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This summer thousands of families will make the trek up to the Natural History Museum in London. It is an inspiring place to take your young naturalists but why not take kids to one of these local wonders of the natural world, all in Brighton and Hove, and save the visit to London for the winter, when the tube is cooler and less crowded with tourists.

**1) Rock Pooling at Ovingdean**

Exploring rock pools is hard to beat. A huge variety of surprising creatures can discovered by children of all ages.

The undercliff walk provides unrivalled, safe, access to miles of rock pools between the Marina and Newhaven and most locals will have their own particular favourite spot. For younger children, the beach at Ovingdean is ideal, when the tide goes out, the rock pools start at the bottom of the pebbles so there is no slippery weed to cross and Ovingdean has a cafe serving sandwiches, ice creams and massive slices of delicious homemade cake. There is also a clean public toilet with nappy changing facilities.

TIP Try feeding an anemone with a small piece of ham or shellfish. They will wrap their tentacles around the food and pull it into their mouths.

TIP For older children the undercliff is perfect for cycling, allowing them to cycle between several spots and compare the diversity of different habitats.

**Find out more**

For the local tide times see Brighton Marina Website <https://www.premiermarinas.com/Tides-Weather-Forecast/Brighton-Weather>

**Getting there**

BUS Catch a number 12 or 14. For Ovingdean Gap, get off at St Dunstan’s. There is a tunnel under the road to a flight of steps down to the beach.

CAR There is parking along the road towards Ovingdean Village

**2) Beacon Hill Nature Reserve**

Beacon Hill Nature reserve is a little known local Gem, a little patch of grazed Downland on the top of the Cliff above Rottingdean. The 360 degree views across Brighton and the Sea are spectacular and ever since the the grass has been grazed by sheep rather than mown there has been an explosion in diversity of wildlife, including birds, rare orchids and butterflies.

There is a lot to keep youngsters interested in the half mile walk to the top of the hill, past the abandoned pitch and putt golf course and Rottingdean Windmill. At the top of the hill is an ancient long barrow burial mound and dew pond.

Beacon Hill is an especially rewarding place for children to watch birds. Male Skylarks are easily spotted, hovering and singing as they guard their territories. Swallows put on spectacular aerobatic display, swooping just feet away as they hunt for insects very low to the ground. Buzzards are a common sight circling over the hill and if you are lucky an evening visit might reward you with a sighting of a Barn owl. There are lots of butterflies and other insects found on the hill to keep your bug hunters amused including a colony of the rare Chalkhill Blue Butterflies.

TIP Rottingdean Windmill will be open to visitors on Sunday 16th August

TIP Identifying plants can be a challenge but encourage children to compare the biodiversity of downland to that of a local park or garden by counting how many different species of plant they can find.

**Find out more**

Rottingdean Parish council website has a section devoted to beacon hill, including a map to help you plan your visit. <http://www.rottingdean-pc.gov.uk/beacon_hill>

**Getting there**

BUS The 12 or 14 will take you to the entrance of the nature reserve. Get off at the Windmill at the top of the hill above Rottingdean.

CAR There is pay and display parking at the White Horse Pub in Rottingdean

**3) Fossil Hunting at Peacehaven**

Just beyond the Bastion Steps at Peacehaven are some of the most spectacular fossils in the UK. Huge ammonites, 6’ in diameter, as well as numerous fossils of sea urchins, sponges and shells can all be found close to the eastern end of the undercliff walk. This is an area of special scientific interest so you are only allowed to collect fossils from loose boulders, not hammer them out of the cliff or rock platform below, nevertheless if you spend some time searching, especially after a storm, you are unlikely to come away empty handed.

The way down on to the beach from the end of the undercliff is slippery and the pebbles quite big and difficult for the youngest children to walk on but for school age children with an interest in dinosaurs and fossils it is well worth a visit.

TIP The chalk is soft and fossils can be removed easily from the loose boulders with a small hammer and cold chisel.

TIP Look for rusty coloured irregular lumps of stone embedded in the chalk. These nodules of Iron Pyrites are found all along the beach between Brighton and Newhaven. They break open easily to reveal the spectacular crystals known as Fools gold.

**Find out more**

For the local tide times see Brighton Marina Website <https://www.premiermarinas.com/Tides-Weather-Forecast/Brighton-Weather>

For more details about what to look for

<http://www.discoveringfossils.co.uk/peacehaven.htm>

**Getting there**

BUS The 12 or 14 will take you to within 5 minutes of the Bastion Steps. The stop you want is on the outskirts of Peacehaven, just after GE Meker Fencing, heading towards Newhaven.

CAR There is on street parking in Peacehaven

**4) The Booth Museum**

Don't let a rainy day hold back your naturalists. Brighton's Booth museum is home to the eclectic collection of victorian Naturalist Edward Booth who shot and stuffed hundreds of birds. The Museum is also home to a collection of minerals, fossils, skeletons and insects and a hands on activity area. There is lots to inspire budding collectors and the

The Museum is generally quiet and is a great place to take even very little children who can toddle around safely and generally find something to interest them.

The Museum is closed on Thursdays but for the rest of the week is open 10:00 – 12:00 and 1:15 – 5:00 and 2:00 - 5:00 on Sunday.

TIP When the sun eventually comes out, Dyke Road park, with a cafe and playground is just across the road.

**Find out more**

Brighton Museums Website <http://brightonmuseums.org.uk/booth/>

**Getting there**

BUS Buses 14, 14C and 27 from Brighton city centre or from Brighton Station stop near the Booth Museum.

CAR There is pay and display parking in the residential streets around the museum.

**5) Stanmer Park**

On days when the heat is really oppressive a visit to some shady woods is a great way to keep cool and for the kids to stay active. There are miles of paths to explore in the park but the best trees for climbing are around the back of Stanmer house. Also worth a visit are the glasshouses at Stanmer nursery and the little orchard that once belonged to the house. In Stanmer village you can usually see horses and cows and get an ice cream at Stanmer stores.

Aside from a few squirrels it can be surprisingly difficult to spot much wildlife in woods. However in any heap of old leaves there is great bug hunting. It is usually easier to find creatures if you take a tray or large plastic tub and fill it with a handful of decaying leaves. The bugs will drop to the bottom of the tray.

TIP Take a pale coloured sheet, blanket or even a sheet of paper. Place it under a tree and gently shake the branches, the sheet will soon be covered in dozens of strange insects that we rarely see - all food for foraging birds.

**Find out more**

You can download a useful leaflet that gives more details about what to see in the park an includes a helpful map from <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/leisure-and-libraries/parks-and-green-spaces/stanmer-park>

**Getting there**

BUS The 78 Bus goes from the Old Steine to Stanmer village about once an hour. The Number 25 Bus stops at the entrance to the park very frequently

CAR There is parking within Stanmer park but restrictions are in place within Stanmer village.