

**Cuckoo Line**

The Cuckoo Line is an informal name for the now defunct railway service which linked Polegate and Eridge in East Sussex from 1880 to 1968. It was nicknamed the Cuckoo Line by drivers, from a tradition observed at the annual fair in Heathfield, a station on the route. At the fair, which was held each April, a lady would release a cuckoo from a basket, it being supposedly the 'first cuckoo of spring'.

The railway line served the following Sussex communities: Polegate, Hailsham, Hellingly, Horam for Waldron, Heathfield, Mayfield, Rotherfield and Eridge. Services continued through Eridge and onward via Groombridge to Tunbridge Wells.

The Cuckoo Line was built by the London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSC&R) in two sections, starting with the branch from Polegate to Hailsham which began to operate on 14 May 1849. The remainder of the line to Eridge began to operate in September 1880.

At the 'Grouping' in 1923, the railway passed into the control of the Southern Railway. When the Southern Railway was nationalised in 1948, the line became part of the Southern Region of British Railways.

Following the Beeching Report in 1963, the line was recommended for closure. The section from Eridge to Hailsham was closed to passenger traffic in 1965 (the section between Heathfield and Hailsham remaining open for freight until 1968), whilst the short branch from Polegate to Hailsham remained open until 8 September 1968. The closure of this section was hotly disputed – even British Railways themselves agreeing that Hailsham was a growing town and that buses would be unable to cope with the demands of the increasing population.

Today, the Cuckoo Line remains a closed railway – a footpath and cycleway known as The Cuckoo Trail runs along much of the route from Polegate to Heathfield. Polegate retains a railway station, albeit on a different site to the one formerly used by Cuckoo Line trains, whilst the site of the station in Hailsham is now occupied by a housing estate. At Horam the platforms are preserved including a nameboard. Hellingly station survives as a private residence, and Heathfield station building is now a shop selling kitchen utensils but the site of the platforms are now occupied by industrial units.

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

# The Cuckoo Trail



**Walk overview:**

Distance:	5.5 miles (9 km)
Time:	2.5 – 3 hour
Description:	Walk back through history. View and walk along part of the legendary Cuckoo line (a railway line which used to connect London and Eastbourne and was closed in 1968).



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Leave The Gun and turn left around the corner of the building. Follow the yellow arrow on the post and walk through playground to the furthest corner. Cross a broken stile and continue straight across the field in the direction of the corner of the forest. Carry on straight along the edge of the forest until a stile at the end. Climb over the stile and turn left onto the road.

Keep walking for 0.3 mile (500m) until a crossroad with a rural road. Turn right onto the road **(1)** (follow a 'Footpath' signpost) and keep walking along the road until an iron gate. Go straight onto a trail (past a post with a yellow arrow) and continue along the trail **(2)** until you see buildings of 'Wellshurst golf and country club' (the trail becomes a track later, you pass a teeing off ground and walk over a small bridge). Keep walking along the fence of the training ground, follow the yellow arrows, keep on the right and walk around the building of the club (path leads through club maintenance machines park). When you reach a small asphalt road turn right and follow this road until the main road.

Turn right onto the main road and continue for 0.1 mile (150m) until you see a 'Footpath' signpost on the left side of the road. Turn left onto the path and carry on until a wooden gate. Go through it, turn right (follow the yellow arrow) and keep walking across the field until the next gate with a signpost **(3)**. Go through the gate and follow the yellow arrow. Walk diagonally down the hill until an iron gate. Go through and climb over the following stile **(4)**. Continue straight across the field, climb over a stile, go across a track and climb over the next stile into the next field. Follow this direction and walk diagonally across the field until a stile. Climb over it and keep walking diagonally across the next field (you can see a small pond surrounded by a small wood on the right). In the furthest corner go through the gate **(5)** and turn right onto the Cuckoo Trail.

Enjoy walking along the Cuckoo Trail **(6)** until you see an old railroad bridge **(7)** over the trail (keep to the asphalt pavement the whole time). In front of the bridge turn right and go over a small footbridge and through the wooden gate. Continue along the edge of the field and go through the following metal gate. Keep walking along the edge (follow yellow arrows) until a gate on the left. Turn left, go through the gate **(8)** and immediately turn right (follow the signpost). Keep walking along the edge of the field, through an iron gate and along the edge of the next field. In the corner climb over the unusual stile **(9)** and go up the hill until you reach the main road.

Walk across the road and continue along the smaller street. Keep walking along the street (later the road bears to the left and leads down the hill) until you come to a crossroad with a rural road. Turn right and walk up several steps next to the rural road (There is the 'Wealdenway' signpost as well, but it isn't easy to see). Keep walking straight across the field (across the track too) to the furthest corner next to the building.

Go through an iron gate, turn left and keep walking down the hill along the right fence. In the corner of the field go through the gate and over a small footbridge **(10)**. Continue straight along the edge of the field, and climb over a stile in the corner into the forest. Follow the trail down the hill, over a small footbridge **(11)** and up the hill until a post with a yellow arrow on the right. Follow the arrow, turn right and climb over a stile into the field. Immediately turn left and follow the edge of the field. In the corner climb over a stile and keep walking straight across the next field, later following the edge of the field. Pass the 'Wealdenway' signpost on the left and climb over 2 styles in the corners of the fields. Keep walking straight along the edge of the field and climb over the next stile into the next field. Continue straight across the field and climb over a stile with a small footbridge **(12)**. Keep walking straight across the field (past farm buildings on the right) to the corner. Climb over the last stile and turn right onto the rural road (follow the 'Wealdenway' signpost).

Walk along this road past Rock Harbour Farm house and in front of the pond turn left (follow the 'Wealdenway' signpost). Keep walking along this road until a bigger asphalt road. Continue straight until a T-junction with a road signpost. Turn right (follow the signs 'Horam' and 'Heathfield') and go back to The Gun.