

Country Walks

for the best in nordic walking, guided walks and weekends away

West Dorset & The Jurassic Coast: 'B' Grade

Friday 2 – Sunday 4 or Monday 5 October
(2 or 3 nights) (B grade: 7-8 miles daily)

Walking in the stunning countryside surrounding the 'sweet Be'mi'ster' of William Barnes, the Brit Valley & the Jurassic Coast

Beautiful Beaminster (Hardy's Emminster) is a delightful base, one of the most perfectly sited of all Dorset towns, idyllically situated in a broad bowl-shaped valley in the heart of West Dorset. The hotel shares the same stretch of the River Brit made famous by Channel 4's 'River Cottage' series.

The Bridge House Hotel, Beaminster

Dinner, bed and breakfast at the privately-owned Bridge House, a 700-year-old former priest's house with crackling log fires in centuries-old inglenooks, stone mullioned windows, oak beams and candles. The restaurant has been awarded two AA Rosettes, has featured in the BBC's Good Food magazine and enjoys an enviable reputation for fine dining, using a wealth of local organic produce. Johansen's and Alistair Sawday recommended. The Bridge House is ours for the weekend and in 2008 it was voted everyone's favourite hotel!

Price per person: £295 for 2 nights, £95 Sunday night dinner, bed and breakfast

Price includes:

- En-suite accommodation
- Two or three 3-course dinners
- Two or three full English breakfasts
- Two full-day guided walks
- Coach travel to and from Sunday's walk
- Visit to Charmouth Heritage Centre
- Two guide-hosts providing commentaries on features of historical and general interest along the way
- All gratuities

Price excludes:

- Pub lunches
- Optional teas
- Drinks and items of a personal nature

Accommodation: 6 doubles for single occupancy, 1 family room (comprising 1 room with a double bed and a separate room with a single bed, both sharing a bathroom (suitable for 2 friends), 1 four-poster, 2 superior doubles, 2 standard doubles, 1 superior twin, 1 standard twin.

Itinerary

Friday

A welcome meeting followed by dinner in the hotel's award-winning restaurant.

Saturday

Today we walk direct from the hotel, through historic Beaminster, to the serene and timeless landscape around the head of the Brit Valley. The walk is rich in picturesque villages, hidden in folds in the land and largely overlooked. We visit enchanting Netherbury and Stoke Abbott, each with an ancient church and a clutch of thatched cottages. Lunch at Stoke Abbott's thatched 17th century New Inn, in a beautiful garden overlooking a wooded valley. Nearby are the wooded slopes of Lewesdon Hill, inspiration for poets, including the young William Wordsworth who roamed this ridge of hills; in the distance is Pilsdon Pen, stark and woodless, the highest point in Dorset. We finish with a fine ridge walk, following in the footsteps of William Barnes, the Dorset poet, over Waddon Hill and Gerrard's Hill, with views to Somerset and Devon and down the Brit Valley towards Bridport. *(7 miles, 'B' grade)*

Sunday

Our coach drops us at Charmouth, on the Jurassic Coast, a World Heritage Site, gateway to 95 miles of unspoilt coast, for one of the best walks in Dorset, a complete contrast from the Beaminster walk. At the Heritage Centre, a local expert will explain something of the 185 million years of fossil history. On via gorse-covered Stonebarrow Hill and the former fishing village of St Gabriel's to dazzling Golden Cap, the highest cliff on the south coast of England. Here, magnificent views extend from Portland Bill in the east to Lyme Regis and Devon's Start Point in the west; inland you see Pilsdon Pen and as far as the heights of Dartmoor. We lunch at the excellent Anchor Inn at the tiny fishing hamlet of Seatown, overlooking Lyme Bay. From here the coastal path winds through a lovely stretch of bracken, heather, bilberry and blackberry to our journey's end at West Bay. This is a working harbour, bustling with fishing boats and other craft, refreshingly unsophisticated. After tea, our coach returns us to Beaminster and, for those staying a third night, the considerable comforts of our hotel. *(7 miles, 'B+' grade; the '+' part of the grading reflecting a number of ups and downs, well within the capacity of normally fit people)*

Travel & Transport

By rail: two-hourly trains from London Waterloo to Crewkerne (2.26 hours) with onward travel by taxi (6 miles) or train to Yeovil with onward travel by bus (18 miles). We can arrange shared travel or taxi-sharing if required.

By road, total mileage from central London: 145 miles (3.14 hours). We may be able to arrange car-sharing if required. Car parking available at the hotel.

Transport to the walk on Sunday is by minibus; on the Saturday we walk directly from the hotel.