

ISLE OF WIGHT

Bembridge and Culver Downs trail

An invigorating circular on the east side of the Isle of Wight, with splendid views of the coast and countryside. The trail starts at Bembridge Windmill, only surviving windmill on the island, before joining with a section of the coast path. It then cuts back inland, heading past a Victorian fort and the RSPB-protected wetland at Brading Marshes. Be sure to stop and take in the scenery from the top of Culver Downs.



Information

Address: Bembridge Windmill, High Street, Bembridge, Isle of Wight.

OS map: Landranger 196, Explorer OL29

Activity: Walking

Moderate: Some uneven surfaces and one steep ascent towards middle of the trail. For further details, please see Terrain section.

Dog friendly: Dogs are welcome, but please take your dog waste home or use the bin provided in the car park next to the Culver Haven pub.

Full trail: Miles: 5.6 (km: 8.96)

Access: Challenging

Duration: 2 hours 30 mins - 3 hours

Terrain

Total ascent is 210m (700ft). Mostly well-defined paths with some stony and uneven surfaces, but can become slippery and muddy in wet seasons. There is a steep ascent to Culver Down with seats at some viewpoints.

Total steps: 6

Start point: Bembridge Windmill lay-by, grid ref: SZ641875

1. Walk to the bend in the road and turn left to Bembridge Windmill. Walk downhill to Steyne Wood, home to red squirrels. Just 50yds (46m) into the wood, prior to the interpretation panel, bear left to follow a path which soon reaches a busy road. Cross over and go through a gate and continue on path signposted BB22 up a gentle rise past a caravan park to Hillway Road. Turn left up the road, then first right after 100yds (90m) into Jenny Street's Lane. Follow the path signposted BB15, eventually meeting the coastal path after bending round a large corrugated building.
2. Turn right and walk along the coastal path with stunning views of Whitecliff Bay. Pass BB16 on your right, then in open area, bear to the right of the seats and cross the top of the concrete ramp to follow the onward coastal path, keeping to the immediate right of the hedge and soon passing over a wooden bridge to the left of caravans. This is a rising path with some steps. Go through a kissing gate and follow the path diagonally up the hillside, turning left at the hedge at the top to pass through another kissing gate leading to an interpretation panel. After 30yds (27m) bear right, cross the car park and go up steep concrete steps to the beacon.
3. From the beacon, turn right and follow the road past the pub and Yarborough Monument. Turn left immediately after the café and follow the signed coastal path, going through a kissing gate and following the cliff edge for 380yds (350m) to reach a line of scrub just before a steep drop. Bear right along the upper edge, and keeping the bushes on your immediate left. Continue onwards through a gap in a crossing hedge and after a few yards turn right heading upwards. This path emerges onto the road close to Bembridge Fort. Turn left along the road to the fort entrance (only open for pre-booked tours; telephone 01983 741020).

4. Take the grassy downhill path directly opposite the fort entrance for 50yds (46m), then bear diagonally left and downwards along the well defined track and continue through a break in the hedgerow. Take the first right and head down the valley, descending all the time and continue on the right hand side of the valley to pass through a kissing gate to meet the busy road.
5. Follow the road to the right for 40yds (37m) then take the left BB31 footpath, entering the RSPB Gander Down Reserve by a kissing gate. Bear right and follow the hedge, turning into the wood at a kissing gate, then after 20yds (18m) turn left. Shortly, bear right and continue for another 220yds (200m) to the Eastern Yar sluice gate, one of the best vantage points for seeing birds on Brading Marshes.
6. Retrace your steps, and this time bear left at the path junction into Centurion's Copse. Bear left again onto BB20 at the interpretation panel, and left yet again after 80yds (75m). Cross the middle of the field by the solitary oak tree to a bridge and kissing gate at the far side, then over the next field to a kissing gate in the hedge. After a third kissing gate the path crosses Bembridge Airfield runway through a kissing gate. Follow the edge of Brading Haven reserve, passing through a kissing gate and a stile and follow the path to the top corner of a field. Bear right over a stile and return to Bembridge Windmill by crossing another stile and through a gate. Turn left to get back to the lay-by.

End point: Bembridge Windmill lay-by, grid ref: SZ641875
