



# The Purbeck Way



## Wareham to Chapman's Pool or Ballard Down



Wareham



Chapman's Pool



Ballard Down



Corfe Castle

# The Purbeck Way

The Purbeck Way passes through some of the most varied and spectacular scenery in Britain. After leaving the River Frome and its water meadows, the route continues through heathland, woodland and grassland before arriving at the dramatic scenery of England's first natural World Heritage Site, the 'Jurassic Coast'. The route then continues along the South West Coast Path from Ballard Down to Chapman's Pool. North of Wareham there are links with the Wareham Forest Way and beyond to Blandford and Christchurch via the Stour Valley Way.



Old Harry Rocks

## Geology and Wildlife

The geology of the area is outstanding. The route from Wareham to Chapman's Pool includes eight major rock types, each shaping the landscape in a different way, with a variety of habitats and wildlife. As the seasons change, so does the wildlife: from spring flowers and summer butterflies to autumn migrating birds and wildfowl staying for the winter.

## Species

Purbeck is home to many nationally rare species. Some, like the ladybird spider, are only found in Dorset. Fortunately much of the area is managed by sympathetic landowners or conservation bodies like the National Trust, so their future is in safe hands.



Adonis blue butterfly

## Following The Purbeck Way

Although much of the route is fairly easy walking, some sections are remote and quite rugged, especially in winter. Plan your route carefully and wear suitable clothing and footwear. The route is signposted with various signs and markers, some showing the distinctive logo above. Although this leaflet includes a map, you are advised to take along Ordnance Survey Explorer Map for Purbeck (No15).



Bee orchid

## Public Transport Information

Wilts and Dorset Buses - Number 40 Poole to Swanage via Wareham and Corfe Castle and number 30 Wareham to Swanage via Corfe Castle. Telephone 01202 338420 [morebus.co.uk](http://morebus.co.uk)

A signposted walk through spectacular landscapes with lots of wildlife and history to enjoy.

## Circular routes along the way

### Eastern route (approx 8 3/4 miles of walking)

#### Corfe Castle to Swanage

From this imposing Royalist ruin, walk along the ridge to the South West Coast Path at Ballard Down. Follow the path down into Swanage, stopping perhaps at the beach before taking the steam train from Swanage Railway Station back to Corfe Castle or Norden Station. Parts of this route are steep, please take care.

### Northern route (approx 5 3/4 miles of walking)

#### Corfe Castle to Wareham

Walk from the Castle across Creech and Stoborough Heaths and then along the River Frome to Wareham Quay. Take the time to wander around historic Wareham and perhaps stop for lunch. Then catch the bus from Wareham Quay back to Corfe Castle. This route can be wet in winter, please wear suitable footwear.

### Southern route (approx 12 miles of walking)

#### Corfe Castle to Swanage via St. Aldhelm's Head

Walk from the Castle south towards the coast at Chapman's Pool, then take the South West Coast Path past Durlston Country Park and down into Swanage. Stroll along the restored Victorian Pier and take in the panoramic views of Purbeck's beautiful countryside before boarding the steam train back to Corfe Castle or Norden Station.

## Keeping Purbeck Special

The Purbeck countryside is a special place. Please help to conserve it by observing the key points of the Countryside Code.

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people



Wareham Train Station - 10 mins walk from the northern end of the Purbeck Way. Trains run east to London Waterloo and west to Weymouth every half an hour (approx.)

Telephone: 0345 6000 650 [southwesternrailway.com](http://southwesternrailway.com)

Swanage Railway - Travel by steam train between Norden Car Park, Corfe Castle and Swanage. During the summer months trains run every 40mins (approx.)

Telephone: 01929 425800 [swanagerailway.co.uk](http://swanagerailway.co.uk)

## Useful contacts:

Rights of Way Officer	01305 221000
Durlston Country Park	01929 424443
Discover Purbeck Information Centre (Wareham)	01929 552740
Tourist Information Centre (Swanage)	01929 766018

## Open Access

Parts of the Purbeck countryside are mapped as open access land. Look out for the access symbol shown right. For more information visit [gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land](http://gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land)



## Footpaths and bridleways

Footpaths are for the use of pedestrians only and will be signposted by:



Bridleways are for the use of pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders and will be signposted by:



Other walking leaflets available: Wareham Two Rivers Walks, Wareham Forest Way, Purbeck Way West and Lawrence of Arabia Trail.

Photo credits: Peter Booton, John Farmar, Nicholas James, Colin Nunn, and Ben Spurling.

**Please note:** The representation of a track or path is no evidence of a public right of way. This is not a Definitive Map of Rights of Way and has no legal status. Users of all routes shown in this leaflet do so entirely at their own risk and are responsible for their own safety, and the safety of others using the same route. We cannot guarantee that all routes will be passable, particularly in wet weather.

Whilst every care has been taken in the production of this leaflet, Purbeck District Council cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information and accepts no responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Large print leaflets are available on request. Please call 01929 557237 for further information.

Designed 2010. Updated by Dorset Council 2019.



# The Purbeck Way



A signposted walk through spectacular landscapes with lots of wildlife and history to enjoy

## Section 1 - Wareham to Corfe Castle (approx 6 miles/9.6km)

From opposite Wareham Quay, follow the river to Redcliffe Farm and on through Ridge. Follow roads to Stoborough Green before turning left across Stoborough Heath. Cross the railway and continue across Creech Heath and into Furzebrook. The road becomes a path leading to the bottom of the chalk ridge to Corfe Castle. If you are joining the walk at Norden Car Park, walk to the National Trust Visitor Centre and cross the road to join a path around the base of the castle.

## Section 2 - Corfe Castle to Ballard Down (approx 6 1/4 miles/10km)

The path skirts the south of the Castle along Ollie Vyes Lane and then into the Square. Follow West Street until the road bends, turn left at the footpath. At Morton's House Hotel turn right along East Street. Pass the school on your left and turn left to follow the footpath over the bridge to Challow Farm. At the road, turn left and then right up on to the chalk ridge, with fine views back to the Castle and on to Swanage. As the path descends to the Ulwell Gap, bear left, cross the Swanage to Studland road and continue around the bottom of the chalk ridge to the end of Ballard Down.

## Section 3 - Ballard Down to Chapman's Pool along the South West Coast Path (approx 11 1/2 miles/18.5km)

Follow the 'acorn' logo.

## Section 4 - Chapman's Pool to Corfe Castle (approx 3 1/4 miles/5.2km)

At Chapman's Pool the path continues north up the steep sided valley and past Swanworth Quarry, from where the village of Kingston will be seen on the left and Corfe Castle, across Corfe Common ahead in the distance.

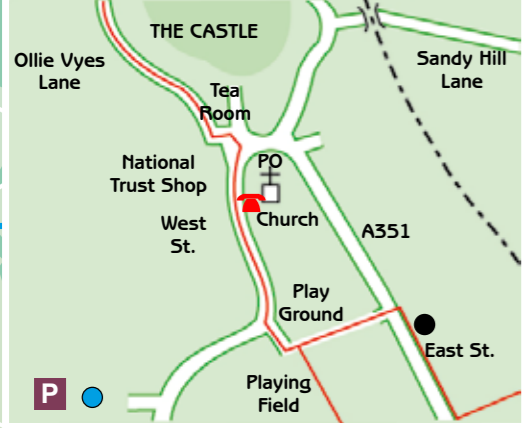
### Key

The Purbeck Way	
South West Coast Path Link	
Bridleway	
Lulworth Range Walks	
Forest	
Major/Minor Road	
Railway and Station	
Swanage Steam Railway	
Disused Railway Track	
Car Park	
Tourist Information Centre	
Visitor Centre	
Bus Stop	
Public Telephone	
Public Toilets	
Refreshments	
Campsite	

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### Route through Corfe Castle Village



**River Frome**  
One of the most westerly chalk rivers in England, the Frome is an important breeding ground for salmon. The large amount of freshwater life attracts many birds including the jewel-like kingfisher. One of Britain's rarest birds, the cetti's warbler, breeds in the dense riverside vegetation, you might hear its loud, abrupt song.

**Heathland**  
Purbeck's lowland heaths are internationally important for wildlife. Amongst the purple heather, grows the local Dorset heath, along with other acid-loving specialities such as sundew, bog asphodel and the vivid blue marsh gentian. All six species of native reptile including the rare smooth snake and sand lizard live here. Countless insects also thrive in the warm, sandy conditions including silver-studded blue butterflies, emperor moths and tiger beetles. These in turn provide food for Dartford warblers, tree pipits and nightjars.

**Ball-clay workings**  
For 3,000 years, Purbeck's fine-grained clay has been used to make high quality pottery and today the extraction industry is still an important part of the local economy. Many of the old clay pits have long been abandoned, filling with water to become well-known beauty spots like the Blue Pool (admission charge). These pools are also a haven for wildlife, supporting over 20 species of dragonfly and a wide variety of other pondlife.

**Corfe Castle (see inset map)**  
The historic village of Corfe is dominated by the magnificent ruin, Corfe Castle. In 1646 a combination of undermining and gunpowder was used to destroy this Royalist stronghold on the orders of Oliver Cromwell, after Lady Bankes had held out against the Roundheads for three years. More information is available at the Castle View Visitor Centre tel: 01929 481294.

**The South West Coast Path**  
The South West Coast Path is the longest of Britain's national trails measuring 630 miles in total. The link with the Purbeck Way is a little more modest, running some 11 1/2 miles from Ballard Down to Chapman's Pool. The route takes you through Swanage, formerly a port for the stone trade, but now a charming seaside resort and 'Gateway to the Jurassic Coast'. The Jurassic Coast, England's first natural World Heritage Site, runs from Orcombe Rocks, in Exmouth, Devon to Studland Bay in Dorset. This 95 mile stretch of coast, covers 185 million years of earth history - a real walk through time! Limited public access to the Lulworth Range Walks and Coastal Path around Kimmeridge and Tyneham is available during the main school holidays and most weekends. Call 01929 404819 for access information.

**Chapman's Pool and Hill Bottom**  
This steep-sided valley, created 10,000 years ago by the flood waters of the last ice age, is an important site for migrant birds. Each spring and autumn thousands of warblers, chats and flycatchers pass through the area, resting and feeding before continuing their journey. The purple spikes of buddleia attract many butterflies, particularly painted ladies and red admirals.

**Durlston to St. Aldhelm's Head**  
The spectacular clifftop walk between Durlston and St. Aldhelm's Head is full of interest with a long legacy of quarrying and smuggling. The Portland limestone cliffs are home to many seabirds, most famously the puffins at Dancing Ledge. Peregrines are also a common sight while, out at sea, with a bit of luck you may spot bottle-nosed dolphins. The coastal grassland is home to two real Purbeck specialities - the early spider orchid and Lulworth skipper butterfly. St. Aldhelm's Head is important for rare arable plants.

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