



10 Tennyson Trail

A long and challenging walk which climbs up the downs and generally follows the crest through forests, past ancient burial sites, the Tennyson Monument, and The Needles to Alum Bay. Superb views in many directions.

Tennyson Trail Landmarks

Built on the remains of a Roman fort, the medieval castle at Carisbrooke is famous for the imprisonment of King Charles I before his execution during the Civil War, in 1649.

Brighstone Down at 199 metres high provides vantage points for some of the best views of the Island. On a clear day the whole length and breadth of the Island can be seen.

The Longstone (dated 3000-2000BC) can be found at the tumuli on Mottistone Down.

The Needles Battery, which is open to visitors during the summer months, is a Palmerstonian fort built in the 1860's. It still houses two 12 ton gun barrels and has a 60m tunnel leading to dramatic views of the Needles. It is in the care of National Trust.

1 The trail starts at Carisbrooke about two kilometres (1 1/4 miles) south west of Newport town centre. On the B3401 Alvington Shute, turn left into Nodgham Lane where a sign indicates the Tennyson Trail. Turn right opposite Park House and proceed uphill in a southwesterly direction along the ancient road which has banks on each side. Carisbrooke Castle can be seen on the left and later, again on your left the fertile Bowcombe Valley.

- 2** After about 1500 metres (1640 yards), continue through a gateway, crossing bridledways NI25 and NI27. Continue on level ground in the same direction following the hedge to your left. On reaching two field gates side by side, take the left and continue along the lane, going through another two gates on the way, and keeping the hedge to your right. Ignore Footpath NI40 where the television transmitter mast is visible. The track starts to descend before reaching a gate to a crossing track at the bottom.
- 3** Cross straight over, following the sign for Bridleway NI36a to Brighstone Forest, to another gate 80 metres (90 yards) beyond. Proceed ahead, passing under an overhead electric cable, and follow a narrow beech plantation on the right. Ignore bridleway NI98 on the right and continue straight ahead and uphill through open fields before levelling off at a gate where you follow the signpost for Bridleway NI39 to Brook and Freshwater. Continue ahead, passing through two more gates, as the track gradually becomes enclosed by trees as you enter Brighstone Forest.
- 4** On reaching Brighstone Forest, a sign for the Tennyson Trail indicates straight ahead on the main forest track passing Bridleway BS6 on the right. Ignore all other tracks crossing and follow signs for the Tennyson Trail. As the track starts to descend it crosses Bridleway BS58 shortly before reaching a five-way crossing.
- 5** Continue ahead, soon reaching a gate and signpost showing left to the Worsley Trail and Shorwell and right to the Tennyson Trail. Here you emerge onto Brighstone Down.
- 6** Continue west on the track with the sea to your left before descending steadily to exit by a picnic area into Lynch Lane. Turn right for 30 metres (35 yards) then left into the National Trust Jubilee Car Park going through the gate opposite next to the National Trust information board. Pass the Forestry Commission Brighstone Forest entrance to your right then climb the Down following the ancient road to the summit.
- 7** Leave the National Trust land through a gate and continue ahead on level ground, immediately passing ancient burial mounds or tumuli on the right. The track then descends to a further gate into a field where the Tennyson Trail is signposted onward. Descend through the field, to reach the B3399 to Freshwater and Yarmouth to the right and Brook to the left.

- 8** Turn right into the road then immediately left into the track by a bus stop or car park then take the left of two gates onto The National Trust Brook and Compton Down. The track immediately starts to climb steeply passing a chalk pit on the right then bears right to diverge from overhead electric cables. The Tennyson Trail continues ahead undulating gently, but steadily gaining height to Afton Down. Proceed to a further gate at the eastern boundary of the golf course, continuing along Afton Down, with the golf course on each side. The track descends to Freshwater Bay.
- 9** The Tennyson Trail joins the westbound Coastal Path next to the public toilets, on the lane to Fort Redoubt. Where the lane turns sharp left, pass through two consecutive stiles onto Tennyson Down then climb very steeply uphill to the information board. Although following the coastline from here on, one should keep away from the cliff edges. The incline lessens but continues to rise to the Tennyson Monument.
- 10** Continue ahead as you now descend. At the bottom cross a stile then climb steadily up West High Down until a radio aerial comes into view. Cross the stile by the aerial then pass it to the right onto a tarmac road. To your left is the Needles Battery. Follow the road a short distance until it turns sharply left below a row of cottages, cross a stile then bear left downhill to another stile leading back onto the road. Continue downwards on the road to Alum Bay which marks the end of this trail.

ROUTE INFORMATION

- Start location: Carisbrooke Castle
- Difficulty: **Challenging**
- Walk distance: **14 miles**
- Places to stop for food & drink
- Viewing & rest stops on route
- Family friendly route