

beaches

Guide to West Dorset beaches and coastal activities



Fishing

Sea and shore angling are extremely popular along the coast. The harbours at Lyme Regis and West Bay provide opportunities for sea fishing and popular for shore angling is Chesil Beach, with bass, cod, mackerel and plaice all regularly caught depending on the time of year. The beaches at Cogden, West Bexington and Abbotsbury are the most popular and easily accessible spots.

Anyone over the age of 12 fishing in freshwaters in England or Wales must have a valid Environment Agency rod licence. No licence is required to fish from the beach. Rod licences are available from Post Offices or online at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/fish or tel 0870 1662 662.

Water Sports

Windsurfing is normally conducted on the eastern side at West Bay and Lyme Regis with caution, weather permitting.



Along the 25 miles of magnificent West Dorset World Heritage Coastline, you'll find a beach that's perfect for you. There is so much variety on the West Dorset coast that we have produced this information sheet to help you. Whether you wish to bathe, fish, dive, sail, walk or simply admire the stunning views, always remember that the coast can be a dangerous place. Please make sure you holiday in safety.

Harbour information

There are two harbours in West Dorset - Bridport (West Bay) and Lyme Regis. Both have a small fishing fleet and commercial tripping boats but are mainly used in the summer by leisure craft. The tripping boats offer sightseeing, fishing and diving trips.

There is a slipway for public use with space for boat trailers at both harbours. Visiting craft are welcome - for more information and charges see www.dorsetforyou.com

Slipway and launching fees are payable to the harbourmaster at both harbours. Care is necessary when entering or leaving the harbour at West Bay and an outboard motor is needed to manoeuvre the harbour entrance. Extreme care must be exercised even when the sea is comparatively calm. It is possible to launch a small boat direct from various beaches, but this also must be done with care.

Harbourmasters	Lyme Regis	Tel: 01297 442137
	Bridport (West Bay)	Tel: 01308 423222

The Jurassic Coast

The Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site is England's first natural World Heritage Site - it is known as The Jurassic Coast. It covers 95 miles of truly stunning coastline from East Devon to Dorset, with rocks recording 185 million years of the Earth's history. The full 25 miles of West Dorset coastline is made up entirely of rocks formed during the Jurassic Period so this is fossil hunting country!

The beaches around Charmouth and Lyme Regis are the very best places to hunt for fossils and hunting for fossils is especially good in the winter months. Cliff falls and mudflows are a hazard and it is essential that you stay on the beach and away from the cliffs. The **Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre** (www.charmouth.org), together with the **Lyme Regis Museum** and **Dinosaurland in Lyme Regis**, have the latest safety advice and run regular guided fossil collecting walks. This is the best and safest way to hunt for fossils.

It is advisable that you go collecting on a falling tide only. A particular hazard is the beach immediately east of Lyme Regis, which is cut off shortly after low tide.

For further information and to pick up a 'Jurassic Coast Fossil Collecting & Beach Safety' guide, visit Lyme Regis Tourist Information Centre.



Always consult tide tables before exploring the West Dorset coastline - www.ukho.gov.uk - or available at your local TIC. **In an emergency dial 999 and ask for the Coastguard.**

To find out more about the Jurassic Coast see www.jurassiccoast.com.



Tourist Information Centre contacts

Bridport Tourist Information Centre
47 South Street, Bridport, Dorset, DT6 3NY
Tel: 01308 424901 Fax: 01308 421060
Email: bridport.tic@westdorset-dc.gov.uk

Dorchester Tourist Information Centre
Antelope Walk, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1BE
Tel: 01305 267992 Fax: 01305 266079
Email: dorchester.tic@westdorset-dc.gov.uk

Lyme Regis Tourist Information Centre
Church Street, Lyme Regis, Dorset DT7 3BS
Tel: 01297 442138 Fax: 01297 444668
Email: lymeregis.tic@westdorset-dc.gov.uk

Sherborne Tourist Information Centre
Digby Road, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 3NL
Tel: 01935 815341 Fax: 01935 817210
Email: sherborne.tic@westdorset-dc.gov.uk

Community Enabling,
West Dorset District Council, Stratton House,
58/60 High West Street, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UZ
Tel: 01305 252241
Fax: 01305 257039
Email: tourism@westdorset-dc.gov.uk
Website: www.dorsetforyou.com



Tourism website:
www.westdorset.com



beaches



West Dorset beaches	Dogs	Car park	Toilet	Safety advice
<p>ABBOTSBURY - CHESIL BANK AND FLEET LAGOON NATURE RESERVE A shelving beach made up of pebbles and shingle. Close to the beach is the village of Abbotsbury, where there are three main attractions - Swannery, Sub Tropical Gardens and Children's Farm. The village is approximately one mile from the beach. Services & cafés/pubs in the village.</p> <p>It is also the site of the Chesil and Fleet Nature Reserve. There are stunning views across to Weymouth and Portland and to the east is the beautiful site of Golden Cap.</p>	Yes	Yes (Seasonal)	Yes Radar Key	 Bathing can be dangerous. The beach shelves steeply & there is a strong undertow. Take care on the shoreline because sudden large waves can engulf persons at the water's edge.
<p>BURTON BRADSTOCK A shelving shingle beach, close to the village of Burton Bradstock.</p> <p>On a clear day visitors can enjoy breath-taking views round to Portland and right the way round to the East Devon Coast.</p>	No dogs 01 May - 30 Sept inc	Yes	Yes	 Bathing can be dangerous. The beach shelves steeply & there is a strong under-tow. Take care on the shoreline because sudden large waves can engulf persons at the water's edge.
<p>CHARMOUTH This beach is slightly shelving and is made up of pebbles and sand.</p> <p>Charmouth is famous, along with Lyme Regis, for its fossils, especially in winter months due to the rough seas. Charmouth is located 2 miles from Lyme Regis and 6 miles from Bridport.</p> <p>At the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre you can find out how to hunt for your own fossils by joining one of the regular guided fossil walks. Guided walks are held Feb - Sept (tides permitting).</p> <p>The coast path continues eastwards to Lyme Regis and East Devon and westwards to Seatown and Golden Cap.</p> <p>ALWAYS FOLLOW THE FOSSIL COLLECTING CODE OF PRACTICE: COLLECTING FROM FALLEN OR BEACH MATERIAL IS ACCEPTABLE PRACTICE. DIGGING IN THE CLIFFS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE PRACTICE.</p>	No Dogs East Beach July & August 1000 - 1800 West Beach 01 May - 30 Sept included	Yes	Yes Within walking distance	 Often used for bathing, depending on weather conditions. When red flag is showing it is not suitable for inflatables. In the beach car park there is a bridge over some deep water leading to the coast path and beach. Take care. Coast path - risk of landslip/ mudslides. Risk of being cut off by tides. Danger of falling rocks.
<p>COGDEN Owned by the National Trust, this steep shelving, shingle beach is located on the coast road between Burton Bradstock and Abbotsbury (B3157). Car parking is free with direct access to the beach via a footpath across a field.</p>	Yes	Yes	No	 Bathing can be dangerous. The beach shelves steeply & there is a strong under-tow. Take care on the shoreline because sudden large waves can engulf persons at the water's edge.
<p>EYPE A steeply shelving pebble beach. Located three miles from Bridport. Walkers can enjoy breath-taking views across the West Dorset coast.</p>	Yes	Short walk from beach	No	 Bathing can be dangerous. The beach shelves steeply & there is a strong under-tow. Take care on the shoreline because sudden large waves can engulf persons at the water's edge.
<p>LYME REGIS Lyme Regis is a picturesque and historic seaside town set in an area of outstanding natural beauty. A town of steep streets, its most outstanding feature is a delightful 13th century harbour known as the Cobb.</p> <p>The beaches in Lyme Regis are a mixture of sand and pebbles. Monmouth beach is very pebbly and shelves. The Front beach is a flat, sandy beach, as is Cobb Gate.</p> <p>Lifeboat & coastguard station. Walk along the historic Cobb for exquisite views back along the West Dorset and East Devon Coast.</p> <p>Fossil hunting is popular - Contact the TIC for more information.</p> <p>ALWAYS FOLLOW THE FOSSIL COLLECTING CODE OF PRACTICE: COLLECTING FROM FALLEN OR BEACH MATERIAL IS ACCEPTABLE PRACTICE. DIGGING IN THE CLIFFS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE PRACTICE.</p>	No dogs 01 April - 31 Oct on Front Beach from Cobb Gate Car Park west to the Lifeboat slipway	Yes Short stay car park near Cobb Gate and 2 short stay & 1 long stay near Monmouth beach.	Yes	 Front beach - Often used for bathing, depending on weather conditions. The Cobb - uneven surfaces, ground slippery in wet weather. No railings around the edge of Cobb. Monmouth beach - Bathing can be dangerous. The beach shelves steeply & there is a strong undertow. Take care on the shoreline because sudden large waves can engulf persons at the water's edge. Tides can cut off people between Lyme Regis and Charmouth - EXTREME CARE TO BE TAKEN
<p>RINGSTEAD A protected shingle beach over looking Weymouth Bay.</p>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Often used for bathing, depending on weather conditions.
<p>SEATOWN A steep shelving beach with pebbles and shingle.</p>	No dogs at any time	Yes	Yes	 Bathing can be dangerous. The beach shelves steeply & there is a strong under-tow. Take care on the shoreline because sudden large waves can engulf persons at the water's edge.
<p>WEST BAY Shingle, sand and pebbles. Steep shelving.</p> <p>Slipway and Harbour.</p> <p>Auxiliary coastguard.</p>	No dogs 01 May - 01 Oct East Pier to East Cliffs, West Pier to West Cliffs.	Yes	Yes	 West Beach - often used for bathing. East Beach - Bathing can be dangerous. The beach shelves steeply & there is a strong undertow. Take care on the shoreline because sudden large waves can engulf persons at the water's edge. Stay away from the base of the cliffs due to risk of falling rocks. Do not climb the cliffs.
<p>WEST BEXINGTON A shingle beach that shelves steeply. Walking is popular around this area and like many of the other beaches in the area the views to the East and West are superb.</p>	Dogs allowed in restricted area	Yes	Yes	 Bathing can be dangerous. The beach shelves steeply & there is a strong under-tow. Take care on the shoreline because sudden large waves can engulf persons at the water's edge.

*Dogs Fouling of Land Act 1996 Max Penalty £1000 Dog Warden Patrolled Areas. Please remove dog faeces from all above areas. Bagged faeces may be placed in any litter bin.

SAFETY ADVICE

West Dorset is a popular rural location for visitors to enjoy the freedom of the countryside. The majority of visits are incident free and these notes are included so that visitors can make an informed judgement about their safety:



- Wind and tidal effects can create hazardous sea conditions including large waves breaking on shelving beaches and an undertow. Consider the conditions before swimming or approaching the water's edge.
- Incoming tides can trap the unwary. Check the tide before walking on beach footpaths.
- Cliff rock falls and mudflows sometimes occur on the coast. Do not enter known problem areas. Keep away from the base of cliffs.
- Sea walls and harbours are often not fenced. Take care not to fall from the edge.