# The Isle of Wight Coast Path Guided Trail for Solos



| Trip style: | Destination: | Walking Grade | Carbon Footprint: |
|---|---|---|---|
| Guided trails | Isle of Wight | 6 | 160kg CO2 |

## HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Exclusively for solos, this guided trail holiday circumnavigates the entire island following the Isle of Wight Coast Path, all with the help of an experienced HF Holidays Leader. Join a group of fellow solo travellers and get to know one another as you walk a 71-mile route that ticks off all the highlights including the chalk headlands of the Needles and Culver Cliff, the Victorian seaside resort of Ventnor, and passes by Osborne House – Queen Victoria's favourite summer residence. As the week unfolds, you'll strike up conversations, build connections, and form lasting friendships.

## WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Walking a full circuit of the Isle of Wight coast
- Having all planning and navigation taken care of
- The dramatic chalk headlands of the Needles and Culver Cliff
- Spending time with like-minded people in the great outdoors
- Finding new routes and places to explore with your HF Holidays Leader
- A more personalised experience thanks to small group sizes (maximum 16 people)

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Comfortable en-suite accommodation 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 walking with an experienced HF Holidays Leader
- All transport to and from walks where necessary
- Dedicated Solos host
- A drinks reception
- Farewell dinner with drinks included
- Easy-to-follow routes, maps, and information in our Discovery Point if you want to explore independently
- Get 15% off car travel and 20% off foot travel via www.wightlink.co.uk/HFHolidays

## ITINERARY - 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.

**Distance**: 13 miles (21km)

**Ascent**: 1,650 feet (500m)

### 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 on the cliffs above 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 little church, then on to Shanklin with its Victorian elegance. We finish the day by following the promenade to the resort of Sandown.

**Distance**: 13 miles (20.6 km)

**Ascent**: 1,500 feet (460m)

*Please note that there was a large landslide at Bonchurch in December 2023 and we are no longer able to walk through most of the Bonchurch Landslip area. We will divert to the main road for a short distance, then rejoin the Coastal path from the Landslip carpark.*

## 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.

**Distance**: 11 miles (17.5km)

**Ascent**: 800 feet (250m)

## 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.

**Distance**: 9½ miles (15.5km)

**Ascent**: 900 feet (270m)

## 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.

**Distance**: 11½ miles (18.5km)

**Ascent**: 800 feet (240m)

## 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.

**Distance**: 12 miles (19km)

**Ascent**: 1,350 feet (410m)

## Day 8 Departure Day

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making your way home.

## DAILY WALK OPTIONS




**Moderate walking grade 6**

Longer full day walks with more ascent and varied terrain. Good fitness and agility are needed. Typically, 9-10 miles (15-16km) with around 1,500ft (460m) of ascent.

## ACCOMMODATION

### 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.

#### About

· 43 well-appointed guest rooms · Exclusive occupancy: 61 guests minimum · Check in from 4:00pm · For members check in from 2:00pm · Full-board (including cream tea on arrival) · Free Wi-Fi · Free on-site parking · Boot room and drying room · 2 travel cots & 4 high chairs · Discovery Point offering a wide range of local area maps, route guides, and information for self-guided walks · Books and games to borrow · Licensed bar · Three lounges · Garden · Electric vehicle charging point - Please note, you will need to bring your own cables to use this EV charging point




#### Then & now

Little is known about the history of Freshwater Bay House, yet records show it was a purpose-built hotel owned by Charles Plumley in 1824. Prior to this, it was known as The George Inn and visited by London-born artist George Morland in 1799. He earned a living on the island by painting inn signs and undertaking local portrait commissions, although it's thought he sought refuge here to dodge his creditors. By the 1850s, the hotel was known as Plumley's Post House before later changing its name to the Freshwater Bay Hotel and Posting Establishment (it was around this time that playwright George Bernard Shaw visited with his new wife). It was then bought by William T Lambert who renamed it Lambert's Hotel – and this name stuck until the beginning of the 20th century. Over the years, the rather famous roll call of guests included Lewis Carroll, Anthony Trollope, and Lord Tennyson. It has been part of our HF Holidays line-up since 1956.

Nowadays, Freshwater Bay House has 43 well-appointed guest rooms in three categories (Classic, Premium, and Superior), three cosy lounges (one has a grand piano), a licensed bar, and a light-filled restaurant for a wide range of dishes made with fresh and seasonal ingredients. There's a handy boot and drying room, books and games to borrow during your stay, and a Discovery Point offering a wide range of local area maps, route guides, and easy-to-follow information for self-guided walks. Equally fabulous is the putting green, and lovely gardens with paths leading down to the beach in one direction and Tennyson Down in the other. For sunny days, there's an outdoor heated pool (open from May to September*) with a seating area and far-reaching sea views.

## Check-In & Check-Out

You are welcome to check in from 4pm at the earliest. HF Members can check in earlier, from 2pm. On arrival, you'll enjoy a complimentary cream tea and get to meet your fellow guests, our HF Holidays Leaders, and the rest of the friendly team. Check out 10am.

# FOOD & DRINK

### Dining

Seasonal dining, tailored for you

Our team of skilled chefs design our dinner menus to showcase the best of each season, from warming winter comfort food to vibrant summer dishes, including vegetarian, vegan and high-protein options. We also source fruit and vegetables within a 40-mile radius of each house, open every break with a Chef's Special menu inspired by dishes and flavours of the local area, and are able to adapt dishes to suit special dietary requirements.

Welcome Cream Tea

What better way to start your stay than with a cream tea, served fresh on arrival to make you feel instantly at home. A quintessentially English tradition, our scones are baked in-house and served with preserves and clotted cream, providing the perfect opportunity to meet fellow walkers.

A hearty breakfast to start the day

Start the day with a freshly-prepared cooked breakfast and a wide choice from our continental buffet, including hot drinks, juices and fresh fruit. Our team offer a quick and friendly service, leaving you fuelled and ready for your day's adventures.

Our famous picnic lunch

Our personalised picnic lunches are perfect for a day out walking, ready to enjoy when hunger strikes. Choose from a large selection of fresh sandwiches and salads, freshly baked cakes and snacks, including the ever-popular Freddos chocolate bar! Everything is designed to fit neatly into your rucksack, and all of the packaging we provide is recyclable or compostable.

3-course evening meals

Our à la carte evening menus feature a wide choice of starters, mains, and desserts, made with seasonal ingredients and, wherever possible, herbs and vegetables from our own gardens. Shared around sociable tables, dinners are relaxed occasions, with drinks available to order at the table or from the bar, and a traditional Sunday roast to round off the week.

## ROOMS

Your room at Freshwater Bay

Designed with your comfort in mind, Freshwater Bay House has 43 well-appointed guest rooms available in three categories: Classic, Premium, and Superior.

**Classic Rooms** are comfortable en-suite guest rooms, ideal for a peaceful night's sleep. Amenities include free Wi-Fi, tea and coffee-making facilities, toiletries (hand wash, shampoo, and shower gel), and a TV.

**Premium Rooms** are more spacious en-suite guest rooms*. Amenities include free Wi-Fi, tea and coffee-making facilities, toiletries (hand wash, shampoo, body lotion, shower gel), and a 32-inch TV. Extras include bathrobes, slippers.

**Superior Rooms** are even more spacious en-suite guest rooms offering upgraded views of the surroundings*. Amenities include free Wi-Fi, tea and coffee-making facilities, toiletries (hand wash, shampoo, body lotion, shower gel), and a 32-inch TV. Extras include bathrobes, slippers.

**We love:** Rooms 19 and 20 on the first floor for their lovely sea views. Rooms 18 and 22 are both corner rooms overlooking the bay and Tennyson Downs. The more spacious Room 24 has five large windows overlooking the gardens and bay as well as a private sitting room. Room 39 on the second floor is a corner room with a bathtub.

The **Choose Your Room** service is available at our UK country houses, allowing you the option of choosing and confirming a specific room for an extra charge of £30 per room. This is subject to availability. Upgrade supplements apply.

**Check in & check out**
You are welcome to check in from **4:00pm at the earliest**. **For members check in is available from 2:00pm (2026).** On arrival, you'll enjoy a complimentary cream tea and get to meet your fellow guests, our HF Holidays Leaders, and the rest of the friendly team.

On the day of departure, we kindly ask all guests to check out by **10:00am**. You'll be asked to settle your bill prior to leaving. You may, of course, make a charitable donation to our HF Holidays Pathways Fund if you wish. Please note that we only accept card payments.

**Room supplements**

| Superior | Premium single | Premium double/twin | Choose your room |
|---|---|---|---|
| £25 pppn | £20 pppn | £20 pppn | £30 per room |

*Views and layout reflect each properties unique character and location

*Please note, pool opening hours are: 07:00am – 09:00am and 16:00pm – 18:30pm

## ACCESSIBILITY

For accessibility and assistance information, please contact our expert team on 020 3974 8865 or view the accessibility information online for Freshwater Bay House

## ABOUT YOUR STAY

**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 waking routes as well as visit-worthy local attractions.

**Helping you enjoy the Great Outdoors - A natural focus on walks**

**Walks talks and Discovery Points**
Our founder, country pastor turned social innovator, Thomas Arthur Leonard, was passionate about encouraging people to explore the countryside. His legacy continues in HF's continued focus on walking. Many guests choose to travel with us on guided or self-guided walking holidays, and as such, evenings at our houses are often busy with walk leaders hosting various briefings and talks. On guided walking holiday arrival days, there are walking information briefings before dinner, and for the duration of any guided walking holiday there will be a Walks Talk before (or on occasion after dinner), to go through the following day's walk options. Self-guided walking guests, and those on special interest holidays (where there is free time to explore independently), are of course welcome to also join in these Walks Talks - please talk to the team locally if you have any queries. Our Discovery Points are filled with handy maps and route notes, designed to ensure everyone, not just those booked on a guided walking holiday, can enjoy the beautiful countryside settings that our HF houses enjoy.

**The walking day**
Prior to setting off on guided walks, our HF Holidays Leaders run through a short safety briefing. There's also an up-to-date weather forecast on display at the house to ensure walkers 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.

# TRAVEL DETAILS

## Address

Freshwater Bay House
Freshwater Bay
Isle of Wight PO40 9RB

**Tel:** +44 (0)1983 753854

## By taxi

From Yarmouth ferry port it's a five-mile taxi journey that takes approximately 15 minutes. We recommend booking your taxi at least seven days in advance as availability may be limited.

For pricing, please contact the taxi company directly.

Taxi companies in the area include:

**Bay Taxi**
Tel: +44 (0)7475 662350

**Rayner's Taxis**
Tel: +44 (0)1983 752784

**I Cabs**
Tel: +44 (0)7553 567567

A return journey can be arranged on your behalf by the HF Holidays House Manager at Freshwater Bay.

*HF Holidays does not own or manage any of the above taxi companies.

## By Bus

From Yarmouth there are public buses - please check timetables https://www.islandbuses.info/

## By train

The nearest station is Lymington Pier on the mainland which is adjacent to the ferry terminal.

Check National Rail for train times and routes.

## By ferry

You have two ferry options. The Wightlink Lymington to Yarmouth ferry is the most convenient for Freshwater Bay. Should you wish to take the bus from Yarmouth, rather than taxi, the Needles Breezer bus stop is a 2min walk from the ferry terminal, and buses run hourly to Freshwater Bay, a 5min walk to Freshwater Bay House. Alternatively, the Red Funnel Southampton to East Cowes ferry is often the cheapest option if you want to take your car to the Isle of Wight.

**HF Holidays member discount**
If you're a member, you can **get 15% off car travel and 20% off foot travel** with Wightlink Ferry. For full details visit www.wightlink.co.uk/HFHolidays.

## By car

**From Yarmouth**
Turn right out of the ferry terminal onto the A3054 and cross the bridge. After one mile, turn left down Pixley Hill, signposted Freshwater Bay. Turn left at Freshwater Garage and continue along Afton Road. At the lifeboat station turn right and follow the road round. Freshwater Bay House is on your left.

**From East Cowes**
Follow signs for Newport, taking the A3021 and then A3054. Continue through Newport and Carisbrooke. Turn left onto the B3401 through Calbourne. At the junction with Afton Road (A3055), turn left and then right by the lifeboat station, and follow the road round to Freshwater Bay House.

Or you can leave your car on the mainland (there's a pay and display car park at Lymington Pier) and travel on the ferry as a foot passenger.

## By air

The nearest airport is Southampton Airport.

From Southampton Airport Parkway station (adjacent to the airport terminal) there are regular trains to Lymington Pier, taking about 40 minutes. From here, you'll need to catch the ferry over to the Isle of Wight.

Otherwise, the best options are London Heathrow or London Gatwick airports for connecting trains to Lymington Pier.

Check National Rail for the best routes and train times.

## LOCAL AREA

Places to visit in the Isle of Wight

Whether you're enjoying a guided or self-guided walking holiday, there's always the opportunity to linger for longer. Here's our pick of the very best things to see and do within easy travelling distance of Freshwater Bay House.

### Freshwater Bay

Just a skip away from Freshwater Bay House, this semi-circular namesake bay surrounded by gleaming white cliffs is a magical spot for rock pooling, watersports, swimming, boating, walking, and more. While mostly pebbles, there are some sandy parts on its eastern side.

### The Needles

Named for their pointy shape, this iconic trio of brilliant white chalk rocks are located on the island's western tip. They lead out to what is easily Britain's most photographed lighthouse – a red-and-white-striped tower built in 1859 on the outermost of the chalk rocks.

### Yarmouth

An hour's walk away, this historic seaside town is set at the mouth of the River Yar. The highlight is the 16th century Yarmouth Castle – one of Henry VIII's most sophisticated coastal fortresses built to guard the western entrance to the Solent.

### Osborne House

Just a 40-minute drive away, this former royal retreat was purchased by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in 1845 and used to escape court life. Now managed by English Heritage, it charms with glorious gardens and rooms filled with original furniture and works of art.

### Carisbrooke Castle

What was once an artillery fortress, king's prison, and royal summer residence is located near Newport in the heart of the island. Not-to-be-missed attractions at this medieval stunner include King Charles I's bowling green and the lovely Princess Beatrice Garden.

### Alum Bay

Cherished for its multi-coloured sands and stunning views across the Solent, Alum Bay delights with crystal-clear waters that are perfect for swimming and paddling. Don't leave without buying a souvenir filled with this world-famous sand that comes in 21 shades.

### Isle of Wight Steam Railway

Following a five-mile countryside route Smallbrook Junction to Wootton, this lovingly restored vintage steam train is an award-winning attraction. Hop off at the rural stations and learn about 150 years of railways history at the Train Story Discovery Centre.

## Blackgang Chine

Perfect for those with children in tow, this family-run fantasy theme park dating back to 1843 is the oldest in the UK. Highlights include life-sized pirate ships, fairy castles, an underwater kingdom, and a cowboy town where kids can choose to be chose to be an outlaw or sheriff.

## Ventnor Botanic Gardens

A 30-minute drive away, this botanical wonderland is home to around 6000 species of rare and exotic plants and trees in 22 acres. The warm climate attracts some amazing wildlife, including wall lizards, slow worms, and even Iberian ants.

## Bembridge Windmill

Built in the early 1700s and closed in 1913, the last surviving windmill on the island was famously featured in a 1795 watercolour by JMW Turner. This much-loved local landmark was donated to the National Trust in 1961 still has most of its original machinery intact.

## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

### Packing list

Weather conditions in the UK can vary throughout the day, and conditions in the mountains may be cold and windy even in summer. Use the following list as a guide when preparing for your holiday.

**Essentials**

- Suitable waterproof walking boots with ankle support and good grip
- Waterproof, wind-resistant jacket with a hood, taped seams and a hydrostatic head rating of at least 10,000 mm
- Waterproof overtrousers
- Spare warm clothing, such as a synthetic insulated jacket
- Comfortable walking clothing (jeans & waterproof capes are not suitable)
- Warm mid-layers, such as fleeces
- Gloves and a warm hat, even in summer
- Rucksack with a waterproof liner
- Water bottle with a capacity of at least 1 litre
- Flask for hot drinks
- Sunscreen
- UV-protective sunglasses
- Spare high-energy food
- Head torch and spare batteries for holidays between October and March
- Passport (if applicable)
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy

**Recommended**

- Several base layers, with long or short sleeves
- Cushioned walking socks to avoid blisters
- First-aid kit, including plasters, insect repellent, a midge net and a tick-removal tool
- Sit mat
- Waterproof pouch for valuables
- Rubbish bags
- Wallet or purse

- Camera
- Walking poles
- Sun hat
- Gaiters
- Mobile Phones
- Swimwear (please see accommodation information for hotel facilities)
- Membership cards for English Heritage, the National Trust or similar heritage organisations in Scotland and Wales, if you are a member. These may be useful when visiting attractions during your itinerary or on your free day.

## USEFUL INFORMATION

### Safety Information

**Walking Safety**

Walks may be changed for safety reasons and are subject to a maximum and minimum number of guests.

Leaders always consider the safety of the group as a whole and may need to alter or curtail the walk if the conditions dictate. Your leader may refuse to accept a guest where clothing, equipment or behaviour is unsuitable. In the event of a problem all leaders carry a mobile phone, first aid kit, group shelter, spare maps and a compass.

**Please note**: If you choose to leave the group your leader is no longer responsible for you.

**In the event of a problem**

If you become separated from your group, please stay where you are. Your leader will retrace their steps to find you.

All our walk leaders carry a mobile phone, group shelter, spare maps and a compass. In the unlikely event your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call the emergency services (call 999 in the UK, or 112 overseas).

Please then try to call the hotel where you are staying to let them know there is a problem.

We advise you carry a copy of these trip notes or note down the contact phone number for your accommodation (details in the travel section) should you need them in case of emergency.

If you have any cause for complaints regarding accommodation, you should notify your leader who can then attempt to rectify the problem.

### Ticks

Ticks are tiny creatures that live in vegetation and can attach themselves to passing animals or walkers and may carry a risk of Lyme Disease. Please refer to NHS advice and guidelines for information prior to your holiday.

### Your Island Hopping Leader

Our experienced and knowledgeable volunteer leaders undergo a thorough assessment to lead you on your holiday and are delighted to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with you.

Please ensure you complete and hand in your registration form on arrival and let the leader know about any medical problems you may have. This may be useful in the event of a problem on the walk and will be treated confidentially by the leader.

## In the event of a problem

If you become separated from your group, please stay where you are. Your leader will retrace their steps to find you.

All our leaders carry a mobile phone, group shelter, spare maps and a compass. In the unlikely event your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call the emergency services (call 999 in the UK, or 112 overseas).

Please then try to call the hotel where you are staying to let them know there is a problem.

If you have any cause for complaints regarding accommodation, you should notify your leader who can then attempt to rectify the problem.

### Maps and Guides for Isle of Wight Coast Path

Your trail leader will carry all the necessary maps and guides. For you own interest you may consider looking at the following:

OS Explorer Outdoor Leisure Map 29

The Coastal Paths and Inland Trails on the Isle of Wight Coast Path

## TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

**Document produced:** 24 November 2026