

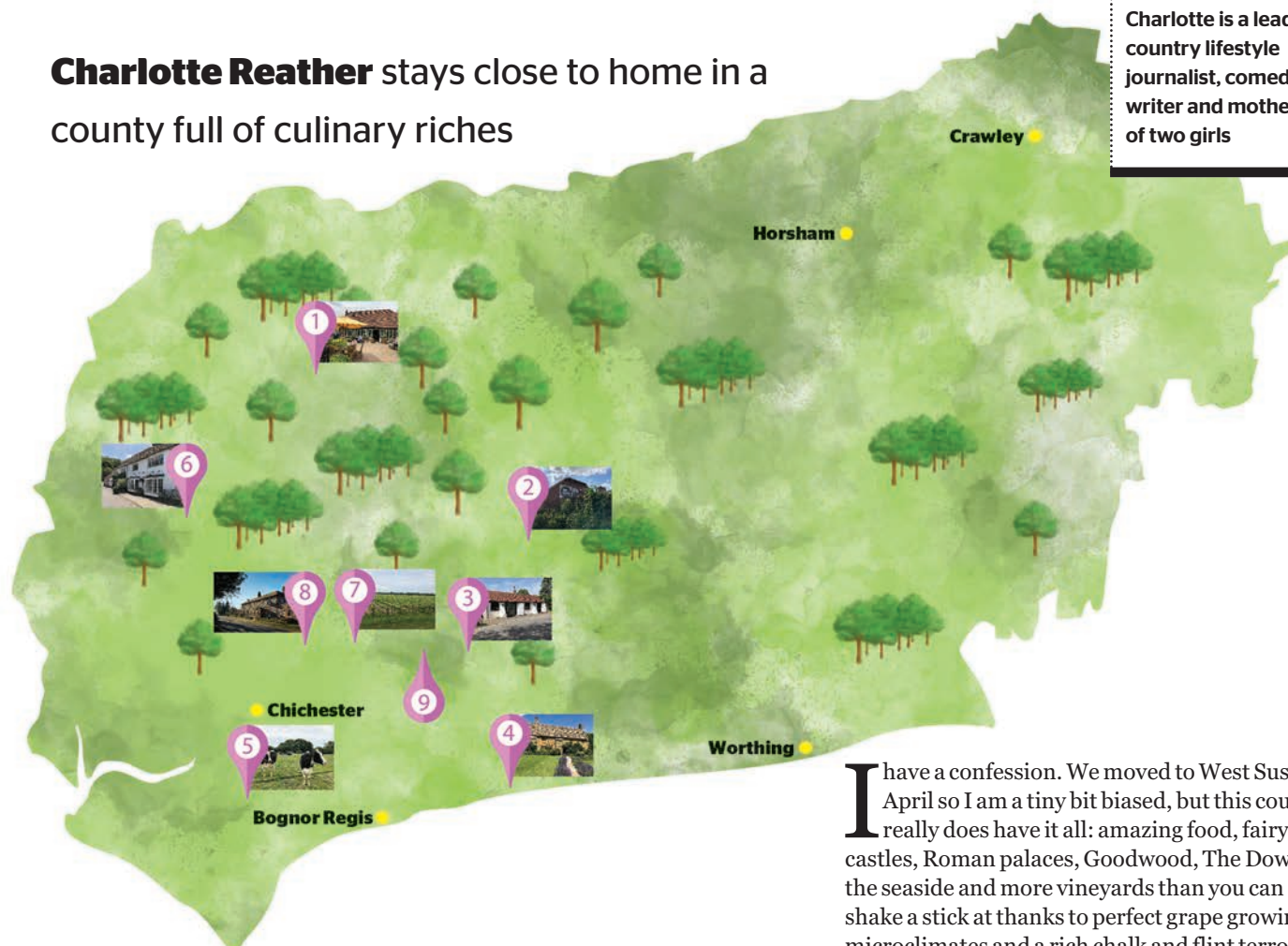
Eat, walk, sleep... West Sussex

Charlotte Reather stays close to home in a county full of culinary riches



By Charlotte Reather

Charlotte is a leading country lifestyle journalist, comedy writer and mother of two girls



I have a confession. We moved to West Sussex in April so I am a tiny bit biased, but this county really does have it all: amazing food, fairytale castles, Roman palaces, Goodwood, The Downs, the seaside and more vineyards than you can shake a stick at thanks to perfect grape growing microclimates and a rich chalk and flint terroir. Forget Champagne, pass the Tinwood and come on Down – it's Glorious here.

1 Cowdray Farm Shop and Café

Home to some of the most exciting international polo in the UK, including the prestigious Gold Cup, played in front of the enchanting ruins of a Tudor manor house, Cowdray Park Estate has also garnered a reputation as a foodie and wellbeing destination. Boasting on-site yoga, meditation and chanting classes for the mind, Cowdray honey and organic kefir for the body and Langham traditional ale for the soul, the 16,500-acre estate is an artisanal hive of activity.

The kefir, a fermented probiotic milk drink, is made by 'Susana and Daughters' from raw milk produced by the herd of 290 Holsteins on the farm. Lady Cowdray is a health food devotee, so there are fresh boost juices and smoothies at the cafe and much of the produce has an estate or local provenance, as you would expect.

The rosemary and garlic spatchcock leg of lamb from their master butcher is simply out of this world. And our lunch of Cowdray venison burgers from the wild fallow and roe deer on the estate are a hit with the children, as is the playground conveniently positioned next to the café. Worth a visit.

● Cowdray Park, Midhurst, GU29 0AJ

● cowdray.co.uk



2 Charlie's Farm Shop

Dairy farmer Charlie Hughes got the full hurricane force of our family and I fear is still reeling from our visit. Husband Ed was unable to accompany me so I had to contend with one hot puppy and two bothered children alone.

It wasn't pretty, but somehow, amid the commotion, we managed to have a tour of his 250-acre dairy farm, including viewing his impressive robotic milking machine, which his 120 Friesian-Holstein milkers can access day or night when they want to be milked. He told me that 60% of his milk goes to processor Arla, 40% into his own delicious Charlie's natural yoghurt, ice cream and his Southview Farm milk, which he delivers to local shops, cafes and businesses.

In the cool, airy farm shop, opened in 2013, he asks his professional butcher to prepare some of his rose veal for me to take home. "Veal is an under-used meat and it's the best thing to do with the bull calves from a dairy herd. Eating British veal supports British dairy farmers," says Charlie.

At home, I prepare veal Milanese with breadcrumbs, which the children devour and is a great alternative to the usual chicken goujons.

- Charlie's Farm Shop, Southview Farm Dairy, Bury, Pulborough, RH20 1NP
- charliesfarmshop.co.uk



4 Bailiffscourt Hotel and Spa

Bailiffscourt was the extraordinary brainchild of Walter Guinness (Lord Moyne) and architect Amyas Phillips who finished the replica medieval manor house in 1927. Phillips searched the country for original stone, woodwork, doors, windows and fireplaces, bringing them all together at Climping to create the exquisite country house within 30-acres of private parkland leading to the beach.

There are 39 rooms across the main hotel, as well as several charming medieval-style cottages. With my two toddlers and puppy, Douglas, in tow we are led up to the Baylies Suite with a magnificent four-poster bed and cot bed and fold-up bed for the children. And there are two baths!

My girls bathe in one and I jump into the tub next to them. From our rolled baths we watch a helicopter land on the hotel's helipad from our bathroom window making the children scream with excitement. And that's before they find their frisbees and buckets and spades, included in our 'Beach, Bucket and Baliffscourt' family package, as well as four Gold+ tickets to the spectacular Arundel Castle, second only to Windsor, with breathtaking gardens and only 15 minutes' drive from the hotel.

Douglas tests the hotel's dog-friendly policy to the hilt, but Bailiffscourt more than lives up to their 'Pet's Pyjamas' promise with our puppy treated like a prince, while I take the girls swimming in the saltwater outdoor infinity pool.

We take a wander on the beach before dining in the hotel's Tapestry Restaurant, where the girls behave impeccably with Matilda, aged two, ordering herself a sparkling water with a regal wave of her hand. They happily eat their cod and potato wedges with pea puree and caper butter as I enjoy the 'Climping Beach' poached lobster, crab mayonnaise, brown shrimp and hot butter glazed lobster.

Everything is local, seasonal and fresh and when the lamb Wellington arrives I devour it along with crisp sweetbreads, roast loin, beetroot mash and a rosemary and lamb jus. I savour every mouthful accompanied by an excellent pinot noir and, as the children's goodwill starts to wane at the bottom of their ice cream glasses, I ask for my English cheese platter to be sent to my room to enjoy in my four-poster.

The Beach, Bucket, Bailiffscourt Package includes:

- Overnight accommodation in a Climping Room for two adults and two children
- 2 x Scrunch bucket, spade, & frisbee
- 4 x Gold Plus tickets to Arundel Castle
- 1 bottle of Sussex Sparkling wine
- Three-course dinner
- £25 dinner allowance per child
- Full English and continental breakfast
- Bookable from 2nd April to 1st November 2019 including holidays and half-term, subject to availability
- From £495
- Bailiffscourt Hotel and Spa, Climping Street, Climping, BN17 5RW
- hshotels.co.uk/bailiffscourt

3 The Forge Village Shop & Cafe, Slindon

Nestled within 3,500 acres of the National Trust Slindon Estate, The Forge was a working blacksmith forge until 2011 when the building fell into disrepair and was saved by a group of villagers who turned it into a shop.

After being taken over by a professional team two years ago, the café won 'Sussex Life's Best Tea and Coffee Shop' in 2018 and has become a haven for dog walkers, cyclists and ramblers, all drawn by the breathtaking walks on the estate and The South Downs.

"We are very much about seasonal local produce," says manager Adam Gill. "Our tomatoes are from Nutbourne, salad leaves from Eartham, we have Petworth Eggs, milk from Charlie Hughes at Southview Farm Dairy and ice cream from Caroline's Dairy. All our sausage rolls, quiches, and scotch eggs are made in-house."

Try their popular 'Fisherman's ploughman' with local Selsey crab and smoked salmon for lunch or drop by one afternoon to sample their fabulous cream teas. "We serve massive slabs of homemade cake, proper sandwiches and a large scone. It's not delicate, it's rustic," says Adam.

In the autumn there's the Slindon Pumpkin Festival, as well as events at Gaston Farm, including Open Lambing and the Festival of Horsemanship.

- The Forge, Reynolds Lane, Slindon, BN18 0QT
- slindonforge.com



5 Caroline's Dairy

Dairy farmers Chris and Caroline Spiby opened Caroline's Dairy in 2008 as a response to poor milk prices. Eleven years on, they produce more than 36,000 litres of ice-cream, winning Great Taste Awards six years in a row, including 2019.

"Our ice cream is sold all over Sussex, Southern Surrey and East Hampshire in independent shops," says Caroline, who has no plans to sell it nationally. "Then it wouldn't be local and being local really means something."

They produce five million litres of the white stuff annually from the 550 Friesian-Holstein cows on their 540-acre farm near Sidlesham. The cows are glowing with health ruminating on the nutrient-rich meadow grass. "It's all permanent pasture on the farm as it's water meadows with valuable coastal wetland habitat for migrating breeding waders," says Chris.

Only 1% of their milk goes into ice cream. "We sell 99% to M&S, who ensure high animal welfare and sustainable farming practices to their customers and lower antibiotic use. They also pay us a fairer price," says Chris.

Caroline lets me taste some of her most popular flavours. My favourite is the toffee and honeycomb. My children select strawberries and cream and Belgian chocolate as their winners and, after two tubs each, I need to get them back in the car, pronto.

- Caroline's Dairy, Chalder Farm, Sidlesham, Chichester, PO20 7RN
- carolinesdairy.co.uk



6 The White Horse, Chilgrove

One of our most memorable hosts, Richard Miller is a veteran of the hospitality industry having run 22 restaurants with Ken Hom in London 'back in the day'. Now 'retired' he holds the reins to the White Horse, a charming South Downs dog (and children)-friendly pub with 15 beautiful, modern rooms.

"We won Pets Pyjamas two years in a row and were the National Pub of the Year in 2018, and Pub of the Year South East 2019," says Richard. "In the summer we cater for the Goodwood crowd and during the winter months look after shooting parties as we are situated between three pheasant shoots." They also host a select number of weddings in the beautiful meadow.

He generously brings out signature dishes prepared by chef Richard Cane-Toye. We greedily sample foie gras, Charlie's Cold Smoked Trout with Petworth asparagus (in season at the time) and monkfish scampi, followed by Nutbourne tomato and Parmesan risotto and a Rother Valley ribeye.

Part of the Epicurean Collection of award winning boutique country inns, The White Horse is a jewel in their crown. Check out the website to join the Epicurean Club and earn points across the collection.

- The White Horse, 1 High Street, Chilgrove, Chichester, PO18 9HX
- thewhitehorse.co.uk



7 Tinwood Vineyard and Winery

Second generation farmer Art Tukker dug up his lettuce-farming parents' icebergs and tore up the rulebook. Looking more like a hip DJ than a farmer, he is the brains, passion and force behind Tinwood Winery. We start with a group tour of the vines. "We live in the rain shadow of the Isle of Wight," Art explains. "The rhombus shape of the island with its sharp western edge called the Needles, tears apart rainstorms causing them to avoid the area and we are only three miles from the sea, which protects us from spring frosts as the sea is warmer than land. We barely see a frost here and never have snow."

But, if there is a frost, Art has a frost-busting machine that blasts hot air over the vines at the first hoary hint. "Underground is flint and a seam of chalk four metres deep that runs under the Channel, the same seam found in the Champagne and Burgundy regions of France. Chardonnay vines love chalk and Blanc de Blanc is 100% Chardonnay."

Back at the impressive modern winery, we sit out in the sunshine and imbibe three glasses of Tinwood sparkling wine accompanied by a wedge of Cornish brie and Tinwood honey: Tinwood Blanc de Blanc, Tinwood Brut and Tinwood sparkling Rose. The stand-out is the Blanc de Blanc, 2017. However, with their best vintage last year, the 2018 Brut is set to be astonishing. Book a tasting in 2020 to delectate some outstanding British bubbles and you can stay in one of their sumptuous wine lodges, so why not make a weekend of it?

● Tinwood Vineyard and Winery, Tinwood Farm, Halnaker, Chichester PO18 ONE
● tinwoodestate.com

8 Farmer Butcher Chef, Goodwood

The FBC is an unashamed but ethical and sustainable carnivore's delight, with a menu that educates the diner on the different cuts of pork, beef and lamb. This is food with a remarkable provenance, all emanating from the 12,000-acre organic Goodwood Estate or within a local radius.

Before our meal, farm manager Conor Haydon drives us around in his 4x4. "There's a thousand head of cattle (dairy and beef) on the farm at any one time, 60 sows farrow to finish, 1,400 north country mule ewes put to a South Down or Suffolk ram, a managed wild deer herd and a commercial pheasant and partridge shoot. The farm is certified organic and self-sustaining, with all of the animal feed grown on the estate," he says.

Meat is butchered on site by five full-time butchers (and can be ordered in boxes by phone) and everything including the baa, moo and oink is used.

Ed and I enjoy lamb faggots and steak tartare followed by a Butcher's Board of beef to share from their 30-month, grass-finished Shorthorn cattle, a British native breed. There's a slow-cooked crusted goose steak, devilled beef heart, slow roasted shin and onion pressing, charred oxtail and tongue stew, beef dripping chips and horseradish cream.

For once my husband, a Hereford farmer's son, is rendered speechless as he happily chomps away. This is meat-eating with reverence for both animal and farmer, which feels and tastes just sensational.

● FBC, Goodwood Hotel, Chichester, PO18 0QB
● goodwood.com





Slindon loop

Difficulty: Easy

Distance: 1.8 miles

Time: 1-1.5 hours

Address: Park Lane Car Park, Slindon, BN18 0QY

Summary:

This walk takes you on a circular walk from Park Lane car park through Park wood, following the line of the Park Pale: a liner ditch and bank that once bound the medieval park of Slindon. At the northern end, where the archaeology of the pale is no longer visible, the route brings you out by Slindon College, once the manor house of the Slindon Estate. Top tip: Grab an Estate leaflet from the orientation board at the car park for some further information about your walk.



1. Facing the orientation board in the car park, take the middle path with a wooden field gate into the woods. At the first junction, bear left and continue until you emerge out of the woods with the park pale running to your left. Glimpses of the parkland, Slindon College, and the village can be spied through the trees to your right.

2. At a convergence of paths, turn left (crossing the pale). You are now walking along the carriage drive that would have taken the Countess of Newburgh and her friends to the great house. Continue on the carriage drive keeping the pale on your right.

3. Soon you will see the remaining majestic beech trees for which Park Wood was once internationally renowned. About 90% of the mature trees were lost during the 1987 storm, but you can spot some of the lucky ones soaring above the rest of the canopy.

4. Take a brief detour off the carriage drive down a signed track to the early Stone Age Raised Beach. Archaeologists have discovered Stone Age tools here, evidence there was a human settlement half a million years ago by the sea. Back

on the carriage drive, on the left-hand side you will see Druid's Grove – a hauntingly beautiful survival of Slindon's great beech trees.

5. Eventually, the wood opens out again and you pass the remains of a Regency summer-house, which once stood like a giant pepper pot, complete with balcony and views southwards across the park to the coast. The story goes that over-enthusiastic Canadian soldiers stationed here during WWII used it as target practice and this is all that remains today.

6. Beyond the summer-house the carriage drive comes to an end at the Camping and

Caravan Club site entrance. Turn left down towards the road, where you will take a narrow path to the right parallel to the road. Step down off a low wall and you will see the North Lodge entrance to Slindon College.

7. With the lodge on your right continue up the road, flanked by flint walls on both sides. You will pass St Richard's church on your left. At the first road junction, turn right down Church Hill or, if it's autumn, continue straight on Top Road for 90m to see the famous Slindon Pumpkin display from October-November.

8. Return down Church Hill, past St Mary's church and, as the road bends round to the left, you will see the village pond. At the pond turn right on a path that takes you into a wood known as The Bellows, named after from the three paths that converge at its southern end, giving it a 'blacksmiths bellows' like appearance on the map. Continue south back towards the car park. The woodland at this point changes to Butchers Copse named after the Butchers Broom that grows here. The spiky plant was once used by butchers to clean their wooden chopping blocks, ideal for getting into all the cracks and indentations.

