



Photo: Tim Locke

BAA CRAWL

IT'S OPEN FARM SEASON

It's lambing time, and several farms in Sussex open their gates to the public. At the Seven Sisters Sheep Centre at East Dean, near Birling Gap, you can see a remarkable variety of rare breeds (50 or so of the 63 British sheep breeds), including the chunky, high-mutton content Southdown sheep, bred by John Ellman of Glynde in the late 18th century. For children, there are bottle-feeding opportunities and tractor rides, and an aptly rustic playground. Ovine and bovine pleasures await at Church Farm, Coombes (in surprisingly remote-feeling countryside near Lancing) where five generations of the Passmore family have farmed since 1901, and where they have 800 Welsh mules and Charollais rams as well as 80 pedigree Sussex cattle; farm tours take you by tractor up on to the Downs, where it's explained to you how the farm is run and how the dew ponds work.

Another place to catch while you can is Bates Green Farm at Arlington, where bluebells carpet the woods to psychedelic effect. Now open for its 40th year, it's gorgeously good-humoured, and people come in thousands to follow the signposted trails: the farm opens in cooperation with two of its neighbours, with the entry fee, teas and produce stalls going to fund worthy local causes.

More Sussex pleasures in Tim Locke's Slow Sussex, Guide Book of the Year Finalist in British Press Awards (£14.99 from Skylark, Lewes Tourist Information Centre and Barbican House). Visit facebook.com/slowsussex for details of walks he's doing.