

3 Coastal Path Brighstone to Niton

IW INDICATOR



DISTANCE

0 miles 8
0 kilometres 13

4h

GRADIENTS

Easy walking, a couple of short steep descents and climbs either side of some Chines.

Starting at Grange Chine this walk ambles over cliffs tops giving superb views of the crumbling coastline. The chines are a special coastal feature of this particular area. As you meander along the cliff top route it is easy to imagine the smuggling trade of old going on along this relatively remote stretch of coast.



The Pepper Pot, Niton Down

Brighstone to Niton Landmarks

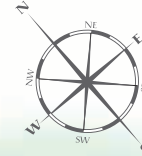
In 1930 erosion led to the discovery of a late Bronze Age urn in a field close to Barnes High. Other remains of ancient inhabitants include a string of barrows along the chalk ridge between Shorwell and Freshwater.

Whale Chine is the most spectacular of the chines, formed by the rapid erosion of soft clays and sands which form the cliff. The rivers cut down into the cliff and the face is worn back by the sea, resulting in vigorous downward erosion by the stream producing the steep sided narrow gullies which are characteristic of this coastline.

Above the cliff on the summit of Niton Down are two buildings known as the 'Pepper Pot' and 'Salt Cellar'. The Pepper Pot, an octagonal structure is the remains of a medieval lighthouse constructed in about 1320 by Walter de Godeton, reputedly as a penance from the Pope for illegally acquiring wine from a wrecked ship. Nearby, the Salt Cellar is an uncompleted lighthouse, begun in 1785 and replaced by St Catherine's Lighthouse in 1838.

The cliffs along this stretch of coastline are a jumble of chalk, sandstone and clay. The nature of this material means that it is susceptible to landslides caused by the undercutting of the coastal erosion. The road connecting Niton and Blackgang fell into the sea along with several houses in 1928.

- 1 Leave Military Road at Grange Chine and walk towards the sea following the signposts BS58. Walk down into the Chine, across the bridge and up the other side. Continue along the cliff overlooking Brighstone Bay, to pass the comparatively diminutive Barnes Chine before reaching the crumbling yellow sandstone of Barnes High.
- 2 Continue along the cliff top to Cowleaze Chine and follow the path inland around the head of the chine and walk parallel with the opposite side towards the cliff top again. Cross over a stile, footbridge and another stile and passing the old water works on your right, strike diagonally left across the field to the far corner.
- 3 Pass over stile and down the chalk path with central rail turning left inland along the side of Shepherds Chine. At irrigation dam and pumphouse turn right and climb to rim of Chine via the steps, turn right and return to the cliff edge.



- 4 Continue along the cliff top to Atherfield Point where the coastguard lookout and chiming buoy at sea warn ships of this notoriously bad coastline. At Whale Chine walk parallel with the chine to the Military Road, turn right through the car park, and then right again over a gate crossing a field to rejoin the coastal path. Skirt around Ladder Chine which lies to the right and continue eastwards around Walpen Chine taking the footpath towards Cliff Farm and the village of Chale, alongside a hedge and now heading inland. Walk over the footbridge between the fields to the stile, keeping the hedge on the right. Turn right along the road past Cliff Farm to the village, passing the church with its perpendicular tower with graveyard tombs where errant smugglers used to hide. Shortly after passing the church turn right along The Terrace then left along Bridleway C15.

- 5 At Main Road (Blythe Shute) cross over and follow left hand verge uphill. About 100 metres past the roundabout turn right into footpath C10. Follow the left hand edge of the field then uphill through scrub to car park. Turn right across car park, up steps to seat on cliff top.



St Catherine's Lighthouse

- 6 The coastal path follows a well defined track along the cliff top above the undercliff. Continue on the cliff top, above St Catherine's Point and Rocken End, a large offshore rock and the home of a colony of comorants, the most southerly part of the Island.



Gore Cliff

Pass the Telecom transmitting station and masts and walk along the path with the fence and bushes either side. Cross a stile, continue to the edge of the field, over another stile and conclude this section of the coastal path by descending into Barrack Shute, via Boxers Lane footpath.