

Keyhaven Marshes

This walk follows part of the Solent Way through a nature reserve rich in wildlife.

Along the route there are views across the Solent to the Isle of Wight and the Needles and opportunities to watch the ever-changing bird life of Keyhaven Marshes. The path then cuts inland to follow an ancient highway behind the reserve before returning to Keyhaven.

Be Forest Friendly: To help ground nesting birds rear their young safely, keep yourself, dogs and ridden horses on the main tracks from the beginning of March to the end of July.

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1. Go through gate

From the bus stop continue along Keyhaven Road towards the coast. Take your first left onto a no through road directly opposite the Gun Inn. Pass Keyhaven public car park and toilets on your right and follow alongside the harbour wall to cross the mouth of Avon Water. Turn right at a waymarker post signed 'Solent Way Lymington' and through the gate (waypoint 1).

Quick Info

Start / Finish

Keyhaven green bus stop, SO41 0TG, Grid Ref: SZ 304 916

Distance

2. Information panel

Go past an information panel (waypoint 2) and follow the gravel path along the top of the sea wall. Be aware that cyclists also share this footpath. At this point there are good views across the saltmarsh to Hurst Spit, and Hurst Castle and lighthouse.

3. Follow the sea wall

Continue following the Solent Way along the sea wall (waypoint 3). Please keep dogs under close control and stay on the footpath to reduce disturbance to wildlife, in particular nesting, roosting and feeding birds.

4. Bird nesting island

Continue along the sea wall from which there are good views of the Isle of Wight and the Needles, the site of many a wrecked ship. On your left is Fishtail Lagoon with a large bird nesting island in the middle (waypoint 4). A grassy track drops down on your left to an information panel and a gate to access the edge of this lagoon. This is a good point to watch birds and then continue on the upper gravel track.

5. Viewpoint on sea wall

Continue ahead alongside Fishtail Lagoon. At the end of this lagoon there is a path leading off to your left down steps following alongside a wide-cut channel. Ignore this path and continue following the path ahead which bends to your right. Where the path turns left there is a grassy area on top of the steep sea wall where you can rest and admire the views (waypoint 5).

6. Walk towards jetty

Continue walking alongside the lagoon towards the pipe line and jetty (waypoint 6).

7. Continue along the footpath

Turn left opposite the jetty and follow along a wide gravel track, taking the upper path when the track splits, which takes you inland across the reserve to a small car park at the end of Lower Pennington Lane. This track goes through grassland and scrub on a reclaimed landfill site. Go through the wooden gate, beside an information panel, and turn left through the car park and past a wide gate to continue along the footpath (waypoint 7).

8. Efford Landfill Site

Follow an ancient highway alongside Efford Landfill Site (waypoint 8). This site has now been reclaimed and landscaped with a large lake. The path goes between two hedgerows, which act as a natural screen to watch wildlife. In early summer listen for stonechats, often seen perched on gorse, which make a loud 'tchack' alarm call like the sound of two pebbles being knocked together.

9. Join a single track road

Ignore two paths on your right and go past a wide wooden gate to join a single track road (waypoint 9). Follow along the road to the walk start and retrace your steps back past the Gun Inn and to the bus stop.

3-4 miles

Duration

1-2 hours

Surface

Gravel footpaths and quiet country lanes.

Getting there...

New Forest Tour - blue route
(seasonal sightseeing bus).

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