

Isle Of Wight



The Route

Where: Cowes to Newport and Sandown

National Route Number: 23

Distance: 16 miles each way

Terrain: traffic-free except through towns, and flat

Public transport: Car ferries from Southampton to Cowes, Portsmouth to Ryde and Lymington to Yarmouth all carry bikes free of charge. Trains from Sandown to Ryde link with Portsmouth ferry

Bike hire: The Bike Shed near Merstone - 01983 868786; Funation Bikes, Cowes - 01983 200300; Island Cycle Hire (free delivery to Sandown) - 07712 363134

Maps: Round the Island Cycle Route leaflet available locally at TICs

OS maps: Explorer OL29, Landranger 196

Tourist information:

Offices in all three towns - 01983 813818

Towns to search for on Sustrans website mapping: Cowes, Newport, Sandown



At 13 miles by 23, the Isle of Wight is a perfect size for exploring by bike. As it has no through traffic its lanes are pretty quiet, and it is blessed with a mild climate and largely unspoiled countryside - nearly half of the island is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is also one of the few places in England where you can still see a red squirrel or Glanville Fritillary butterfly. In spite of the relative quietness of the roads, the newly-completed traffic-free railway path from Cowes to Sandown is proving extremely popular with islanders and visitors alike.

Cowes is famous as a yachting centre, and for Osborne House, Queen Victoria's island retreat. The on-road route from the ferry port at East Cowes is signed to the south end of Arctic Road, and then you are on the railway

path on the banks of the tidal river Medina towards the bustling market town of Newport. When you get there it is worth visiting the remains of the Roman villa, discovered in 1926 and painstakingly restored.

The railway path resumes at Shide along the river bank, this time following the freshwater Medina, joining the river Yar through open countryside and a marshland nature reserve. There is often a tea tent at Old Merstone Station. The route continues to Sandown, a popular holiday resort with safe swimming from a Blue Flag beach. If you want to see more of the island from your bike, you can join the Round the Island cycle route which follows the coastline mainly on roads through Bembridge and Ryde, then back to Cowes.