Titchfield's Historic Canal
Explore a fascinating disused canal, a superb wetland nature reserve and a scenic clifftop path along an unspoilt stretch of Hampshire's coast.

**Distance** 5 miles (8km)
**Minimum time** 2hrs
**Ascent/gradient** 114ft (38m)
**Level of difficulty** Easy

**Paths** Canal tow path, clifftop path, tracks and field paths
**Landscape** Nature reserve water-meadows, coastline, open farmland
**Suggested map** aqua3 OS Explorer 119 Meon Valley & Portsmouth
**Start/finish** SU 540057
**Dog friendliness** Off lead by canal and along cliff top
**Parking** On-street parking and car park behind community centre
**Public toilets** Titchfield and Meon Shore

**Trail Summary**
This walk explores the village of Titchfield, a thriving port and market town in medieval times on account of its abbey. Although a mile or two inland from the Solent, the village was linked to the sea by a navigable channel, thought to be one of the earliest canals in Britain. Away from Titchfield, the coastal path alongside the Solent brings extensive views of the Isle of Wight, as well as the busy sea lanes on the approaches to Southampton.

Alongside the Solent is Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve, a well-known birdwatching site. It covers 369 acres of the Lower Meon Valley and contains a variety of wetland habitats, some of which have become rare in lowland Britain. The reserve is managed primarily for birds but it also has rare flora including rarities such as slender bird's-foot-trefoil, frogbit and marsh mallow. It is also home to foxes, deer, dragonflies and butterflies.

**On Map 1 to 3**
1. From the village square walk along Church Road (beside the Co-op) to the church and bear right beside the graveyard. Cross a footbridge over the old canal and turn right along the tow path (signposted 'Lower Meon Valley Trail'). Cross a road and keep to the tow path by the side of the canal, heading south for nearly 2 miles (3.2km). When you reach a gate, continue on towards the road to view the remnants of the sea lock.

2. Just before the lane, cross the stile on the left and follow the footpath through some trees. Soon you'll reach Meon Shore and the Titchfield Haven Nature Reserve. To visit the reserve follow the footpath to the left, close to the shore road, to the visitor centre. When you reach a County Council sign, bear right to the road. Turn right along the road, then left beside a gate and follow the public footpath between chalets to join the Solent Way path beside a drive to Cliff Cottage. Follow the path along the top of the cliffs and enjoy the lovely views across the Solent to the Isle of Wight and Calshot Castle on the far side of Southampton Water. In ½ mile (800m) or so, pass in front of Sea House and descend with the path down to the beach.

**On Map 3 to 2**
3. Just before a freshwater inlet, follow the path inland beside a barrier. Shortly merge with the drive to Sea House and continue walking inland. At Lower Brownwich Farm, bear right along the concrete road. Ignore the footpath beside the road and keep to the drive as far as a fork. Proceed ahead (marked by a yellow arrow) and pass cottages and barns on your left, the concrete soon giving way to an earth track. Pass a marker on a gate post, then in about 100yds (91m), take the public footpath right across the centre of a large field.

**On Map 2 to 1**
4 At a T-junction of paths, turn right along to a lane. Turn left and keep to the lane (which can be busy) for ¼ mile (400m) to a T-junction. Turn left, then right into St Margaret's Road and right again along West Street, following it downhill to the village square.