



Photos: Tim and Anne Locke

## BALCOMBE VIADUCT

Many people who have taken the train to London from Lewes or Brighton must have passed over this 1841 railway-age marvel completely oblivious to its gargantuan form. Only a gorgeous, tantalisingly brief opening out of the view over the greenest and most English of landscapes as the train crosses the insignificant Ouse just south of Balcombe might make you look out. You might just glimpse a blur of the pair of mock pavilions at either end as you whiz along. It really deserves a leisurely look from below, where it assumes almost heroic proportions: you're looking at 11 million bricks, forming 37 arches, of a viaduct that towers 95 feet high and spans 1,476 feet. Each of the arches saves on yet more bricks by having an oval-cut out that gives a surreal view of a seeming infinity as you gaze through the whole lot. When, many years back, I first found the public footpath that goes beneath, there were trees growing between the piers, and, somewhat disconcertingly, chunks of fallen bits of the classical balustrade lay on the ground. Now it's all happily restored and the balustrade is properly intact. It graces the view for miles around – including from the glorious gardens at Borde Hill and Nymans, either of which tie in very nicely with a visit.

**Tim Locke's Slow Sussex & South Downs National Park (£14.99) is available at SkyLark.**