

ISLE OF WIGHT

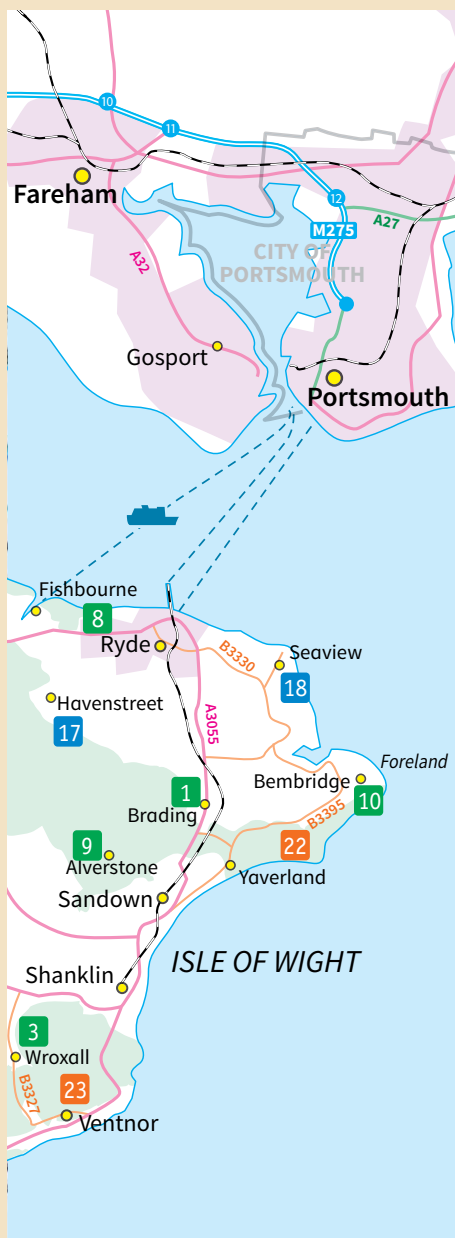
Outstanding Circular Walks

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Introduction to the Isle of Wight



Despite its modest size, the Isle of Wight has a remarkably diverse landscape, with over half of it designated as a National Landscape (formerly an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – AONB). The diamond-shaped island, which measures approximately 23 miles (37km) from west to east and 13 miles (21km) from north to south, encompasses a wealth of varied and unspoilt scenery, from dramatic cliffs and rolling chalk downland to peaceful river estuaries, woodland and farmland. ‘The Island’, as it is known locally (and used in this guide), also has an excellent network of over 500 miles of footpaths and bridleways, making it an ideal location for walkers.


Walking on the Island


As well as a 70-mile-long coastal path that encircles it, there are a number of named and waymarked inland trails. The coastal path, which will form part of the King Charles III England Coast Path when complete, takes in chalk and sandstone




Walkers along the coastal path

walk 4


 **Start**
Wootton Bridge


 **Distance**
3 miles (4.9km)


 **Height gain**
340 feet (105m)







 **Approximate time**
1½ hours

 **Route terrain**
Mostly gravel and surfaced tracks; field paths; undulating farmland and woodland; railway crossings. Two stiles

 **Parking**
Brannon Way car park, PO33 4NU



 **Public transport**
Bus services 4, 9/N9; stop at Wootton Tesco, High Street, near the start: islandbuses. info/services

 **OS maps**
Landranger 196 (Solent & The Isle of Wight), Explorer OL29 (Isle of Wight)



 **GPS waypoints**
 SZ 544 919
 SZ 538 910
 SZ 536 905
 SZ 543 904
 SZ 546 919

Wootton Bridge

This pleasant walk through lovely, unspoiled countryside is a good one for railway enthusiasts, providing glimpses of Wootton Station and crossing the Isle of Wight Steam Railway line twice. The return leg passes through quiet woodland to reach the Old Mill Pond and picturesque Wootton Creek.

 Turn right out of the car park, then left onto the main road opposite Tesco Express, and head up the hill. Go left at the traffic lights into Station Road, **The Cedars** pub just beyond the junction, and then take the second turning on the left into Packsfield Lane. A few houses line the gravel track at first, but thereafter the attractive route runs between hedges of beech, holly, oak and bramble, with glimpses of Wootton Station away to the right. The bridleway climbs gently past Packsfield Farmhouse to the gated railway crossing .

Keep a good lookout for trains as you cross the line and fork left onto the narrow bridleway N7, signposted Littletown Lane. Pass Woodford Cottage on the right, turning left to continue to the T-junction with bridleway N3. Turn left towards Briddlesford Road, following the track as it swings to the right across a private lane in front of the white-painted ‘Shiloh’.

Pass Little Mousehill Farm Cottage and turn left through a gate  along footpath N2, signposted Woodhouse Farm. Continue through the fields going through a kissing-gate and over a stile, then another stile into a small wood, following its edge. Leave by another kissing-gate and head up the right-hand side of the field to a further kissing-gate. Turn left along bridleway N1 towards Wootton Bridge .



Wootton Creek



SCALE 1:25 000 or 2 1/2 INCHES TO 1 MILE 4CM TO 1KM



Tennyson Monument

regularly, declaring the fresh air 'is worth sixpence a pint'.

From the monument, head down the grassy ridge, keeping ahead where another path forks left (an alternative route to The Needles viewpoint, keeping closer to the cliff edge along Highdown Cliffs) to reach a half-size replica of what was called the Nodes Beacon that once stood on the spot now occupied by the Tennyson Monument. A track joins from the right – your return route later. Go through the gate just ahead, a four-armed fingerpost next to it **B**.

Take the left fork, signed Coastal Path and The Needles, and head gently up and along the broad grassy ridge of West High Down. Aim for the mast in the distance. The roofs of the former Coastguard Cottages (now NT holiday lets) can be spotted ahead to the right. Just before the mast, go through a gate to the left of it and then pass to its right. Carry on down the tapering ridge, the Needles NCI (National Coastwatch Institution) station in view ahead. Bear to the left of it to descend a chalky path down to a concrete road, the station

nearby to the right.

Over to your left is a former rocket testing site. Cross the road and head down the path signed to The Needles viewpoint **C**, descending some steps. From the viewpoint, retrace steps to the concrete road and turn left, past the NCI station, to the nearby New Battery. From here, follow the path signed for the Old Battery, going up a few steps, then down some more, the surfaced path bending left to continue downhill.

From the Old Battery, continue alongside the road, then on the roadside path towards Alum Bay, enjoying the fine views of the multi-coloured sand cliffs. Where the road bends left to enter the Needles Park **D**, if you wish to omit the section to Alum Bay, read on from the next paragraph. Otherwise, continue through the Needles Park to descend to the beach at Alum Bay for a closer look at the sand cliffs (bear in mind the climb back up again afterwards). Head

Needles Batteries

High up on the clifftop

above Alum Bay is the Needles Old Battery, a Victorian fort in the care of the National Trust, which provides superb views of The Needles. It was built in the early 1860s as part of a protective chain of forts and batteries to guard The Solent and naval dockyards at Portsmouth from possible French invasion, and was occupied by soldiers until the end of World War II. It is open from March until the beginning of November, as is its atmospheric 1940's-style tea room.

Higher up the headland is the New Battery (also National Trust), which was added in the 1890s to house larger guns. Between the 1950s and 1970s the rooms were used as the control centre for secret rocket tests carried out at the nearby static test site. The Rocket Exhibition here is open on Saturdays from late May to the end of August.

Further Information



Walking Safety

Although the reasonably gentle countryside that is the subject of this book offers no real dangers to walkers at any time of the year, it is still advisable to take sensible precautions and follow certain well-tried guidelines.

Always take with you both warm and waterproof clothing and sufficient food and drink. Wear suitable footwear, such as strong walking boots or shoes that give a good grip over stony ground, on slippery slopes and in muddy conditions. Try to obtain a local weather forecast and bear it in mind before you start. Do not be afraid to abandon your proposed route and return to your starting point in the event of a sudden and unexpected deterioration in the weather.

All the walks described in this book will be safe to do, given due care and respect, even during the winter. Indeed, a crisp, fine winter day often provides perfect walking conditions, with firm ground underfoot and a clarity unique to this time of the year. The most difficult hazard likely to be encountered is mud, especially when walking along woodland and field paths, farm tracks and bridleways – the latter in particular can often get churned up by cyclists and horses. In summer, an additional difficulty may be narrow and overgrown paths, particularly along the edges of cultivated fields. Neither should constitute a major problem provided that the appropriate footwear is worn.



Walkers and the Law

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW Act 2000) gives a public right of access in England and Wales to land mapped as open country (mountain, moor, heath and down) or registered common land. These areas are known as open access

land, and include land around the coastline, known as *coastal margin*.

Where You Can Go

Rights of Way

Prior to the introduction of the CRoW Act, walkers could only legally access the countryside along public rights of way. These are either 'footpaths' (for walkers only) or 'bridleways' (for walkers, riders on horseback and pedal cyclists). A third category called 'Byways open to all traffic' (BOATs), is used by motorised vehicles as well as those using non-mechanised transport. Mainly they are green lanes, farm and estate roads, although occasionally they will be found crossing mountainous area.

Rights of way are marked on Ordnance Survey maps. Look for the green broken lines on the Explorer maps, or the red dashed lines on Landranger maps. The term 'right of way' means exactly what it says. It gives a right of passage over what, for the most part, is private land. Under pre-CRoW legislation walkers were required to keep to the line of the right of way and not stray onto land on either side. If you did inadvertently wander off the right of way, either because of faulty map reading or because the route was not clearly indicated on the ground, you were technically trespassing.

Local authorities have a legal obligation to ensure that rights of way are kept clear and free of obstruction, and are signposted where they leave metalled roads. The duty of local authorities to install signposts extends to the placing of signs along a path or way, but only where the authority considers it necessary to have a signpost or waymark to assist persons unfamiliar with the locality.

CRoW Access Rights

Access Land

As well as being able to walk on existing rights of way, under CRoW legislation you

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