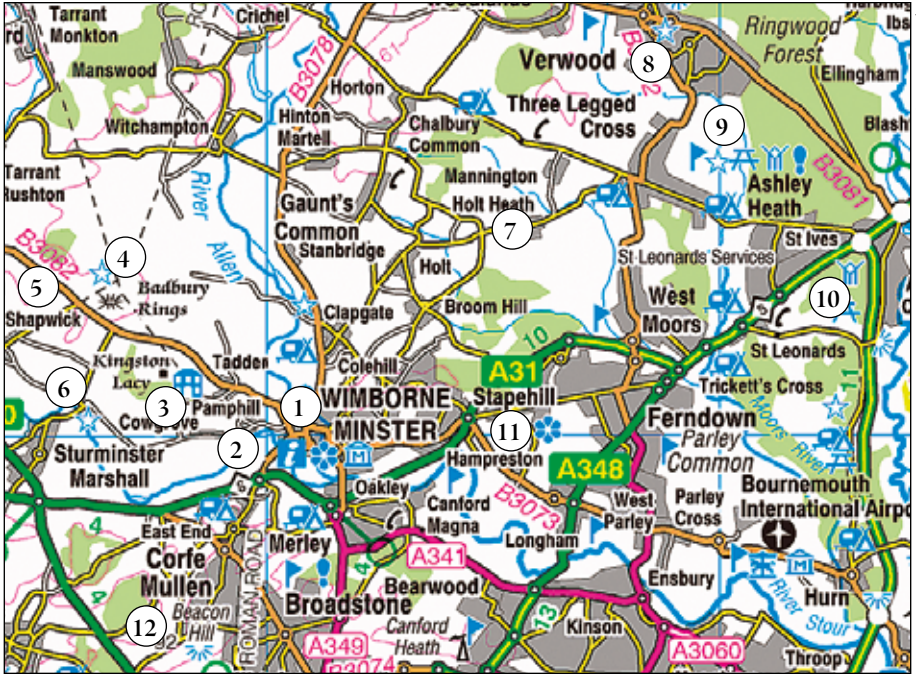


# ITINERARY #14 - WIMBORNE & SOUTHEAST DORSET



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## WIMBORNE & SOUTHEAST DORSET

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**WIMBORNE MINSTER** was formerly the only town in East Dorset of any size. Its well-preserved town centre and old buildings make it a delight to visit, especially on market days. With the Southeast Dorset Conurbation just to the south, other settlements such as Verwood, Ferndown and St Leonards have expanded. The busy A31 traverses the south of the district.

**Kingston Lacy**, just west of Wimborne, is one of the Crown Jewels of National Trust properties and is an essential visit, whether for its extravagant interior or its gardens. In springtime the succeeding drifts of flowers are a sight to see.

**Badbury Rings** is one of Dorset's best hillforts. It is famous for its orchids, butterflies and Roman road junction. The adjacent Beech Avenue also merits a visit, especially in misty conditions, when the sun is low.

**Nature** East Dorset has several very good nature reserves, despite the proximity of urban sprawl. Upton and Holt Heaths as well as Avon Heath Country Park are three of several excellent places to seek rare plants, butterflies, birds and reptiles. Moors Valley Country Park is more commercial, with a wide range of entertainments, but also has a strong nature element.

**Rivers** The Rivers Stour, Allen, Crane and Avon flow through this region of Dorset. All arise in chalk downlands to the north. This makes their water levels change greatly between summer and winter. Access to the riverbanks is thus limited. The many bridges afford good viewpoints for photography, birdwatching or seeking Otters. Footpaths follow many parts of these waterways and may be found on the 1:25,000 OS maps. Great care should be taken near all rivers when they are in spate.

## ORDNANCE SURVEY 1:50,000 &amp; 1:25,000 MAPS

OS Landranger Map 195 Bournemouth & Purbeck  
OS Explorer Map 118 Shaftesbury & Cranborne Chase

## WIMBORNE &amp; SOUTHEAST DORSET

**1. Wimborne Minster** (page 262, popn. 2011, 15,174) grew up at the confluence of the Rivers Stour and Allen. The town centre has retained large numbers of buildings dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, giving it a very distinctive appearance. Many of the shops and pubs have kept their original frontages rather than pander to modernisation.

**The Minster** (page 262) was founded in c.AD705, and burnt by the Danes in 1013. The present church dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The building has two very interesting, but highly contrasting, 14<sup>th</sup> century survivals. The chained library in the old treasury has many very old manuscripts and books. The other feature is an astronomical clock with a geocentric display and an external quarterjack to strike each quarter hour.

**Priest's House Museum** (page 262) is on the High Street, in the former manse. Rooms are arranged as if from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. There is a pleasant garden with a cafe on the River Allen.

**The Model Town** (page 262) depicts about 100 buildings of the town in the 1950s. There is a Thomas the Tank model railway and visitor centre.

**2. Julian's Bridge** (page 262) was built across the River Stour in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This attractive old bridge is still the main road into the town from the west. It spans the wide flood plane of the river.

**Lake Farm Roman Fort** (page 76) was built by the Romans soon after they invaded in AD43 as a forward base to subdue the southwest. This 16ha *vexillation* fort was linked to Hamworthy in Poole Harbour by a Roman road, parts of which can still be seen and which forms the boundary between East Dorset and Poole.

**3. Kingston Lacy House** (page 264) is 2mi (3km) west of Wimborne Minster via the B3082 Blandford road. The estate was acquired by Sir John Banks when he bought Corfe Castle in 1635 from Charles I. Kingston Hall was completed in 1667. It was completely remodelled in the 1830s and renamed Kingston Lacy. The lavish interior holds internationally important collections of fine art, Egyptian antiquities and extravagant decor. The gardens are famous for their succession of Snowdrops, Daffodils, Hyacinths and Tulips.

Open all year, this amazing National Trust property is an essential visit, especially in springtime.

**4. Badbury Rings** (16ha, page 266), 2mi (3km) northwest of Kingston Lacy is a prominent Iron Age hillfort. Just to the west there was a Roman temple. Excavations revealed many artefacts suggesting that it was in use for over 400 years from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. This site is famous for its orchids, with at least 12 species present.

**The Beech Avenue** (page 267) along the B3082 was planted in 1835, with 365 trees on one side and 366 on the other. Great care should be taken when admiring this plantation as the road is fast and busy.

**Five Roman Roads** (page 266, 270) intersect just north of Badbury Rings. They radiate to Dorchester, Hod Hill, Ilchester, Old Sarum and Hamworthy. Parts of all of them may be visited.

**5. Shapwick** (page 266) is just west on a loop of the River Stour. This was probably the Roman settlement of *Vindocladia*. The road from Badbury Rings follows the old Roman road.

**6. White Mill** (page 263) is just downstream, near Sturminster Marshall. It retains some of its 17<sup>th</sup> century workings, and is occasionally open.

**White Mill Bridge**, another fine 16<sup>th</sup> century crossing point, is said to be the oldest in Dorset.

**7. Holt Heath** (488ha, page 273) is a large lowland heath nature reserve. Rare birds, butterflies, dragonflies, plants and reptiles thrive here.

**8. Verwood** (page 273), 10mi (16km) northeast of Wimborne, was formerly a major pottery-manufacturing centre.

**9. Moors Valley Country Park** (100ha, page 272), near Verwood, offers a huge range of family-centred activities. It also has abundant wildlife.

**10. Avon Heath Country Park** (230ha, page 272), near Ringwood, is another heathland nature reserve. It has a Discovery Centre and extensive footpaths to explore.

**11. Avon Valley Viewpoint** (page 272) is off the A338 opposite the entrance to Avon Country Park and offers fine views to the south over the valley.

**12. Beacon Hill and Hill View** (page 273), near Corfe Mullen, both offer fine panoramic views over Poole Harbour and Upton Heath.