

Dorset Coast Thomas Hardy Walks Holiday

Destinations: Dorset Coast & England

Trip code: LHTHY-4

Trip Walking Grade: 3



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Thomas Hardy understood, knew, and was loyal to Dorset, the countryside where he was born and lived most of his life. Dorset's wild uplands and quiet villages, tucked away beneath the Downs, have changed very little since Hardy's day. We walk through Hardy's landscapes and see it much as he would have seen it, and the paths we take are the ancient byways followed for generations by people going about their ways. These are the paths Thomas Hardy walked and the characters in his novels trod. An exploration on foot of Hardy's 'Wessex' is surely one of the best ways of discovering Hardy's land and work.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Great value: all prices include Full Board en-suite accommodation, a full programme of walks with all transport to and from the walks, plus evening activities
- Great walking: explore Hardy's Wessex in the company of our experienced leader
- Accommodation: our Country House is equipped with all the essentials – a welcoming and relaxing lounge and dining area, a drying room for your boots and kit, and comfortable en-suite rooms

HOLIDAYS HIGHLIGHTS

- Discover the beautiful homeland of Thomas Hardy and the landscapes that inspired him
- Walks explore Hardy's Wessex and his inspiration for novels such as Far from the Madding Crowd, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, The Woodlanders
- Admire the scenes of Hardy's Egdon Heath, Mistover Knap, Rainbarrow, Mellstock, and Abbot's Cernal
- Follow in the footsteps of Hardy's characters such as Tess of the D'Urbervilles. She was one of Hardy's most intrepid walkers

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

You're welcome to check in from 4pm onwards.

Enjoy a complimentary Afternoon Tea on arrival.

Day 2: Higher Bockhampton, Egdon Heath, And Stinsford (Mellstock) And Puddletown (Weatherbury)

The walk starts at Higher Bockhampton where Hardy was born in 1840, and after walking through woodland to view his cottage, we continue through meadows and farmland which Hardy saw from his bedroom window, and which became the world of Far from the madding crowd, to arrive at Stinsford church where Hardy's heart is buried in the grave of his first wife, Emma.

After exploring Stinsford, Hardy's Mellstock, the location for Under the Greenwood tree, we walk the paths Hardy walked along the River Frome and then explore the landscape to the north which he immortalised as Egdon Heath in one of his most powerful novels, The return of the native. We will still be able to see many of the features of the heath he drew upon in the novel, including the possible site of Mistover Knap where Eustacia Vye lived, the pond close by where she met her straying lover, Wildeve, and the mighty old British burial place which Hardy named Rainbarrow. We end our walk in Puddletown, Hardy's Weatherbury, at the church where Fanny Robin was buried and mourned by Sergeant Troy in Far from the madding crowd. 9½ miles (15km)

Day 3: Cerne Abbas And The Woodlanders

Our walk today starts and finishes in one of the most beautiful Dorset villages, Cerne Abbas, Hardy's Abbot's Cernal. From here we walk above the Cerne Valley and along the hillside to High Stoy, one of Hardy's favourite viewpoints overlooking the Blackmore Vale. We continue along the crest of Little Minterne Hill, and as we walk through the beautiful valley with its rounded copses, by Minterne House, and where parts of old beech and oak forests shade our path, we enter the landscape of Hardy's The Woodlanders, and its characters, Melbury and Giles Winterbourne.

The paths take us through farmland and woodland into the loveliest part of Cerne Abbas, with its charming black and white cottages, and to the Abbey ruins, possibly used by Hardy as the model for the great barn in Far from the madding crowd. 8½ miles (14km)

Day 4: Wessex Heights – Around Bulbarrow In The Footsteps Of Tess Of The D'Urbervilles

Today's walk begins in the heart of Tess of the D'Urbervilles countryside in the Blackmore Vale. Appropriately, Tess is one of Hardy's most intrepid walkers. We follow in Tess's footsteps around Bulbarrow Hill whose summit is ringed by Rawlsbury Iron Age Hill Fort. It was near here that Tess was compelled to look for work at Flintcombe Ash Farm (Plush) after Angel Clare deserted her. We continue on paths and bridleways walked by Tess, with views of Blackmore Vale which Hardy loved so much, and into which Tess gazed and saw 'an abyss of chaotic

shade'. Our route then takes us through small copses, and farmland, and passes through the small hamlet of Hilton, the epitome of one of Hardy's 'part real/part imaginary' village and through the Estate hamlet of Bingham Melcombe, all known by Hardy as he walked and cycled his beloved landscapes. 7½ miles (12km)

Day 5: Departure Day

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making your way home.

ACCOMMODATION

West Lulworth House

Set just 200 yards from the sea, West Lulworth House has a highly coveted location just above the lake-still expanse of Lulworth Cove on Dorset's iconic Jurassic Coast. Built in 1881 by the then Mayor of Weymouth, it has been perennially popular with walkers, twitchers and fossil hunters. As well as 22 delightful bedrooms, there's a south facing garden and elevated terrace with cracking views, an outdoor heated pool and a pair of lovely lounges, perfect for a relaxing walking holiday exploring the Jurassic Coast. Step out the front door and on to the coast path. To the west lies Middle Beach and the picture perfect Durdle Door, with its massive rock arch and gently sloping beach. East lie the beaches of Mupe Bay and Arish Mell. But you're here for the walking and what adventure you'll have on the coast path or exploring the interior. Then there's Lulworth Castle and the famous ruins of Corfe Castle standing guard over the Purbeck Hills to explore.

Matchless Country House Accommodation

Accommodation Info

Need To Know

Important Covid-19 Steps We Have Taken For Guest Safety: Please Read

Following the relaxation in government guidance on 19 July, we are continuing to take extra steps to keep our guests leaders, and staff safe in our HF country houses. We ask all our guests to respect the measures put in place.

The English, Scottish and Welsh governments are not in sync, so measures in our country houses will vary between the nations. With the relaxation of social distancing in England, from 19 July we will be allowing larger groups to dine and relax in the bar together. However, we will still give guests space e.g. we will seat 6 people at a table where pre-pandemic we may have seated 8. We will ensure our public rooms are well ventilated by opening doors and windows wherever possible. If you have any concerns about distancing, please speak to the House Manager. The government recommendation for England is to wear face coverings in crowded areas. You must wear a face covering by law in public areas in hotels in Scotland. This is mandatory in public spaces; however, face coverings will not be required whilst eating and drinking in the restaurant and bar areas or whilst you are outside our houses. In Wales face coverings will remain a legal requirement indoors, with the exception of hospitality premises.

As a temporary measure, we will not be servicing rooms during a stay. Extra tea, coffee, milk, and toiletries will be made available on request for all guests. It is recommended that guests bring their own toiletries for the duration of their stay. We will though be increasing the frequency of cleaning in our public areas providing particular attention to frequently touched items including door handles and handrails.

Menus for the week will be available in your room on arrival. A self-service breakfast will be served from 7.45am – 9am. Picnic lunches will now be pre-ordered the night before from an order form in the room. Evening meals

will be table service. A dinner order form will be available in each room for completion. Dinner is served at either 7.15pm or 7.30pm. Please check at the house for details. The bar will be open. We will be offering a table service but guests can also come to the bar to order (depending on local restrictions).

Join our team after dinner on Wednesday evenings for the HF Big Pub Quiz. There will be one other evening of entertainment at the start of the week, which will vary depending on the country house that you are staying at. Our Walk Leaders will also be on hand in the bar or lounge for individual or small group walks talks briefings, which allow guests to talk through the following day's walk options and ask any questions. All of our swimming pools are open, except for Glen Coe, which will not re-open this year. Swimming Pools will be operated in line with maximum capacities.

For more information and to see all the steps taken, [visit our page on how house stays will be adapted](#).

Rooms

Tea & coffee-making facilities, TV, Hairdryer, Toiletries, Wi-Fi

Stay in one of the main building's bright, beautifully presented rooms or in the adjoining cottage. With 22 bedrooms, West Lulworth House has plenty of space and there's a range of Classic, Premium and Superior Rooms to choose from: each room has an airy feel and the same cosy style. Opt though for Room 4 on the first floor of the main house for its weathered, pastel-painted wood panels and the lovely view looking over the cove, or squirrel yourself away in Room 23 in the cottage to the side of the main house for a large room with more sumptuous views to soak up.

All 'Classic' rooms are ensuite and furnished to a high standard. There are also several 'Premium' and 'Superior' Rooms that are either larger or have a desirable view, a more luxurious mattress and larger television – upgrade your stay for just an extra £15-25 per person per night. You can choose a specific room for an extra £30 per room, subject to availability. Upgrade supplements still apply.

Facilities

Free Wi-Fi, boot room and drying room, attractive garden, outdoor swimming pool, multi-purpose activity room, lounge, library and board games to borrow

After a day walking on the Dorset Coast or hunting for fossils, come back to the house and its specially tailored walkers' facilities. Relax by sitting in the sunny south facing gardens or take a table on the terrace with matchless views of the cove below. Slip in to the heated outdoor pool (currently closed) then surface in time to retire to the cosy lounge and its squishy sofas and seafaring decorations to read up on the area or the attractive bar with its pretty tiled insets for a sundowner.

Food & Drink

As at all our country houses, holidays are full board, from afternoon tea served as a welcome treat through that evening's meal to a hearty breakfast on the day of departure. Food at West Lulworth House is varied with a strong emphasis on the use of seasonal British produce. Our experienced chefs create each dish using only the freshest ingredients and, when in season, use home grown herbs and vegetables taken from our own gardens to give a true taste of the local area.

Accessibility

For accessibility and assistance information, please contact our expert team on 020 3974 8865 or view the accessibility information online for [West Lulworth House](#)

TRAVEL DETAILS

Our address is: West Lulworth House, Lulworth Cove, Dorset BH20 5RJ

Tel: [01929 400253](tel:01929400253)

We recommend getting the train to Wool and then a taxi transfer to West Lulworth House. However if you are planning on driving, please note that you can only park in a public car park. Please check the process below.

By Train:

The nearest railway station is at Wool. For train times and route planning by train visit www.nationalrail.co.uk or phone 03457 48 49 50.

By Taxi:

The 5-mile journey from Wool railway station takes approximately 10 minutes. You can pre-book a taxi from our recommended taxi company, Durdle Door Cabs. As a guide price, it costs £12 per 4-seat taxi in 2020. 8-seat taxis are also available at a higher rate. They will arrange shared taxis wherever possible. Please pre-book your taxi at least 7 days in advance by contacting:

Durdle Door Cabs*
Tel: +44 (0) 1929 444546
Email: info@durdle-door-cabs.com

The return journey can be arranged on your behalf by the West Lulworth House Manager.

*Durdle Door Cabs is not owned or managed by HF Holidays.

By Car:

The recommended route is via Bere Regis and Wool – although slightly longer this avoids the traffic through Bournemouth and Poole. From Bere Regis follow signs to Wool. At Wool cross the level crossing and turn left following signs to Lulworth Cove and West Lulworth. Continue for a further 4 miles to Lulworth Cove. As you enter Lulworth Cove Village, there is a slip road on your left to West Lulworth House.

It isn't possible to park in the HF car park, which is just for drop offs. The main public car park across the road though is free for HF Holidays' guests staying at West Lulworth House in 2021, as long as you book your car in with staff at West Lulworth House within 30 minutes of arriving. Note though, failure to do this could result in a fine from the Lulworth Estate. For 2022, Lulworth Estate are introducing a new system whereby guests may have to book the car park online before arrival; as soon as we have more information from the Lulworth Estate, we will update this page.

Travelling From Overseas

If you're travelling from Europe the most convenient airport is at Southampton. From Southampton Airport Parkway station (adjacent to the airport terminal) there are direct trains every hour to Wool - journey time 1hr 20mins. See www.nationalrail.co.uk for details.

For most guests, travelling to either London Heathrow or London Gatwick airport is the best option. See www.nationalrail.co.uk for onward connections by train to Wool.

LOCAL AREA

Lulworth Cove is a justifiably popular destination, with day-trippers and holiday-makers drawn by the stunning local scenery. The cove itself is a near-perfect semi-circle which has been carved by the soft rocks by the waves. A 20-minute walk along the cliff path will take you to Durdle Door, one of the area's other geological wonders. This impressive natural sea arch was formed from the more resistant limestone. The free Heritage Centre next to the public car park is well worth a visit during your stay.

Facilities in Lulworth Cove are limited to a selection of pubs, cafés and souvenir shops. The nearest towns are

Wareham, Dorchester and Weymouth, which all have a good selection of banks, chemists and supermarkets.

During your visit to Dorset you may enjoy visiting the following places of interest:

Bovington Tank Museum

[The Tank Museum](#) at Bovington, 20 minutes' drive north of Lulworth Cove, houses a particularly impressive collection of tanks from around the world. Trace the history from the tank's origins in the First World War to the present day.

Lulworth Castle

Situated just a couple of miles inland from the cove, [Lulworth Castle](#) is a 17th century mock medieval castle that was once the heart of an extensive estate. Having been gutted by fire in 1929 it was derelict for many years, but has since been completely renovated.

Corfe Castle

The iconic ruins of [Corfe Castle](#) stand guard over a natural gap in the Purbeck Hills, about 30 minutes' drive from Lulworth. Dating from the 11th century it is now maintained by the National Trust.

The Etches Collection - Museum Of Jurassic Marine Life

[The Etches Collection](#) houses the finest single collection of Late Jurassic fossils, all found by Dr Steve Etches MBE in and around Kimmeridge Bay. The museum takes visitors on a journey of the marine flora and fauna which lived here over 150 million years ago. The museum is located in Kimmeridge village, some 8 miles from Lulworth Cove. It can be reached in around 21 minutes by road or on foot (if the Lulworth Range Walks are open) – which takes somewhat longer!

Swanage Railway

Ride on this lovingly restored [Swanage Railway](#) branch line through the glorious Purbeck countryside. Steam hauled trains run throughout the year. You may want to leave your car in the Park & Ride at Norden, about 30 minutes' drive from Lulworth, and use the railway to visit the attractive seaside resort of Swanage.

Monkey World

Located near Wool, 20 minutes' drive north of Lulworth Cove, [Monkey World](#) is a world-renowned ape rescue centre familiar to many from the TV programme 'Monkey Life'. Monkey World provides a home for apes rescued from mistreatment in the pet trade, circuses and used in medical laboratories. Apes are rescued from all over the world. Residents include four separate groups of chimpanzees, three groups of orang-utans, capuchin monkeys and several species of gibbon.

Abbotsbury Swannery

[Abbotsbury Swannery](#) is the world's only managed colony of Mute Swans. Some 600 of them live and breed here, nesting unusually close to each other. Visitors can walk through the colony and help feed the birds. Visit from mid-May to the end of June to see hundreds of adorable cygnets. The swannery is near Weymouth, about 20 miles from Lulworth Cove (40 minutes' drive).

Brownsea Island

[Brownsea Island](#) is located in the middle of Poole Harbour; boats depart from Poole Quay and Sandbanks, about 40 minutes' drive from Lulworth Cove. The island is now a nature reserve, managed by the National Trust and one of the last remaining places to spot red squirrels in the UK. Brownsea is also famous as the location of the

world's first scout camp in 1907.

Weymouth

Weymouth is a fine Regency seaside resort with an ever-popular beach and bustling harbour. Visitors can learn about the town's fascinating history in the [Weymouth Museum](#).

Thomas Hardy's Cottage

The writer Thomas Hardy was one of Dorset's most celebrated residents who used the local towns and villages around Dorchester as the setting for many of his novels. His [birthplace near Dorchester](#) is around 30 minutes' drive away and now owned by the National Trust.

Cerne Abbas Giant

This 180ft figure carved into a hill just outside the village of Cerne Abbas is one of the UK's most famous chalk hill figures – and the largest. His exact age and purpose is still debated; you decide if you think he once held a cloak over his arm and a severed head in his hand! The [Cerne Abbas Giant](#) is near Dorchester, about a 45-minute drive from Lulworth Cove.

Athelhampton House & Gardens

Located near Dorchester, about 30 minutes' drive away, [Athelhampton House](#) is a fine Tudor manor house dating from 1485. The surrounding formal gardens are also impressive and were created between 1891 - 1899.

Kingston Lacy

This fine country house and estate is located near Wimborne Minster, about 45 minutes' drive from Lulworth Cove. Dating from 1665, and now managed by the [National Trust](#), it houses a fine collection of antiques, with many notable examples from the Middle East and Egypt.

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Essential Information

"There's no such thing as bad weather, just the wrong type of clothing!" goes the adage. Come prepared for all eventualities and you'll walk in comfort as well as safety. Britain's famous for its changeable weather, so here's our advice on what to wear and bring.

Essentials

- Waterproof walking boots providing ankle support and good grip.
 - A waterproof jacket and over-trousers
 - Gloves and a warm hat (it can be chilly at any time of the year)
 - Rucksack
 - Water bottle (at least 1 litre capacity)
 - A small torch (everywhere in winter, year round in mountains)
 - Sun hat and sunscreen
- Denim jeans and waterproof capes are not suitable on any walks.*

Recommended

- Several layers of clothing, which can be added or removed
- Specialist walking socks to avoid blisters.
- A first aid kit inc plasters– your leader's first aid kit doesn't contain any medication

- Sit mat (insulated pad to sit on when you stop for a break)

You Might Also Want

- Walking poles, particularly useful for descents.
- Insect repellent
- Flask for hot drinks
- Rigid lunch box
- Gaiters
- Blister kit (eg Compeed) just in case
- Waterproof rucksack liner

HOW TO BOOK

When you're ready to book, you can choose to **book online** or book **over the phone**. Our website offers secure online booking for our holidays, is available 24/7, and offers more in-depth information about all our holidays. If you prefer to call us, our experienced and knowledgeable team are available to answer any specific questions you have and can offer guidance as to which holiday is best suited to your needs.

Our office is open: Monday to Friday: 9am – 5.30pm, Saturday: 9am – 1pm, Sunday & Bank Holiday Monday: closed

PAYING YOUR DEPOSIT

To secure the holiday of your choice, you will need to pay a deposit: UK & European Holidays: £150 per person and Worldwide Holidays: £250 per person. You can pay your deposit by debit or credit card with no additional card fees charged or make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account, please see details under BACS payments. You can also pay your deposit by cheque within seven days of booking. Cheques should be made payable to 'HF Holidays Ltd' with your booking reference / Order ID on the back.

NON-MEMBER FEE

Non-members can join our holidays by paying a Non-Member's fee of £30 per person per holiday. Alternatively, full membership is available from £100 – visit hfholidays.co.uk/membership for details.

BACS PAYMENTS

Please quote your booking reference / Order ID when you make your payment online: Bank Name: National Westminster Bank, Account Name: HF Holidays Limited, Account Number: 48904805, Sort Code: 60-00-01, IBAN: GB90NWBK60000148904805

Once we have received your booking and deposit, we will send a confirmation invoice to the lead name. Please check this carefully. For bookings 'with flights' it is essential that the names on your booking confirmation invoice match those on your passport for bookings overseas. Please advise us immediately of any errors. Any name changes after the balance of your holiday has been paid will be subject to a fee levied by the airline.

MANAGE MY BOOKINGS

Payments can also be made through the Manage My Booking function on our website. Click on the link at the top of our homepage. This is available to all customers who provide an email address at the time of booking.

YOUR FINAL BALANCE

The balance is due 10 weeks before departure. As with paying your deposit, you can pay your final balance by debit or credit card, make an online BACS payment directly into HF's bank account or pay by cheque.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is an important part of any booking and essential for one of our holidays. HF Holidays works with specialist. Insurance Brokers Campbell Irvine Direct. For more information or to obtain a quote call them on 01702 427 236 or visit hfholidays.co.uk/insurance

PEACE OF MIND

ATOL:

The air holidays and flights in this brochure are ATOL-protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 710. In the unlikely event of our insolvency, the CAA will ensure that you are not stranded abroad and will arrange to refund any money you have paid us for advance bookings. For further information visit the ATOL website atol.org.uk

MEMBER OF ABTOT:

HF Holidays is a member of ABTOT (The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited) which provides financial protection under the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 for HF Holidays Ltd and in the event of their insolvency, protection is provided for the following: 1. non-flight packages commencing in and returning to the UK; 2. non-flight packages commencing and returning to a country other than the UK; 3. flight inclusive packages that commence outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland, which are sold to customers outside of the UK and Republic of Ireland. 1, 2 and 3 provides for a refund in the event you have not yet travelled. 1 and 3 provides for repatriation. Please note that bookings made outside the UK and Republic of Ireland are only protected by ABTOT when purchased directly with HF Holidays Ltd.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

PRICE GUARANTEE

We promise that our earliest published prices will always be the best and if we reduce our holiday price after your booking has been confirmed, we will pass this reduction on to you. Our price promise applies if any subsequent offer price is for an identical holiday, duration, location and date and does not cover any optional extras, flights or additional services.

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