

BROWNSEA ISLAND HAMPSHIRE

Distance: 8.9 km (5.5 miles)
Difficulty: Easy
Terrain: Easy island paths
Height gain: 137 metres
Map: OS Explorer OL15
Starting point: Brownsea Island quay (GR SZ 032 877)

Highlights

- Spotting red squirrels and spoonbills
- Swimming off South Shore
- Getting away from it all on the south coast

Pubs and cafes near the route

- National Trust café near the quay

Dogs

- Not permitted on the island

Brownsea Island: Circular walk

A flourishing wildlife haven with woods, lagoons and unspoilt beaches a world apart from the bustle of Poole Harbour. A walk around the edge of the island passes through a wide range of habitats, and offers ever changing coastal vistas as well as a visit to most of the island's highlights. Close to the quay the route passes the statue of Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouting movement, before entering the Dorset Wildlife Trust reserve with its hides offering a close-up peek at the bountiful bird life on the lagoons and the islands famed red squirrels. Pottery Pier, on the east coast, is full of the ceramic fragments of the ill-fated porcelain works. Then, along the south coast the site of the original Scout camp still offers nights under the stars for Scouts, Guides and the public. From this stretch of coastline there are multiple access points to South Shore for a swim. The route returns to the visitor centre via a peacock-filled lawn in front of the church which is a great place for a picnic.

Directions



1. At Brownsea quay and reception pick up a free island map. Turn left towards the clock tower and follow the path towards the Dorset Wildlife Trust reserve, walking parallel to the Brownsea Castle garden wall and past the sculpture of Baden-Powell.
2. After 150m turn right onto the boardwalk towards the nature reserve and continue until you reach the gravel track. Turn right and continue along the well-marked trails around the reserve visiting the birds hides en-route.
3. After 2km exit the reserve the same way you came in, return to the main track and turn right passing the south tip of the two lakes and a wooden adventure playground. After about 1.3km, reach the four-ways junction and take the second path on the right towards Maryland and Pottery Pier. After 200m pass through the deer enclosure into Parkyn Copse and continue downhill, descending the steep steps to Pottery Pier.
4. From here, walking the 2km of coastal route bearing left is possible only in dry weather, owing to a number of landslips. Follow NT guidance and take alternative paths inland if necessary. Passing through the ruins at William Pit, cross the grassy area past the flag pole and enter the woodland through the gate (avoiding the boardwalk), continuing on the paths that hug the coast. For simple refreshments or to visit the Scout Stone walk uphill to the Baden-Powell Outdoor Centre.
5. For the pebbly beach of South Shore, head uphill past the NT houses and follow the signs, passing the warden's cottage. At the beach, head immediately back uphill and turn right at the top to follow the sandy path. Along it are optional detours down to various points for views across to Shell Bay and Harry's Rocks, as well as beach access. For a more direct route follow the larger paths along Horse Field and Daffodil Fields. Passing to the left of the enclosure and on towards the farm buildings, you arrive at the visitor and interpretation centre. Continue on the main path past the church and turn right along the main track back to the café and quay.

Special notes: NT members free; entry charge for non-members. Entry to Dorset Wildlife Trust reserve £2.00. Wild camping not permitted

*Happy Islandeering
Lisa, Charlie and Goose*

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