


Paradise on the Isle of Wight...4 miles Brook, Compton & Afton Downs

Butterflying does not get any better than this; walk along the chalk ridge running through the middle of the Isle of Wight and you will find an abundance of flora and insect life; pure escapism into the real world! This is a great site for Adonis Blue and Chalkhill Blue butterflies, with large populations of Small Blue, Dark-green Fritillary and Glanville Fritillary. Brown Argus and Grayling can also be spotted. In late summer you can often catch a glimpse of the Clouded Yellow.

Getting there and facilities:

Train: Lymington  then ferry to Yarmouth www.wightlink.co.uk. Then by bus...

Buses: Southern Vectis service No. 7 from Yarmouth via Freshwater or from Newport via Brighstone to Compton Chine www.islandbuses.info

Cycling: from Yarmouth follow the cycle-way to Freshwater, turn left on the A3055 to Freshwater Bay, then left onto the coast road to Compton Chine/Afton Down Quarry car park. The roads here can be very busy www.sustrans.org.uk

Road: from Yarmouth follow the A3055 until you reach Compton Chine car park (National Trust sign reads Afton Down).

Maps & Grid Ref: OS Landranger 196 & Explorer 29, SZ367855

Facilities: WCs and refreshments available in near-by Freshwater.



Since the 1940s, Brook and Compton Downs have been grazed by free-ranging Galloway cattle, run by the Trust's tenant farmers at Compton Farm. The cattle are well adapted to the challenging environment and graze the slopes perfectly for the flowers and insects, but the gorse is also managed by cutting and burning.

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Compton Chine cliffs support one of the best colonies of Glanville Fritillary on the Island, but colonies also occur along the south slope of Compton Down and in mown and burnt gorse on Brook Down.

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Points of Interest

Brook Down

The quarry slopes here are good for spotting butterflies; Glanville Fritillary often breeds amongst cut or burnt gorse above the quarry and the main track up to the crest of the downs is also a great viewing point.

Compton Down

The south-facing slopes here are superb for butterflies and the Combe above Compton Farm is a first-class area for finding Chalkhill Blues and Adonis Blues. You can find the Glanville Fritillary along the lower slopes and also in the gorse in the summit, where in July and early August the Dark-Green Fritillary is abundant.

Compton Chine

This is the best known site for Glanville Fritillary, although the timing of the flight season varies from mid-late May in good springs and early-mid June in late springs. The butterflies can be found along the lower cliff slopes, on either side of the wooden steps, but move their headquarters periodically.



The south-facing slopes support a huge population of Adonis Blue. Broods peak in early June and mid-late August. Chalkhill Blue is even more abundant, peaking in early-mid August.

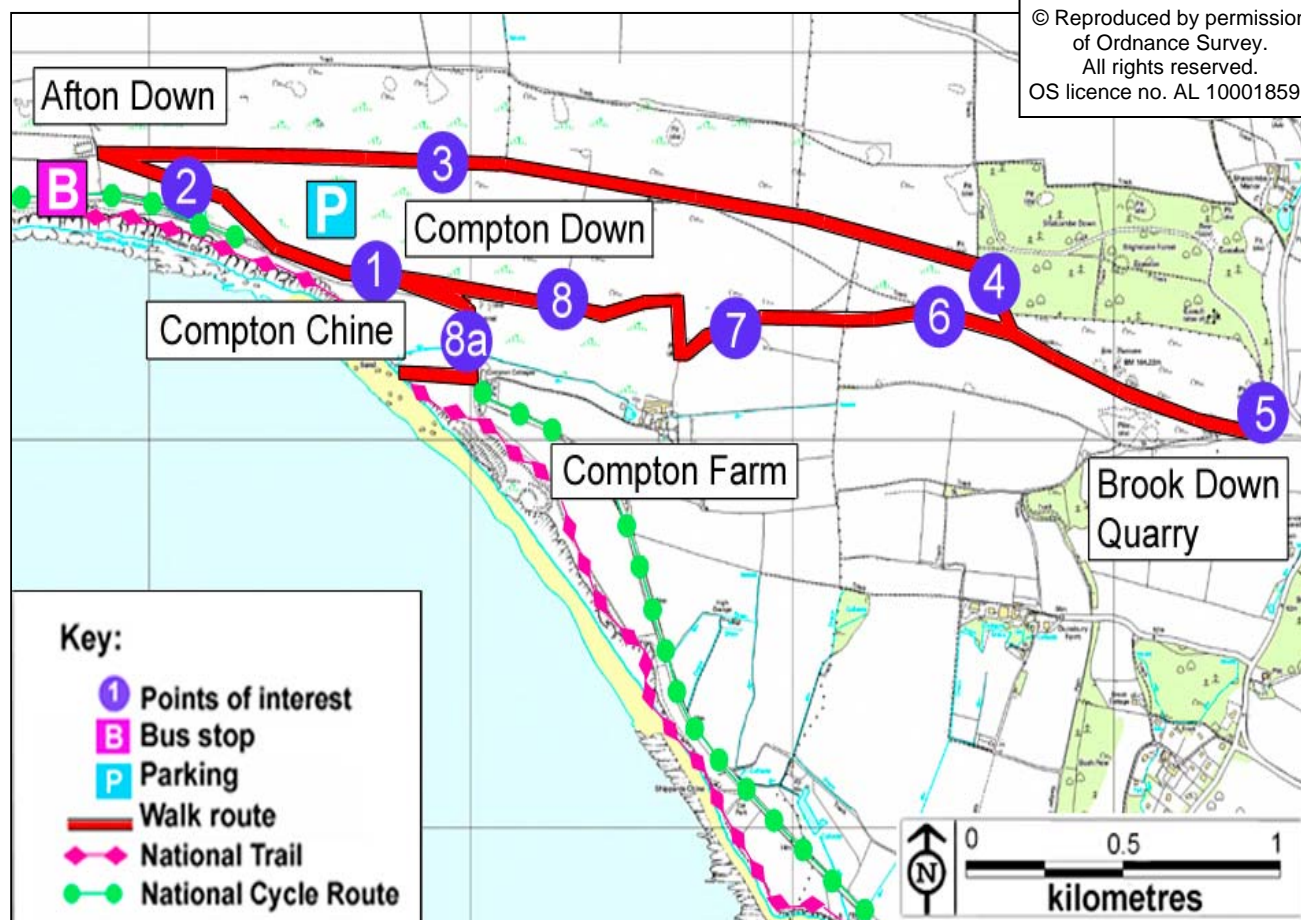
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Route and Directions

1. Start in Whiteways Quarry car park (National Trust sign reads Afton Down car park) by the main road. Turn right out of the car park and onto the downs; this is usually great for Blues.
2. Head along the Freshwater Way footpath on Afton Down to the summit. This area is a golf course.
3. Head eastwards on the bridleway, along the summit of the downs. Dark-green Fritillary abounds amongst the burnt and cut gorse areas.
4. Continue along this path until you reach another path; drop down to join the path and follow it easterly to the car park at Brook Down.
5. From Brook Down Quarry, explore the quarry slopes and gorse glades, before heading west back towards the main track and dropping down to the cattle tracks along the lower south-facing slope. Look out for the Adonis Blues.
6. Head west along the lower slopes towards Compton Combe. Clouded Yellows are often seen here and on the upper slopes of the camp-site field.
7. Blue butterflies are usually best found in and around Compton Combe, above Compton Farm.
8. Carry on westwards along the lower slope, crossing the fence into the un-grazed section. This area is best for Graylings, Green Hairstreaks and Small Blues.
- 8a. During the Glanville Fritillary season (June to early August), detour to Compton Chine, via the road verge. Go south along the cliff top and then down the wooden steps. Enjoy! It's a great bathing beach.

From here carry on heading west until you reach your starting point at Compton Chine car park.

'For words, like Nature, half reveal And half conceal the Soul within.' Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who lived and wrote for many years just west of Freshwater and loved these downs. There is also a life size statue of Jimi Hendrix in the garden of Dimbola Lodge Museum, along the B3322 in Freshwater.



Terrain and accessibility: 4 miles (6.4km) return from Brook Quarry. Moderate slopes with cattle ridges, main track along the crest of the downs. Stout footwear needed.

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