

BE A



Experience sustainable transport

WALKING EXPERIENCES: DINOSAUR SAFARI

Isle of Wight



OVERVIEW:

The Isle of Wight is also known as Dinosaur Island. It's the UK's dinosaur capital, and one of the best places in the planet to find fossils. Who knows what you might find in a day... a bone? An entire skeleton? A new species?

The Island's 'Dinosaur Coast' stretches for 20 glorious miles, from Yaverland in the East, to Compton Bay in the West.

The first Isle of Wight specimens were discovered here in the 1820s and new varieties are still being picked up today by holidaymakers and locals just pottering around on the beaches. You don't need tools – just a good eye, and a lot of luck.

Look for heavy dark stones with a shiny surface, regular ridges, a 'bubbly' looking interior or glinting crystals. And go hunting at low tide, and after rough weather or a storm. Then get your finds identified, because if you discover a new species, it could be named after you!

You can walk your way around the Dinosaur Coast – and indeed, the entire Island – using the Isle of Wight Coastal Path. This is a fantastic way to explore around the dramatic coastline with breathtaking views over some of the best beaches in the world.

The section that we'll take you along for this itinerary will enable you to see the most striking geological features of the Isle of Wight including sweeping Compton Bay and dramatic Culver Down.

MORNING

Dinosaur hunting in Yaverland

Start at the car park opposite The Isle of Wight Zoo. Follow the signposted coastal route up the steep grassy hill until you reach the top of the landslip. You'll get great views over some of the richest dinosaur beds in the country (look for the dark seams in the cliffs, as this is where the dinosaur remains are usually hidden, before they're washed onto the beaches).

At the very top of the hill, you'll find a kiosk for coffee and cake, and a pub with a garden that has one of the best panoramic views on the Island. Reward yourself appropriately, and then head back the way you came, down the hill to the car park.

If you feel like foraging, then venture onto the beach for a spot of beach combing – you may be able to pick up some fossils from the dinosaur age.

Continued on next page >

To find more walking ideas go to visitisleofwight.co.uk



BE A

Experience
sustainable
transport

WALKING EXPERIENCES: DINOSAUR SAFARI

Isle of
Wight

AFTERNOON

In the footprints of dinosaurs at Compton bay

You're now off to Compton Bay, to explore one of the best beaches in the world (according to the Sunday Times Travel magazine). Start at Shippards Chine car park. This is a National Trust site with toilets and a van serving ice creams, drinks and snacks.

Now go on a 'footprint safari'. We recommend taking the Isle of Wight Official Dinosaur Safari Guide with you (available from the Guildhall for £5). Follow the coastal path, walking with the sea to your left. Then go down the steps, and walk with the sea to your right.

You can see a huge number of dinosaur footcasts at the base of the cliffs. They look like giant 3D footprints and were formed when heavy dinosaurs left their prints in soft mud. The footprints then filled with sand, which later turned to rock. Enjoy them – but please don't take them home, as they're protected and belong to the National Trust. Head for the bit of land that juts out. That's Hanover Point and at very low tide, you can see dinosaur footprints and the 'fossil forest' of petrified tree trunks. Return the way you came.

TIPS FOR EXPLORERS

As you're combing the beach, look out for small bits of fossilised wood with glinting 'gold' seams – this is a sign that you're hunting in the right area.

Go with an expert – a guided fossil hunt with a local expert is safe and fun. For more info, go to visitisleofwight.co.uk/inspiration/dinosaur-island

PLUS DON'T MISS

Take your treasures from the beach to **Dinosaur Isle**, the UK's biggest dinosaur museum. The bone boffins there will identify them for you – and if they think you're onto something big, they'll send a team out to investigate. The museum is based in a pterosaur-shaped building that watches over the dinosaur coast on Yaverland seafront. During the holidays there are activities for kids including painting and puzzles. dinosaurisle.com

Go and see the dinosaur plants at **Ventnor Botanic Garden**, where local beast *Valdosaurus* would have enjoyed many vegetarian meals. You can see modern relatives of prehistoric plants including the Monkey Puzzle Tree, Modern Gymnosperms, Ginko Tree and Tree Ferns. In the summer, look out for the little green Ventnor lizards scuttling around in the terraces and basking in the sun. They're not dinosaurs but use your imagination and they just might be. botanic.co.uk

Head for **Blackgang Chine** near Chale for animatronic fun. If you're brave enough to enter 'Restricted Area 5' you'll meet a variety of dinosaurs including screeching raptors and one of the largest robotic T-Rexes in the country. blackgangchine.com

FACT FILE

The landscape is undulating, with some steep hills along the route.

The Isle of Wight Coastal Path takes you on a 67 mile circular tour that includes the 20 mile long section of 'Dinosaur Coast'. This runs through an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Give yourself a whole day to explore the Dinosaur Coast – there's a lot to see and do.

You can get the bus to various points and attractions on the trail. Or go by train. The Island Line runs between Ryde and Shanklin - get off at Lake or Sandown to join the trail.

To find more walking ideas go to visitisleofwight.co.uk

