

About this walk

This walk travels the length of Brean Down; a natural pier standing 97m high and offering stunning views across the Bristol Channel to South Wales, north to Weston-super-Mare and south to Exmoor and the Somerset Levels. Its height has made it an ideal site for coastal defences as far back as the Iron Age and in 1862 a Palmerston Fort was built in response to the threat from France and Napoleon III.

The rocky limestone soil on its southern slopes is the perfect habitat for some of our rarest blooms, while the northern slopes offer a dazzling display of Bluebells in Spring.

Photo credits

© Isobel Pring coastal and walk images

Useful websites

nationaltrail.co.uk/england-coast-path-sw
somerset.gov.uk/england-coast-path
visitsomerset.co.uk



To report any problems on the footpaths during your walk visit:
somerset.gov.uk/report-a-problem-with-a-public-right-of-way/

ENGLAND
COAST PATH

NATIONAL TRAIL

Brean Down Circular

3 miles / 4.8km | 2-2.5 hours | Easy to Moderate



On your walk...

The England Coast Path is well waymarked and easy to follow. The acorn symbol of the National Trails is found on waymarks and fingerposts along the route.



Where your walk takes you away from the Coast Path it will be signed with the standard waymarks shown here:

Footpath Bridleway Permissive path

Stay safe and follow the Countryside Code on your walk and always follow guidance on local advisory signs. You can see the Countryside Code at www.gov.uk/countryside-code.



Dogs are welcome on these walks but always keep your dog under close control near livestock and wildlife, especially ground nesting birds, and always clean up after your dog and dispose of dog waste in an appropriate bin.

For more information about this walk or to download a .gpx file, scan the QR code or visit nationaltrail.co.uk/short-routes/brean-down-circular



All information correct at the time of publication

WALK KEY INFORMATION & FACILITIES



Distance: 3 miles/4.8km

Duration: 2-2.5 hours

Map: OS Explorer 153: Weston-super-Mare & Bleadon Hill

Grade: Easy to Moderate



Access:

The start of the walk includes a long series of steps but these can be avoided by turning right and using the service road. Sections of this walk may be completed using a mobility tramper; to find out about hiring a tramper visit countrysidemobility.org



Getting here:

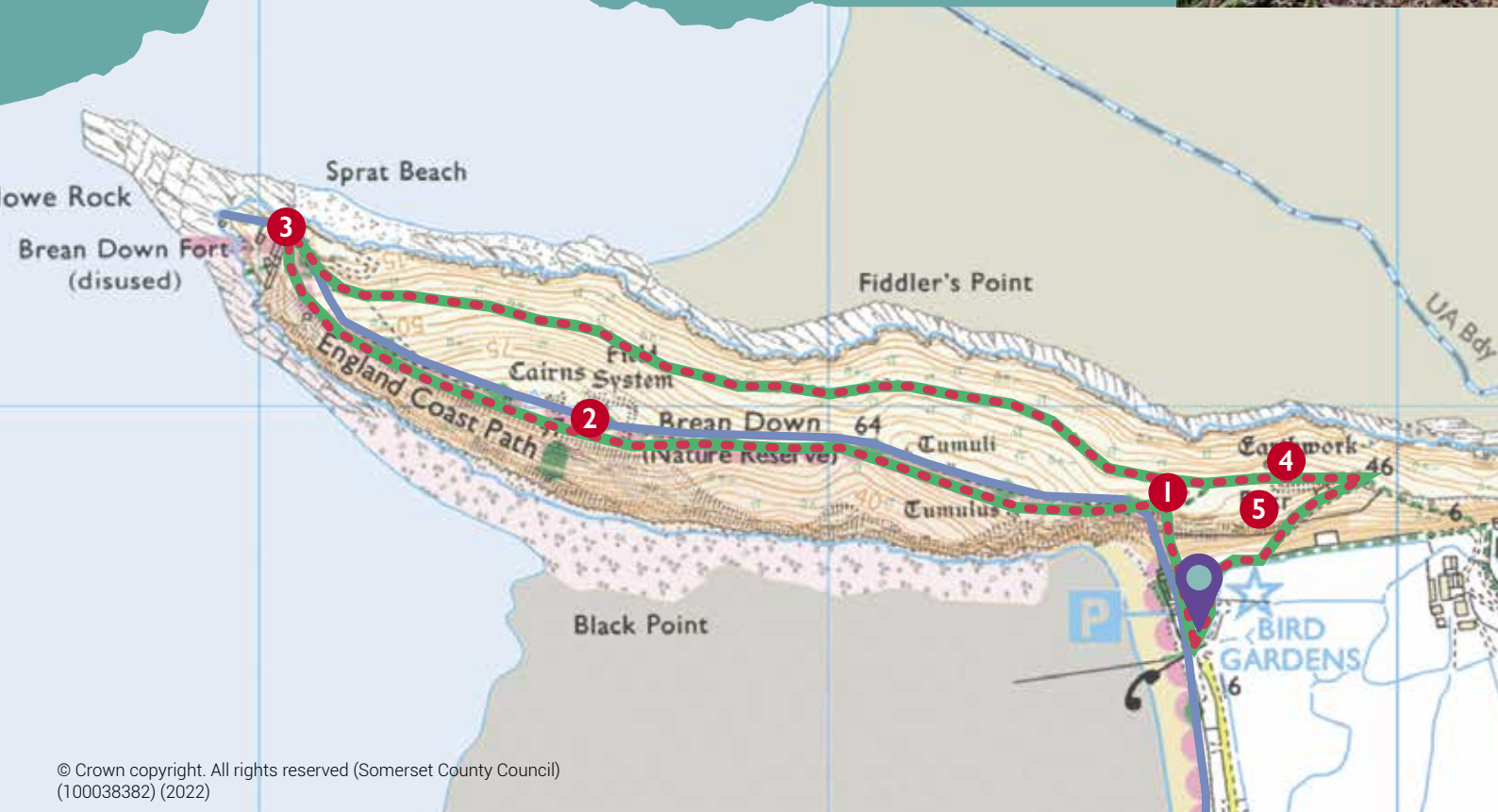
By car to Brean Down, Brean Down Road, Brean TA8 2RS. There are two pay and display car parks here. The closest bus stop is 1.5 miles / 30 minutes walk from the start. Visit travelsomerset.co.uk to find out more.



Facilities:

There is a National Trust café and ice cream hut here with public toilets, and a second café a little further along the road. There is also a National Trust Information Centre.

Brean Down Circular



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England Coast Path

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DIRECTIONS

From the car parks walk along the road passing the café on your left. Keep left where the road forks and go up the steps onto Brean Down or, if you wish to avoid the steps, turn right and then through the gate on your left to walk up the service road. At the top of the steps a short diversion to your right brings you to the WW2 range marker **1**, a concrete arrow set in the ground that was used by planes flying above to orientate themselves to the Bridgwater Bay bombing range.

Return to the top of the steps and take the path to the left along the southern slopes. The rocky limestone soil and warm south facing cliffs here provide the perfect habitat for some of the nation's rarest blooms including the White Rock Rose, seen in early summer, dwarf sedge and Somerset hair grass. You might also be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of a peregrine falcon flying past.

Continue along the path and notice the remains of a Celtic field system **2** ahead of you; a series of small rectangular 'fields' that cross the path as you head up the hill. At the highest point on the down you will find a trig point, or triangulation point. These four foot high pillars were originally used by Ordnance Survey to create maps.

From here it is possible to look across the bay to the islands of Steep Holm and Flat Holm. Today both are

uninhabited and classified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and nature reserves, but while Steep Holm is English and a part of North Somerset, Flat Holm is Welsh and part of the Vale of Glamorgan.

From the top of the hill follow the path down to Brean Down fort **3**; one of the Palmerston Forts built in 1862 to protect the country from the growing strength of France under Napoleon III. Take some time to explore the fort buildings and the launch rail at the end of the peninsular, which was used in an attempt to develop a naval version of the dam-busting bomb developed by Barnes Wallis.

From the fort, make your way back along the surfaced track on the north side of the Down. Towards the end of the track you pass a series of machine gun emplacements **4** north of the path where soldiers practised shooting at targets in the bay using six Lewis light machine guns. At this point turn and look to the south, this is the site of an Iron Age hill fort **5** dating to around 1200 BC, and a series of banks and ditches associated with the fort can still be seen on both sides of path.

Follow the path round to the right ignoring the footpath on your left and continue down the surfaced track until you reach the road. Turn right and follow the road back to the car parks.