



The best outdoor activities in Hampshire

Hampshire is one of the UK's finest active outdoor destinations, a vast network of footpaths and byways, dense woodland, off-road cycling trails, coastlines, islands and waterways. Whether you're paragliding above the Queen Elizabeth Country Park, tracing the birthplace of windsurfing on Hayling Island or simply walking in the footsteps of one of our literary legends, here's how to enjoy an active outdoor adventure in Hampshire.

3,000 miles of dedicated walking routes

Hampshire's landscape is a rich fabric of contrasts, boasting some of England's most inspiring countryside and coastlines. From lowland heaths and ancient woodland to vibrant cities - walkers can enjoy 3,000 miles of footpaths, bridleways and byways.

For serious walkers, Hampshire offers a network of 13 long distance routes including the 23-mile Blackwater Valley Path located on the borders of north east Hampshire, the Shipwright's Way stretching from the South Downs to Portsmouth Harbour, and the 60-mile Solent Way which, as the name suggests, follows the scenic Solent coast between Milford-on-Sea and Emsworth.

And then there's the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of Hampshire's literary greats. Jane Austen fans can enjoy a circular walk from Chawton to Farringdon, or follow the Jane Austen walking trail between Alton and Chawton. The 4-mile Edward Thomas circular walk has stunning views of the South Downs and hangers.

On and off-road biking for all ages

One of the best ways to experience Hampshire is on two wheels, with over 750 miles of off-road cycle routes for beginners and challenging trails for the more experienced. Beginners and young families should seek out The Hayling Billy Hill Path on Hayling Island and the Test Way Path near Romsey, both of which have been created along disused railway lines to offer flat, easy-going cycling.

The more adventurous cyclist may want to try out the Ox Drove off road cycle trail, which takes you through 25 miles of rolling hills and woodlands at the heart of rural Hampshire.

Then there's longer routes such as the mighty 100-mile South Downs Way, which offers a surprisingly vast rural wilderness between Winchester and the white cliffs of the Sussex coast at Eastbourne. The three-day ride is steeped in history (the route has been called a 'Neolithic motorway') and includes an ascent up Butser Hill to the highest point of the South Downs at 270m (886ft).

Watersports and the 60th anniversary of windsurfing

It was in 1958 that Peter Chilvers (then only 12) first invented windsurfing on Hayling Island, and to this day Hampshire remains one of the UK's finest watersports destinations. For top class sailing, windsurfing and kayaking look no further than the Solent coastline in the south of the county while the River Hamble, which runs into the Solent, is considered to be one of the country's leading yachting centres.

Both Calshot Activity Centre and Portsmouth Watersports Centre offer a combination of sailing, windsurfing, canoeing and powerboating, and those keen to sample stand up paddleboarding (SUP) can do so either on open waters in Southampton and Calshot Beach or more relaxed locations such as Beaulieu River and Basingstoke Canal.

Adventure activities

Did you know that you can ski in Hampshire? The outdoor Alpine Snowsports Centre at Aldershot is a great place to experience your adrenaline rush with three slopes, the tallest of which is 110m. Calshot is also home to three indoor ski slopes where you can learn to ski, snowboard and ski bobb on snowflex - the latest in ski slope technology.

Calshot Activities Centre is one of the biggest outdoor activity centres in the UK. Based on the shores of the Solent you'll have immediate access to many watersports, as well as 1200sq metres of climbing walls, 80 rope lines, huge overhangs and roofs.

If you are a member of the British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association then the Sky Surfers Club, based in Petersfield, can take visitors up to Butser Hill for a unique birds eye view of the destination.

And for all other tourist information about Hampshire, go to <https://www.visit-hampshire.co.uk>.