

Brean Down

Postcode: TA8 2RS

UK Grid Ref: ST 296 585

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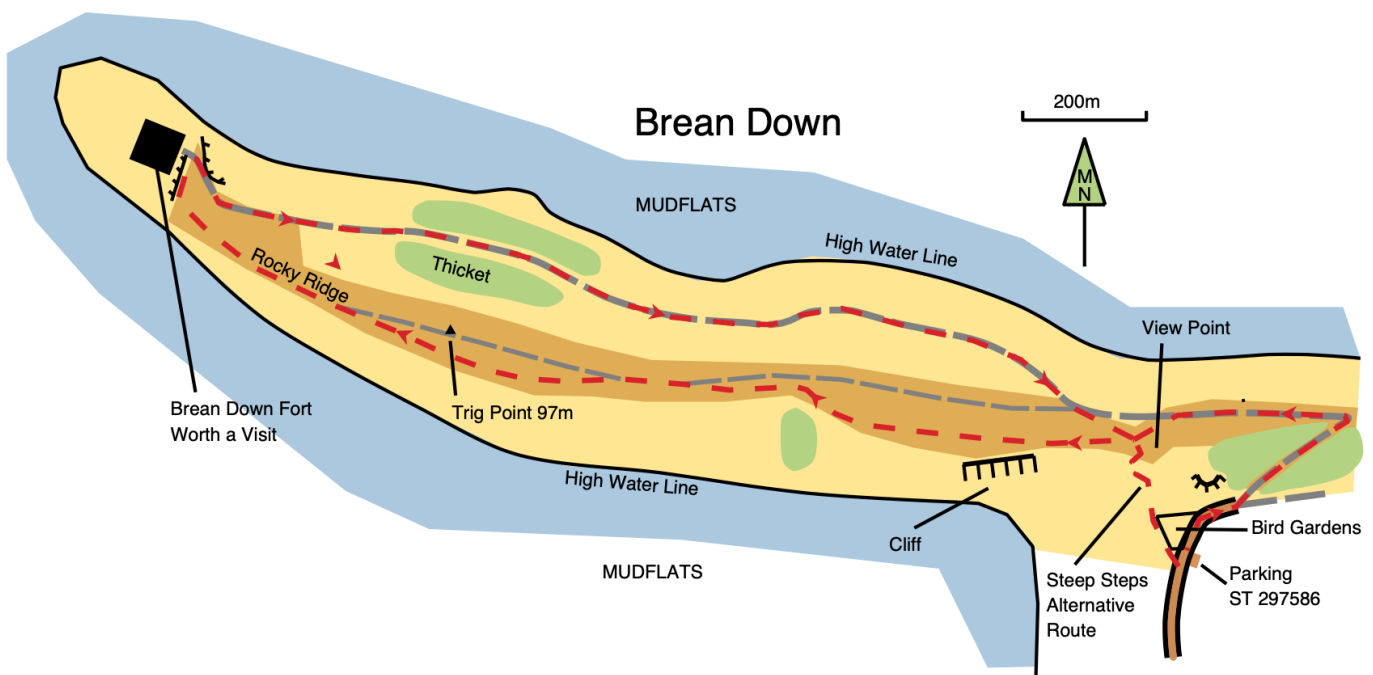
This limestone headland is a SSSI owned and managed by the National Trust.

Overview

The 1.5 mile (4km) circular route along the Down follows short turf and paths. The fort and down are reached by a steep climb up a flight of steps a short distance from the car park. The cliffs are extremely steep and NT request that dogs are kept on leads at all times.

Key Species (check flight times)

Chalkhill Blue, Dark Green Fritillary, Common Blue, Brown Argus, Small Skipper, Large Skipper, Wall Brown, Grayling, Small Heath, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Ringlet and Six-spot Burnet.



Directions & Parking

M5: Junction 22. Head to Brean village and then follow the coast road (Warren Road) to the end.

There is a National Trust Car Park (free to members) as well as a P&D car park at the base of the hill and on the beach when tides permit.

Walk

From the car park near the National Trust café, go to the left of the Bird Garden and up the steps to the top of the cliff, take your time on the climb and rest often to admire the views and look for **Common Blue and Brown Argus**. In season, **Meadow Brown, Small Heath** and **Six-spot Burnet** will be constant companions on this walk.

This page has been extracted and updated from the Butterfly Walks in Somerset & Bristol (2015) booklet. Reviewed and updated by Brean Down Transect Walker (JB) - Nov 2023.

At the top of the steps you will be greeted with spectacular views across Somerset, Wales and Devon while you recover your breath. Head left and follow the Down out to sea and take the path to the left of the main track. This takes you along the south facing side of the Down and on less windy days this will be alive with butterflies. **Common Blue, Brown Argus, Meadow Brown and Small Heath** will be fluttering at your feet, whilst **Wall Brown** and **Dark Green Fritillary** will fly above the bracken tops. Keep your eyes peeled for **Grayling** on the rocks and the path and in amongst the **Meadow Brown**.

Check in the most sheltered spots and around bushes for **Gatekeeper, Small Skipper** and **Large Skipper** as well as a variety of moths, **Yellow Shell, Speckled Yellow, Silver Y, Hummingbird Hawk moth, Brown Silver-Line, Yellow Belle, Cinnabar, Treble Bar, Silver Y** and **Jersey Tiger** have all been spotted recently. **Brown and Yellow tail moths** are also common and you will see their webs and larva in brambles from May onwards.

As you near the end of the down you will start to descend down towards the fort. This is where **Chalkhill Blues** can be found towards the end of July, but is also a good spot for **Grayling and Wall Brown**. In windy weather they will hunker down on the steep slopes down towards the cliff edge, so be careful when searching them out and do not be tempted to venture off the path to the left. After your descent, take time to explore the Fort and its fascinating history before heading back.

On the return journey follow the lower path, but if you have time, explore the network of paths on the steep slope to your right. Exertion will be rewarded with **Ringlet, Gatekeeper, Small Heath, Six-spot Burnet and Brown Argus** as well as sheltering moths, if the sun is catching the slope. Drop back down and keep following the path, keeping your eyes peeled for butterflies basking on bracken, brambles and ivy, especially in late afternoon sun. If you are lucky you may glimpse **Marbled White** amongst common species here.

As you reach the top of the steps where you started your walk, you can either descend them or follow the track which will take you down a slope and back round via a road to the car park. This route takes you past areas of scrub where **Common Blue, Brown Argus, Red Admiral, Peacock, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Brimstone, Orange Tip, Holly Blue** and **Speckled Wood** will all be found in season. **Clouded Yellow** and **Painted Lady** may also be seen on migration anywhere on the Down.

This circular walk can be done either way around and adapted to ascend and descend via the slope if you wish to avoid the steps.

Facilities

The NT owned, Cove café is at the start/finish and also has toilet facilities (normally open 10am – 4pm) There are also toilets at the Brean Beach car park on Warren Road.

Useful Links

National Trust - Brean Down. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/brean-down>

Brean Down Way (Cycle route 33) <https://breanbikerehire.co.uk/brean-down-way/>

Trampers for Hire: Two all-terrain mobility trampers that can go 'off road' are available to hire at Brean Down. So even if you have difficulty walking, you can still enjoy a great day out and amazing views with the family. See NT website for full information:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/brean-down/features/explore-brean-down-by-scooter>