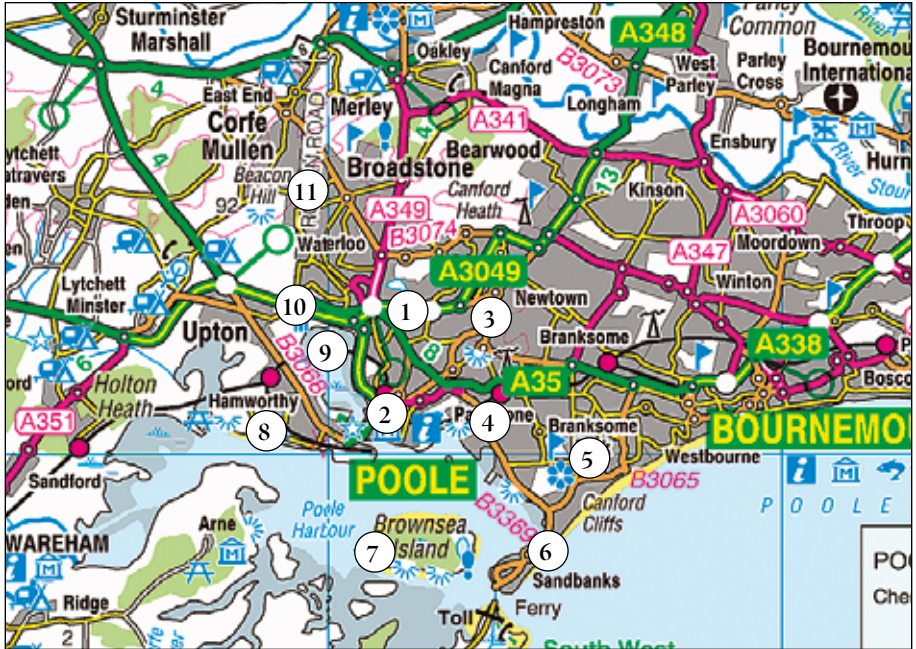


ITINERARY #15 - POOLE



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POOLE

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POOLE HARBOUR is a large inland lagoon, sheltered from the sea by Sandbanks and Studland. It covers an area of c.14mi² (36km²), with a coastline of c.63mi (100km) and is mostly shallow. With access inland via the River Frome, this area has a history of human habitation going back at least 400,000 years.

There is considerable evidence of settlement by Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age people in the Wareham area. However it was only during the Iron Age that large scale pottery-making and trading started. The Poole Boat dates from c.300BC and may have been used to transport goods within the harbour, rather than in the open sea.

The Romans developed a deep water port at Hamworthy to supply their invading army. Later, they greatly expanded the production of pottery, which was exported all over Roman Britain and northern Gaul. The industry later moved inland to Verwood.

Poole Quay, along with the old part of town behind it, is a very attractive place to visit today. There is much to see and do. A stroll along the harbour front, exploring the old streets with their fine Georgian merchants' houses and sitting at a quayside cafe table admiring the scene is a good start.

Beaches Many people will go straight to the seaside. Poole offers 3mi (5km) of pristine, golden sands, with a seaside promenade from Shore Road to Branksome Chine. With beach huts and many facilities, this is said to be one of the best beaches in Britain.

Brownsea Island is the star attraction here for anyone interested in nature. It is famous for its population of Red Squirrels, rare elsewhere in England. In winter, many waders and waterfowl pass through or stay here. Large flocks of Avocets overwinter here. Special trips are laid on by the RSPB to observe these avian visitors.

ORDNANCE SURVEY 1:50,000 & 1:25,000 MAPS

OS Landranger Map 195 Bournemouth & Purbeck
 OS Explorer Map OL15 Purbeck & South Dorset; Map 118 Shaftesbury & Cranborne Chase;
 OL22 New Forest

POOLE

1. Poole (page 278, popn. 2011, 154,718) is clustered around the north and east side of Poole Harbour. The town has been a trading and fishing port since the Iron Age.

2. The Old Town (page 286), behind the Quay, has many fine old buildings dating from the 18th century when the town was a booming port. Some of the streets are pedestrianised which adds greatly to the pleasant ambience of this area of town.

Poole Quay (page 282) has retained many of its old buildings. Today it caters predominantly for visitors, with many bars, restaurants and shops. Boat trips depart from here for Brownsea Island, Wareham or Swanage and around Poole Harbour.

Poole Museum (page 285) is housed in a converted old warehouse. Its prize artefact is the Iron Age Poole Boat. The collection includes everything from Palaeolithic handaxes to Roman ceramics. This museum is an essential visit for anyone wishing an insight into the past and is on a par with the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester.

Customs House (page 287) is now a restaurant. It was rebuilt after a fire in the style of the previous building. It was here that the infamous Hawkhurst Gang made off with contraband tea in 1747.

Poole Lifeboat Station (page 284) was established in 1865. Its first motor lifeboat is preserved in the Old Lifeboat Museum on Fisherman's Dock. The present station is at Old Poole bridge.

RNLI Headquarters (page 283) is on Holes Bay. The Riggers Restaurant is open daily to the public for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Poole Pottery (page 279, 286) was established in 1873. The area around Poole Harbour was already a significant pottery producer in the Iron Age. Under the Romans this became a major industry, making *Black Burnished Ware*.

St James's Church (page 286) was built in the 1820s in a rather austere style. The wooden pillars are of Newfoundland pine.

The Newfoundland Trade (page 280) in Codfish started in the early 16th century. For nearly 300 years Poole merchants prospered from a three way trade. Salt and goods were shipped to fishing stations. Salted, dried Codfish was sent to Spain,

Portugal and France. Salt, wine, olive oil and other goods were then returned to Poole.

3. Constitution Hill Viewpoint (page 288) in Parkstone has panoramic views of Poole, the Harbour and Purbeck.

4. Poole Park (page 288) is east of the Quay in a loop of Parkstone Bay.

5. Compton Acres (4ha, page 288) has seven separate gardens; they are said to be "*highly regarded as one of the most important historic gardens in England*". Off the B3369 to Sandbanks near Canford Cliffs, the Gardens are open all year; there is a gift shop, a plant centre and two cafes.

6. Sandbanks (page 288) is a sand spit which forms the southeast side of Poole Harbour. Famous for its high property prices, mere mortals can still enjoy the wonderful sandy beach facing the sea, one of the best in Dorset.

Poole beaches (page 288) extend for 3mi (5km) from Sandbanks to Branksome. Many facilities are open in summer with RNLI Lifeguards present.

The Chain Ferry (page 289) carries vehicles and passengers across to South Haven Point.

7. Brownsea Island (page 290), the largest island in Poole Harbour, is an essential visit for everyone interested in nature. Ferries run from Poole Quay and Sandbanks. It is owned by the National Trust; DWT maintains the northern part as a nature reserve. Open from late March to end October; there are some special RSPB trips in winter.

8. Hamworthy (page 289) is on the west side of Poole, facing southwards onto Wareham Channel. This seaside area is much quieter than the beaches facing the English Channel, but every bit as nice.

9. Holes Bay (page 289) is a large tidal inlet, the north of which can be accessed from Upton Country Park. It is good for waders and waterfowl during the winter and migration times.

10. Upton Country Park (page 289), on the north shore of Holes Bay, belongs to the Council. With formal gardens, woodland and a tearoom it is a pleasant place to take a stroll.

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