

Bikexplore

Isle of Wight

Gravel & Tarmac Tour

(Tour CW 241)

11th - 17th May 2024



A network of country lanes and traffic-free cycle paths through a variety of attractive scenery makes the Isle of Wight an ideal destination for a cycling holiday. A coastline of cliffs, beaches and harbours surrounds a green interior of downland, forests and river valleys where red squirrels live. At Egypt Point in the north, racing yachts and giant cargo ships can be seen close to the shore, sharing the waters of the Solent. The world-famous chalk Needles stretch like the spine of a great white sea monster towards the west. The touring cyclist can visit well-known attractions like Queen Victoria's home, Osborne House, and little-known beauty spots like the Newtown Nature Reserve. The Island's bustling capital of Newport contrasts with small seaside towns like Ventnor and sleepy inland villages like Brighstone.

Itinerary

Key to meals: B = Breakfast, D = Dinner

Sat 11 May – Meet up in Emsworth

We gather at our hotel in the afternoon. Before dinner we take a short local ride to have a look at Chichester Harbour, get used to riding as a group and check our bikes are ready for the tour.

- Route distance: 20 miles
- Route altitude gain: 376 ft
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (D)

Sun 12 May – Crossing to the Island

Carrying our own luggage, we ride to the Isle of Wight Ferry in Old Portsmouth via Hayling Island before crossing the Solent to Fishbourne. On the Island, we cycle south over Mersley Down to our cliff-top hotel in Shanklin.

- Route distance: 28 miles (of cycling)
- Route altitude gain: 854 ft
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Mon 13 May – South East & Central

A circular luggage-free ride taking in Ventnor, Newport and Sandown with plenty of stops for sight-seeing and photographs. In the evening, we walk into town for dinner in a restaurant (cost not included).

- Route distance: 36 miles
- Route altitude gain: 2,106 ft
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Tue 14 May – West Wight

Another unladen day ride, this time through the beautiful southern farmland region towards Yarmouth and Fort Victoria Country Park in the west of the island

- Route distance: 47 miles
- Route altitude gain: 2,296 ft
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Wed 15 May – Free Day

By this time, participants will have some ideas about where they might like to explore in smaller groups. The Tour Leader will be happy to lead a ride. Some people like to go for a hike along the coast and some just enjoy a lazy day. In the evening, another stroll into town for a restaurant dinner (cost not included).

- Route distance: various
- Route altitude gain: various
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B)

Thur 16 May – The North West

A circular unladen route to the North West of the Island, calling at West Cowes (photos of sailing yachts close to the shore) and Newtown nature reserve.

- Route distance: 40 miles
- Route altitude gain: 1,766ft
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Fri 17 May – Return to Mainland

This morning, we re-trace our track back to the ferry at Fishbourne, carrying our luggage. After disembarking in Portsmouth, we head back, via Hayling Island, to Emsworth where the tour ends.

- Route distance: 28 miles
- Route altitude gain: 749 ft
- Meals: (B)



Price & Key Dates

Price: £760

The price is based on a minimum number of 10 participants booking on the tour. If there are insufficient bookings by 2nd March 2024, we will contact you and return all monies paid.

Price includes:

- 4 nights hotel, half board, sharing rooms
- 2 nights hotel, B&B, sharing rooms
- Secure bike storage
- Bikexplore costs

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from mainland hotel
- Single occupancy supplement (£298 for 6 nights)
- Car parking at mainland hotel (£25 per car for 6 nights to be paid directly to the hotel)
- Evening Meals on Monday and Wednesday
- Drinks with evening meals

- Lunches or refreshments at morning and afternoon stops
- Meals in transit
- Entry fees at any attractions visited
- Ferry Fares – allowing Senior customers to pay a discounted rate. (Portsmouth /Fishbourne return Adult: £30.20, Senior: £22.10. Hayling Ferry Adult or Senior: £3.00 each way. All October 2023 prices).
- Any other personal expenses
- Tips
- Travel Insurance

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £76 per person is required as soon as possible once the Tour Leader has processed your Booking Form (see below), with the final balance of £684 per person to be paid by 2nd March 2024.

Cancellations

Should you be forced to cancel your booking for any reason you must notify us in writing. Cancellation charges are as follows:

Written notice received:

- Before 2nd March 2024: £76
- 2nd March 2024 to departure: £760

To Make a Booking

Please contact the Tour Leader to check that there are still places available. Then download and complete the booking form and email it to the Tour Leader. Instructions on how to pay the deposit (and balance) will then be sent to you.

Holiday Information



This Holiday is classed as Grade 3 – Leisurely Moderate

Area Covered By The Holiday

On the mainland, the city traffic of Portsmouth will be avoided by riding south through Hayling Island on the traffic-free Billy Trail (the track of an old Victorian tramway). We make the short crossing to Eastney on the little Hayling ferry and then follow the Esplanade to the Fishbourne Ferry. The Isle of Wight is explored in a series of day rides, with

destinations in the South East, West and North West. The region to the North of Shanklin could be visited on the free day. The Isle of Wight is actually a big chunk of the South Downs shoved out into the Solent, so climbs over 300ft hills feature in most routes. Cycle paths mostly follow the routes of disused railways which were built along river valleys.

Rides and Rest Days

I have called this a Gravel and Tarmac Tour because I want cyclists to choose tyres which are suitable for rough surfaces on the Cycle paths. The Tarmac roads are mainly smooth, but some of the lanes have broken gravelly surfaces with potholes. Members of the group usually ride together but, if participants prefer, they will be equipped with sufficient maps and directions to ride on ahead or drop behind and catch up later. We will be carrying our own luggage on the journey to our Isle of Wight hotel and on our return to the mainland. While touring the Island we will be unladen and the main group will travel at an average speed of about 12mph. We will have plenty of stops for coffee, lunch or tea and to admire the landscapes, seascapes, buildings of interest and the like. Some riders are avid British Cycle Quest (BCQ) hunters and routes can be adjusted or detours suggested to reach these. Wednesday will be a free day, as described above, but there is nothing to prevent participants from remaining at the hotel to rest on any of the Isle of Wight days.

Travel & Parking

You will have to make your own arrangements for travel to and from the start and end point for the tour near to Emsworth. This has a station on the Portsmouth-Chichester railway line. The National Cycle Route 2 passes approximately 3 miles to the south of the hotel and there are easy connections with the motorway system. Cars can be parked at the mainland hotel while we are touring the island at a cost of £25 for 6 nights. This can be arranged when you arrive. It is very important to note that neither the Tour Leader nor Bikexplore are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before finalising travel arrangements to join the tour, you should ensure that you have read and understood our booking conditions. Should the tour not attract sufficient bookings to reach the minimum operating size, we may cancel the tour at any time up to 10 weeks before departure. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation, or wait until you have been told that the tour will go ahead.

Accommodation and Meals

The hotel on the Isle of Wight looks out over the English Channel from its cliff-top position. The mainland hotel (a new one for us this year) is located in the South Downs National Park close to the Chichester Harbour Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Both hotels have comfortable rooms and attractive dining rooms which can cater for a range of dietary requirements. Both have secure bike storage. Four hotel dinners are included and two will be paid for by participants at separate restaurants in Shanklin. Lunches will be paid for by participants at cafes, bakeries or village shops along the road.

Group Information

The maximum number of participants will be 13 including the Tour Leader.

Weather and Clothing

Spring is a good time to visit the Isle of Wight. There can be some great sunny days mixed with cooler and wet weather. From March to May the average daytime temperatures are between 10°C and 16°C. Shorts and a cycling top with short or long sleeves are the usual daytime riding attire, but make sure you pack some warmer things and wet weather gear. We strongly recommend wearing a cycle helmet. Your favourite casual clothes will be suitable for evening wear.

Cycles & Equipment

A touring bike, gravel bike, hybrid or lightweight ATB would be suitable for this tour. You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. A low bottom gear (e.g. small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog on your rear wheel) is recommended. If you are unsure about gears, please discuss with the Tour Leader. Mudguards are optional but show consideration for those who are following you in wet weather. Lights are a legal requirement at night so are needed if going out for an evening ride. Tyres of at least 28mm diameter are recommended. Each day participants will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools to deal with punctures and minor repairs. For carrying your other gear on the ride to and from the island, a strong rear rack with panniers or bike-packing bags or saddlebag and bar bag would all be suitable. You are advised to do some riding before the tour with a similar load to that which you will be carrying during the tour to get a feel for how your bike will handle.

Maps

Before departure, participants will be sent the following:

- links to the routes on RidewithGPS (can be read on Smart Phones and iPhones)
- files to load onto GPS devices including .gpx, .fit and .tcx
- PDF maps, elevation profiles and cue sheets to print (useful if you don't have a GPS device).

Ordnance Survey Landranger maps 196 and 197 were used in planning the tour. Pages torn from a cheap road atlas would be perfectly adequate.

The address, phone number and location of your accommodation will be provided. You should carry these each day and a mobile phone, if you use one.

About the Leader

This will be my 11th year organising cycling holidays, having led tours in the UK and India. I have led four previous tours on the Isle of Wight and have spent many short cycling breaks on the island independently and with my cycling club during which I have built up a sizable repertoire of day rides.

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