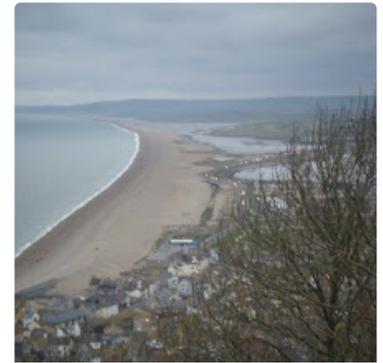
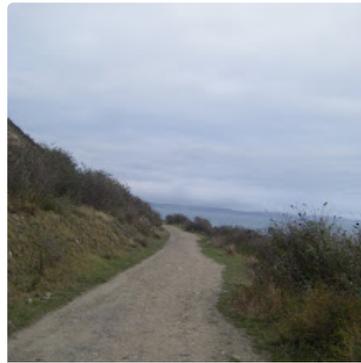




# South West Coast Path: Weymouth via Isle of Portland Circular Walk

Weymouth's harbour, the South West Coast Path, a disused railway path, industrial archaeology and a grandstand view of the Devon and Dorset coast.




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<b>Length</b>	77A Weymouth to Isle of Portland and Portland Bill : 8.1 miles (13 km)
	77B Weymouth Circular (via the railway walk, Chesil beach and SWCP) : 9 miles (15 km)
	77C Isle of Portland Circular (via the SWCP) : 8 miles (14 km)

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**OS Map** OS Explorer OL15 (Purbeck). Weymouth is in Dorset.

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**Toughness** All walks: 4 out of 10 - 1 climb up to the Verne, fairly good paths throughout

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**Features** This walk was inspired by a BBC 'Railway Walks' program featuring a disused railway line between Weymouth and the Isle of Portland. It also features the sea, a stage of the South West Coast Path ("SWCP"), and industrial archeology - the quarrying of Portland stone.

It is in 2 distinct sections: 1) from Weymouth, south to the causeway by the railway path, or by the SWCP, and 2) the Isle of Portland Circular path

Weymouth has a pretty harbour, with many pubs and cafes. There are 2 routes south to the causeway over to Portland, the South West Coastal

Path (SWCP), and a disused railway line turned into a cycle path. Railway walks buffs suggest doing the walks twice, once in summer for the greenery, and once in winter to appreciate the engineering, but once is enough for most. The causeway is part of Chesil beach, a pebble beach forming a long spit.

The Isle of Portland is a tall wedge shaped slab of Portland Stone, high at the north end, and sloping slowly into the sea at the south end at Portland Bill. The hill on the north side is The Verne. On top of it is a citadel (a fort housing a prison). The Verne has stunning view over Chesil Beach, Weymouth harbour, The Isle of White, and a large stretch of Devon and Dorset's coast - a 1/4 of the entire SWCP.

Note there is no route to the east of the prison, the path shown on the OS map is a dead end. You need to go around the west side of the citadel to join the coast path. On the south side of the prison are remains of WW2 gun emplacements, and much evidence of quarrying, disused tramways and the like.

Furthur south along the east coast, you can choose between the cliff-top SWCP or the route of the railway line (half way up the cliff), which goes as far as Church Ope, the island's only beach. At the southern tip, is Portland Bill and a lighthouse.

There is a regular bus service for most of the route, so it is easy to cut the walk short at any time.

Weymouth to Portland and back is far too long for 1 day, so 3 day walks are suggested.

### **77A : Weymouth to the Isle of Portland and Portland Bill (linear walk)**

Head south from Weymouth along the railway line or SWCP to the causeway, then up to the Verne, and down Portland's east coast to Church Ope and Portland Bill. Start back along the west coast only as far as Southwell, for a bus back to the train station

### **77B : Weymouth Circular**

Out by the railway walk to the causeway and the Verne (Portland's hill) for stunning views, and return back by the SWCP for a drink by Weymouth's historic harbour

### **77C : Portland Circular walk**

Best for car drivers, as it would require out and back buses from Weymouth station for train travellers

## By Car

By car its possible to park at the Causeway, the Verne (free), Church Ope (free) and Portland Bill (pay), and do several shorter walks.

## East of The Verne

A tramway used to run around the east side of the The Verne Citidel (prison). Its route is shown on the OS 1:25K scale map. A public footpath, now overgrown, runs along it, except for a gap in the middle where the route is blocked by security gates for the port. For now its impassable. There is no public route around the east side of the hill.

## Points of Interest

- [Isle of Portland](#)
- [Portland Branch Railway](#)
- [Rodwell Trail page on Weymouth Council website](#) - the nearest thing to a homepage.
- [Trip report of a Portland Circular Walk](#)
- [Geoff Kirby - local's in depth guide to exploring the island](#)
- [Geology of the Island](#) - the very detailed Ian West / Southampton University site.

## Eat

- There are many places in Weymouth's historic harbour area.
- [The Jailhouse Cafe](#), DT5 1EQ. Inside the Verne Prison on top of the hill - drive through the traffic light controlled tunnel into the prison itself. Stunning views!
- The Heights Hotel, Yeates Rd, Dorset DT5 2EN. The landmark hotel at the top of Portland's hill (on the only road up the hill to the south of the island) has cafe with a stunning panoramic view. Its also the bus stop for the Isle of Portland Circular walk.
- [The Lobster Pot](#), DT5 2JT. The cafe by Portland Bill Lighthouse. Recommended.

## Travel

### Getting there: by Train

This walk is best for a weekend trip given the distance, but there are regular promotions, e.g. £12 day return in 2015. Consider 'Advance' tickets. Also check "Plusbus", it adds about £2 to your ticket, but includes bus travel to/from Portland

Trains from London Waterloo to Weymouth are 2 an hour (1 an hour on Sunday), and take 3 hours.

### Getting there: by Car

About 3.5 hours from London. Free parking anywhere outside Weymouth town centre

## Getting Around: Weymouth Buses

2 bus routes go from Weymouth station to Portland. Route #1 (Weymouth - Causeway - Portland) is very regular, even on Sundays, even late in the evening - but it only goes as far south as Southwell, about 2km short of Portland Bill. There is also an expensive tourist service to Portland Bill (£5 day tickets only, not included in 'Plusbus').

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### SWCP

The South West Coast Path (SWCP) is the longest of the national paths and follows the coastline of Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Devon again and finally Dorset. This section, along the Exmoor coast, is its traditional start, as is done anti-clockwise.

The walk may be done as one long walk, staying overnight along the way, or as a series of day walks, returning by bus to your car or accommodation.

By car, you'd be better in a B&B, renting a cottage, or staying in one of the caravan parks near Combe Martin, and doing day trips by car (returning to it by bus), then you don't have to worry about carrying your kit, provisions, booking accommodation, etc. With 2 cars you can shuttle, and have far more freedom over how far you walk each day.

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### Stages

Minehead is a large seaside resort town with shops accommodation, but only heritage rail, not national rail.

- [Day 1\) Minehead to Porlock Weir : 14.1km / 8.7 miles / 408m of ascent](#)

Porlock is a small touristy village with several pubs, restaurants and B&Bs a few km inland. Porlock Weir on the coast has a hotel and a good pub.

- [Day 2\) Porlock Weir to Lynmouth : 18.5km / 11.5 miles / 1,072m of ascent](#)

Lynmouth (seafront) and Lynton (above it at the top of the hill) are a large very touristy village with lots of accommodation. Year round bus service inland, but summer only bus service along the coast

- [Day 3\) Lynmouth to Combe Martin : 21.8 km / 13.6 miles / 1,250m of ascent](#)

Combe Martin is a small seaside village a few km from a much larger one - Ilfracombe

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### Links

The SWCP National Trail website has more details on each day's route. The SWCP Association has an annual handbook with updated accommodation guide.

- [SWCP Association](#) : updated accommodation and trail news
- [SWCP Official Website](#) : details of each day (choose 'longer walks')
- [Exmoor Public Transport](#)

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## Chesil Beach

Don't even think of walking along the 14 mile (23 km) spit at Chesil Beach [\[wikipedia\]](#) [\[geology\]](#) [\[nature reserve\]](#), which runs parallel to the coast between the Isle of Portland caesway and Abbotsbury, with the brackish Fleet Lagoon behind it.

Why? It a nightmare of shingle walking over 180,000,000,000 pebbles. It hard going over the shingle, and once you start, there's no way to cut it short. The west and middle of the spit is closed from April to August inclusive due to nesting birds (starting from the "Dragon's Teeth" anti-tank blocks at the north west end of the Lagoon) and there are also closures due to an army firing range (at the eastern end of the Lagoon). The lagoon side of the spit is always closed (fragile environment) - stick to the crest of seaward shore. The eastern end of the spit is always open.

If you do decide to walk it, [check in with the reserve warden's](#) (more so you can help them - they are interesting in nature sightings, and any problems you encounter, as bits of the reserve are rarely visited, which is a hint in itself)

Current thinking is that the beach isn't a true spit (or 'tombolo') caused by deposition of pebbles washed along the coast by tides, but a barrier beach (or 'shoal') instead.

The South West Coast Path does not go along Chesil Beach, but along the land side of the lagoon behind it. It a lovely walk, but does not compare to the nearby coast or ridge walks.

The spit is best viewed from the hills above Abbotsbury (or the Subtropical Gardens), or from the Isle of Portland's hill. It's also well worth a visit for a (short) walk. Access:

- East: DT4 9XE. By the Isle of Portland Causeway. Large cafe. Regular buses (Weymouth - Portland). Parking: £1/hour, cheaper in winter.
- West: DT3 4LA. Abbotsbury's beach, past the Subtropical Gardens. Parking £3 (per day only, when the cafe is open). Small cafe.

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## Help Us!

After the walk, please leave a [comment](#), it really helps. Thanks!

You can also upload photos to the [●● SWC Group on Flickr](#) ([upload your photos](#)) and [videos to](#) [YouTube](#). This walk's tags are:

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**By Car**      **Start**

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**Map Walk**    This walk **requires** an OS map and a compass or GPS for navigation. You can print out OS maps using the link above.

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**Help**            National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Traveline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

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**Version**        Mar-25 **Andrew**

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## Walk Directions

The whole walk - Weymouth to the Isle of Portland and back is too long for 1 day, hence the 3 options.

### 1) Weymouth to the Isle of Portland

From Weymouth, south along the SWCP. Cross the causeway to Portland. Climb the Verne for stunning views, and follow the SWCP south. Cross the island, and head back north, and catch a bus back to the station.

A 1:25000 map would be useful for Weymouth town centre, and the Verne sections

1. [1] Start from Weymouth Station
2. Head to Weymouth's picturesque harbour (cross it on the bridge, not the passenger ferry),
3. Then the South West Coastal Path south (or you could follow the disused railway line path)
4. [2] Cross the causeway, either on the railway trackbed, or along Chesil Beach (the pebble embankment).
5. Leave the SWCP at the foot of the hill, and head east, steeply up the hill to the prison entrance (on the north side of the Verne).
6. Head for Portland Castle
7. Then climb the hill on the disused tramway. Head east to the north west corner of the citadel
8. Walk around the prison (a fort) on its 'moat' to its south east side (**NB there is no access to the coast on the east of the prison**)
9. [3] Explore the remains of gun emplacements ('battery') on the hill top.

10. Join the SWCP. Head south on the clifftop SWCP (or the lower railway line path) past remains of quarry workings to Church Ope cove.
11. *Cross the centre of island to its west coast*
- 12.
13. Head north along the SWCP, up the west coast
14. Catch a regular bus from Chiswell (every 10-15 mins, takes 15 mins), or the start of the causeway to Weymouth Station.

## 2) Weymouth Circular

From Weymouth Station to the Verne (Portland's Hill) and back. Out by the old railway line, back via the SWCP

1. Start at Weymoth Station
2. Follow the Rodmell Trail (a disused railway) line to the causway.
3. Then follow the above route (points [2] to [3]) up to the prison, and around to its south side
4. Follow the SWCP west along the ridge with a stunning view to the north
5. Follow the SWCP down the hill, and back across the causeway, and along the SWCP to Weymouth harbour.

## 3) Isle of Portland Circular - Car Drivers only

Parking at the Verne, a circular walk along the SWCP

1. Park at the top of the hill, beyond Fortuneswell, not by the prison!
2. Follow the SWCP around the island, but do explore the Verne, just south of the prison

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