

## Fact file Bikepacking beginners

**Distance:** 370km (230 miles).

**Route:** Hindhead to Portsmouth via the Shipwrights Way, ferry to Ryde, across the Isle of Wight to Yarmouth, then ferry over to Lymington. Through the New Forest to Cadnam, then up the Test Valley and across to Winchester, where we picked up the South Downs Way/King Alfred's Way back to Hindhead.

**Conditions:** We had several days of warm sunshine and only one day where it threatened to rain but didn't. The route was a mix of off-road/traffic-free trails, bridleways and smaller roads and byways. After a dry summer all were in good condition.

**Bikes used:** We both used Giant Anthem cross country mountain bikes.

**Maps/guides:** Phones and a Garmin 800 for route guidance, using a mix of gpx files, the Komoot app and Google Maps.

**I'm glad I had...** My Ortlieb QR seatpack and bar bag, which went on and off the bike really easily.

**Next time I would...** Question B&B owners more carefully about safe storage for the bikes before booking.

**Further info:**  
Shipwrights Way: [bit.ly/cycle-shipwrights-way](http://bit.ly/cycle-shipwrights-way)  
Isle of Wight: [visitisleofwight.co.uk/things-to-do/cycling](http://visitisleofwight.co.uk/things-to-do/cycling)  
The New Forest: [thenewforest.co.uk/things-to-do/cycling](http://thenewforest.co.uk/things-to-do/cycling)  
King Alfred's Way: [cyclinguk.org/king-alfreds-way](http://cyclinguk.org/king-alfreds-way)



Shipwrights Way. He lived near the route and rode it regularly, which made navigation easier on day one. We stopped to eat our packed lunch outside the scenic St Hubert's church in the South Downs National Park – Troy with a tin of sardines and a chunk of bread, me with a pack of biltong and a bag of crisps. That fuelled us to Hayling Island, our first overnight stop. We had enough time to check out the beach and the route to the ferry for the next morning. Then it was back to the B&B.

We made the Isle of Wight ferry in good time, after catching the small ferry across from Hayling to Portsmouth. On the island we headed towards Cowes on a relatively flat northern route using part of the established Red Squirrel Trail. I'd visited the south and the centre of the island before and knew how steep and long the hills were. The idea was to get to the other side and spend two nights in a self-catering flat so that we could explore the western end of the island at our leisure.

The weather was cooperating. We had deep blue skies, warm sunshine and amazing sunsets for both of our island days. It was good to have time messing about on the bikes without the luggage, just exploring with no agenda or



**Clockwise from top left:** Loaded Anthems on Hayling Island. Freshwater Bay on the Isle of Wight. Tennyson Monument, Isle of Wight. Near Minstead – ponies roam free in the New Forest, along with pigs, cows, horses and donkeys  
**Below:** Near Binfield on the Medina Greenway, Isle of Wight

destination other than to get back to base by the end of the day.

We cycled up to look at the Needles, then tried to find a bridleway to take us up to the Tennyson Monument where the views across the island are amazing. It was a steep push up, then mostly footpaths, so we headed back down to Freshwater and up the chalky bridleway of the Tennyson Trail, alongside a golf course that seemed to go on forever, up and up until it suddenly went steeply (and sketchily) down again. Glad of the stable mountain bikes, we then returned to Yarmouth for a bit more sightseeing.

## FOREST FAUNA

Day four was a New Forest day. We caught the ferry across to Lymington, where we met another friend, Paul, who joined us for a wiggly off-road ride as far as Lyndhurst. We had lunch there, and stopped to thank Tom at the marvellous Woods ▶

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