

ISLE OF WIGHT

Paradise on the Isle of Wight butterfly walk

This moderate walk passes along the chalk ridge that runs through the middle of the Isle of Wight. This swathe of downland is one of the best places in the country for spotting wonderful butterflies: Adonis blue and chalkhill blue species live here in abundance, with large populations of small blue, dark-green fritillary and Glanville fritillary as well. Brown argus and grayling can also be spotted, and in late summer you can often catch a glimpse of the clouded yellow.



Information

Address: Compton Chine/Afton Down car park, Compton Bay, Isle of Wight.

OS map: Landranger 196; Explorer OL29

Activity: Walking

Moderate: Moderate route with some steep inclines. For further details, please see Terrain section.

Dog friendly: Dogs are always welcome, but please keep them on a lead around wildlife and livestock, and take any dog waste home with you.

Full trail: Miles: 5 (km: 8)

Access: Challenging

Duration: 2 hours - 2 hours 30 mins

Terrain

Total ascent is 220m (720ft). There are some steep slopes and tracks are not clearly defined on side of the down. The exposed downs can be windy, and the chalk is slippery in wet conditions.

Total steps: 9

Start point: Compton Chine/Afton Down car park, grid ref: SZ367854

1. Cross the road from the car park, turn right on the roadside path until you see a chalky path rising diagonally on the right-hand side, signed bridleway F34.
2. Follow this path uphill until you reach a track at the top.
3. Turn right (eastwards) along the track and continue through a golf course and one gate before eventually descending steeply. Dark green fritillary abounds amongst the cut gorse areas in July.
4. 20yds (20m) after a 'No entry for vehicles' sign, and just after a track joining from right, take a sharp left and round up into Brook Down quarry to explore the quarry slopes and gorse glades.
5. Head back to cross the main track and bear left just before the 'No entry for vehicles' sign. Follow this grassy track upwards. Look out for Adonis blues. At the crest of the rise, next to some cattle pens, bear to the right of two gateposts marking the track leading down the hill.
6. Follow one of the lower cattle tracks parallel to the track. This is open downland with no defined footpaths. Aim just to the right of a line of bushes at the base of the hill in the distance, or the main road beyond. Follow this low level and narrow path as far as Compton Coombe, always keeping on the downs side of the fence line.
7. You need to climb up the coombe and leave at the top right, about three quarters of the hill height.
8. Take a level path around the head of the coombe, through gorse to a five-bar gate in the fence into an un-grazed section (the path drops downhill slightly before the gate). Continue straight on along the now well-defined grassy track, which descends

eventually to the car park. This area is best for graylings, green hairstreaks and small blues.

9. During the Glanville fritillary season (June to early August), take a detour to Compton Chine via the road or the coast path from the car park. Go down the wooden steps. This is also a great bathing beach.

End point: Compton Chine/Afton Down car park, grid ref: SZ367854
