

## ITINERARY #3 - ABBOTSBURY & INLAND



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### ABBOTSBURY & INLAND

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**ABBOTSBURY** lies at the centre of a part of Dorset where the visitor is spoilt for choice. The only answer is to keep coming back for more. There are dramatic views from everywhere along the B3167 coast road, but one of the best vistas in Dorset is undoubtedly from the steep hill west of the village.

Stop in one of the several laybys and take time to savour the The Fleet and Chesil Beach, with Portland behind, St Catherine's Chapel in the foreground and Abbotsbury nestling in its valley. Probably the best time to visit is early morning or evening in the winter.

**Chesil Beach** is an immense shingle barrier stretching from

West Bay to Portland. The size of the pebbles is graded from west to east, starting off with pea-sized stones and gradually increasing in diameter the further east one goes. There is limited access to The Fleet lagoon except where the South West Coast Path follows the northern shore from Langton Herring to Ferrybridge.

**The Ridgeway** passes along the Chalk spine which runs from Askerswell Down and on to Purbeck. Large numbers of prehistoric sites litter this area, which is dominated by Black Down with its prominent Hardy's Monument. There are countless quiet lanes, footpaths and tracks to explore, each revealing more fine views.

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

OS Landranger Map 194  
OS Explorer Map OL15

Dorchester & Weymouth  
Purbeck & South Dorset

## ABBOTSBURY &amp; INLAND

**1. Chesil Beach** (page 148), a shingle barrier beach, stretches 18mi (29km) from West Bay to Portland. It is up to 200m wide and 15m high and is very hard walking. The South West Coast Path follows the beach all the way from West Bay to Abbotsbury.

**2. Burton Bradstock** (page 148) marks the end of the dramatic sandstone cliffs that run from here to Golden Cap. The very popular Hive Beach Cafe overlooks Hive Beach.

**3. Cogden Beach** (page 148), in contrast, is wholly uncommercialised. It is reached via several meadows, which abound in wild flowers in spring and summer. The beach is also host to many plants and is backed by small lagoons, with water plants, amphibians and breeding birds. In spring and autumn this is an excellent place to seek migrant birds.

**4. Abbotsbury** (page 148) is a highly attractive little village which nestles in a small valley overlooking The Fleet and Chesil Beach. The village and environs have much to offer the visitor.

**Abbotsbury Castle** (page 149, 215m, 2ha) is a small hillfort on Wears Hill to the west of the village. It has a panoramic view of Lyme Bay.

**Abbotsbury Sub-Tropical Gardens** (page 149, 8ha) have many rare and exotic flowers, including world famous Camellia groves and Magnolias.

**St Catherine's Chapel** (page 149) is very prominent on the top of Chapel Hill, south of the village. It is barrel-vaulted and dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

**Abbotsbury Swannery** (page 148) is said to be "*The world's only managed colony of nesting Mute Swans.*" The best time is May and June when the cygnets are hatching, but the site is open from March to October. Swans and wildfowl are present all year.

**5. The Fleet** (page 149, 186) is a tidal lagoon which stretches from Abbotsbury to Ferrybridge.

**6. Hardy's Monument** (page 151 SY614877, 242m) is sited very prominently on the summit of Black Down. It commemorates Thomas Masterman Hardy, Nelson's captain at Trafalgar. This site offers splendid views in all directions.

**Archaeological sites** are present in abundance in the area north of Portesham. Bronze Age tumuli are abundant along this chalk ridge from Long Bredy to Bincombe Hill north of Weymouth. There are extensive footpaths and lanes all over this area.

**7. Hellstone** (page 150) is about 1,000m southeast of Hardy's Monument. This large neolithic chambered cairn was set up as it is seen now in 1866.

**8. The Valley of the Stones** (page 150, signposted west of Hardy's Monument) is a chalkcombe famous for its large sandstone Sarsen stones which litter the valley floor.

**9. The Grey Mare & Her Colts** (page 150, SY584870) is reached by a 500m footpath off the road from Abbotsbury to Black Down. This impressive Neolithic chambered cairn is the best in Dorset.

**10. Kingston Russell Stone Circle** (page 150) is about 800m northwest of the Grey Mare along the same path. This small oval setting has 18 recumbent monoliths and is aligned to the midwinter sunset.

**11. The Nine Stones Circle** (page 150) stands on the busy A35 500m west of Winterborne Abbas. Access to this impressive stone circle is from the nearby Little Chef carpark.

**12. Roman Road** (page 152, 174) A long stretch of Roman road can be traced from east of Dorchester to Eggardon Hill and part of the way to Bridport. The section from Lambert's Hill (SY633907) to the hillfort follows a quiet and very scenic side road.

**13. Compton Valence** (page 153, SY595932) is a hamlet in a small, sheltered valley just north of the Roman road. In early spring it has a profusion of Snowdrops, followed by Daffodils.

**14. Eggardon Hill** (page 152, SY541947, 252m, 8ha) is a small hillfort on a chalk ridge prominently situated off Spyway Road 5mi (8km) east of Bridport. There are panoramic views in all directions from the impressive ramparts. The hill is famous for its orchids and butterflies in summer.

**15. Powerstock Common** see page 333.

**16. Kingcombe Meadows** (page 153, SY553990, 185ha) is about 1mi (1.5km) north of Toller Porcorum. Kingcombe Visitors Centre is signposted off Kingcombe Road. The reserve is in the River Hooke valley with a clay bottom and Greensand on the lower slopes, while chalk caps the northern side. The grassland is grazed, or cut for hay, while hedges, lanes, streams and marshy areas complete the diversity. Over 430 species of wild flowers have been recorded here. There are marked trails to explore this very impressive wildlife reserve.