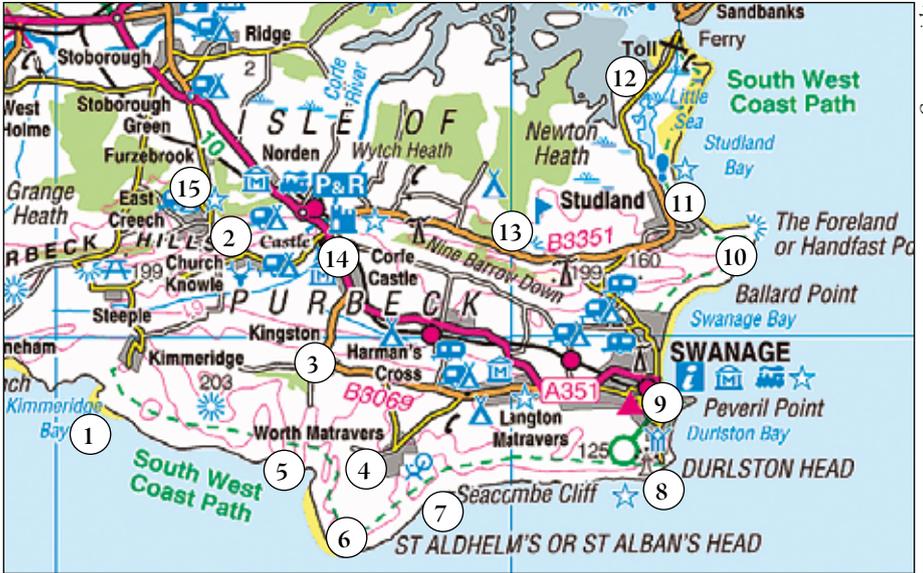


# ITINERARY #8 - PURBECK COAST - EAST



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## PURBECK COAST - EAST KIMMERIDGE TO STUDLAND

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**THE ISLE OF PURBECK** is smaller than the modern administrative district. It extends north from Flowers Barrow to the River Frome and thence to Wareham and Poole Harbour. This area is bounded to the south by great limestone cliffs and to the north by low-lying heathland. The spine of the Purbeck Hills runs across the centre, separated from the coastal ridge by a fertile valley.

**Corfe Castle** is an essential visit, with its fairytale castle, ancient limestone houses, steam trains and dramatic situation. The best views are from West Hill at dawn or East Hill at sunset, especially when mist shrouds the countryside, or from Kingston to the south.

**Inland Villages** include Church Knowle, Steeple, Kimmeridge, Worth Matravers and Langton Matravers. These ancient, small settlements all have their own charm and interesting history.

**Durlston Country Park** is one of the best nature reserves in Dorset with over 500 species of wild

flowers, 33 of butterflies and 270 of birds. Not far behind are Ballard Down and Studland Heath. The Purbeck Hills are also good for butterflies and wild flowers.

**Seaside Resorts** Purbeck has two popular seaside resorts, which could hardly be more different. Swanage is a slightly genteel, smaller version of Weymouth and much less commercial. It has a beautiful, sheltered situation with a fine long sandy beach. Studland has a beautiful 4mi (6km) beach and is almost totally non-commercialised because it belongs to the National Trust.

**The South West Coast Path** includes essential visits such as Kimmeridge Bay, Chapman's Pool, St Aldhelm's Head and Durlston Head. Throughout the whole area there is a maze of quiet country lanes, tracks and footpaths. Some are sign-posted or waymarked, but many are not. In this busy area of Dorset it is easy to get away from the crowds in unspoilt countryside. Conversely, there is also plenty on offer for those preferring busy towns.

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

OS Landranger Map 195 Bournemouth &amp; Purbeck

OS Explorer Map OL15 Purbeck &amp; South Dorset

## PURBECK COAST - EAST

### KIMMERIDGE TO STUDLAND

**1. Kimmeridge Bay** (page 210) is ringed by low cliffs with bands of clay, shale and cementstone. The Flats and Ledges, visible only at low tide, are of hard limestone, ideal for rockpooling or fossil hunting. Kimmeridge is about 5mi (8km) southwest of Corfe Castle. The Jurassic Kimmeridge Clay Formation is famous for its abundant fossils.

**Gad Cliff** (130m) to the west, looks like a giant limestone saw blade from the hill above the bay.

The “**Nodding Donkey**” at the west end of the bay extracts oil from Jurassic strata 350m underground.

**Purbeck Marine Wildlife Reserve** extends from Mupe Bay to St Aldhelm’s Head. The Marine Centre has aquaria and helpful marine wardens.

**Clavell Tower**, a 19<sup>th</sup> century folly, is now available as an esoteric holiday let.

**2. Church Knowle** (page 225) is a pretty little village which snuggles below the Purbeck Hills. It has a fine Norman church and a traditional pub.

**Steeple** (page 225), 2mi (3km) further west, is famous for its connection to the US flag. The design is based on the Lawrence coat of arms, which can be seen in the Norman church.

**3. Kingston** (130m, page 224) on a ridge 1.5mi (2.5km) south of Corfe Castle has pretty cottages and panoramic views. Its main claim to fame is the excellent and very popular Scotts Arms pub.

**4. Worth Matravers** (page 213, 224), the most southerly and picturesque of these villages, is about 1.5mi (2.5km) southeast of Kingston. Benjamin Jesty, who discovered a cure for smallpox, and his wife, are buried in the graveyard here. The unique local pub, the Square and Compass should not be missed.

**5. Chapman’s Pool** (page 212) is about 1,000m down a steep footpath from a carpark at Renscombe Farm. This delightful bay is never busy and the shoreline is an excellent place for fossil hunting.

**6. St Aldhelm’s Head** (108m, page 212) is the most southerly point on Purbeck, with superb views. The unusually-built chapel may be Norman. There was an important radar station here in WWII.

**7. Winspit** (page 213) is a small bay east of St Aldhelm’s Head. The cliffs are pock-marked with old limestone quarries, now home to many bats.

**8. Durlston Country Park** (113ha, page 214) is one of the prime destinations in Dorset for anyone interested in nature. The Visitor Centre has interactive displays, a gallery, shop and restaurant. Waymarked paths, information on daily sightings and events are all available there and online. The reserve is deservedly famous for its diversity of species of wild flowers, butterflies and birds. Many come to seek the rare Early-spider Orchids or Lulworth Skipper butterflies.

**Anvil Point Lighthouse** (page 215) is a waypoint for shipping between Portland Bill and the Solent.

**Tilly Whim Caves** (page 215), next to Anvil Point are former limestone quarries. Many bats roost here so they are not open to the public.

**9. Swanage** (page 216) is a rather elegant and unspoilt seaside resort. Earlier prosperity was based on quarrying of Purbeck Marble and Limestone, especially from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

**Swanage Steam Railway** (page 217, 222) was formed as a result of the branch line being closed in 1972. Trains now run regularly to Corfe Castle and Norden, as well as occasionally to Wareham.

**10. Ballard Down** (page 218) marks the eastern end of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. This chalk escarpment ends at Handfast Point.

**Old Harry Rocks** (page 218) are chalk stacks which extend eastwards from Handfast Point.

**11. Studland Bay** (page 219) has 4mi (6km) of beautiful sands, backed by extensive dunes and the Studland Heath Nature Reserve. The village has a fine Norman church and an excellent pub.

**12. South Haven Point** (page 219) is the terminal for the chain ferry to Sandbanks.

**13. Kingswood Down** (page 218), below Nine Barrow Down, has a panoramic view over Studland.

**14. Corfe Castle** (page 220), a small stone-built village in the centre of Purbeck, is dominated by its romantic and iconic castle, one of the most impressive in England. The National Trust keep the castle, shop, tearoom and visitor centre open all year.

**15. The Blue Pool** (page 223) is an old clay pit at Furzebrook, northwest of Corfe Castle. It has a shop, tearoom, museum and plant centre.