

Hardy Country and the Jurassic Coast

Dorset is one of England's comeliest counties, renowned for its soft, undulating hills and cliff-backed coastline. There are few conurbations to blot the landscape, instead gentle sheep-speckled slopes and mellow green prospects soothe the traveller's eye. The past looms large here, from the fossil-rich Jurassic Coast to Ancient British sites, and from Roman remains to medieval monuments. Literary types know the region for its associations with Thomas Hardy and his works, in which it appears as "Wessex", while Hardy's own town of Dorchester ("Casterbridge") offers plenty of entertainment for children and adults alike.



Above Traditional English seaside resort of Swanage, see p60



Above The peaceful country village of Abbotsbury, see p61



ACTIVITIES

- Board a classic steam train from Swanage to Corfe Castle
- Walk the South West Coast Path along its spectacular cliffs
- Enjoy a glorious Dorset cream tea in a traditional tea shop
- Hire a boat or paddle a kayak on the Frome at Wareham
- Go windsurfing or sailing in the bay at Weymouth
- Hunt for fossils on the Isle of Portland or Lulworth Cove
- Discover your inner Briton on Maiden Castle's ramparts

PLAN YOUR DRIVE

Start/finish: Swanage to Sherborne.

Number of days: 3 days allowing a half-day's tour of Dorchester.

Distance: Around 129 km (80 miles).

Road conditions: Good roads, but sometimes narrow and steep.

When to go: It is possible to tour the area any time of year, but best to try and avoid public holidays and summer weekends, when traffic is heaviest around the coast.

Opening times: Museums and attractions are generally open 10am–5pm, but close earlier (or are closed altogether) Nov–Easter. Shop opening hours are longer. Churches are usually open until dusk.

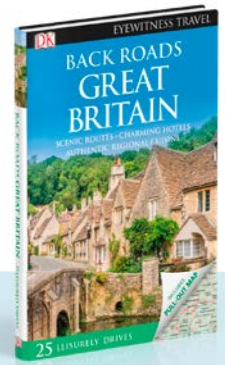
Main market days: Swanage: Fri; Wareham: 2nd & 4th Thu of month & Sat; Weymouth: Apr–Oct Thu; Dorchester: Wed & 4th Sat of month; Sherborne: Thu & Sat, also Farmer's Market on 3rd Fri of month.

Shopping: Dorset is famed for its creamy Blue Vinny cheese; sweet cinnamon-rich Dorset apple cake, and delicious locally produced chutneys and jams.

Major festivals: Swanage: Jazz Festival, Jul; Wareham: Music Festival, Aug & Sep; Weymouth: Seafood Festival, Jul; Weymouth Regatta, Sep.

DAY TRIP OPTIONS

Dorchester's many museums and ancient sights have something for everyone – but especially dinosaur hunters; follow the theory with some practical fossil hunting on Chesil Beach and Portland. From Swanage enjoy a ride on a steam train, visit a crumbling Norman castle and then head to the coast to explore the beach and awesome rock formations near Lulworth. For full details, see p63.



North Yorkshire Moors and Coast

England's largest county, North Yorkshire is strewn with picturesque villages, old market towns, stately homes and castles, historic churches, romantic ruins, and so much more. Its coastline is variously quaint, bustling and unspoilt. Its high, heather-clad moorland is stirringly beautiful with great vistas where sheep graze peacefully. There are some purely scenic stretches of dramatic road. This drive, which passes through the Howardian Hills and the centre of the North York Moors National Park, before reaching the seaside, provides more than a glimpse of all these aspects. The trip takes the historic city of York for its point of departure, with a walk at the heart of this wonderful city.



Above Sandsend, just north of Whitby, a small town with a long sandy beach, see p197

ACTIVITIES

- Climb York Minster's 275 steps** and look out over the delightful warren of medieval streets and buildings
- Enjoy a warm Yorkshire Fat Rascal** – a traditional rich fruit and nut scone – at Bettys Tea Rooms, York
- Revisit Brideshead**, actually Castle Howard, the palatial home used as a setting in the TV series and film of Evelyn Waugh's classic novel
- Cycle through beautiful Yorkshire forests** near Pickering
- Walk through time** in historic buildings chronicling 400 years of rural history at Hutton-le-Hole, one of the country's prettiest villages
- Hop aboard a steam train on the Rail Trail** over the Yorkshire moors from Grosmont to charming Goathland, and stroll back
- Go deep-sea fishing** in Whitby, a centre of Yorkshire coastal fishing
- Look down on Rievaulx Abbey from above** – England's foremost Cistercian abbey looks fabulous when seen from Rievaulx Terrace
- Walk along the Cleveland Way National Trail** from the pretty town of Helmsley



Above Pretty Old Malton, on the road from Castle Howard to Pickering, see p189



Below The glorious view from the Chimney Bank, on the road to Rosedale, see p190

PLAN YOUR DRIVE

Start/finish: York to Sutton Park.
Number of days: 4 allowing half a day in York.

Distances: 233 km (145 miles).

Road conditions: The roads are generally well-maintained. The steepest routes over the high moors require the use of low gears.

When to go: Best from late April through to mid-September. In summer the heather covering the moors blooms a rich purple.

Opening times: Galleries, museums and attractions are generally open 10am–5pm, but often close earlier Nov–Easter. Shops are often open longer. Churches are usually open until dusk.

Main market days: York: open market, Shambles, daily; Pickering: street market, Mon; Whitby: Tue & Sat; Helmsley: Fri; Guisborough: Thu & Sat.

Shopping: Look out for Whitby jet jewellery and local smoked kippers; chocolate in York; heather honey from the Yorkshire moors; and knitwear made with wool from local sheep breeds.

Major festivals: York: JORVIK Viking Festival, Feb; The Great Yorkshire Fringe, July; Food and Drink Festival, Sep; National Book Fair, Sep; Food and Drink Festival, Sep; Whitby: Regatta and Carnival, mid-Aug; Folk Week, late Aug.

DAY TRIP OPTIONS

See the **Minster** and **medieval streets** of York, then explore the **palace and grounds** of Castle Howard, enjoy some **aromatic lavender** and finish at the **Georgian mansion** of Sutton Park. From Pickering, explore the **moors** by **foot, bike or steam train** and marvel at some **frescoes**; in Hutton-le-Hole, see **historic buildings** and take a thrilling **high moor drive**. From Whitby, see the **ruined abbey**, take a **fishing** trip, visit Grosmont for a **steam-train ride**, then **walk** home. For full details, see p193.

