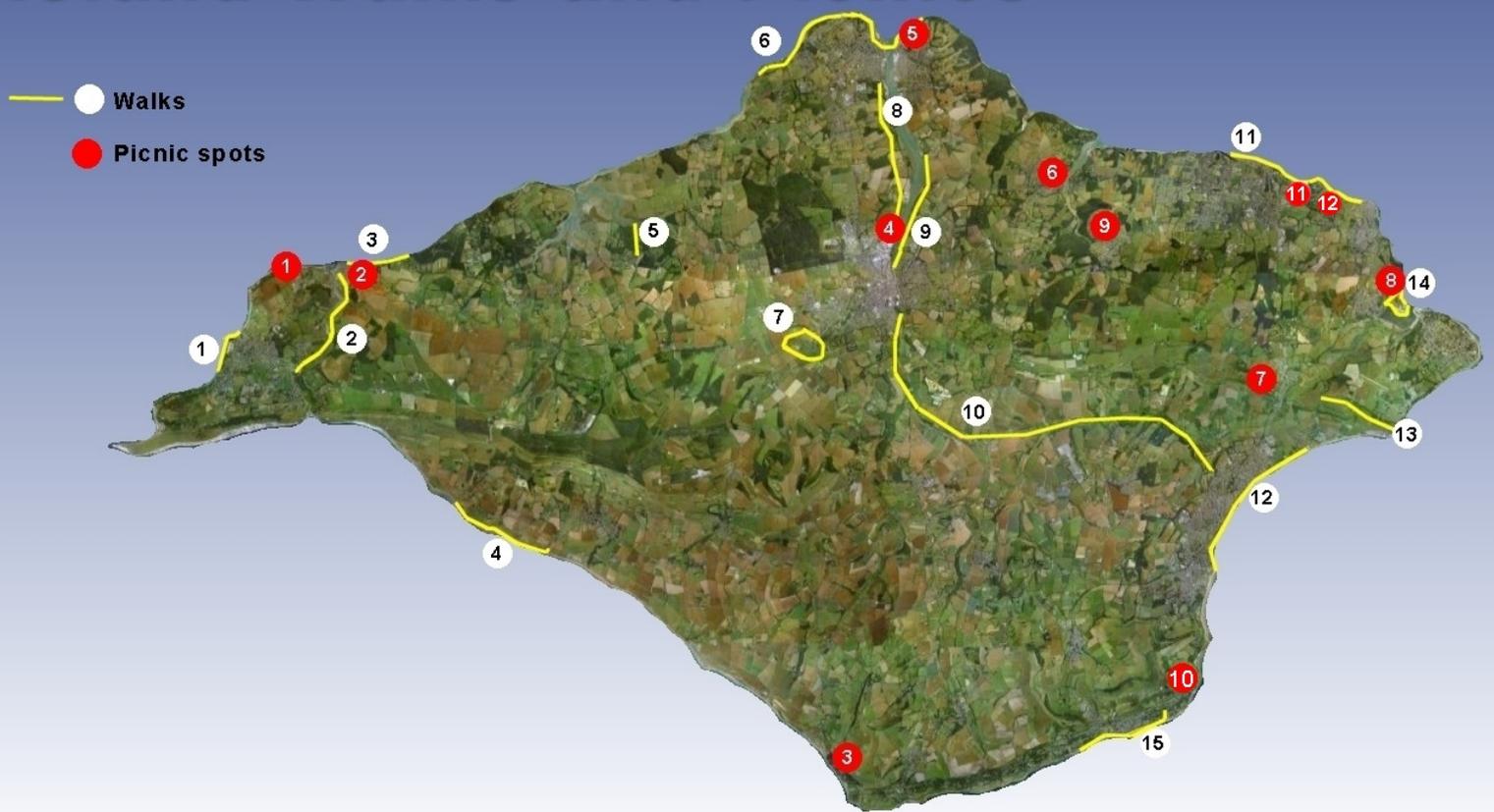


# Island Walks and Picnics



## Picnic Places with picnic benches or tables.

I know the Island has a great many lovely picnic places but as I get older I find it more and more difficult to enjoy a picnic unless I can sit up to a table and relax. I decided to create the Walks and Picnics map so that I can share with you some places I enjoy, and hopefully, get some more suggestions from you.

Picnic places are marked by the red spots.

- 1). Fort Victoria.** Several picnic tables here, but they do get busy as there are some barbeques available. After your picnic there is ample scope for a stroll on the beach for a short way to the west, and as far as Yarmouth harbour to the east about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile easy walking away. (Not suitable for wheelchairs). WC in the car park at Fort Victoria as well as a café.
- 2). Yarmouth Common.** Parking just off the Yarmouth to Newport road just outside the village. Several picnic benches. Steep slope from car parking down to sea wall but could be negotiated by a wheelchair depending on the strength of the pusher! WC across the road from the common and a lovely walk along the sea wall towards the east.
- 3). Blackgang Viewpoint** Car park. Two or three picnic benches at the back of the car park. Despite being in the car park the setting is quite pleasant and as a bonus the Chale Farm locally made ice-cream van is there most of the time! A walk along Gore cliffs is possible but not wheelchair friendly. Nearest WC in Niton village.

**4). Riverbank Picnic Area.** Newport. Situated on the river bank and accessed from 'River Way'. Through the industrial estate, across the roundabout, the car park is on the right. Several picnic benches in a pleasant enough setting. Best at high tide though. Nearest WC Newport. This is the starting point for the Newport to Cowes cycle way, which is good walking and wheelchair friendly.

**5). East Cowes Sea Front.** Just along the sea front, past the children's paddling pool there are two picnic benches. East Cowes front is a great place to watch the activity on the water and a pleasant place to have a stroll too – if the conditions have not brought about the ECP. (East Cowes Pong). It can be really overpowering on a bad day so be prepared to find somewhere else if the ECP manifests itself. Toilets near the children's pool as well as at the other end of the front.

**6). Wootton Creek.** New picnic tables overlooking the water. Turn off Wootton High Street into New Road and park as soon as you can. Look for Pump Lane on the right and follow it for no more than 100 yards to the picnic area. Nearest WC (and beer!) in the Sloop on the main road.

**7). Brading Downs.** Several picnic benches just a stroll from the several car-parking areas on the top of the down just out of Brading. Benches are often vandalised so sadly they are not always usable. Plenty of scenery and places to stroll up there and also a Minghellas Ice-cream Van! Nearest Public convenience – a car drive away in Brading car park or Yaverland car park.

**8). St Helens Duver.** Leaving St Helens village towards Seaview, you will see the road on the right of a sharp bend at the end of the village green. At the bottom of the hill, go straight on to the parking area overlooking the entrance to Bembridge harbour. Several picnic tables but can be busy with campers from adjacent fields. Lots of footpaths to explore, WCs on the sea wall and a friendly café.

**9). Firestone Copse.** Cross Wootton Bridge towards Ryde, The first turning on the right is Firestone Copse Road. Follow this road into the woods and after  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the turning you will see a car park on the right-hand side of the road. There are several picnic benches set among the trees. There are no facilities but plenty of places to stroll and enjoy the nature.

**10). Smugglers Haven (Devils Chimney).** Half way between Shanklin and Ventnor you will see the Smugglers Haven and Devils Chimney signposted. It is a free car park and is close to a small, slightly uneven meadow. There are four picnic bench tables in this meadow. It is well sheltered if it is windy and a very pleasant 'sun trap' in which to sit and enjoy a picnic. No toilet facilities, but the café is only a short stroll away and there you can enjoy a brew, if like us, you didn't take your flask!

**11). Appley Park.** There is just one picnic table in the park. Leave the car in the Appley approach car park at the end of Ryde Canoe Lake and walk along in the park past the tower. Just past the tower you will find the picnic table. It is well positioned to enjoy views over Ryde sands and the Solent. There are good public toilets in the park and plenty of seating. The park is served by Ryde's road train (Dotto train). If the picnic table is taken, you could walk on to number 12. Puckpool Park.

**12). Puckpool Park.** The park is situated halfway between Ryde and Seaview. Leaving Ryde, follow the signs toward Seaview and after passing Appley Manor, turn left into Puckpool hill. The park is at the bottom of the hill. There are two excellent cafes, one at each end of the park, but if you have taken your own grub, there are two

or three picnic tables situated quite close to the toilet block. There are some lovely gardens to enjoy and if you get the overwhelming urge to exercise, you can play on the two miniature golf courses or perhaps play a game of petanque or tennis.

## Walks

Walks are marked in the white dots.

**1). Totland to Colwell Bay.**  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from Totland to the café at Colwell bay. Take the road from the village at Totland towards the pier. Follow on down the hill to the sea wall and turn left. **Lots of free parking right on the front.** This walk is totally level and wheelchair friendly along its full length. There is a restaurant and café at the Totland end as well as toilets. There are a couple of cafes, ice-cream shops and more toilets at the Colwell bay end of the walk. 

**2). Yarmouth to Freshwater.** This walk is  $1\text{-}\frac{3}{4}$  miles along the old railway track as far as the causeway at Freshwater. It is completely flat but a bit bumpy along in front of the old tidal mill at Yarmouth. These bumps can be avoided by a slight detour to the left of the mill where it then joins the track again. There are toilets near the car park in Yarmouth. At the causeway you can turn right across the bridge and follow the road up the hill for less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile to take refreshments at the Red Lion or visit Freshwater Parish Church. As an alternative to the pub, instead of turning right across the causeway, just cross the road and continue on the path to Freshwater. There you will find a lovely café and also a Co-op store. Remember, if you walk all the way, then you have to walk back again. You could possibly get a bus! For able bodied people, rather than walk back along the same route, take the footpath beside the church which will eventually take you back to Yarmouth harbour just the other side of the bridge from where you started. This footpath can be narrow, bumpy and muddy and has several styles to climb.

**3). Yarmouth Common.** See 2). above. You can walk towards the east for just over  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile. There are plenty of seats at regular intervals but just over half way the path gets a bit bumpy and there are three steps! An alternative walk is to wander from the car park, through the back streets into Yarmouth village. There, if you are particularly energetic, you can either walk along the pier or stroll around the harbour.

**4). Cliff top walk in the West Wight.** Chilton Chine. Passing along the Military Road, you will find a little car park right alongside Island Pearl. From this car park you can walk as far as your legs will carry you along the cliff tops towards Hanover point. I have not tried to take a wheelchair along there but I think it would be possible for the adventurous. The going is mostly level but the ground is a bit rutted and rough. A real nature walk this one, no seats, ice-cream shops or toilets. Take your own seat (or blanket) and just enjoy the solitude whilst watching the clouds.

**5). Newtown Creek.** This is just  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile through a copse to a quiet backwater of Newtown creek. Leaving Newtown towards Porchfield, the road goes into the trees and then takes a sharp right hand bend. On this bend there is space for several cars to park. Alongside the car parking is a footpath, which has what I can best describe as a pinch point entry, two posts with a narrow gap between. We have taken a wheelchair down this path having folded it to get through the gap. However my wife didn't enjoy the ride! The path is reasonably smooth but can be muddy and has some tree roots crossing it. Continue down the path and it opens to the backwater where there is just one seat. Another nature walk hence no facilities.

**6). Cowes/East Cowes Sea Fronts.** From Gurnard sailing club it is a 3-mile walk to Norris Point in East Cowes. This is a good walk to pick 'bits' from. I have walked from one end to the other to accompany my wife on her mobility scooter. The entire walk is wheelchair friendly and level except through the town in Cowes. When I say wheelchair friendly, it depends how much you enjoy the corrugated ramp on and off the floating bridge. There are plenty of refreshment establishments all along the route and also toilet facilities. Foot passengers (and wheelchairs) travel free on the floating bridge and it makes the 'walk' a bit novel too. Various parking places and many vantage points to enjoy the activities on the water. Beware of the ECP! (East Cowes Pong).

**7). Carisbrooke Castle.** A round walk around the castle! Easy to walk, very hard pushing a wheelchair! No facilities, nearest are at Carisbrooke village. Nice evening walk this one if we get a good sunset.

**8). Newport to Cowes Cycle Way.** See 4) above. This walk follows the route of the old railway line alongside the river Medina. It is just over 3 miles in length but sadly doesn't go anywhere. It just stops at its junction with Arctic road Cowes. However, along its level wheelchair friendly route, there are many places to stop and enjoy the views across the river. You pass behind the Vestas turbine factory and may see them loading blades onto 'Blade runner' to transport to Southampton. Further along there is a bridge with fine views of the river and the creatures that live in and on it. Further still there are views across the river to Newport Marina and the crumbling paddle steamer 'Ryde'. Take your camera and find a quiet spot to enjoy the scenery.

**9). Newport to the Folly.** Park somewhere by Newport quay and pass the Riverside Centre on the east side of the river Medina. The path passes the back of the school, crossing their playing fields and crosses a couple of bridges, (Sadly broken down when we last used this path) and then reaches the rusted remains of the paddle steamer 'Ryde'. Here you have to cross the lock gates of the marina before following the path onto the Folly Inn. This path is 4 miles in length and sometimes it is not easy to see where it is going. It is not suitable for wheelchairs because of the broken steps onto the bridges and the need to cross the lock gates. Newport Marina to the Folly would be a shorter alternative, as would Newport quay to the marina.

**10). Newport to Sandown.** This is another track that follows the route of the old railway. It runs all the way from Blackwater to Perowne Way in Sandown. It is a cycle track and so flat and reasonably smooth. Although it is 7-3/4 miles long it is conveniently broken up into bite size pieces. You can join the track at the following points

Shide Road near its junction with Blackwater road – 1.2 miles to  
Blackwater Hollow near its junction with Sandy Lane – 1 ¾ to  
Merstone where it crosses Merstone Lane – 1 ½ miles to  
Arreton, just south of the village – Just over 1 mile to  
Newchurch at the bottom of Newchurch Shute. – 1.2 miles to  
Alverstone – 1.1 miles to the end of the track at Perowne Way.

No facilities along the way but so many beautiful views as the track follows the course of the River Yar. At various points along the way, efforts have been made to enhance the walk by adding such things as a sculpture trail and wetland nature trail. Unfortunately there are very few seats to stop and while away the minutes. We have walked the full length of the track, (not in one go because we have always had to walk back again) and each leg has its merits and so we can recommend all of it to you.

**11). Ryde to Seaview.** 2-½ Miles from Ryde pier to Seaview. This walk is another one to pick bits from. It is flat, level and wheelchair friendly over its full length. It is also served by the Ryde road train (Dotto Train) for most of the route. The Dotto train is wheelchair friendly too. Starting from Ryde you pass the hovercraft terminal and then Ryde harbour. There are lots of seats, toilets and refreshment stops available along the route. You can buy any refreshments from a simple ice-cream cone to a gourmet meal or even a Chinese. Pass the canoe lake and then you then have a choice of walking through Appley Park with its lovely gardens or walking along the sea wall. After passing Appley Tower you go on to the entrance to Puckpool Park. Here you can walk through the park along in front of the beach huts, stay on the sea wall or spend some time exploring in the park. I can recommend the pizzas at the café! But only if you have walked far enough to use up the calories! Leaving the park you follow the road along the sea front and after about half a mile look out on the right hand side for a path leading to a bird hide. You can take a detour to visit the hide which is well positioned to watch all the water fowl and wildlife in the meadows at the back of the road. We have seen voles, rabbits and a fox from there as well as all sorts of birds. At the end of the old toll road (I believe the old gate is still there) follow along Bluett Avenue, pass Seaview sailing club and end your walk on the front at Seaview with its fine views over the Solent.

**12). Sandown and Shanklin.** From Yaverland car park at the eastern end of Sandown Bay, the walk through to Shanklin is 2-¾ miles, but just walk as much as you want. Yaverland to the pier is just over a mile. There are WC facilities dotted along the sea front. Lots of refreshment places and seats to just stop and watch people go by. The walk is wheelchair friendly all the way but look out for a narrow pavement just after you pass the Wight City amusements. I would advise you not to be tempted to walk back to Sandown along the cliff path. I have done it pushing a wheelchair but it was just like a roller coaster ride and was nearly the last walk ever for me!

**13). Bembridge Downs.** No facilities (nearest toilet Yaverland car park). Lots of room and spectacular views. There is an ice-cream kiosk, a restaurant and lots of places to stroll. What a shame that our local authorities do not see fit to put some seats and picnic benches up there.

**14). St Helens Duver.** See 8) above. Only wheelchair friendly in parts, but lots of nooks and crannies to explore if you can walk. Good café and toilet facilities and a great place to sit in the car and watch the people and boats go by.

**15). Bonchurch to Ventnor.** 1-¼ miles from the car park at Bonchurch to the Smugglers Inn on the seafront at Ventnor. This walk is flat, level and smooth once you get down to the sea wall at Bonchurch. The few hundred yards from the car park to the sea wall are quite steep. Easy to walk but a struggle for a manual wheelchair. (Drop the wheelchair off at the bottom before parking the car maybe). This is a nice seaside walk from Bonchurch through Wheelers Bay and on to Ventnor seafront. There is a café at Bonchurch but few places to sit before you reach Ventnor. Toilets along the way are up quite a lot of steps but there are some new loos at Ventnor. We always walk from Bonchurch to Ventnor and back, as it all seems worthwhile when you can enjoy a drink or meal on the front at Ventnor. Mill Bay and Smugglers feature as part of this walk as well as the continental style coffee shops that have appeared in Ventnor now.