






The Lepe Loop

A well signposted route through field and woodland paths with spectacular views across the Solent.



Key:

-  Trail Starting Point
-  Trail
-  Point of Interest
-  Car Park
-  Public Toilets
-  Trail Steps

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The Lepe Loop

Start at Lepe Country Park and follow the oak signposts around the route.

Situated on the southern edge of the New Forest and a mile from the Solent coast, Exbury is a peaceful and beautiful village with a fascinating history and important war time links to Lepe and the build up to D-Day. Exbury Estate was bought by the eminent banker Lionel Nathan de Rothschild in 1919. He remodelled Exbury House and built the 200 acre gardens now famous for their collections of rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias.

As you walk along the foreshore of this Coastal Nature Reserve (North Solent Site of Special Scientific Interest), look and listen for the huge variety of wading birds that feed on the mudflats. Oystercatchers have a long red bill and curlews have a down-curved bill which allows them to probe for hidden insects and shells in the mud. The reserve is also an important feeding area for dark-bellied Brent geese. Please help wildlife by keeping dogs under close control.

On 6 June 1944 thousands of troops with their vehicles and supplies left Britain via locations such as Lepe Beach in the New Forest for the beaches of Normandy. This was D-Day, the start of the great campaign to liberate Europe and to bring the Second World War to its end.

Today at Lepe you can still see plenty of evidence of wartime activity. If you walk along the beach or track, about half a mile east of the car parks you will come across the extensive concrete and brick structures were used for three different tasks: construction of the 'Mulberry Harbours' (caissons), caisson launching, and for embarkation of men, vehicles and supplies.

Trail Overview

Start/finish: Lepe Country Park, SO45 1AD.
Grid Ref: SZ 455 985
what3words.com/comedians.hits.dared

Ordnance Survey map: Explorer OL 22 New Forest.

Distance: 5.9 miles (9.3 km) – 2-3 hours.

Local facilities: Parking is available at Lepe Country Park where there are also toilets, café, shop, information and a children's play area.

Accessibility: Mostly easy walking with gentle gradients, gates and three stiles. Woodland paths can be very muddy. Foreshore route can flood at high tide – follow the parallel road instead.

Directions

1 Lepe Country Park

Leave Lepe Country Park via the lower car park, looking out for the Lepe Loop trail head on the small green by the road and coach parking. The signpost points the way further west along the road towards the small lighthouse and the watch house. Keep following the path past the old coastguard watch house along a line of sea defence groynes

2 Watch the Tide

Keep going until you reach a wooden signpost. If the tide is high, then go up the track towards Inchmery Lane. If the tide is low, then you can follow the beach along until it meets Inchmery Road further west. Keep going along Inchmery Road until you reach a sharp left hand turn with an open area of grass to the right. Head onto that green area looking out for a signpost which points the way along a public footpath

3 Wooden footbridge into the wood

Walk through a lovely little woodland until crossing a small bridge and reaching large open fields. Keep close to the left-hand hedgerow and follow the worn path through the fields looking out for signposts as you go

4 East Hill Farm

Keep going, following signposts and go straight over the lane to walk down a gravel track leading to East Hill Farm. Once you can see the buildings keep going straight ahead and look out for the path passing next to fields and heading down hill into woodland. Follow the path down to the bottom and at the three-way signpost turn right to walk uphill, up out through the woods and onto arable fields

5 Back to the Coast

Continue along the footpath which heads south back towards the coast. A series of large fields gives way to some smaller fields and keep following the signposts which will take you round the back of the coastguard cottages to join up to the Lepe overflow car park and then back to the Country Park.

