage and the Journey Within, Wednesday 26th September, 3-5pm**
Victoria Field, author of 'Baggage – A Book of Leavings', introduces pilgrim writers with extraordinary stories to share.
- **Santiago Tales – A pilgrimage on Horseback, Wednesday 26th September, 5.15-6pm**
Susie Gray reflects on her epic journey on horseback to Santiago de Compostela. Meet Susie and her intrepid and gorgeous horse Apollo.
- **Literary Reflections – A Performance of Chaucer's 'The Millers Tale', Wednesday 26th September, 7.30pm**
The audience can meet an all-star cast of published pilgrims and discuss their adventures. The evening will begin with a short performance of Chaucer's 'A Miller's Tale' by the Dour Players.
- **Trailblazers – training workshop for new ambassador programme Thursday 27th September 2018, 11am-4pm**
Do you like walking, storytelling and have good local knowledge of the history and countryside in Surrey/ Kent? Do you have time to lead organised walks & talks on and around the North Downs Way National Trail? Could you be a North Downs Way Ambassador?
- **Well-being and Nature Guided Walk - Friday 28th September 2018, 11.15am**
Discover how engaging with nature and walking is beneficial to your well-being with a 5-mile circular walk following the North Downs Way.
- **Kent – England's Holy Land: Tales of the Kent Saints and Pilgrimage, Friday 28th September, 7.30pm**
Andrew Kelly of the Augustine Camino gathers historical experts for an exploration of key figures in Kent's rich pilgrimage history.
- **North Downs Way Anniversary Celebrations Pilgrimage Fair, Saturday 29th September, 10am – 8pm**
 - A variety of beautiful guided walks finishing in Wye followed by a Pilgrims Feast in the Church followed by a choral harmony pilgrim duet. Choose from a variety of pilgrimage-related themes: **British Pilgrimage Trust; Refugee Tales; Ash Pilgrimage; Map Reading; Mindfulness; Augustine Camino.** There are different lengths and grades of difficulty to suit all needs and interests.
 - A delicious Pilgrim Feast with flowers, music candles, slow roasted whole lamb, local sausages and homemade vegetarian options. The feast will be preceded by a short talk by Refugee Tales.
- **Parade - Sunday 30th September**
The main event on Sunday 30th to mark the 40th Anniversary of the North Downs Way will see us leading a parade from the Church to the Wye Crown to cut the cake and toast the trail. Later in the afternoon we will launch The Ale Trail with a beer festival celebrating the Kent landscape, local breweries have dedicated official beers to the North Downs Way Trail to help raise funds for trail maintenance.

Check out bit.ly/PilgrimsFestival for more information

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

The North Downs National Trail

- National Trails are long distance routes, all are open to walkers and some are specifically designed and managed for horse riders and mountain bikers. There are 15 completed National Trails in England and Wales. National Trails are designated by government and are managed to the highest standards by dedicated staff and volunteers.
- The North Downs Way national trail is based on the Pilgrims Way from Winchester to Canterbury and the shrine of the slaughtered Thomas a Becket. From Canterbury the path picks up the long distance route to Roma on the Via Francigena. With such strong links to pilgrimage the trail has been involved in a Europe wide 'Green Pilgrimage' project looking at sustainable tourism on long distance trails.
- Pilgrimage is growing phenomena for people of faith and none. The massive secular popularity of the Camino to Santiago de Compostela in Spain has led to a growing interest in the ethos of pilgrimage; a journey with meaning that celebrates local produce, hospitality, and respect for traditions and local people.
- The ethos of pilgrimage suits modern sensibilities of wishing to be sustainable, close to nature, respectful of local traditions and produce, and taking time out of busy lives to clear the head and the heart.
- Kent's pilgrim routes connect medieval churches, ancient holy sites, spectacular remote countryside, local pubs and shops and villages, and ancient routeways.

Link to festival programme: **[bit.ly\PilgrimsFestival](https://www.kentdowns.co.uk/pilgrims-festival)**

Twitter handles

- <https://twitter.com/KentDownsAONB>
- <https://twitter.com/northdownsway>
- Facebook pages
 - <https://www.facebook.com/KentDownsAONB/>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/NorthDownsWayNationalTrail>
- Hashtags

#NDWPilgrimsFestival

#WeArePilgrim

#AlesOfTheTrail

The Kent Downs AONB

- The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty 50th anniversary year, Head for the Hills, is supported by National Lottery players through the Heritage Lottery Fund.
- “2018 is a year to enjoy and celebrate the beautiful landscapes of the Kent Downs - we'll also look towards the years to come and will be asking as many people as possible to participating in shaping its future” Nick Johannsen Director of the Kent Downs AONB unit
- For more information on the Kent Downs AONB and the anniversary year visit www.kentdowns.org.uk or find us on social media
 - <https://www.facebook.com/KentDownsAONB/>
 - <https://twitter.com/KentDownsAONB>



Wye Devils Kneading Trough Credit Explore Kent (high res available)

For further information contact Kate Hickey, Communications Manager, Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit, kate.hickey@kentdowns.org.uk, 01303 815170