

West Dorset & Jurassic Coast
Wednesday 23 – Friday 25 June 2010

(2 nights, Easy 'A grade; 4-5 miles daily)

*Relaxed walking in the stunning countryside
surrounding the 'sweet Be'mi'ster' of William Barns,
exploring the Jurassic Coast and visiting the magnificent gardens of the Brit Valley*

The Bridge House Hotel, Beaminster__

Dinner, bed and breakfast at the luxurious Bridge House Hotel in beautiful Beaminster (Hardy's 'Emminster'), a 700-year-old former priest's house with stone mullioned windows, oak beams and candles. New bathrooms, Egyptian cotton bedlinen, flatscreen TVs ensure your every comfort. 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 Alastair Sawday recommended.

Price per person: £299 for 2 nights for double and twin occupancy; £15 per night single supplement for single occupancy of spacious double rooms. (The hotel has no single rooms).

Price includes:

- En-suite accommodation
- Two 3-course dinners
- Two full English breakfasts
- Two full days of guided walks and excursions
- Coach travel on two days
- Visit to Charmouth Heritage Centre and services of local warden
- Two guide-hosts providing commentaries on features of interest along the way
- Private tour of The Mill House gardens, Netherbury with coffee;
- Guided tour of Mapperton House and gardens

Price excludes:

- Two pub lunches
- Optional teas
- Drinks and items of a personal nature

Itinerary

Wednesday_A welcome meeting with drinks on the house, followed by a memorable dinner in the hotel's award-winning restaurant.

Thursday_In the footsteps of Thomas Hardy we walk through the serene and timeless landscape surrounding beautiful Beaminster. We explore enchanting villages hidden in folds in the land, each with an ancient church and a clutch of thatched cottages. Then to the Mill House at Netherbury for coffee and a private tour of its glorious scented flower gardens. Refreshed, we walk on to Stoke Abbott's thatched 17th century inn to lunch in another beautiful garden overlooking a wooded valley. Next, we're off to romantic Mapperton for a guided tour of its Elizabethan manor house. You'll love too the valley gardens, set deep into a lost Dorsetcombe among tumbling hills, "One of the top 10 gardens in Britain" say The Independent. Perhaps a cream tea to follow before continuing our walk back to Beaminster for further culinary delights and the comforts of our hotel! *(5 miles, gentle 'A' grade)*

Friday_By coach to Charmouth for some wonderful coastal walking, a complete contrast from yesterday's walk. At the Heritage Centre, a local expert will explain a little fossil history. Then down to the beach to walk to Lyme Regis, our warden helping us find fossils on the way. After lunch we tour historic Lyme Regis with its steep streets and famous Cobb, a beautiful seaside town renowned for its literary and artistic associations. Then back to our coach which climbs the hill for us so that we can enjoy a wonderful stretch of downland walking high above the sea without the effort! Here spectacular views extend from Portland Bill in the east to Devon's Start Point in the west, inland to Pilsdon Pen and as far as the heights of Dartmoor. Having completed this short but stunning circuit we rejoin our coach for a relaxing journey to Beaminster and a farewell tea. *(5 miles, gentle 'A' grade)*

The 2010 Beaminster Festival of Music and the Arts may be of interest if you plan to spend a third night. The festival commences at 1730 with Choral Evensong at St Mary's Church, Beaminster. Truro Cathedral Choir perform works by Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Purcell. (Free entry). At The Bridge House Hotel, at 1930, a Literary Supper with Tom Holland, one of the most authoritative and talented historians of his generation. Cost £40. For Box Office and further details of these events see the website link below:

<http://tiny.cc/P1amw>

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. taxi-sharing if required.