



# SLOPE SOARING SITES OF ENGLAND



2016

40<sup>th</sup> Edition

*This guide is current as at July 2016 but it is not future-proof.*

*Check the latest situation before you fly.*

## FAVOURITE SLOPE SOARING SITES

This guide features 80 slopes in England and Wales for flying radio control model gliders. The online Slopehunter map has over 250 slopes:

[Slopehunter Google Map](#).

To whet your appetite, here are some favourite slopes in the southeast of England. They're in no particular order, since your personal favourites will depend on the wind direction and how close you live to the slopes.

### BEACHY HEAD

*When Beachy Head is on, the lift is amazing: strong and buttery smooth*

### BOPEEP HILL

*Excellent smooth lift, very similar to Firle Beacon*

### BUTSER HILL

*A friendly club site with slopes facing a variety of directions*

### BUTTS BROW

*A couple of great bowls plus a couple of secondary slopes*

### DEVIL'S DYKE

*Superb lift but can be crowded*

### DITCHLING BEACON

*Plenty of lift but can be turbulent*

### FIRLE BEACON

*Excellent smooth lift, hard to fault*

### HARTING DOWN

*Not so well known but lift as good as the very best*

### IVINGHOE BEACON

*A great range of slopes and a wonderful friendly scene*

### LONG MAN HILL

*A selection of superb slopes but quite a hike to get to them*

### THURNHAM CASTLE HILL

*A popular site that faces the predominant wind direction in southern England*

Sites in the rest of England and Wales are not listed above, but they are shown on the Google map. They include world class sites such as St Agnes Head and the Bwlch.



Ivinghoe Beacon



Firle Beacon



Long Man Hill

**Where's that then?**

On the south coast near Eastbourne.

**So what's it like?**

Beachy Head is a pretty remarkable place. It has several slopes as well as miles of cliffs to soar from. The main slope faces southeast (ESE to be precise) with views over Eastbourne. It is a large grassy bowl set well back from the cliffs, offering excellent smooth lift in east to southeast winds. The bowl is large enough to soar from without having to fly out over the sea. Unfortunately the landing area is a bit tricky. You need eyes in the back of your head to watch out for tourists (when they see a glider landing they often converge on it to get a good look). While dodging tourists you also need to make very sure you do not fly too far back, because vicious turbulence lurks over the sunken road.



*There might be a smidgeon of lift here, what do you think?*

A few hundred yards to the left of the main bowl is another equally impressive bowl that faces east (known locally as Whitbread Hollow).

To the right of the main bowl there are a couple of small bowls that face SSE.

The cliffs are over 100 metres high – in other words, pretty staggering – and the bowls on top add half as much again. The cliffs are only for experienced flyers since there is potential to lose a plane out to sea.

However, usually there is no reason to be near the edge since the bowls are set well back. This is just as well, since these are definitely not cliffs you would want to fall off (those little bunches of fake flowers along the edge mark the locations of suicides).



*Summer evening flying at the east bowl*

Sometimes paragliders fly at Beachy Head. Always give paragliders right of way and allow them plenty of airspace. Occasionally the lift fails to appear on hot summer days even though the wind seems perfect. This is due to a strange phenomenon: the warm wind gets cooled by the cold sea and cannot rise up the cliffs. On hot days like this the site would usually be too crowded with day-trippers for comfortable flying anyway.



*Springtime over Eastbourne*



Beachy Head is public access land managed by the the Gilbert Estate. Apparently National Trust rules apply (the BMFA has an agreement with the Trust which stipulates that gliders are allowed but motorised planes are not.)



*Crikey, where did he come from?!*

### Marks out of 10?

Beachy Head gets 7 – and perhaps even 8 when it's really on. The main flying spot – the ESE bowl – can be superb in the right conditions. However Beachy Head should be avoided during the summer holidays when it gets very crowded with tourists.



*Landing is easy enough – as long as you don't hit anyone*

### How do you get there then?

Drive down the M23 from London and then east along the A27 to the first Eastbourne junction, the A2270 (just to cause confusion this is marked Willingdon rather than Eastbourne). Stay on the A2270 heading into Eastbourne, and a mile before the seafront take a sharp right onto the A259 (this is the coastal road that leads to Brighton). Head west on this for two miles and then take a left onto the B2103 to Beachy Head (it's well signposted). Park in the Countryside Centre carpark (this is managed by Eastbourne Council and costs £1.40 for two hours – or if you're feeling cheeky you could try parking for free in the pub carpark).



*You could recreate Beachy Head's WWII battles with PSS gliders!*

Another soaring site, Butts Brow, is nearby (you passed it going down the A2270). It also has a southeast slope, although not nearly as good as Beachy Head.

*Latitude 50.736 / Longitude 0.253*

[Beachy Head Map](#)

**Where's that then?**

One of the few coastal soaring sites in north Kent, Beltinge Cliffs rise between Beltinge and Reculver, a couple of miles east of Herne Bay.

**So what's it like?**

The cliffs at Beltinge are a rarity in southern England: cliffs that face north. To be precise, some sections face NNW. They work well in north to almost northwest winds. These are irregular, eroding clay banks and cliffs, popular with fossil hunters when the tide is out. The area is public access land owned by the local council. The landing area is good: quite large and flat. The cliffs are not as high as those at Beachy Head but nevertheless they're nicely soarable when conditions are right. As with most cliffs, there can be turbulence at the edge. The wind speed range that seems to work best is around 10mph to 20mph. When the wind exceeds about 20mph the lift breaks up into strong turbulence and the cliffs become unsoarable. In winds below about 12mph paragliders sometimes fly at Beltinge.

The cliffs at the Reculver end are a protected area. If you fly along this section you should take great care not to upset the sand martins that nest in the cliffs (obviously this is unlikely, since any glider that collides with the cliff face is about to be lost to sea!)



*Just don't get too near the edge ...*

**Marks out of 10:**

Beltinge really only merits 5, but the spot is worth knowing about because it is one of the few north facing slopes in Kent. One other is at Minster on the Isle of Sheppey (see the Minster Cliffs section). Beltinge offers slightly higher cliffs and a larger landing area than Minster.



*If you dump a plane in the sea you could try asking the coast guard to rescue it ... or maybe not ...*

**How do you get there then?**

Drive from London eastwards on the M2 and take the A299 towards Herne Bay. Go a couple of miles along the coast to the village of Beltinge. The cliffs run for about a mile between Beltinge and Reculver. Park in the carpark at the end of Bishopstone Lane. You can launch from the grass area in front of the carpark.

We're talking about 70 miles from the east side of London, so Beltinge is one of the furthest sites that are within relatively easy shooting distance of the capital. Perhaps you could convince the kids you're taking them on a fossil hunting adventure ...

*Latitude 50.375 / Longitude 1.168*

[Beltinge Cliffs Map](#)



**Where's that then?**

Near the south coast, just south of the A27 between Brighton and Eastbourne.

**So what's it like?**

Nice. It's a civilised sort of hill, but quite steep, so there's good lift. The landing zone is large and free of hazards. The hill faces northeast and – surprise, surprise – flies best in northeast winds. In fact there are three slopes here, all equally good.



*There is lots of lift over the launch area so planes need to be thrown forwards, not upwards*

In many ways the slopes at Bopeep are like Firle, and indeed Bopeep Hill is less than two miles from Firle. Bopeep's air is sometimes not quite as smooth as Firle's, but Bopeep seldom gets crowded, whereas Firle can be pretty popular at weekends.



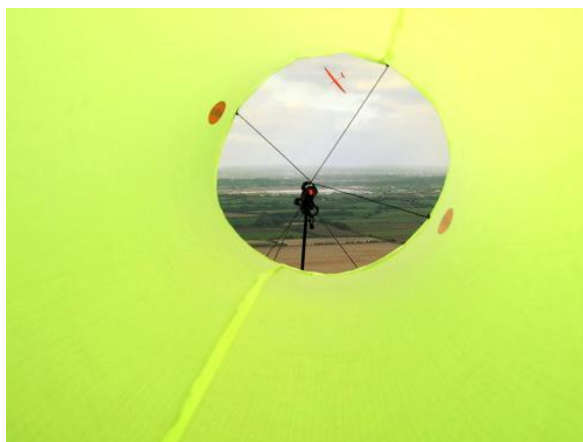
*On Saturdays the scale guys sometimes meet up at Bopeep*



*What's going on over there – the second coming?*

Sometimes Bopeep hosts paraglider schools on the slope nearest the carpark. This is usually when the wind is less than 10mph or so. If this happens, you can either walk 600 yards further east, or head in the opposite direction by crossing the road and walking 500 yards west. The slope to the east is perhaps fractionally better than the other two. Should any paragliders enter the model glider aerial fray, always give them right of way and fly away from them. Further advice on this issue can be read here: [BHPA Policy](#).

There is lift over the landing zone of all slopes, so getting your plane down can require determination. The good news is that there is very little turbulence behind the landing areas, so you can safely fly well back and land slowly.



*The view through a windsock, in case you're wondering...*



*The slope 600 yards east of the carpark is possibly the best slope of all – if you can cope with the walk*

The site is called Bopeep because you access it by going up Bopeep Lane and it is opposite Bopeep Farm. However the hill is actually called Bostal Hill – not many people know that. The farm is a Bed & Breakfast ([www.bopeepfarmhouse.co.uk](http://www.bopeepfarmhouse.co.uk)), so you could stay here and walk half a mile up the hill to fly (bet you drive, though!)

#### **Marks out of 10?**

What do you reckon, 7? You might even say 8 when you consider that there are several good slopes.

#### **How do you get there then?**

Get yourself down the M23 to the A27 and head east. About six miles past Lewes, watch carefully for the small lane on your right called Bopeep Lane.



*Spring session*



*A few hundred yards west of the carpark can be a good place to fly when paragliders are using the carpark slope*

The lane is just after the village of Selmeston. Drive a mile up Bopeep Lane and park in the carpark on the left. If you fancy a challenge it is possible to cross-country soar westwards all the way to Firle and even onwards to Itford Hill.



*There's nothing quite like a nice new glider*

Bopeep Hill is public access land. Apparently National Trust rules apply (the BMFA has an agreement with the Trust which allows unpowered glider flying but prohibits powered models - if you have an electric powered glider you can simply tape the blades to the fuselage).

**Latitude 50.823 / Longitude 0.126**

[Bopeep Hill Map](#)



**Where's that then?**

A handful of miles south of the M25 near Dorking.

**So what's it like?**

Box Hill is a country park owned by the National Trust. It has a pay carpark and take-away cafe at the peak. There are several flyable slopes but they can only really be used at times when there are few people about.

The main slope is a couple of hundred yards from the cafe. It is a medium-sized slope that faces south to SSW. It has a stone lookout point at the top which is popular with day-trippers. The slope is moderately steep with a rounded top so the lift can be quite good. The landing area could be better: you have to land on the slope, or possibly fly your plane over the road behind the slope and land in the field there. The difficulty is that on pleasant days there are lots of walkers and picnickers occupying the area. So this slope is best flown on cool, cloudy days when it can be surprisingly deserted. If the slope is occupied, try walking down to the bottom of the landing area: if you go through the row of bushes a whole new lower slope is revealed. This area benefits from being wider – it extends for several hundred yards further westwards – plus it is less likely to have people on it. So this lower area can be the smartest spot for launching and landing.



*The main slope: sometimes crowded, sometimes deserted*

Half a mile away is a west slope overlooking the A24. It is a shallow grassy slope about 70 metres high. It works for WNW to WSW winds. It tends to have fewer walkers on it than the main slope does. There are views over Denbies winery (don't even think about abandoning the soaring for a wine tasting session!) The lift is pretty meagre. However, rising thermal air currents often add lift: all those cars racing along the A24 seem to generate enough heat to spawn good thermals. Box Hill's west slope may not be the greatest slope but it is the only west facing slope for many miles.



*West slopes are rare in the area so this one is worth a try*

When flying on the west slope you can just see another slope in the distance next to the vineyards: Denbies Hill. This is not the greatest slope in the world either, but it definitely has its good days and is worth knowing about in case Box Hill is too crowded. The slope is over 100 metres high. The ideal wind direction is south. If you go through the gate at the bottom of the landing area and head right for a couple of hundred yards you'll find another pretty little slope that often seems to have superior lift. What a view!

If none of these slopes are lighting your fire, consider heading over to Colley Hill, which will have more lift. It's about a 15 minute drive.



### Marks out of 10?

Overall Box Hill's main slope scores 5. So does Denbies Hill. The west slope at Box Hill is probably only a 3!



*The lift at Denbies' lower slope can be surprisingly decent – but trying to land on the slope can be a bit indecent!*

### How do you get there then?

You can reach Box Hill's slopes from either end of Zig Zag Road. The main way in is from the A217: drive down the A217 from central London, past Sutton, then at the large Kingswood roundabout (which is a couple of miles inside the M25), go slightly to your right down the B2032, Dorking Road. Go over the M25 (gazing down smugly at the poor fools in the traffic jams) and follow the signs to Box Hill (which involves taking a brief right onto the B2033 and then left onto Box Hill Road). After a couple of miles this becomes Zig Zag Road and you will see the slope on your left. Actually to be precise the slope goes down out of sight and what you can see is the stone lookout point.

If you reach the National Trust Cafe you've gone a couple of hundred yards too far. Buy a piece of cake to recover from the shock and then get back to the slope.

The west slope is half a mile away at the far end of Zig Zag Road. Park in the little carpark on the right just after the last hairpin bend before the park exit (now you know why it's called Zig Zag Road). Cross the road and climb about 50 yards up some steep little wooden steps to the peak. The slope is on the other side, overlooking the A24.

To get to Denbies Hill from the west slope, exit the park and turn left past the biker cafe onto the A24. After about half a mile take a right into Ashcombe Road (signposted Guildford). Continue straight as it becomes Ranmore Road, following the signs towards Ranmore. After maybe a mile and a half park in the National Trust carpark on the left. It's signposted Denbies Hillside.

As at many National Trust sites these days, you are supposed to pay £2 to park if you're not a National Trust member.

The National Trust has a policy of encouraging glider flying, but occasionally wardens may be unclear on this point. Here is the official National Trust wording on the matter (available on its website):

**"The National Trust welcomes non-powered model flying on its land, recognising that the activity seldom causes significant disturbance, provided particular care is taken with regard to other visitors, livestock and birds."**

Latitude 51.246 / Longitude -0.310

[Box Hill Map](#)

[Denbies Hill Map](#)

**Where's that then?**

Down the A3 ... way down towards Portsmouth.

**So what's it like?**

Butser Hill is one of Hampshire's main flying sites. It is a large, exposed hill with slopes facing a variety of directions.



*Butser Hill has a good variety of slopes*

The northeast slope is perhaps the best one – it provides good lift and easy landing on the flat hilltop. It offers wonderful views over the surrounding countryside. It works best in north to northeast winds – if the wind is any more easterly the lift quickly becomes erratic because there is a hill jutting out on the right that blocks the wind.



*West winds and only west winds work for the west slope*

The west slope is also a very good slope as long as the wind is directly west (it is a pronounced valley pointing west so smooth air from any other direction cannot reach the slope).

The southwest slope is a bowl and is turbulent except in low winds, so it's not for beginners. The north slope provides reasonably good lift but landing can be tricky since there is lots of lift and turbulence in the landing area. The east slope also provides quite good lift but the launch is challenging since you have to hurl your plane over a fence and trees. The treetops bear skeletons of unreachable planes!

The slopes radiate from the large, flat hilltop, so access is unproblematic. Each slope involves a walk of 5 to 10 minutes from the carpark.

A model soaring club operates from the site (see [mvsa.bmfa.org](http://mvsa.bmfa.org)). Membership is not mandatory but is well worthwhile if you live in the area. The club operates a frequency pegboard at the site. Unlike some sites, electric powered gliders are allowed at Butser Hill.



*The civilised northeast slope is good for scale soaring*

The club also operates a site a few miles east at Harting Down which is truly excellent in north to northwest winds. The slope is steep and mainly faces NNW. The lift can be strong yet quite smooth. The landing area is large and flat. So it's all good!

BMFA insurance is required to fly at Harting Down. If using a 35MHz transmitter, only even frequency numbers should be used (for example channel 64 but not 65). If you meet any club members there, be nice, because they have rights to the site under an agreement with the National Trust.

### Marks out of 10?

Each slope individually is in the 4 to 6 range, but put them all together in one place and Butser Hill is worth 7 out of 10.

### How do you get there then?

Drive down the A3, past Petersfield, and the hill is on your right – keep an eye out for the telecommunications mast on top. Wave at it as you pass because there is no exit here. Almost a mile further on, take the exit on your left marked Butser Hill, keep heading to your left to go back over the A3, turn right at the mini roundabout towards London and then follow the Butser Hill signs up Hogs Lodge Lane to the carpark at the top of the hill. You have to pay £1 at the entry barrier to park as long as you like. Butser Hill is part of Queen Elizabeth Country Park (the land is owned by the Council) and the park's postcode is PO8 0QE.



*Over the northeast slope*



*Trying to decide if the air is smooth enough for a launch*

Harting Down is about 5 miles east of Butser Hill, on the B2141, a mile or so south of the village of South Harting. There is a National Trust carpark at the top of the hill on the left. It costs £2 to park (free for National Trust members). The slope is about 400 yards east of the carpark along the ridge.



*Harting Down: nice lift and nice landing*

The club also has access to a couple of other slopes on private land (such as the east-facing HMS Mercury site on Wether Down, two miles west of Butser Hill) so it's worth joining the club if you live in the area.

**Latitude 50.959 / Longitude -0.870**

[Butser Hill Map](#)

[Harting Down Map](#)



**Where's that then?**

In Willingdon, a village on the outskirts of Eastbourne, on the south coast in East Sussex.

**So what's it like?**

This hilltop reserve has several slopes. The two best slopes are the east and north bowls. The east bowl is a large slope, moderately steep, about 100 metres high. It produces good lift in northeast to east winds. The perfect wind direction is east or ENE, but you can amble around the rim to the right to fly in northeast winds.



*The east bowl provides good lift*

The landing area is reasonable. There is a fence along the top to avoid. Take care not to knock over any walkers when landing – it doesn't go down well. There are also a few trees just down the slope that can catch you out. You might think you've caught your plane in a bush six feet high, but when you walk down you realise your pride and joy is actually thirty feet up a tree!

The area also has a good north slope nearby (a couple of hundred yards further from the carpark). This is also a large bowl, with reliable lift and an excellent flat landing area. It works best in north to NNE winds. Some say it is even better than the east bowl because it has a larger landing area and fewer trees to catch you out.



*An autumn club racing session at Butts Brow*

There is a less exciting but quite pleasant southeast slope a few hundred yards to the south. This slope overlooks a golf course and the sea beyond. It is a gentle, medium-sized slope and offers fair lift, low turbulence and reasonably good landing possibilities. Butts Brow is generally a fairly quiet flying area. It becomes more lively on days when the good folks of the East Sussex Soaring Association get together to fly there. The club occasionally holds friendly competitions at Butts Brow and Long Man Hill, varying from relaxed fun flies to aerobatics contests to national races. If you fly in the area, the club is well worth joining: [www.eastsussexsa.co.uk](http://www.eastsussexsa.co.uk).



*Like the east bowl, the north bowl produces good lift – plus the landing area is slightly better*



*A hefty launch*

### **Marks out of 10?**

This one is distinctly 7.

### **How do you get there then?**

From London, head down to the south coast on the M23. Go east along the A27 past Lewes. Go down the first road into Eastbourne (the A2270, Eastbourne Road – confusingly this is signposted Willingdon rather than Eastbourne).



*Over Eastbourne*

After about two miles head slight right down the small road signposted Willingdon Village. In the centre of the village turn right into Butts Lane. Haul your butt up the lane's steep incline, which takes you to a public reserve (owned by the local council) which rejoices in the rather unlikely name of Butts Brow.



*Another view of the east bowl*

Park in the first carpark on the right. There is a charge of £1.40 for two hours parking and you need to have the correct change: beware, the wardens can be ruthless.

The east bowl is about 300 yards north of the carpark (away from the radio mast that is visible from the carpark). The north bowl is about 200 yards beyond that. The southeast slope is the other way, about 200 yards south of the carpark (past the radio mast).



*A launch at the north bowl*

**Latitude 50.793 / Longitude 0.242**  
[Butts Brow Map](#)



**Where's that then?**

The Bwlch is in south Wales, on the A4061, four miles from the town of Treorchy.

**So what's it like?**

England has hills, but Wales has mountains. That is why Welsh slopes merit special guest status in this guide despite the fact that they are not in England.

The Bwlch is an area of huge slopes around a winding alpine-style road in the mountainous region of central south Wales that includes the Brecon Beacons. The area has almost endless potentially flyable slopes, but many are difficult to reach because the only roads are down in the valleys. So hard hiking can be required.



A large version of this map is available at:  
[www.slopehunter.co.uk/bwlch.pdf](http://www.slopehunter.co.uk/bwlch.pdf)

The Bwlch slopes are perhaps twice as high as England's major slopes, and twice as steep as well. This gives them a certain infamy because the lift is huge but challenging. Flying at the Bwlch can involve arduous hikes, severe weather, high winds, extreme speeds ... and wrecked gliders. There is a reason the slopes have been given names such as "Wrecker"! Bwlch air is seldom smooth because most of the Bwlch's slopes face other slopes across the valleys. The wind is often far stronger than on the flat, so about the only time the Bwlch might be considered relaxing is when the forecast is only 5mph or so.

In the milder months Mickey's is one of the most flown slopes because the prevailing winds are southwest to west. Mickey's has a southwest section (starting a few hundred yards from the layby marked by the lower of the two blue "P" signs on the map), and about a mile further on, a west section.



The gate up to Mickey's slope: behind this, a gravel path winds for a few hundred yards up the hill to the ridge

Both sections of Mickey's are slightly milder slopes than Wrecker, and have nice large grassy landing areas. However the hike is quite difficult.

The layby often has an ice cream van parked in it, which is why the other nearby slope is known as the Ice Cream Slope. It is a grassy slope facing northwest. It also involves a bit of a hike.



A firm launch into big wind at Mickey's Slope



In northerlies the stunning “mega-bowls” come into play: Wrecker and Crest. Wrecker – the most famous of the Bwlch slopes – works in northeast winds. Crest works in east winds.

Wrecker is right by the road (alarmingly so, in fact: take great care not to fall off the edge). Park in the layby on the A4107 shown by the upper of the two blue “P” signs on the map.



*Mickey's has a nice, large, flat landing area*

The best flying spot is probably about 150 yards to the left of the layby – or whichever section of the bowl is facing most directly into the wind. It is possible to fly from the layby if you are concerned about getting too close to the edge.



*The hike up to Mickey's slope is a bit of a ... hike.*

The right end of the Wrecker bowl is sometimes known as VR98 (after a competition that was held there in 1998) and faces north.



*This is the view from the top of Wrecker, a few feet from the parking layby*

Crest – the biggest bowl of all – is a longer walk from the same layby.

The Back of Wrecker is also a large, steep slope. It faces south and is also reached from the same layby. Further information on the Bwlch can be found at [www.knewt.com](http://www.knewt.com)



*The Back of Wrecker viewed from Mickey's slope*

(By the way, English speakers pronounce “Bwlch” halfway between “Bulk” and “Book” – although the true pronunciation ends with a Welsh guttural “ch” sound which is hard to say in English.)

Wales has many other large slopes apart from the Bwlch.

About an hour's drive from the Bwlch is a specialist slope soaring spot called the Skirrid. This is a razor ridge – an unusual hill shape for Britain. It runs north-south and so works in west and east winds.



*It is hard to get a feel for the size of Wrecker from a picture, but in reality it is a mighty impressive piece of topography*

The sharpness of the Skirrid ridge and steepness of its sides make it excellent for Dynamic Soaring (flying in circles on the “wrong” side of the ridge to achieve high speeds).



*The Skirrid ridge has no landing zone*

The top of the Skirrid is rocky and there is no landing area, so this is not a spot for beginners. The climb up from the carpark is difficult and takes the best part of an hour. The carpark is at the southern end of the ridge (a National Trust layby on the B4521).

Wales has many coastal flying sites and perhaps the two best known are the Great Orme and Rhossili. Both are giant-sized coastal slopes. The Great Orme is in the north of Wales and Rhossili in the south.

The Great Orme is a bit of a monster, and in fact it must have given this impression through the ages because Orme is a Viking word for a sea monster.

The Great Orme is next to the seaside town of Llandudno. It works in a variety of wind directions. A friendly group of slope soarers fly there, and helpful advice can be found by Googling “Stormeflyers”.



*Dynamic soaring a little too close for comfort at the Skirrid*

Rhossili is a touristy village in the picturesque Gower Peninsula area. It is surrounded by many flyable cliffs facing various directions. The largest flying spot is the huge sloping ridge overlooking Rhossili Bay. It faces west.



*Launching at Rhossili Bay*

The main parking area is at the far end of the village (£3) and then it is a case of walking through the village and hiking up the rather arduous hill. Some local flyers park behind the ridge by driving up a small road called Bunker’s Hill, but it is a slightly longer walk (although less steep).





*The view towards the far end of Rhossili Bay*

Rhossili Bay's ridge runs for about three miles and is flyable all along its length. It produces wonderful, smooth coastal lift, and is free of turbulence because there is no vertical cliff or sudden lip. The landing area is very good: it is flat and covered in low gorse which cushions the impact.

In low winds paragliders use the end of the ridge nearest the village so it is best to walk further along. It is also possible to access the far end of Rhossili Bay from the village of Llangennith.



*Flying over the sea at Rhossili Bay*

More Welsh slope soaring sites can be seen on the [Slopehunter Google Map](#)



*The view over the village from the Rhossili Bay ridge*

### **Marks out of 10?**

The Bwlch is awarded 8. If you are a bit of an adrenaline junkie you might even call it 9 ... but if you hate hikes and drama you will probably rate it lower.

### **How do you get there then?**

The Bwlch is on the A4061, four miles south of Treherbert/Treorchy (two villages that have fused into one town). From the Bwlch the A4061 continues down to junction 36 of the M4 motorway.

The Skirrid is on the B4521 near Abergavenny. From Abergavenny go up the A465, turn right into the B4521, and park in the National Trust layby. Abergavenny is accessed by driving north from junction 26 of the M4.

The Great Orme is next to Llandudno in north Wales. It is 60 miles west of Liverpool taking the A55. It is 150 miles north of the Bwlch (which could take four hours!)

Rhossili is 18 miles west of Swansea on the Gower Peninsula. From Swansea take the A4118 (Gower Road). Swansea is on junction 44 of the M4.

**Latitude 51.640 / Longitude -3.534**

[Bwlch Map](#)

[Skirrid Map](#)

[Great Orme Map](#)

[Rhossili Bay Map](#)



**Where's that then?**

A stone's throw outside the M25, to the south of London near Reigate. This is one of the closest slopes to London. It is also the only slope on the North Downs to rival the South Downs for lift.

**So what's it like?**

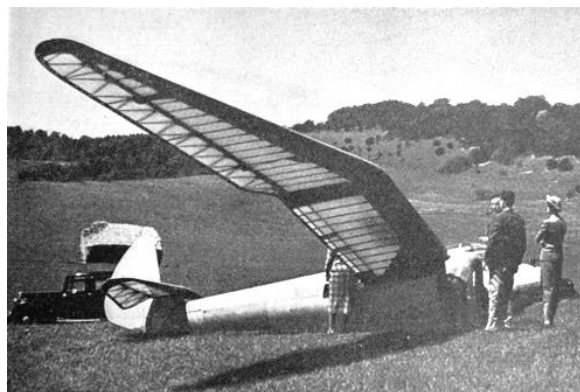
Colley Hill is a good burly slope. This is another way of saying there is a lot of lift but also a fair bit of turbulence. The good news is that over the last few years the National Trust has eradicated most of the scrub from the slope, which has made the air smoother than ever before.



*Summer soaring at Colley Hill*

The slope is steeper than most and higher than most. It faces SSW at the head of a valley and so works best in SSW wind. It is also very good in south wind. It is flyable in southwest wind but often more turbulent. Colley Hill does not work well if the wind is any more westerly than southwest.

Colley Hill can be a mega-lift slope when the wind is right. You know the opening scene of the seminal American slope soaring movie 'Lift Ticket'? The one with the Higgins F-20 doing high speed aerobatics in mega-lift next to the Golden Gate Bridge? That sort of flying is on the agenda at Colley Hill when the wind is over 15mph or so. Alternatively, relaxed flying can be had in wind of only 5-10mph, when the lift will be at its smoothest.



A Minimoa on the site of the Surrey Gliding Club at Bucklands Hill, between Reigate and Dorking, where there is fourteen miles of slope soaring

*Amazingly, full size gliders were flying at Colley Hill in the 1930s and 1940s, including this Minimoa*

Landing at Colley Hill can be slightly tricky: the landing area is backed by trees, and the air over the landing area is usually gusty. The best landing approach is to land sideways along the slope, rather than trying to turn over the trees.



*A good way for novices to enjoy Colley Hill is to bring a foamy and leave the balsa masterpiece at home*

A couple of hundred yards to the right of the main slope a grassy knoll can be seen, and this is the often the smartest place to fly. The air is smoother here and landing easier. Delicate floaty models can safely be flown from this knoll when the wind is light. Since the knoll protrudes from the face of the hill it works in winds from southwest around to southeast. Here's a bit of trivia knowledge: the knoll actually has a name of its own, Saddle Knob.

Between Saddle Knob and the main slope, the scrub clearance has recently revealed a fairly good southeast facing slope. The lift is good in southeast and SSE winds, but the landing area is narrow. In southeasterlies the smart thing to do is to launch at the southeast slope and then, when it comes time to land, fly 100 yards left or right to land on a larger landing area.



*A tip from those in the know: the best place to fly is the grassy knoll to the right of the main slope*

#### Marks out of 10?

The lift is worth 7 and the landing area is worth 5, so let's call it 6. Colley Hill is definitely the best slope so close to London.



*A family foamy session overlooking Reigate*



*Winter soaring at Colley Hill*

#### How do you get there then?

Colley Hill is a few hundred yards from Junction 8 of the M25 (Sutton/Reigate). At Junction 8, go up the A217 towards Sutton for just 100 yards and turn left into a small road called Margery Road. Drive for almost a mile to the end of the road and park in the Margery Wood carpark (National Trust members park for free, but the Trust now expects non-members to pay £4 to park at any of its carparks!) Walk along the dirt track that begins next to the National Trust information sign, through the woodland and over the M25 on a footbridge (about 200 yards in all). The slope is through the gate.



*Hurling a discus-launch glider off the grassy knoll*

Latitude 51.256 / Longitude -0.217

[Colley Hill Map](#)



### Where's that then?

Just outside Brighton.

### So what's it like?

Devil's Dyke is a popular slope soaring and paragliding location due to its ease of access and proximity to Brighton. The main slope is a large, steep bowl that faces NNW. It is an impressive 150 metres high. It features superb lift in northwest to north winds. The lift can be smooth – or it can be turbulent if the wind isn't straight onto the slope.



*This scale glider is hard to tell apart from the full size*

The landing area is reasonable but not huge. Take care not to fly too far back, because nasty turbulence lurks behind the flat area. At weekends there can be walkers and kite flyers obstructing the landing area. Paragliders and radio control planes each have their own separate air space so paragliders are not a problem (but if paragliders ever stray, give them right of way).

The carpark is right on the slope so access is particularly easy. For the best soaring spot, park in the furthest carpark and walk about 50 yards east. Do not fly directly in front of the Devil's Dyke pub because paragliders fly there. The pub serves food and drink all day and there is usually an ice cream van in attendance. So this is not one of those locations where you need to rough it!



*There's always a dog that loves launches isn't there?*

Soaring Devil's Dyke can be good fun due to the impressive slope and the carnival atmosphere. If Devil's Dyke turns out to be too crowded for your taste, you could consider flying nearby at Jack and Jill Hill or Ditchling Beacon, which work in north winds and are usually far more peaceful. They are just on the other side of the A23. The National Trust even produces a map for walking there: [Dyke to Ditchling Trek](#). Here's an idea: drop the family at Devil's Dyke and send them on the walk. Fly at the Dyke for a while. Drive over to Ditchling Beacon. Fly there for a while. Collect the family when they arrive. Everybody's happy. You never know, it could work!



*If you see a big air model like a Jart going for it, you know the lift must be pretty decent*



*Little and large*

### **Marks out of 10?**

Devil's Dyke scores 7 (the slope itself is possibly worth 8 but a point is deducted for crowding).

### **How do you get there then?**

If you're starting from the London area, drive down the M23. Pass Gatwick and keep going as the M23 becomes the A23. When you reach the A27, just outside Brighton, get into the left lane to turn west along the A27 towards Worthing – but don't floor it, because you need to exit at the next junction which is less than a mile along the A27. This is the B2121 and is signposted Devil's Dyke. Go north up this road. Continue straight up the road for about 3 miles all the way to the top (you'll pass a couple of roads that curve off to the right but do not be tempted by these).



*A low, low pass at the Dyke*

Park in the carpark (£2 except for members of the National Trust) and you can virtually launch your plane from the car. The pub's postcode is BN1 8YL.

(By the way, at night Devil's Dyke has a bit of a reputation for alfresco sex, so make sure you leave in good time ... or stay behind, as is your wont.)



*A touch of frost*

**Latitude 50.885 / Longitude -0.212**

[Devil's Dyke Map](#)



### Where's that then?

Can you count the fingers on one hand? That's how many miles north of Brighton this is, a few miles off the main London to Brighton road (the M23/A23).

### So what's it like?

Pretty great! The slope is about 150 metres high and is steeper than ... well, an unsteep slope. The main slope is a large bowl that faces NNE. It works in north to northeast winds. If it gets any more easterly than northeast, it stops working well because to the right is a hill blocking the wind.



*Big lift, big turbulence ... a man's slope*

The lift is strong, but for some reason there is often turbulence. The landing area is a little narrow but perfectly okay – although there is the odd barbed wire fence if you're really determined to test the survivability of your pride and joy. It's probably best to launch and land from the flat top of the slope. Some flyers climb over the fence to stand on the slope itself, but the landing is rather restricted there. If the wind is from the north, the best flying will be at the far end of the slope (about three hundred yards east of the carpark) whereas if the wind is more northeast the area closer to the carpark will be more directly into the wind.



*The slope is steep despite how it looks here*

Ditchling Beacon is public access land owned by the National Trust. There are also other possible slopes both ways along this ridge if you can bear the thought of walking. A couple of hundred yards west of the carpark is a north facing slope that is almost as good as the main slope. It is possible to soar along the various bowls to Jack and Jill Hill, two miles west. From the main slope, it is also possible to continue flying eastwards for several miles.



*All you have to do is avoid the fence and landing is easy*

Three miles east of the carpark is Plumpton Hill, a bowl that produces big lift in north to northeast winds – just like Ditchling Beacon – but seems to have slightly smoother air.



*Plumpton Hill is very similar to Ditchling Beacon but the air can be a fraction smoother*

The reason Plumpton Hill is not used by flyers is that the access track is almost too rough for vehicles. It is probably best to tackle the track on foot, or hike from Ditchling Beacon. The land at the top is working farmland owned by the National Trust so be careful not to flatten crops or anything like that.

If hiking is your thing, visible from Plumpton Hill is Kingston Castle Hill. This orchid nature reserve has no vehicular access but rewards the keen hiker with a good northeast bowl and various other northerly flying spots. Information on the reserve is available from [Natural England](#). Care needs to be taken not to trample the rare wildflowers and butterflies.



*If you're up for a bit of a trek there is good flying to be had at Kingston Castle Hill*

Overall Ditchling Beacon has great lift and a reasonable landing area – although sometimes the turbulence provides a bit too much excitement! If it is too gusty for your taste, you could always drive around to the milder slope at Jack and Jill Hill.

If you want to send your family off on walks while you fly, there is a downloadable brochure of walks in the area: [Ditchling Walks](#).

#### **Marks out of 10?**

Ditchling Beacon earns 7. It's a darned good slope. It's not hugely popular – Bopeep Hill attracts more flyers in northeast winds – but it usually has one or two flyers on it when conditions are right. Plumpton Hill and Kingston Castle Hill would merit similar scores except that access is a bit challenging.

#### **How do you get there then?**

Follow the directions to Jack and Jill Hill, except don't turn into Mill Lane. Continue on up the A273 for half a mile and just before the road to Ditchling village turn right along the small road to Clayton (Underhill Lane). Eventually you reach a crossroads with a somewhat larger road: turn right up this road. It is signposted 'The Beacon'. The road rises steeply to the National Trust carpark at the crest of the hill on your right – you'll see the sign just too late to turn into it. Park in the carpark and walk east across the road – the slope is right there. The other smaller slope is several hundred yards west of the carpark. The air at this smaller slope can be smoother if the main slope is too gusty.

Plumpton Hill is accessed either by hiking from Ditchling Beacon, or by foot up the public track that begins opposite Plumpton Lane. Kingston Castle Hill is accessible from the carpark on Falmer Road (the B2123) or from Kingston near Lewes.

**Latitude 50.899 / Longitude -0.104**

[Ditchling Beacon Map](#)

[Plumpton Hill Map](#)

[Kingston Castle Hill Map](#)



### Where's that then?

Near the south coast, off the A27 between Brighton and Eastbourne.



*A really nice slope ... nice lift, nice landing, nice views ...*

### So what's it like?

This large, mellow slope has been a popular radio control flying location for over forty years. It is public access land managed by the Firle Estate (apparently the usual National Trust policies apply – unpowered glider flying is welcome but power flying is not).

Firle Beacon works best in north wind. The slope seems quite fussy about wind direction: NNW and NNE winds work, but northwest and northeast winds are usually too turbulent (nearby Bopeep Hill is the place to be when the wind is northeast).



*Last flight of the day coming in to land near the carpark*

In north wind the lift at Firle is excellent: smooth and reliable. The landing area at the top of the slope is huge, flat and free of obstructions – although you might manage to hit a cowpat if you try really hard.

Local flyers describe Firle as a “lovely” slope – which almost sounds a bit damning! Actually it refers to the fact that this is a slope where flyers are likely to enjoy great lift and emerge with their planes intact – and there's a lot to be said for that.

There are three main slopes: one by the carpark, a second one 800 yards eastwards (to the right), and a third 500 yards to the west (across the road). The second slope offers the best lift of all, but it is less often used because it involves a ten minute walk.



*Firle was a good site for the maiden flight of this mouldie*

The slope across the road is often used by paragliders when the wind is low, and at these times is best avoided by glider flyers. Should paragliders ever fly into the model flying area, always give them right of way and don't fly too close. (The paragliding association's policy is well worth reading: [BHPA Policy](#).)

A little under a mile west of Firle is a superb but seldom used slope, Beddingham Bowl. It works well in north and NNE winds. The landing area is huge and flat. It is in front of two large tele-communications masts. These can be seen on the horizon from Firle.

A mile further west of Beddingham Bowl is another north facing bowl and a west facing slope – these are

described separately in the Itford Hill section, but in fact you can easily hike between them all.

### Marks out of 10?

Firle is a marvellous site and earns 8.



*The bowl on the west side of the road is equally good although in low winds it is best left to paragliders*

### How do you get there then?

From London go down the M23 to the A27 and get yourself going east on the A27. The turning is on the right half a mile past Beddingham. The road is signposted Firle and also has a larger green sign advertising the stately home Firle Place. Once you've made the turn, go straight for two miles, through Firle village, up the road with the 'No Exit' sign to the slope.



*Firle's big lift is good for weighty planes*



*Firle is popular for a reason*

Park in the carpark on the left at the crest. The gate to the landing area is near the far end of the carpark. Walk eastwards for ten minutes to reach the best flying spot.

Beddingham Bowl is accessed by hiking west along the South Downs Way from Firle. It only takes about 15 minutes. There used to be a road that led up to Beddingham Bowl from the A27, but this has now been closed to motorised traffic. You can still cycle up if you are feeling particularly keen.



*How many flyers have sat behind this handy windbreak without realising it is a 4000 year old tomb?*

**Latitude 50.834 / Longitude 0.085**

[Firle Beacon Map](#)

[Beddingham Bowl Map](#)



### Where's that then?

Off the M20 in Kent, around 10 miles from the M25.

### So what's it like?

In the 1980s Holly Hill was *the* place to fly in Kent. However it became overgrown with brambles and is now seldom used. But here's the rub: recently the Council has been clearing the bushes as part of a new policy of returning downland to its original grassy state, and once again Holly Hill is quite a good place to fly. Flyers are only just rediscovering it, so it's a bit of a hidden gem.

Holly Hill faces SSE and works well in south to southeast winds. It is higher than the current most popular site in Kent, Thurnham Castle Hill, and often produces more lift than that hill.

The landing area is not bad ... but not exactly great either. The landing area is basically the slope itself. You have to land uphill – by coming in really low and rising up the slope below the wind – or by landing sideways along the top of the slope. This can be a little tricky to achieve, so Holly Hill is definitely not the place for large fragile models.

The upper part of the slope is public access land (the Pilgrims Way, managed by the local council), but the lower part is private farmland. So it is best to stay on the upper portion of the slope.



*Great lift in south to southeast winds*



*The landing zone doesn't look so bad, does it?*

A weather station has been set up near Holly Hill and you can see an online live wind report here: [Holly Wind](#).

A few miles from Holly Hill is another slope that merits a mention: Blue Bell Hill. The slope faces south – more SSW to be precise. The lift can be good but is seldom smooth. Scrub is encroaching onto the landing area, which is now not much bigger than your average kitchen table. This, combined with the fact that the slope often has picnickers on it, means that Blue Bell Hill is not really suitable for beginners. Access to the slope is easy since the carpark is right at the top of the slope. There is also another similar slope a hundred yards to the right of the main slope.



*Holly Hill twenty years ago (check out the similarity with the photo on the left – it's even the same guy!)*



*Time to duck?*

### **Marks out of 10?**

Holly Hill has got to be worth 5 despite the fact that it is seldom used.

### **How do you get there then?**

Holly Hill is a couple of miles north of the M20. Exit at Junction 4 (the A228) and drive into the village of Snodland (if you think this is a rather odd name, consider that the estate on the hill is called Punish, and Snodland had a bishop named Gandolph!) In Snodland turn left at the High Street and continue straight onto Constitution Hill until the end of the road (it changes name a couple of times but you can see the slope straight ahead in the distance). At the end of the road turn right and drive up the hill.



*Sunshine and scenery*



*Less scrub than there used to be*

Park on the side of the road at the junction where Birling Hill becomes White Horse Road. There is a North Downs Walk sign marking the entrance to a path. The slope is through here, to your left.



*Blue Bell Hill is not bad, and it often enjoys great thermals, but the ever-decreasing landing zone is a bit of a joke*

To get to Blue Bell Hill, go back onto the M20 for two junctions eastwards, then head north up the A229 for a couple of miles. Exit left when you see the Blue Bell Hill sign. This slip road curves back on itself and takes you straight into the carpark (named Blue Bell Hill Picnic Site).

If you don't like the look of Blue Bell Hill, Thurnham Castle Hill is only a couple of miles east of here (see the separate listing for Thurnham Castle Hill).

**Latitude 51.335 / Longitude 0.310**

[Holly Hill Map](#)

[Blue Bell Hill Map](#)



### Where's that then?

Overlooking the A26, which is the road that goes from the A27 down into Newhaven.

### So what's it like?

Itford Hill has got to be one of the best slopes that seldom gets used for slope soaring. Perhaps this is because the parking is at the bottom of the slope and it's a 10 minute hike up the hill – let's face it, people would really prefer a nice carpark at the top with a model shop and a Starbucks.

The slope that is visible from the road is a large, bare, west facing slope. To be precise it faces WNW. It produces good lift despite the fact that the slope has a slightly shallow gradient. There is a nice large flat landing area. Itford Hill is one of the few slopes where it is feasible to start flying at the top and walk all the way down the hill back to your car while flying.



*West slopes are uncommon but this is one of them*

Behind the landing zone hides a remarkable surprise: a fantastic north-facing bowl. The only reason Itford Bowl doesn't get used is that it is not visible from the road and it takes 15 minutes to walk to it.

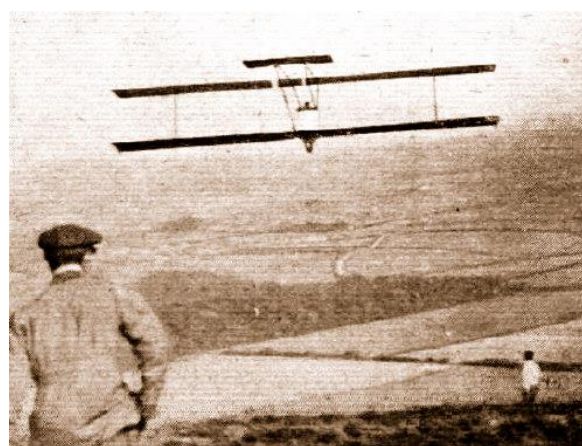
If you walk a few hundred yards south from this bowl, you come to yet another option: a shallow south-facing slope. This south slope is flyable but it is only minor compared to the excellent north bowl.



*A stroll up the hill is required*

### Marks out of 10?

Itford Hill and Itford Bowl are worth 6.



*One of the world's first glider competitions – a key event in the history of gliding – took place on Itford Hill in 1922*

### How do you get there then?

From the A27 turn south at the A26 roundabout towards Newhaven. After two miles park in the layby on your left, just before a large footbridge (which is the only bridge over the A26). Walk eastwards up the meandering South Downs Way to the top of the hill - it's an easy 10 minute walk. About two miles further along the South Downs Way is the major slope soaring site of Firlie Beacon.

*Latitude 50.828 / Longitude 0.043*

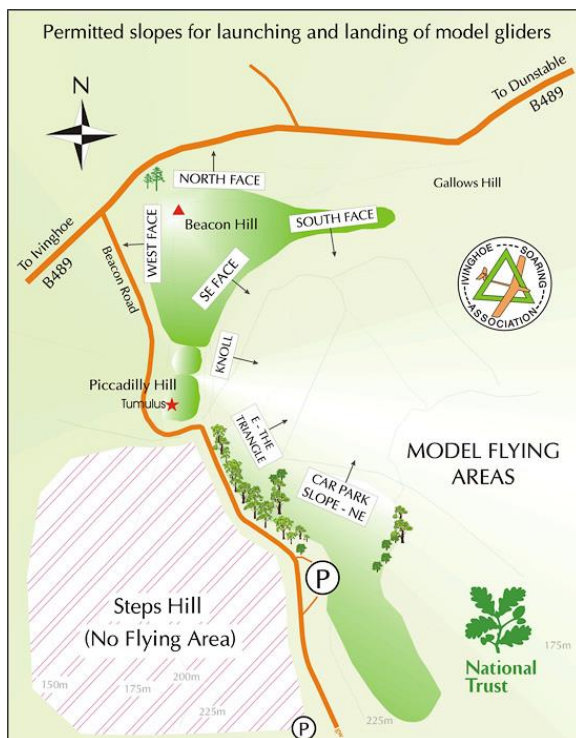
[Itford Hill Map](#)

## Where's that then?

To the northwest of London, up the A41, 20 miles outside the M25.

## So what's it like?

Ivinghoe is one of the premier soaring destinations near London. It features a variety of slopes. Each slope is good, although not all of them are great. What is great is that Ivinghoe has slopes facing almost every direction and so can be flown in almost every wind. Friendly flyers can be found here on most days and there is an excellent soaring club (see [www.ivinghoe.org.uk](http://www.ivinghoe.org.uk)). Membership of the club is optional but is highly recommended – many consider it to be one of the best clubs in the country.



*The map produced by the local club – its website is well worth checking out*

Ivinghoe has slopes facing west, north, northeast and south. The slopes vary in steepness and so there is something at Ivinghoe for everyone. It works for a remarkable variety of winds: north, northeast, east, southeast, south, west and northwest.

So the only wind direction that does not work well at Ivinghoe is southwest.

The best slope is the west one, a very steep slope with very good lift. However – wouldn't you know it? – this slope is one of the furthest from the carpark. Some flyers complain about this 10 minute hike because it is mildly uphill, but it's fine if you have an easy-to-carry plane. On the other hand if you're lugging a 5-metre scale model...



*The west slope viewed from the carpark slope*

There are two milder slopes near the carpark for north and northeast winds: carpark slope and triangle slope. The lift on these isn't huge but they are good for relaxed thermalling.



*Ivinghoe has the camaraderie lacking at less popular locations*





*The trick at the steep west slope is to launch and then stop running pretty damn quick (someone ought to tell the dog!)*

### Marks out of 10?

Each slope individually scores in the 5 to 7 range. However, mix them together and add a healthy dash of friendly club atmosphere, and Ivinghoe has got to be an 8.



*The west slope's landing zone is good, but there's a knack to it, so watch a local land first*

### How do you get there then?

Ivinghoe is near Dunstable. From the M25 go up the A41 for 15 miles and exit at Tring. Follow the signs to Ivinghoe for 4 miles. At Ivinghoe village turn right at the brown Ivinghoe Beacon sign and after one mile you'll see Ivinghoe Beacon on your right. Drive half a mile up the access road and park in the carpark. Two slopes are right in front of you and the others are on the ridge on the far side of the fields.

Ivinghoe Beacon is National Trust land. BMFA insurance is required and the frequency control pegboard operated by the club must be used. Your best bet is to check the club's website for visitor requirements before you go, and make contact with club members when you arrive – they won't bite, honest! Electric powered soarers are not allowed, but you can always just tape the blades to the fuselage.



*It's a good thing a frequency control pegboard is used*

By the way, nearby Dunstable Downs is also occasionally recommended as a slope soaring site, but in fact model flying is banned there. Ivinghoe is for the slope soarers, Dunstable for the kite flyers and paragliders.



*Putting some welly into it*

**Latitude 51.617 / Longitude -0.890**  
[Ivinghoe Beacon Map](#)

### Where's that then?

Jack and Jill Hill, and neighbouring Wolstonbury Hill, are a handful of miles north of Brighton, just off the main London to Brighton road (the M23/A23).

### So what's it like?

Jack and Jill Hill has two old windmills on it named – you guessed it – Jack and Jill. The wide, gentle slope faces north. It is about 120 metres high; a good big slope. There are no obstructions or trees, and landing is easy – you could land 100 yards from where you intended to land and still not hit anything (except perhaps sheep turds ...)



*Jack and Jill Hill seen from neighbouring Wolstonbury Hill*

The lift is good but not really 'mega' – the slope is too gentle and there is no lip and no funnelling effect – but that means there's no turbulence and landing is stress-free. So this is a great slope for scale gliders or relaxed circling hunting for thermals. There may not always be enough lift to thrill aerobatics nuts. The best lift is in north to NNE winds. Northeast just about works, but northwest does not.

If you find that Jack and Jill Hill is not delivering enough excitement for your taste, you could consider getting your good self over to Ditchling Beacon, two miles to your right. Alternatively there is a hidden gem of a northeast slope to the left across the road: Wolstonbury Hill.



*Jack and Jill Hill is a pleasant slope with easy access and easy landing*

Wolstonbury Hill is just on the other side of the A273 but it is hardly visible from the road. Not many flyers seem to know about it, and it is seldom used. Perhaps the problem is that it involves a five minute hike up the hill. In reality this is not a challenging climb. The lift is very good in northeast to ENE winds, and usually quite smooth. The landing area is reasonably large and free of hazards. Watch out for full size gliders which sometimes zoom low over the hill.



*Wolstonbury Hill: little known, little flown*

The far side of the bowl faces east and works well in east winds. It enjoys lift as good as the main northeast section except that the air can be less smooth because the presence of Jack and Jill Hill across the road adds a dash of turbulence.



On the left of the bowl is the peak of the hill, and over the far side of this is a slope overlooking the A23 that works in northwest winds. However the air can be gusty due to ridges lower down the slope. It is probably fair to say that Devil's Dyke, a couple of miles west across the A23, is a better northwest slope – but if the Dyke is too crowded, Wolstonbury's northwest face might be worth a go.



*Wolstonbury Hill on a sunny winter day*

### Marks out of 10?

Let's give Jack and Jill Hill 5. It's quite a good slope and deserves to be busier than it actually is. Wolstonbury Hill is worth a similar amount or possibly even 6.



*Launching off the east face of Wolstonbury Hill*



*Jack and Jill Hill: park and fly*

### How do you get there then?

From London go down the M23 – avoid the urge to turn into Gatwick Airport, you're not going on holiday but doing something even better! – and exit left onto the A273 about five miles before Brighton. Follow the signs around towards Hassocks on the A273. To get to Jack and Jill Hill, watch out on your right for a little road called Mill Lane which has a small brown sign with a windmill on it. Go up Mill Lane for a couple of hundred yards and park next to the windmills. For satellite navigators the windmills' postcode is BN6 9PG. The slope is right in front of you. If you can be bothered lugging your planes, there are other slopes eastwards (to your right) – including Ditchling Beacon, two miles along the South Downs Way.

Wolstonbury Hill is on the left before Mill Lane, up a small road with signs for a horse riding school. A bridle path leads up the hill (a five minute walk). In the 1970s when Wolstonbury Hill was more often used for slope soaring, flyers used to drive up this bridle path and park near the top of the hill. That is still possible, but the track is very rough, plus it's not clear that motorised vehicles really have the right to use it. Both hills are public access land owned by the National Trust.

**Latitude 50.904 / Longitude -0.145**

[Jack and Jill Hill Map](#)

[Wolstonbury Hill Map](#)

### Where's that then?

Kemsing Down and neighbouring St Clere Down are a few miles outside the M25 in Kent – two of the closer slopes to London.

### So what's it like?

Model gliders have been flown on half a dozen slopes around the Otford area of Kent since the 1950s. However these slopes seldom seem to get used these days, perhaps because they are mostly rather small compared to the slopes of the South Downs. They're more suited to delicate balsa-and-tissue floaters, or modern equivalents such as Alulas, than modern big air machines. Nevertheless, two hills in the area offer significant slopes: Kemsing Down and St Clere Down.



*Nothing to hit at Kemsing Down*

Kemsing Down is a large, exposed, grass-covered slope of medium steepness. It faces precisely south and overlooks the small village of Kemsing, outside the M25 to the southeast of London. It is public access land owned by the local council. It works best in south winds, although SSE through to SSW winds also work well. It is quite high – almost 100 metres – and the unobstructed grassy slope is the best part of a mile wide. So landing is not a problem, at least for planes that do not require a level landing area. However trees at the base of the slope can reduce the lift and add a dash of turbulence.



*St Clere Down: fly in private*

A couple of miles to the east is St Clere Down, a good but often deserted slope. The lift is pleasantly smooth, although the slope's gradient is shallow so the lift is not huge. The slope faces south like Kemsing and overlooks the little village of St Clere. It is private land – the St Clere Estate – and to fly there you must be a member of the [Invicta Model Flyers Club](#). This is enforced by a shotgun-toting gamekeeper! The fees are fairly modest so it is worth joining if you live in the area. St Clere Down is closed from September to February (to allow pheasant to breed, apparently). The slope is often known by the name of Wrotham (pronounced "Roo Tim!")



*Easy launching and landing at St Clere*



A couple of miles to the west, nearer the M25, are several small slopes around Otford. Otford Mount has two modest slopes, one facing west (visible from the road that leads from Otford to Shoreham) and one facing south (overlooking Otford). Polhill Bank is a minor slope on the other side of the valley facing SSE. The slopes are too small for major lift but are pleasant locations for flying light planes.



*Polhill Bank is short and sweet*

#### **Marks out of 10?**

Kemsing Down is worth 5 – not a premier league slope but not too shabby all the same. St Clere Down is worth the same amount, but remember you need to join the club to fly there. Polhill Bank and Otford Mount are really just handy spots for locals.

#### **How do you get there then?**

The village of Otford is close to the M25, but the problem is that there are no junctions near it, so you'll have to take a slightly convoluted route from junction 4 or 5. Once you're in Otford, go east onto Pilgrims Way East, signposted Kemsing. Note your mileage reading as you enter Pilgrims Way East and continue along the road as it gets narrower for exactly 1.6 miles. On your left you'll spot a metal gate with a little sign saying Kemsing Down Nature Reserve.

If you have a small car you can probably park on the side of the road, but the road is so narrow that you may struggle to park a large car here. In fact the lack of parking is Kemsing's major limiting factor. Once you have scored a parking space, walk through the gate. You'll be quite startled by the size of the slope immediately in front of you since it is virtually invisible from the road. It's a bit of a hard hike to the top, but at least there's a bench halfway up.

St Clere Down is eastwards from Kemsing Down along the same road. It can also be accessed from Junction 2 of the M26, through the village of Wrotham. Park on Exedown Road, display your membership card on your dashboard, go through the gate and walk straight forward a hundred yards to reach the slope.

Otford Mount is just north of Otford village and is accessed from the road that runs north to Shoreham. A path leads from the road to the slopes but it is not easy to spot from the road. It is just south of an isolated building that was once a telephone exchange. Polhill Bank is just outside the M25 but it is accessed from inside the M25. If you're on the M25, exit at junction 4 and drive towards London for half a mile. At the roundabout take the A224 south for about one and a half miles until you see a pub on your left called the Polhill Arms (which now seems to be boarded up). Park and take the path (bridleway) that starts behind the pub carpark. This diverges left and right. Take the left branch and after 100 yards cross the footbridge over the M25. Polhill Bank is a 5 minute walk through the woods and to your right.

*Latitude 51.309 / Longitude 0.235*

[Kemsing Down Map](#)

[St Clere Down Map](#)

[Otford Mount Map](#)

[Polhill Bank Map](#)

### Where's that then?

A few miles northwest of Eastbourne in East Sussex.

### So what's it like?

There are several slopes here. The slope that can be seen most clearly from the road – the one with the Long Man on it – is a very large bowl with superb lift. It works in a range of northerly winds. It faces mainly north, although around the bowl it varies from NNE to northwest. In fact it is often referred to as a northwest slope.



*The Long Man loved holding the slope race markers*

There is also a good southwest bowl which has a flyable west-facing flank. This bowl funnels the wind so you'll often find the wind is stronger than forecast. The landing area is the wide but shallow strip along the top of the bowl.



*Bring a plane that's not too large to haul up the hill*



*Wind is magnified at the southwest bowl: 20mph wind on the flat will be 30mph or more at the top of the bowl*

Take care not to fly low and slow over the sunken track behind this landing area, because there can be weird turbulence there. One landing option is to come in sideways and turn into the wind in the last few seconds. For a really safe landing option, it is possible to walk up to the peak of the hill (to your left) and land on the nice flat area up there.



*Real men aren't afraid to lug big gliders up Long Man...*

The ascent from the carpark will seem like a refreshing spot of exercise or a real chore depending on the size of your beer belly! The walk is about 20 minutes if you start at the main carpark. From the slope soarers' carpark (see below) the walk takes 10-15 minutes.





*The Wilmington Giant by Eric Ravilious, 1939*



*Hindover Hill is high and over the Cuckmere River*

A friendly club often flies at Long Man and is well worth joining: [eastsussexsa.co.uk](http://eastsussexsa.co.uk)  
BMFA insurance is required to fly at Long Man. This is because the southeast section of the BMFA pays a fee for use of the site, which is managed by an archaeological society (due the presence of the Long Man). Of course it's smart to have BMFA insurance irrespective of where you fly.

#### **Marks out of 10?**

The slopes merit 8 but if you're unfit you'll want to knock off a point for the climb!

#### **How do you get there then?**

If you're starting from London, drive down the M23 to the A27. Drive east along the A27 to the Wilmington exit (you will see the brown Long Man sign – it's a couple of miles before the Eastbourne exit). Turn down this road. A little under a mile past the pretty village of Wilmington is a small carpark on the right that is used by flyers in the know. This offers a shorter walk to the peak than does the main carpark in Wilmington.

Across the road from this slope soarers' carpark is a gate to a public path. Up this path the southwest bowl is reached first, on your right. Just past that is the northwest bowl – Long Man's biggest slope – on your left.

A couple of miles southwest of Long Man Hill is another reasonably good spot, Hindover Hill. This is a very steep bowl that faces east. There is a carpark and wooded area at the top. To the right of the wooded area is an east face (maybe a bit ENE) and to the left is a southeast face. The lift can be strong but turbulent. The landing areas at the top of the slopes are small, although it is possible to fly down and land in fields. When the wind is less than about 10-12mph Hindover Hill is popular with paragliders, so it would be wise to fly here only when the wind is strong. The site is best known by its nickname: High and Over.



*Long Man's southwest bowl is not quite as good as the main northwest bowl, but it's still pretty good*

**Latitude 50.808 / Longitude 0.190**

[Long Man Hill Map](#)

[Hindover Hill Map](#)

### Where's that then?

The cliffs at Minster are on the north shore of the Isle of Sheppey in Kent. The island also offers two other flying spots on its east shore at Warden.

### So what's it like?

The Minster cliffs are modest yet nicely flyable in north to northeast winds. The cliffs face NNE and this is the ideal wind direction to fly in. The lift is not big enough for heavy models, but the ultra-smooth sea air makes flying light models a pleasure. The landing area is small so foamies are a good choice.



*Minster: foamies are go*

About four miles east of Minster Cliffs are two spots, Warden Point and Warden Springs. The spot that has been used for years, Warden Point, is getting smaller due to coastal erosion. The landing zone is now extremely restricted. However, it is unique in working in east wind. Warden Springs is a few hundred yards to the north. It is a more recently discovered site that faces northeast. It has better lift – possibly the best on the island.

### Marks out of 10?

Minster Cliffs scores 5, as does Warden Springs. Warden Point is now probably only a 4. None of these

are huge spots, but the flying can be excellent with the right model in the right conditions.



*Warden Point can be good fun with light models*

### How do you get there then?

To get to Minster Cliffs, head eastwards from London and go up the A249 and over the bridge onto the Isle of Sheppey. Follow the signs into Minster. Some flyers park in the free carpark at the end of Seathorpe Avenue and walk a hundred yards eastwards.

To get to Warden Springs, go to Eastchurch and follow Warden Road to the coast. The flying area is just to the right of the road.

To get to Warden Point, walk from Warden Springs, or drive around to Warden Bay and go up Cliff Drive until it becomes a gravel track. Park a few yards up the track (ensuring you don't block access of course) and you'll see the cliffs to your right.

These three flying areas are owned by the local council. Take great care not to land in the private gardens behind the public paths. The [Bartons Point Model Flying Club](#) sometimes flies at these sites and is well worth joining if you live in the area.

*Latitude 51.422 / Longitude 0.830*

[Minster Cliffs Map](#)

[Warden Point Map](#)

[Warden Springs Map](#)



### Where's that then?

About ten miles east of Brighton on the A27.

### So what's it like?

Mount Caburn is hard to miss if you drive along this stretch of the A27. It is a large, bare, conical hill which is often teeming with paragliders. Due to this popularity, it is recommended that Mount Caburn should only be used by radio control glider flyers when the wind is too strong for paragliders.



*Mount Caburn as seen from the A27*

Mount Caburn is a National Nature Reserve managed by Natural England on behalf of the landowner, the Glynde Estate. The land is grazed by a tenant farmer. The hill works in south wind. Mount Caburn is not a particularly popular radio control flying site and there are often no model gliders even when conditions are good.

A paragliding school operates from the hill. It is requested that model flyers respect this and stay away when the wind is low enough for paragliders (besides, the hill is not much good for model gliders when the wind is low). When the wind is over about 12mph, model glider flyers usually have the hill to themselves. Should any paragliders appear, obviously right of way must always be given to them. The British Hang-Gliding and Paragliding Association provides very sensible advice on this matter:

[BHPA Policy.](#)



*The view to the southwest (the ideal wind direction is south to SSW)*

Flying at Mount Caburn involves a climb to the peak. There are four or five possible routes. The easiest route is from the village of Glynde behind the slope. That climb is less steep than the others. There is a 'hard man route' up the front of the slope, but it is a tough climb and should not be attempted by anyone with doubtful cardiovascular fitness.



*This is the entrance to the easiest path to the top – the sign says 'Licenced Footpath to Mount Caburn'*

Mount Caburn is not really suited to unaccompanied novices. The smart thing for newcomers to do would be to get in touch with this friendly club which sometimes flies at Mt Caburn:

[www.eastsussexsa.co.uk](http://www.eastsussexsa.co.uk)



*This is the hard man route to the top – beware, the climb is tougher than it appears from the base*

### **Marks out of 10?**

Mount Caburn scores 5. Without the climb and the paragliders it might be worth 6.



*The hard man route also involves negotiating your way past this bad boy and his harem*

### **How do you get there then?**

From the M23 head east on the A27. A couple of miles after Lewes you will see Mount Caburn on your left. Take the exit marked Glynde, which is half a mile after you pass Mount Caburn (the exit is the first road to your left after the Beddingham roundabout).

If you prefer to take the hard man route to the top, turn left into Ranscombe Lane a few hundred yards before the easiest path. Drive until you're in front of the slope, quite close to the A27, and the entrance gate is on your right. Take a moment to park considerably because the locals get annoyed by city types abandoning vanity four wheel drives all over the lane. Go through the metal gate and cross the field. Give the bull a wide berth, if he's in the field, and head for the red ribbon that marks the location of the stile leading to the path up to the summit.

There is information on Mount Caburn National Nature Reserve on this website: [Natural England](http://Natural England). The information leaflet is worth downloading because it describes the fascinating history of Mount Caburn and features model flying on page 24.

Across the A27 from Mount Caburn can be seen various northeast slopes such as Kingston Castle Hill, which is a very good bowl that is only accessible by hiking. Further details on Kingston Castle Hill are given in the Ditchling Beacon listing.

**Latitude 50.859 / Longitude 0.052**

[Mount Caburn Map](#)



## Where's that then?

On the south coast, halfway between Brighton and Eastbourne.

## So what's it like?

Newhaven is a good spot for cliff soaring. The cliffs are about 50 metres high and the best part of a mile wide. The lift is smooth and strong when the wind is from the south, and the cliffs can also usually be used when the wind is from the southwest or southeast.



*Read the signs and don't fall over the edge*

If you're afraid of heights or of losing your model out to sea, this might not be the place for you. But in reality cliff soaring is more a psychological problem than an actual hazard, since it's easy to soar over the land and avoid going much out to sea. Just make sure your battery is charged and your plane is in good shape.

Perhaps the worst aspect of these cliffs is the lack of large landing areas. It's all a bit narrow and backed by brambles. It isn't terrible, but it would be a challenge to land a 4-metre scale glider here. Head west for better landing spots.

## Marks out of 10?

This is a 5 ... unless you loathe the challenges of cliff soaring, in which case for you it's a 2!



*The WWII gun bases make good wind breaks*

## How do you get there then?

Drive down the A26 into Newhaven. Cross the River Ouse and in the centre of town follow the brown signs to Newhaven Fort. Turn right up the fort access road and park in the fort carpark. Lug your plane up to the cliffs and throw it. There are soarable cliffs westwards almost to Brighton.



*Seaford Head with Beachy Head on the horizon*

Visible to the east are more cliffs at Seaford. These are also very soarable but involve quite a long walk from the Seaford Head Local Nature carpark.

*Latitude 50.781 / Longitude 0.048*

[Newhaven Cliffs Map](#)

[Seaford Head Map](#)

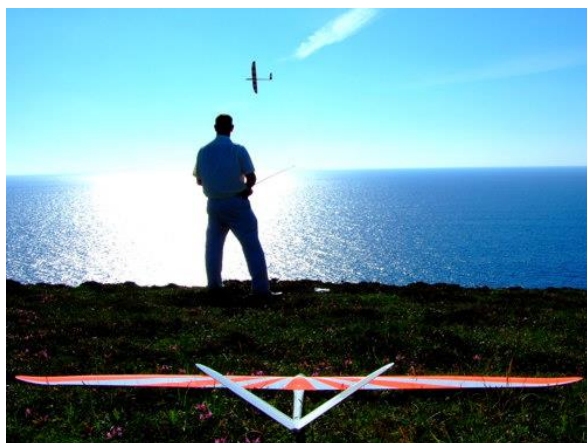
### Where's that then?

St Agnes Head is on the north coast of Cornwall, between Newquay and St Ives.

### So what's it like?

So much of the Cornwall coastline is soarable that it is almost pointless trying to list individual sites. However, a site that stands out as being the best in Cornwall – and one of the best in the country – is St Agnes Head.

St Agnes is a great site because it has amazingly good lift, it works in a wide variety of wind directions, and it has a huge landing area. On the other hand, there isn't much else at St Agnes Head! It could be described as a rather featureless, deserted area. But that would be missing the point: the magic is in the air.



*Summer evening flying at the coastguard slope*

Just what makes the lift at St Agnes so good? For one thing, the cliffs are incredibly high, so the lift is big. Secondly, the air is uncannily smooth after having passed over a thousand miles of ocean. Thirdly, the top of the cliffs is rounded, with no sharp lip, so there is none of the turbulence that occurs at other high cliffs such as Beachy Head. To top it all off, the landing area is vast, flat and free of turbulence. The overall effect is to make the flying exciting yet stress-free.

Despite these advantages, St Agnes Head is often not crowded, since there are no major population centres nearby. Sometimes there are no flyers, or perhaps one or two. At other times there can be a dozen or more if a local flying club decides to organise a visit. During the summer holiday period walkers are common on the coastal path. Flyers must not fly too close to walkers – which sounds obvious but requires extra care because the path is partly out of sight.



*Dramatic views to the south from Tubby's Point*

Photographs can make St Agnes look challenging, but in reality you will be launching, flying and landing on the flat, and won't even be able to see the dramatic cliffs since they fall off gradually out of sight.



*Sun, sea and soaring*

There are three car parks near three main soaring areas. The first car park you come to is known locally



as The Hump (due to the presence of a low hillock). The flying area is on the far side of the hump and faces mainly NNW. It flies best in north to northwest winds. A fraction east of north is also flyable.

A few hundred yards further along is a coast guard hut followed by a second carpark. This spot (referred to as Coastguard) faces WNW to west, and works in west to northwest winds.

Several hundred yards further along is a third carpark (Tubby's Head), which works in west to southwest winds. It is the only spot on the north coast to work in winds that are almost southerly.

Between the three of them, these spots cover 180 degrees of wind direction (from NNE to SSW) – not many sites can claim that.



*The top of the cliffs is rounded, so there is none of the usual turbulence*

The regular flyers are very welcoming and can be contacted via the 'Proper Cornish Slopers' thread of the RCMF online forum ([rcmf.co.uk](http://rcmf.co.uk)) or via their website, [westcornwallslopers.co.uk](http://westcornwallslopers.co.uk).

The 'grass' at St Agnes makes landing easy, because it is actually low, springy broom. This cushions bad landings, but it can be prickly underfoot, so it is wise to wear shoes rather than sandals. St Agnes is probably not the place to bring small children, since they could fall down the cliffs, and besides, there isn't much for them to do on the flat. However for partners there are cliffside walks and bird watching opportunities.



*Evening launch*

St Agnes Head is National Trust land. About a mile east of St Agnes – still on the same National Trust land – is a slope that faces northeast, Newdowns Head. Visiting Newdowns involves a considerable hike, since there is virtually no parking anywhere nearby. Then, when you get there, you will need the confidence to land on a very small, bushy landing area. It is possible with foamies or with mouldies with crow brakes.



*The landing area seldom appears in photographs because there is not much to show – it is large and flat*

Cliffs extend from St Agnes Head for many miles along the north Cornwall coast. Many of these areas are perfectly flyable but are seldom flown. The main ones that are recognised soaring sites are shown on the [Slopehunter Google Map](http://Slopehunter Google Map). This map lists over 250 slope soaring sites in southern England, more than double the number contained in this written guide.

**Marks out of 10?**

St Agnes is an easy 8 – heck, maybe even a hallowed 9 – but St Agnes might not be to your taste if you prefer scratching around in weak lift, negotiating challenging turbulence, or landing in tight spots.



*When you see this sign you'll know you've found it*

### How do you get there then?

Drive into St Agnes. Follow your nose out of town for a couple of miles up to the headland. It is simple enough to get there, but the headland can be difficult to spot over the stone walls. Basically you're aiming to head west on Beacon Drive and then turn right into a small unnamed road past a National Trust sign. This road leads to the three carparks around the coast guard hut.

Newdowns Head is a mile closer to St Agnes. The best way to get there is to walk along the coastal path from the main St Agnes site. Alternatively, it can be accessed from a dead-end road diverting right off Beacon Drive. There is a sign saying Doble Foods. There is nowhere to park, except on weekends when the food factory is closed, when it may be possible to fit a small car or two near there. A walking path begins near the end of the road and takes you a quarter of a mile to the flying area.

About three miles north of St Agnes is Cligga Head, which works well in northwest wind. It is almost as good as St Agnes but is not often used, since flyers in the area usually go to St Agnes. Further north, the cliffs at Tintagel work well in west wind. Southwards, Godrevy Head has two sides to it that work well in west and east winds.

The various coastal sites in Cornwall are often quite remote – do not expect a big sign, a carpark and a burger van! For instance Lizard Point on the south coast offers wonderful flying, but you have to find your way down narrow winding roads, park your car in a tiny hamlet of a few houses, and then walk a quarter of a mile to the coast. It's all part of the adventure!



*There are so many good coastal sites in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset – this is Kimmeridge Down*

The south coast of Cornwall has various other flying sites such as Cudden Point, Rinsey Head, Dodman Point and Whitsand Bay. The flying spots continue into Devon and Dorset with sites such as Kimmeridge Down, and onwards to the east, to the wonderful slopes on the Isle of White. There are too many southwest soaring spots to go into detail, but they can be seen on the [Slopehunter Google Map](#).

**Latitude 50.317 / Longitude -5.232**

[St Agnes Head Map](#)



### Where's that then?

Thurnham Castle Hill overlooks the village of Thurnham in Kent. The slope is sometimes referred to as Detling by slope soarers.

### So what's it like?

Thurnham Castle Hill is a very kind slope with plenty of room for stress-free landings. The slope is of medium steepness and is about 70 metres high.



*Sometimes the lift is not as good as at higher hills, but it seems to be plenty for efficient moulded soarers*

It doesn't produce as much lift as some of the bigger hills on the South Downs, but nevertheless the lift can be pretty good – which is why Thurnham Castle Hill is such a popular spot for Kent flyers.



*The huge landing area is a certified drama-free zone so it's great for bringing in the big 'uns*



*A majestic vintage sailplane slips overhead*

Thurnham works well in WSW to SSW winds – and possibly west wind but not really south wind – up to about 20mph. In stronger winds it gets blown out and the lift actually reduces. The very best conditions often occur on sunny evenings with the wind at around 8-16mph and with evening thermals augmenting the lift. In low winds paragliders take off from the lower section of the slope and great care needs to be taken to avoid them.



*Foam flying wings can take the knocks and are popular with father and son flying teams*

The landing zone is excellent: large and flat, free of turbulence, and covered in nice soft grass. In fact it must be one of the nicest landing areas anywhere.



*Foamies are far more common at Thurnham than big scale gliders, but of course the big ones get photographed!*

The hill is public access land owned by the local council. Behind the landing area is a country park (where the carpark is) with a sign advising visitors “It is great fun to watch the model aeroplanes while enjoying a picnic”!

Just to the west of the main Thurnham slope can be seen a knoll that faces southwest around to southeast. Behind that is a southwest facing bowl. Both of these are as good as the main slope, yet they are seldom used, perhaps for no other reason than they involve walking several hundred yards further.



*The knoll to the west of the main slope is also good, and unlike the main slope works in SSE winds*

Thurnham might be the only slope with its own weather report: believe it or not, a local pharmacy puts a live wind meter online here: [Thurnham Weather](#).

There are two other worthwhile slopes a few miles west of Thurnham Castle Hill – Holly Hill (which works in south to southeast winds) and Blue Bell Hill (which works in south to southwest winds) – see the Holly Hill section for details of these.

### Marks out of 10?

Thurnham Castle Hill scores 6 in terms of quality of lift. However, sociable flyers would rate Thurnham higher due to its friendly atmosphere – Thurnham hosts the largest and friendliest bunch of slope soarers in Kent.



*A strange creature over Thurnham*

### How do you get there then?

Head away from London on the M2. At junction 5 turn southwards down the A249. After about four miles watch for a sign saying White Horse Wood Country Park (on your left – if you reach the M20 you’ve gone two miles too far, darn it!) Drive in and pay £1.20 to park. Walk straight ahead for about three hundred yards through a couple of gates to the slope. If you’re unsure which way to walk, scan the horizon for gliders.

**Latitude 51.295 / Longitude: 0.589**

[Thurnham Castle Hill Map](#)



### Where's that then?

South of Newbury, west of Basingstoke: 40 miles west of the M25.

### So what's it like?

Watership Down has two separate hills, Ladle Hill to the west and White Hill to the east. They are about two miles apart. A bridleway with some flyable spots runs along a ridge between them. A third spot, Beacon Hill, is a mile further west, outside Watership Down.



*All season soaring*

White Hill is the best spot and also the easiest to access. On the west side of the road are two bowls that face northeast. Flyers use the second bowl. The area is not as high as the slopes on the South Downs but there is clear countryside for miles in front so the lift is good. Landing opportunities are reasonable. There is a fence behind the flying area to keep walkers off the racehorse gallops, so try not to land back there. Gliders should not be flown when racehorses are being exercised in the area (although the horse riding often takes place too early in the morning to affect glider flyers).

It is possible to cross country soar all the way along the ridge to Ladle Hill, but access is sometimes difficult. You would need to walk it and plan your route before trying to fly it.



*Walk past the first bowl to the second bowl*

There is also a slope on the east side of the road, accessed from the carpark. The slope faces northwest. It is a wide, fairly shallow slope with reasonable lift. Although you can't see the road from the slope, you will be flying over it, so you need to take care not to ditch a plane down there. This is also a horse riding area so care needs to be taken. There is a large field behind the slope that must not be used to land in: for one thing, it would involve hoisting your svelte form over a barbed wire fence, and for another, the farmer would not thank you for flattening crops.



*The northeast facing slope is a bowl*

Ladle Hill, two miles west, has a slope that curves from west through northwest to north. It is not as good as

it used to be because trees on the slope are growing taller and creating turbulence.

The majority of Watership Down is privately owned, much of it by Andrew Lloyd Weber. The landowners do not mind considerate slope soarers flying here, but as a visitor you need to be on your best behaviour to ensure you don't mess it up for local flyers. By agreement with the landowners, planes are not flown when racehorses are being exercised (usually early each morning except Sundays).



*Flying is not possible when racehorses are being exercised*

Beacon Hill is just over a mile further west from Ladle Hill, on public land on the other side of the A34. It works in a variety of winds with the best being southwest.



*The parking spots are only about 50 yards behind this view*

There is a carpark at the base of Beacon Hill but it's a hard climb from there to the top. The hill overlooks Highclere Castle, the setting for the television series Downton Abbey.

### **Marks out of 10?**

Watership Down gets 6.

### **How do you get there then?**

Take the A339 which runs between Basingstoke and Newbury. Halfway between the two, exit at Kingsclere. In the centre of Kingsclere take the B3051 (signposted Overton) for just over a mile to White Hill. You'll see lay-bys on each side of the road as you approach the crest of the hill. There is also a carpark on the left.

To reach the main flying bowl, walk west (across the road from the carpark) for a hundred yards, past the first bowl, and take the path to the right. Go through the metal gate beside a horse jump. Follow the slope to your left for 100 yards and you will come to the main bowl, which is where flyers have permission to fly.



*Highclere Castle seen from Beacon Hill*

**Latitude 51.306 / Longitude -1.258**

[White Hill Map](#)

[Ladle Hill Map](#)

[Beacon Hill Map](#)



## SLOPES BY WIND DIRECTION

When you know the wind direction on a particular day and want to see which slopes are candidates for flying, here's a list of slopes in the southeast grouped by wind direction. Some slopes appear more than once if they work in more than one wind direction.

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### NORTH

*Beddingham Bowl, East Sussex*  
*Beltinge Cliffs, Kent*  
*Butser Hill, Hampshire*  
*Butts Brow, East Sussex*  
*Devil's Dyke, West Sussex*  
*Ditchling Beacon, East Sussex*  
*Firle Beacon, East Sussex*  
*Harting Down, Hampshire*  
*Itford Hill, East Sussex*  
*Ivinghoe Beacon, Buckinghamshire*  
*Jack and Jill Hill, West Sussex*  
*Long Man Hill, East Sussex*  
*Minster Cliffs, Kent*

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### NORTHEAST

*Bopeep Hill, East Sussex*  
*Butser Hill, Hampshire*  
*Butts Brow, East Sussex*  
*Ditchling Beacon, East Sussex*  
*Ivinghoe Beacon, Buckinghamshire*  
*Kingston Castle Hill, East Sussex*  
*Long Man Hill, East Sussex*  
*Minster Cliffs, Kent*  
*Plumpton Hill, East Sussex*  
*Warden Springs, Kent*  
*Watership Down, Hampshire*  
*Wolstonbury Hill, West Sussex*

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### EAST

*Beachy Head, East Sussex*  
*Butser Hill, Hampshire*  
*Butts Brow, East Sussex*  
*Hindover Hill, East Sussex*  
*Ivinghoe Beacon, Buckinghamshire*  
*Warden Point, Kent*  
*Wolstonbury Hill, West Sussex*

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### SOUTHEAST

*Beachy Head, East Sussex*  
*Butts Brow, East Sussex*  
*Holly Hill, Kent*  
*Ivinghoe Beacon, Buckinghamshire*  
*Polhill Bank, Kent*

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### SOUTH

*Beachy Head, East Sussex*  
*Blue Bell Hill, Kent*  
*Box Hill, Surrey*  
*Colley Hill, Surrey*  
*Denbies Hill, Surrey*  
*Ivinghoe Beacon, Buckinghamshire*  
*Kemsing Down, Kent*  
*Mount Caburn, East Sussex*  
*Newhaven Cliffs, East Sussex*  
*Otford Mount, Kent*  
*Seaford Head, East Sussex*  
*St Clere Down, Kent*

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### SOUTHWEST

*Butser Hill, Hampshire*  
*Long Man Hill, East Sussex*  
*Mount Caburn, East Sussex*  
*Thurnham Castle Hill, Kent*

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### WEST

*Box Hill, Surrey*  
*Butser Hill, Hampshire*  
*Itford Hill, East Sussex*  
*Ivinghoe Beacon, Buckinghamshire*  
*Long Man Hill, East Sussex*  
*Otford Mount, Kent*  
*Thurnham Castle Hill, Kent*

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### NORTHWEST

*Devil's Dyke, West Sussex*  
*Ivinghoe Beacon, Buckinghamshire*  
*Long Man Hill, East Sussex*  
*Watership Down, Hampshire*  
*Wolstonbury Hill, West Sussex*

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## MORE SLOPES

The Google map associated with this guide contains many more slopes – over 250. The extra slopes are major sites in England and Wales, plus some slightly smaller slopes that might be handy for local flyers.

Click on this link for the map – [Slopehunter](https://www.slopehunter.co.uk) – or access it via the Slopehunter website. On the map, the blue pins mark the slopes. Double click on a pin to see details about that slope. Zoom in using the slider control on the left. Click Satellite to see an aerial photographic view of the area. If you have Google Earth installed, you can click on View in Google Earth to see tiltable 3D views of the slopes.

Here is a tiny sample of the sites on the map.



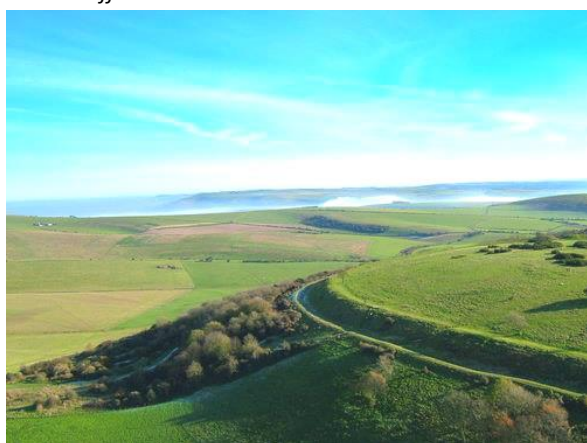
*Chantry Hill*



*Ballard Cliffs*



*Limerstone Down*



*Cissbury Ring*



*Warlingham Bowl*





*Westbury White Horse Hill*



*Uffington White Horse Hill*



*Tennyson Down*



*Whitesheet Hill*

[www.slopehunter.co.uk](http://www.slopehunter.co.uk)

**Take care out there:** Slope soaring can be a hazardous activity. You could fall down a hill. You could be hit by a plane. You could be shat on by a seagull. Whatever happens, it isn't Slopehunter's fault. You alone are responsible for your actions. Have fun and take care.