

ITINERARY #8 - PURBECK COAST - WEST



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PURBECK COAST - WEST THE WHITE NOTHE TO TYNEHAM

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THE DISTRICT OF PURBECK is bounded to the south by a dramatic chalk ridge from the White Nothe to Old Harry Rocks, broken by bays and valleys in places. The whole western coastline described here is criss-crossed by lanes, track and footpaths. These allow free access all the way from Ringstead Bay to Lulworth Cove.

Cliffs From the White Nothe to Worbarrow Bay, high chalk cliffs dominate the coast, reaching 175m at the latter. Harder limestone appears at Durdle Door, Lulworth Cove and the Gad Cliffs. Off-lying limestone ledges also occur in many places at the bottom of the cliffs.

Lulworth Army Ranges From Lulworth Cove to Kimmeridge Bay the whole area forms part of Lulworth Ranges. Access is only allowed here when the ranges are closed. This means most weekends and holidays

as well as all of August. The upside is that this large area of coastline and heathland has remained undeveloped for 70 years, preserving its wildlife.

The Purbeck Hills From Worbarrow Bay eastwards the chalk ridge forms the Purbeck Hills, the backbone of the "Isle". Tyneham is at the westward end of a fertile clay valley that goes all the way to Swanage in the east.

West Purbeck has a great deal to offer the walker with everything from a section of the South West Coast Path, to gentle strolls. The chalk coastal ridge is undulating due to "bottoms" such as Scratchy Bottom, Lulworth Cove or Arish Mell.

This means that what looks like an easy stroll is in fact quite a strenuous walk. As a result, places like Lulworth Cove and Durdle Door can be crowded, while a few hundreds metres away it may be very quiet.

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

OS Landranger Map 194 Dorchester & Weymouth; Map 195 Bournemouth & Purbeck
OS Explorer Map OL15 Purbeck & South Dorset

PURBECK COAST - WEST

THE WHITE NOTHE TO TYNEHAM

1. **The White Nothe** (page 187, 204) is the most westerly point of the Purbeck cliffs. This imposing chalk 169m headland offers stunning views over Weymouth Bay and along the coast to the east.

Burning, or Holworth, Cliff (page 187) is a large area of undercliffs formed by regular landslides. The beach walk from Ringstead Bay to the foot of the White Nothe, can only be done on a falling tide. **Smuggler's Path** (page 187) is a short but very steep 300m climb from the bottom of the cliff.

2. **Swyre Head** (98m, page 204, 212) is about 1,200m west of Durdle Door and offers fine views in both directions along this spectacular coastline.

3. **Durdle Door** (page 204) is one of Dorset's iconic natural features, very much photographed, and yet never fails to impress. Perhaps best visited when the evening sun is low, the shingle beaches can be followed for about 1,000m in each direction. Durdle Door can be reached from the Newland Farm carpark or from Lulworth Cove.

4. **Lulworth Cove** (page 204) is one of the most visited coastal features in Britain. This almost perfectly round, shallow bay has a gently sloping sand and shingle beach. There are fine panoramic views from the cliffs on both sides of the cove. The headland on the west side has amazing contortions on the seaward side, similar to those at the nearby Crumple.

Stair Hole and the Crumple (page 205), about 250m from the carpark, has a large natural arch where the sea has broken through. The limestone here has undergone violent earth movements.

West Lulworth Heritage Centre (page 205) tells the story of Lulworth, with displays on geology, fossils, landscape and local history. There is also a gift shop; it is open all year and has a large car park.

Lulworth Walks (page 204) can be long or short, depending on time and fitness as there is a huge number of paths and tracks which can be followed.

5. **Lulworth Castle** (page 205) is a partially restored 17th century mock castle built as a hunting lodge. It is surrounded by mature woodland and open spaces.

6. **Lulworth Ranges** (page 207) are part of the Armoured Fighting Vehicles Gunnery School at Lulworth Camp. They are closed when in oper-

ation; red flags are flown and the gates are locked. The Ranges are open at weekends, on holidays and during August.

All of the following places are within the Ranges:

The Fossil Forest (page 206) is on the coast about 400m east of Lulworth Cove. Fossilised tree trunks are surrounded by ancient stromatolites.

Bindon Hill (168m, page 206) is a good place to look for Lulworth Skipper butterflies. There are splendid views over the cliffs and bays to the east.

Mupe Bay (page 206) may be only 2.5mi (4km) along the coast from Durdle Door, but it feels like a world away. Even in high summer there are never many people here. From the top of the cliff there are wonderful views across to Worbarrow Bay and beyond, with Mupe Ledges and Rocks in the foreground. The beach is accessible by a steep path. Though only 2mi (3km) from Lulworth Cove the path is very steep in places, making it seem further.

Arish Mell (page 206), about 1,000m to the east, is inaccessible due to contamination, and must be admired from the coastal path.

7. **Povington Hill** (187m, page 208) is the highest point on the road that follows the Purbeck Hills ridge eastwards from Lulworth. There are panoramic views to the south from this and other points.

8. **Tyneham** (page 208), or "*the village that time forgot*", is reached from the ridge road. This isolated valley, along with its coastline, has a special charm. The village has a feeling of sadness about it.

Worbarrow Bay (page 207) has a 1,300m curve of sand and shingle, backed by dramatic chalk cliffs. There is a fine viewpoint at Worbarrow Tout.

Flowers Barrow (page 206) is a large Iron Age hillfort perched 170m above the north side of Worbarrow Bay. It is slowly being lost to the sea as the cliffs are constantly being eroded.

9. **Gad Cliff** (page 208) reaches 130m below Tyneham Cap (page 208). This dramatic 2mi (3km) rock face looks smooth from the west and like jagged teeth from the east.

Brandy Bay (page 208), below Tyneham Cap has many offlying rocks, including Long Ebb and Broad Bench, over which rough seas break spectacularly.