

The Isle of Wight Coast Path Guided Trail Holiday

Trip style: Guided trails

Destination: 📍 Isle of Wight

Trip code: FRW07-LIC01

Grades: 1, 2, 3

Carbon Footprint: 🌿 168kg CO2



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

With miles of coastline to explore and more than half the island bestowed National Landscape status, the Isle of Wight has plenty of walks worth shouting about. But by far the most standout of them all is the Isle of Wight Coastal Footpath – a 71-mile route around the entire island that raises the bar for history, nature, and big-name sights. This guided trail holiday ticks off all the highlights including the chalk headlands of the Needles and Culver Cliff, the Victorian seaside resort of Ventnor, and Osborne House – Queen Victoria’s favourite summer residence.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Walking the full circuit of the Isle of Wight coast
- Having all planning and navigation taken care of
- The chance to spot rare flora and fauna
- The dramatic chalk headlands of the Needles and Culver Cliff
- Soaking up excellent coastal views
- Staying in the comfort of Freshwater Bay House

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Comfortable en-suite rooms in our country house
- Cream tea on arrival day
- Cooked or continental breakfast every morning
- Daily packed lunches
- Three-course evening meals, plus tea & coffee
- Guided walks with an experienced HF Holidays Leader
- All transport to and from walks where necessary
- Get 15% off car travel and 20% off foot travel via www.wightlink.co.uk/HFHolidays

TRIP SUITABILITY

This Guided Walking/Hiking Trail is graded 3 which involves walks/hikes on generally good paths, but with some long walking days. There may be some sections over rough or steep terrain and will require a good level of fitness as you will be walking every day. It is your responsibility to ensure you have the relevant fitness required to join this holiday.

Your fitness

We want you to be confident that you can meet the demands of each walking day and get the most out of your holiday. Please be sure you can manage the mileage and ascent detailed in the daily itineraries. It is important for your own enjoyment, and that of your fellow guests that you can maintain the pace.

It makes a lot of sense to spend time getting some additional exercise before your holiday. We suggest that you try to fit in a number of longer walks, including some on hilly terrain. Other exercises such as cycling, jogging and swimming are also excellent for developing increased stamina.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

Check-in at the hotel is available from 16:00. If you are a member you can arrive at the house from 14:00. Enjoy a complimentary cream tea at 16:30 and meet other guests.

Day 2: Freshwater Bay to Blackgang

From Freshwater Bay we face an ascent over the chalk cliffs of Compton Down, passing Hanover Point with its fossil forest. Along these cliffs you will see evidence of the battle against the sea. We reach the Blackgang Chine theme park where we ascend to the Gore Down viewpoint for a spectacular view back along the coast. 13 miles (21km) with 1,650 feet (500m) of ascent.

Day 3: Blackgang to Sandown

This section of coast has been prone to erosion and for much of the day we'll walk through the 'Undercliff' or on the escarpment cliffs above. Blackgang is on one of the most dramatic sections of this inland cliff and we pass St Catherine's Point, the southern-most tip of the island. We continue to the village of St Lawrence before descending to the coast, passing the Botanic Gardens into the Victorian seaside town of Ventnor. We follow the promenade to Bonchurch with its ancient church, then through the richly vegetated Landslip (so named as it suffered in the great landslip of 1810), to Shanklin with its Victorian elegance. We follow the promenade to the resort of Sandown. 12 miles (19.5km) with 1,350 feet (410m) of ascent. Please note, there has been a landslip on the coast path between Ventnor and Shanklin. For the time being, we will be using the public service bus to bypass this section. The resulting walks statistics are: 10.6 miles (16.9 km).

Day 4: Sandown to Ryde

From Sandown we ascend the chalk clifftops of Culver Down, before passing the cliffs of Whitecliff Bay as we walk to Bembridge at the eastern tip of the island. Around the harbour we pass the tidemill and cross a causeway to the beach at St Helens Duver. As we follow the coast to Ryde, you'll see the Solent Forts, built in the early 19th-century to guard the approaches to Portsmouth against French invasions. 11 miles (17.5km) with 800 feet (250m) of ascent.

Day 5: Ryde to Gurnard Bay

Around the northern tip of the island from Ryde we head west past the ruins of Quarr Abbey, a once-flourishing Cistercian Monastery, and on past Fishbourne with its ferry boats to Portsmouth and to Wootton Bridge. The path heads inland around Queen Victoria's Osborne House estate. To avoid road walking, we take a bus to East Cowes and cross the chain-ferry to Cowes. We pass the Royal Yacht Squadron Club House, with its 22 bronze cannons, to Egypt Point and Gurnard Bay. 9½ miles (15.5km) with 900 feet (270m) of ascent.

Day 6: Gurnard Bay to Cranmore

We ascend the cliffs above Gurnard Bay, with magnificent views across the Solent and Southampton Water. After Thorness Bay the coastal path heads inland around the tidal creeks of the Newtown River. We pass the villages of

Porchfield and Newtown. Newtown was the Island's capital in the Middle Ages and once a thriving port and commercial centre. Continuing over the causeway to Shalfleet we head back to the coast at Hamstead Point and on to Cranmore. 11½ miles (18.5km) with 800 feet (240m) of ascent.

Day 7: Cranmore to Freshwater Bay

We pass Yarmouth with its historic castle and busy harbour and continue along the coast past Fort Victoria with views over the Solent to Hurst Castle. After Totland Bay, we ascend onto Headen Warren with its Bronze Age camp; a delightfully peaceful spot before the bright lights and music of the Alum Bay theme park. The most dramatic section of the coast path is the Needles; the chalk stacks that mark the western tip of the island before the outstanding final section along the chalk cliffs of Tennyson Down back to Freshwater Bay. 12 miles (19km) with 1,350 feet (410m) of ascent.

Day 8: Departure Day

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making your way home.

Freshwater Bay House

Chalky white cliffs and eyebrow-arching sea views set the tone for the delights that follow at this county house on the Isle of Wight - Queen Victoria's favourite island that's just a ferry hop from the South Coast. The location is as gorgeous as it gets; to the south of the village of Freshwater, within pebble-throwing distance of its namesake bay, and just a skip from Tennyson Down. You'll also be within easy reach of the area's showstoppers, including the imposing Stag and Mermaid rocks, the multi-coloured sands of Alum Bay, the remarkable Ventnor Botanic Gardens, and the 125-million-year-old dinosaur footprints at Compton Bay. And then, of course, there's the Needles Old Battery for the ubiquitous photo opportunity and the best views of The Needles.

A warm welcome

We want you to feel comfortable from the moment you arrive. You'll find a welcome pack in your room with guest registration forms, menus, order forms for dinners and picnic lunches, the Wi-Fi password, and the front door code. Our houses are locked at night, so we recommend noting the Duty Manager's number on arrival in case of an emergency (or getting locked out).

Evening entertainment

While evening entertainment varies from house to house, HF Holidays Inter-House Quiz night held after dinner on Wednesdays is a weekly staple. Your HF Holidays leader may be around for tips on guided and self-guided walking routes as well as visit-worthy local attractions.

Walks talks

Our HF Holidays walk leaders host guided walking information briefings before dinner on guided walking holiday arrival days. This is followed by a group Walks Talk for information on the following day's guided walks (held before dinner every evening). Self-guided walking guests are, of course, welcome.

The walking day

Prior to setting off on guided walks, your HF Holidays Leader will run you through a short safety briefing. There's also an up-to-date weather forecast on display at the house to ensure you have appropriate clothing and footwear. If you choose to do your own walks or are on a self-guided walking holiday, we ask that you please complete an Independent Walker Card each day. These can be found near the Discovery Point in the house.