

DORSET



from the country to the coast



www.visit-dorset.com
#visitdorset



Welcome

Introducing Dorset

For more details on how to get to Dorset, see p23.

For more places to visit in Dorset go to:
www.visit-dorset.com

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You'll feel a real connection with our ancient past in Dorset, from the fossil-strewn Jurassic cliffs around romantic Lyme Regis to the soaring limestone archway of Durdle Door along the spectacular World Heritage Coast.

Then head inland for Dorset's welcoming market towns, the rolling northern downland and the mysterious Cerne Abbas Giant.

Everywhere you go there's a sense of history combined with wild scenic beauty. Discover the colourful history of Highcliffe Castle in Christchurch, visit Portland Harbour, site of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games sailing events, stride the cliff paths of the Isle of Purbeck for awesome views over Old Harry Rocks or relax on the endless sands of Studland Bay.

Take the family and a picnic for fun days on the sheltered beaches of Weymouth or Swanage, feel the wind in your face on stony Chesil Beach, or clamber up cobbled Gold Hill in Shaftesbury for views across to Blackmore Vale.

There's all this and more to discover in Dorset, plus the bright lights of nearby Bournemouth and Poole and the woodland trails of the New Forest National Park. And it's so easy for you to get here from anywhere in the UK and Europe.



Cover image

Durdle Door – ©Mark Simons

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Check Online

Visit our website for details on places to stay, where to eat, attractions, activities and events – everything you need to make the most of your time in Dorset.

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Clockwise: Old Harry Rocks (©Adam Burton Photography), Local apples, Corfe Castle, Abbotsbury, cycling on Portland.



FROM PAST TO PRESENT

DORSET'S JURASSIC COAST



If you're after clear air, sweeping cliff walks, breathtaking views and snug little towns brimming with restaurants and shops to explore, Dorset's Jurassic Coast is for you.

England's first UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site covers 95 mind-blowing miles (150 km) from Purbeck to Lyme Regis in western Dorset and continues on to Exmouth in Devon.

Find your way along winding country roads down to the sea; you'll discover prehistoric fossils and gigantic footprints at the foot of the ancient cliffs formed 185 million years ago, as well as beaches only accessible on foot across undulating farmland.

Stay a while at historic Lyme Regis, huddled under towering limestone cliffs and with lots to do, from spotting fossils to quirky museums, art galleries and classy gift shops, or walk along the beach to Charmouth for more fossil-hunting opportunities. Challenge yourself to climb Golden Cap, the highest point along the south coast, for far-reaching views over cliffs and beaches.

All along the coastline, you'll unearth enticing towns and villages: Swanage offers fish 'n' chips and spectacular walks to Studland Bay, Durlston Head and Old Harry Rocks. In Georgian Weymouth, see the road bridge lift to let swanky yachts slip underneath and linger to enjoy the ambience in pubs and bars around the packed, buzzing Waterfront Weymouth.



Check online

www.visit-dorset.com

Left hand page: From Bats Head view towards Durdle Door.

Clockwise: Lulworth Cove (©Roger Holman), Lyme Regis Fossil Festival, Peveril Point (©Adam Burton Photography), Beach huts at Lyme Regis.

www.visit-dorset.com



Follow the South West Coast Path as it marches alongside the Jurassic Coast through Dorset. Spot the other-worldly rock formations and glimpse far-flung views from sheer cliff tops as you walk.

Drive across the narrow shingle causeway to wind-battered Isle of Portland possessor of Dorset's wildest coastline; tour the Tudor castle and clamber up 153 steps in the lighthouse at Portland Bill for views along Chesil Beach. Further down the coast, charming Bridport's harbour is at West Bay, the spectacular backdrop to ITV's drama *Broadchurch*; it's flanked by golden cliffs and the meandering waters of the river Brit.

From Lulworth Cove follow the wild headlands to the fabled natural limestone arch at Durdle Door. Walk along part of the 18-mile (29 km) bank of pebbles forming Chesil Beach, backed by the wildlife-rich Fleet Lagoon. In summer months, pay a visit to the Swannery in the photogenic thatched village of Abbotsbury, looking out over Chesil Beach.

Holidaying with children?

Come and enjoy the soft sandy beaches along the elegant Esplanade at Weymouth. Visit the beach at Swanage or opt to swim in the protected, sparkling waters along dramatic Studland Bay, with chalk stacks at its southern end. At Lyme Regis, scrabble for fossils along pebbly Town Beach or laze on the sand by the long finger of the Cobb as it stretches out to sea.



More online

WHY NOT...

- take a sidetrip to historic **Christchurch**, with its beautiful quay and tranquil natural harbour?
- bask on the endless beach at **Highcliffe**?
- visit nearby **Mudford** to take a walk along the beach to Highcliffe Castle?

CHECK ONLINE

For more details on the delights of the Jurassic Coast, go to:

www.visit-dorset.com



Take in the
awe-inspiring
views of the
dramatic
Jurassic Coast



Clockwise: Studland Beach, View from Golden Cap, Dorset's harbours,
South West Coast Path milestone, Beach fun, Pulpit Rock Portland
(© Ben Pipe), West Bay.



CALL TO ACTION!



GET OUT AND ACTIVE IN DORSET USING MUSCLE POWER – GET INVOLVED IN LOCAL SPORTING ACTIVITIES OR CHALLENGE YOURSELVES TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW.

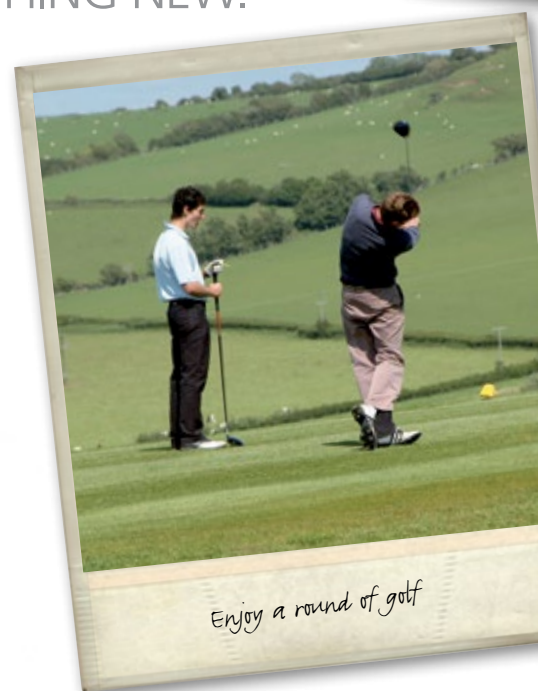
To escape the hurly burly of modern life, let loose in Dorset; feel the wind in your hair and the sun on your face. Here's your chance to explore blowy clifftops, peaceful country lanes, rolling hills and woodland trails – whether on foot, bike or horse. Take to the water to try surfing the waves or head inland for clay pigeon shooting or even Zorbing down a bumpy hillside.

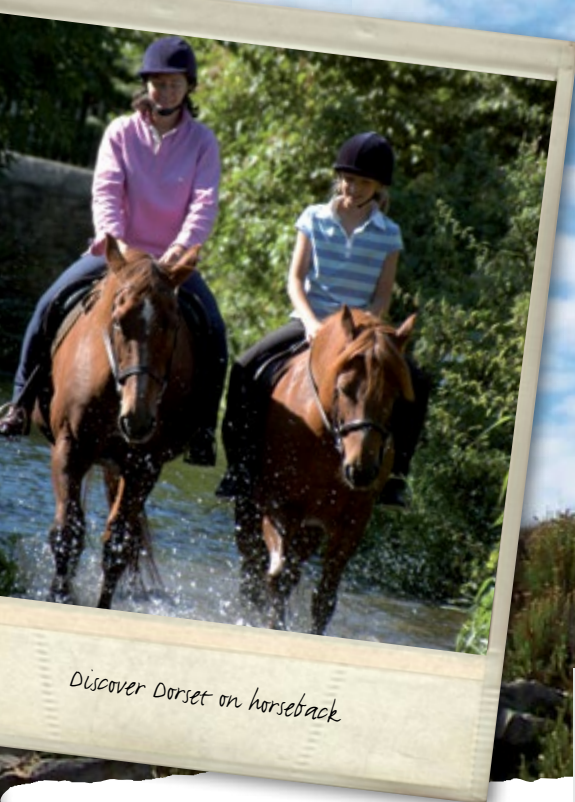
More than 3,000 miles (4,800 km) of footpaths, National Cycle Network routes and bridle paths criss-cross Dorset, linking villages, cosy pubs and visitor attractions like Lulworth

Castle with market towns such as Blandford Forum, Dorchester and Shaftesbury.

Cyclists can take their pick of challenging hill climbs over rough track or gentle meanders through winding lanes to remote villages and rural pubs for a lunchtime pint of local ale.

Why not cycle from the county town of Dorchester through undulating countryside to historic seaside Lyme Regis? Or explore the photogenic villages north of Sherborne along peaceful country lanes – choose from routes long or short.





Discover Dorset on horseback

It's also easy for cyclists to find somewhere to stay – just check out the Cyclists Welcome Scheme to find accommodation offering dry rooms for cycling gear and locked sheds for the safe-keeping of your bikes overnight.

Horse riders of all abilities can trek across northern Dorset's chalk downlands and along shady woodland bridleways or gallop along the endless reaches of Studland Bay. There are riding stables all over the county with horses and ponies for all levels of competence – check details online.

Play A Round

There are more than 30 golf courses in Dorset, ranging from windblown clifftop links to manicured championship challenges; there's something for all levels of play and most clubs are open for visitors to play a round or two – although please check online for course details as some clubs require handicap certificates before allowing you to play.

Kid's Play

Kids can practise their swing at the pirate-themed crazy golf in Weymouth, splash in the sea from safe sandy beaches or whiz down waterslides in one of the county's many swimming pools. Are they ski fanatics? No problem – take them to the dry ski slope at Snowtrax in Christchurch or the Dorset Snowsport Centre near Dorchester to practise their parallel turns.



Go Walkabout

Walks of all lengths for all abilities abound in Dorset. The South West Coast Path runs the length of the county, skirting the Jurassic Coast. Hike its entirety or walk manageable slices – perhaps from Lyme Regis to Charmouth along the clifftops. Inland in northern Dorset, way-marked walking trails pass the restored gardens at Larmer Tree and the abbey and almshouses of Milton Abbas. The Dorset section of the Wessex Ridgeway runs from Ashmore in the north past ancient hill forts and the Cerne Abbas Giant on its winding way to the coast at Lyme Regis. For details, see www.visit-dorset.com.



Check online

For further ideas on walking, cycling, riding routes and golf courses please look online at www.visit-dorset.com



Clockwise: Family fun (© John Deeney), Cycle trails, a family ramble, Jogging along the beach.





More online

For details of the many activities you can try out in Dorset go to visit-dorset.com

Clockwise:
RIB ride along the Jurassic Coast
(© www.lymebayribcharter.co.uk),
Climbing on Portland, Walkers
at Durlston, Kite-surfing
(© Jan Hinton), Sailing in Portland
Harbour, (© Pat Hinton), Kayaking,
(© Reginald Piddock).

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Grab a rod and fish for roach, pike and perch on the river Stour or go sea angling to land mackerel from Swanage and Bridport. Paddle a canoe close to shore under the looming cliffs at Lyme Regis, where you can also dive over offshore wrecks and reefs in the bay or take a cruise to see the natural wonders of the Jurassic Coast.

Feeling adventurous? Turn to the sea for adrenaline kicks as you zoom down the coastline in a super-speedy RIB, bouncing over the waves. Hire a kite surfer to leap across the waves at Christchurch and try power kiting or sand yachting along the beach – or even abseil down steep cliffs on the remote Isle of Portland.

Inland there are masses of waymarked paths in the Blackdown Hills and chances to try shooting clays and racing across the countryside on quad bikes. Take the whole family to Avon Heath Country Park for a walk through the heathland and a chance of spotting rare lizards and larks.

Dorset's sailing is superb; brisk winds and a low tidal range combine with safe waters and ever-changing vistas along the indented coastline. From the fully equipped modern marinas at Poole and

Weymouth, head out into the English Channel for an exhilarating day's sail. Moor up overnight in peaceful Lulworth Cove and hear little else apart from lapping waves. Sail serenely past Old Harry Rocks and into sandy Studland Bay to watch the summer sun sink spectacularly into the sea.



Olympians Came to Dorset

Visit the Weymouth and Portland National Sailing Academy, built for Dorset to host the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games sailing events. For more information, sign on to www.visit-dorset.com

RETREAT TO RURAL DORSET

WHEREVER YOU ARE IN DORSET, THERE'S ALWAYS A GREAT VIEW AND A PRETTY VILLAGE TUCKED AROUND THE CORNER.

Get lost in the county's charm and the individuality of the towns, all with their own character and history to relate.

Much of rural Dorset is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – take your time to explore the twisting valleys of the River Stour, pine and beech woodlands at Wareham and Cranborne Chase and the water meadows of the River Allen, criss-crossed by chalky streams.

Behind Swanage, hike the cliff paths of 280-acre Durlston Country Park to spot Old Harry Rocks, rare orchids and peregrine falcons. Inland at Moors Valley Country Park, try out 1,000 acres of cycling and walking trails or swing through the treetops on high wires.



Wild Garlic growing in woodland at Milton Abbas



Be on the lookout for interesting insects such as the Damselfly



Take a family ramble through the countryside



The charming countryside Dorset has to offer has been designated as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' and it's easy to see why.

Visit the Isle of Purbeck for heathland and harbour-side wetland at the RSPB Arne Nature Reserve, home to Dartford warblers and nightjars. At Chesil Beach, tramp across 180 billion pebbles to spot protected wildflowers and wading birds at salty Fleet Lagoon. Chances are you'll be on your own at Eggardon Hill to discover the little-known Bronze- and Iron-Age remains and marvel at the views to Lyme Bay.

Dorset's Georgian county town of Dorchester has a bustling market on Wednesdays and strong ties to Thomas Hardy, who spent most of his life here and was born at Higher

Bockhampton nearby. It's also the perfect base for exploring the ancient hill fort of Maiden Castle and the Roman amphitheatre at Maumbury Rings, or taking a look at the pioneering development at Poundbury created by Prince Charles.

From Dorchester dive off into wonderful English countryside scattered with historic towns and villages. Around Shaftesbury, lose yourselves in the Blackmore Vale, where signposted trails pass the Iron Age fort at Hod Hill and the long barrows at Hambledon Hill.

All over Dorset, you'll uncover charming market towns and tiny villages tucked into tranquil rurality; medieval Sherborne is hidden away in the north-west of the county, an attractive old town complete with two castles, almshouse, abbey church, restaurants and smart little boutiques selling quality gifts.

Check online
www.visit-dorset.com

INLAND ROUTE
AVOIDING ROAD

Above: Countryside ramble,
Corfe Castle.



Enjoy a cream tea in
historic Abbotsbury





Wimborne Minster boasts the largest market in Dorset, open Friday, Saturday and Sunday mornings, plus a delightful Norman church with a chained library. Tranquil Beaminster sparks foodie taste buds with a sprinkling of gourmet restaurants and the Monday market at Sturminster Newton turns up anything from leather goods to local crafts and freshly baked bread.

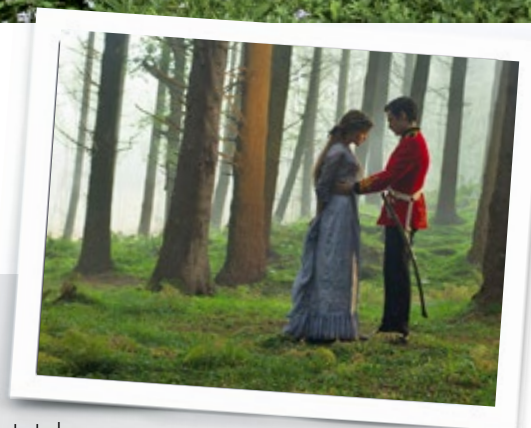
The Tudor hamlet of Cerne Abbas is the much-visited home of the chalk giant carved into the chalky hillside; enchanting Corfe Castle village near Wareham is guarded by its 12th-century castle ruin – an iconic survivor of the English Civil War.

Clockwise: Sherborne, Abbotsbury Sub-tropical Gardens, Thomas Hardy's Cottage, Camping, Filming of *Far From the Madding Crowd* (© Fox Searchlight Pictures)

Right hand page:
Gold Hill, Shaftesbury.

Literary Dorset

Dorset's spectacular rolling countryside, mysterious coastline and stately homes have inspired many a writer and film-maker – the county's world-famous poet and author Thomas Hardy based much of his work around the Dorset area and featured the county as 'Wessex' in his writing. The county features in Thomas Vinterberg's new film of Hardy's 1874 novel, *Far From the Madding Crowd*. World War I legend T. E. Lawrence, star of David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia*, resided at the tiny cottage of Clouds Hill near Wareham. John Fowles's evocative *The French Lieutenant's Woman* was memorably filmed in Lyme Regis and Enid Blyton's 'Famous Five' stories feature Corfe Castle, Brownsea Island and Studland. For more details, check out www.visit-dorset.com.





More online

For further details of Dorset's many welcoming towns and villages, as well as its rural secrets, from Blackmore Vale to barrows at Hambledon Hill, please refer to:

www.visit-dorset.com



Dorset is justifiably famous for the quality of its produce, from lazy afternoon teas with plenty of clotted cream to gourmet chefs performing at high-end restaurants.



Dorset's Gourmet Heritage:

1. One of the UK's earliest farmers' markets was held in Saxon Bridport.
2. Food festivals take over Christchurch and Shaftesbury in May, Bridport in June and Wimborne in October. Celebrity chefs Lesley Waters, Mark Hix and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall have all appeared in Dorset food festivals over the years.
3. Local specialities include seafood and farmed oysters, Portland Dough cakes, Dorset Knob biscuits, handmade chocolates and tingling Dorset Naga chillies.
4. Specialist ciders, scrumpies and perries are produced all over Dorset. Sample Little Thatch, Wolfeton, Gypsy's Kiss and Cider by Rosie.
5. Dorset-brewed ales such as Tanglefoot and Palmers Dorset Gold can be tasted all over the region.
6. Vineyards across Dorset produce red, white and sparkling wines.



So there's a rich tradition of eating and drinking well in Dorset. After al fresco eating with sweeping views, stock up on picnic supplies at farm shops. Come lunchtime, head for country pubs and Ploughman's Lunch served with crumbly Blue Vinney cheese.

Feeling peckish in the afternoon? Find a village tearoom and indulge in Dorset Apple Cake with a dollop of clotted cream on top. For evening, there are plenty of seafood restaurants serving the freshest of mussels and piles of prawns, and buzzing rural hostelrys serving hearty local dishes – and for those special occasions, you'll find plenty of award-winning restaurants serving fine vintage wines.



More online

FARMERS' MARKETS
There are farmers' markets in Dorset all year around, selling fresh, local and organic produce. For details of Dorset's markets and more eating ideas, go to:

www.visit-dorset.com



Dorset's Celebrity Chefs

- Dorset is where Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's story started at River Cottage.
- MasterChef winner Mat Follas has a pop-up restaurant in Dorchester.
- Michelin-starred Alex Aitken cooks at The Jetty in Mudeford.
- Mark Hix oversees the Oyster and Fish House in Lyme Regis.
- Lesley Waters runs a cookery school at Abbots Hill in West Dorset.
- Rick Stein is the latest addition to Dorset's culinary scene with a new restaurant in Sandbanks.

For more details on Dorset's foodie extravaganzas, see:

www.visit-dorset.com

Great Days out in Dorset

There's so much to see in Dorset from fascinating museums and the iconic Gold Hill in Shaftesbury to the romantic ruins of Corfe Castle, popular coastal towns, enticing landscaped gardens and lots of family attractions.

Trace Dorset's long history – from the Jurassic period through Roman occupation to Thomas Hardy memorabilia – at the County Museum in Dorchester. Elsewhere discover fossils and life-size reconstructions at the Dinosaur Museum in Dorchester and experience live action in military vehicles at the Tank Museum in Bovington. Catch the ferry from Poole to Brownsea Island Nature Reserve for walking trails and family fun around a lagoon awash with wildlife.

Take the kids to explore the 10 nature reserves dotted around Christchurch, incorporating salt marshes, wildlife-rich meadowlands and ancient woodland. If you're a gardening fanatic, stop off at Forde Abbey's Cistercian monastery and grounds, Mapperton for its woodland landscaping or Abbotsbury to explore the sub-tropical gardens.

Travel back through the centuries to the ornate Saxon abbey church, medieval ruins and Tudor castle in Sherborne. Spend the day discovering the National Trust's Kingston Lacy estate; meander along the River Stour or discover the Iron Age fort at Badbury Rings. Glimpse bygone splendour at Portland Castle and the stately charms of Athelhampton and Highcliffe Castle, and contrast these with Thomas Hardy's humble cottage birthplace in Higher Bockhampton.

From breathtaking coastline to stately homes, and cheeky monkeys to upland downs, Dorset's got it all.



Clockwise: Monkey World, The Tank Museum, Kingston Maurward Gardens, Weymouth Sea Life Park, Abbotsbury Swannery, Tutankhamun Exhibition, Cerne Giant.





Take a day out on the
Swanage Railway

Fun on the farm

Family time

For fun-packed days out with the kids, visit Monkey World, Sea Life, Farmer Palmer's or Adventure Wonderland. They'll also love the famous Swannery and Children's Farm at Abbotsbury plus the gentle giant Shire horses at Dorset Heavy Horse Farm Park. Animal-mad families can even try donkey-walking or llama-trekking adventures in West Dorset. All kids love to run around on the sandy beaches at Lyme, Swanage and Weymouth and splash in the clean, shallow waves. The beaches between Lyme Regis and Charmouth are the best for uncovering fossils – visit the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre to join a guided fossil-hunting walk. For more ideas to entertain the whole family, visit www.visit-dorset.com.

More online

For prices, opening times and directions to all of the attractions mentioned here, as well as further ideas for great family days out or other Dorset treats to visit, please see:

www.visit-dorset.com



Dorset Shopping

The unique experience that is Dorset continues apace in its many and varied shopping opportunities.

Sherborne, Sturminster Newton and Wareham are crammed with small independent shops selling unusual quality gifts, art, antiques and independent fashion. Seek out Dorchester for antiques, bohemian Bridport for stylish ceramic homeware and Lyme Regis for souvenir fossils and fine arts linked to the Jurassic Coast. The market town of Blandford Forum is home to Badger ales while Bridport's Palmers produces beers in a traditional thatched brewery; take some bottles home for a lingering taste of Dorset.

For a complete family shopping experience, visit nearby Bournemouth for its mix of high-street chains and long-established department stores.

Visit a market somewhere in the county almost every day; pick up the occasional antique, hand-crafted jewellery or plants for your garden borders from the colourful stalls at Shaftesbury, Dorchester, Christchurch, Wareham, Wimborne Minster and Weymouth.

There are farmers' markets across Dorset too; try Bridport, Poundbury or Christchurch for top-quality local produce, from beef and seafood to mustard and marmalade. It's a great chance to meet the producers and sample some delicious goods direct from the heart of Dorset.

Clockwise from top: Poole Pottery, Sarah Hough Stationary, Chococo Chocolates, Rocking Rhino, James Harvey Furniture, Local farm shop, Handmade jewellery, Market day – Bridport, Independent shopping.

Throughout the year take your pick of Dorset fêtes, country shows and local festivals for an enjoyable shopping opportunity and the best of local produce. Strike off the beaten track for a totally different kind of retail experience and uncover potters and painters working in remote studios across the county.

And when your feet have had enough, take time out to relax in tempting tearooms, cafés or bars. Try the local pub or book in advance for memorable dining experiences at top-end restaurants. There are so many options to be found throughout Dorset.

Dorset Markets online

For details of all Dorset's markets, check online at:
www.visit-dorset.com



A Year in Dorset

Dorset is a non-stop frenzy of entertainment for all the family, a constant round of agricultural shows, country fairs, farmers' markets and gourmet celebrations.

Film, folk, food, fossil and jazz festivals and carnivals appear on the agenda alongside walking festivals, regattas and firework displays. Many top visitor attractions host their own events, from medieval tournaments to rock concerts – find out more at www.visit-dorset.com. Art lovers are catered for too, with the biennial Dorset Art Weeks.



May

During May visit Dorset to see the baby swans hatching at Abbotsbury Swannery and enjoy laidback Sherborne Abbey Music Festival. Watch top chefs cook at Christchurch and Shaftesbury food festivals.



June

The onset of summer in Dorset sees a weekend of traditional Celtic and English music and dance at Wimborne's Folk Festival. Or celebrate everything from classical concerts to folk, rock and theatre at the annual Beaminster Festival.



July

July brings the Pommery Dorset Seafood Festival to Dorset at Weymouth, plus the magical Camp Bestival music extravaganza at Lulworth Castle. Sailing regattas and carnivals are held throughout the county and the Jazz Festival at Swanage.



October

Enjoy beautiful autumn colour at many magnificent gardens, including the floodlit sub-tropical gardens at Abbotsbury. Celebrate local food and drink at the Dorset Food Week. Other jamborees include the Purbeck Film Festival – the UK's largest rural film festival – and the Literary Festival at Bridport, Sherborne and Purbeck – a week-long celebration of the arts.



August

See the Red Arrows fly in formation at Bournemouth Air Festival during August. Enjoy Weymouth Carnival, which wraps with a spectacular firework display along the Esplanade. For some old fashioned fun, head to Beaminster's Buckham Fair.



September

Autumn brings the traditional Great Dorset Steam Fair and the Sturminster Newton Cheese Festival, which showcases cheese, local beers and ciders as well as traditional crafts. Visit in September to enjoy traditional rural pursuits at the Dorset County Show, or get your hiking boots on for the Swanage and Purbeck Walking Festival.

More online

Above is just a small selection of the festivals and events taking place throughout the year in Dorset – search the full events listing on:

www.visit-dorset.com

Visitor Information

Dorset has a fantastic range of accommodation from plush hotels to cosy B&Bs, guesthouses and inns. Got young children? Ask for a cot. Why not stay on a farm? You could bring your dog!

Stay deep in the countryside, on a clifftop or in a quiet town street; relax in saunas in elegant hotel spas or choose simple country pubs with four-poster beds and welcoming fires.

If you're cycling or walking, look for drying rooms and bike-storage facilities online at www.visit-dorset.com.

There are lots of self-catering options too, plus camping or caravanning at high-quality, scenic sites and holiday parks along the Jurassic Coast and in the heart of Dorset's stunning countryside.

Clockwise from top: Farmhouse B&B, West Bay Holiday Park, Summer Lodge Country House Hotel.
Back cover image: Dorset countryside (©Mark Simons)



Accommodation in Dorset

Search for availability and book accommodation online at www.visit-dorset.com. There is a range of accessible accommodation online to suit all levels of mobility.

Tourist Information Centres (TICs)

For details of local Tourist Information Centres please go to www.visit-dorset.com/planyourvisit

Check online

For more detailed information about areas within Dorset, go to

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Published by West Dorset District Council on behalf of the Visit Dorset Tourism Partnership.

Photography: Tim Pestrige Commercial Photography, Roger Holman, Adam Burton, Mark Simons, Creative Studios, ITV Picturedesk/Kudos, www.lymebayribcharter.co.uk.
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Travel by Road

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Travel by Sea

Visit www.visit-dorset.com for full details on travelling to Dorset.



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