

Nature's Harvest walk... 2½ miles

West Bexington, Dorset

 THE NATIONAL TRUST

Enjoy a gentle autumnal walk in the heart of the stunning Jurassic Coast and discover an area rich in wildlife. Along the way, you'll pass a beautiful stretch of Chesil beach and walk through farmland, with hedgerows bursting with wild berries.

Start: West Bexington Beach Car Park (not NT) **Grid ref:** SY532865 **Maps:** OS Landranger 194 / Explorer OL15

How to get here & local facilities

By bike: National Cycle Network route 2 passes a few miles away. See www.sustrans.org

By foot: South West Coast Path runs the whole length of the coast and passes through the car park at the start of the walk

By bus: X53, Bridport-Dorchester-Weymouth. Alight at the Bull Inn at Swyre and walk to start of walk (about 1 mile) or request a stop along the B3157 at Tulks Hill and join the walk from there

By road: take B3157, Bridport to Abbotsbury, and follow to West Bexington

Hotel, pub, café, WCs and car park in West Bexington (not NT). Small farm shop in the village (NT tenanted) selling organic beef, lamb and cereals. Visit www.tamariskfarm.com

Things to look out for...

Chesil beach

Made up of pebbles and shingle, Chesil beach stretches for 18 miles between West Bay and Portland. It is one of the finest 'barrier beaches' in the world, sheltering Weymouth from the prevailing wind and waves and preventing the area being eroded by wave action. The pebbles vary in size from fist-sized, near Portland, to pea-sized at Bridport.

The Fleet Lagoon

For much of its length Chesil beach is separated from the mainland by an area of salt water called the Fleet Lagoon. The Fleet is home to a variety of fish, sea anemones and sea grasses, as well as the famous Abbotsbury Swannery.

Migratory birds

During winter the stubble is left in the fields so birds can forage on fallen grain. The surrounding scrub is a temporary home to lots of migrating birds, like finches, warblers and Swallows, who are getting that last bit of energy before the long migration flight south from here to Africa.



There are plenty of blackberries, elderberries (pictured), sloes and hawthorn berries to forage for in the hedgerows. They're a great source of vitamin C and can be used to make all sorts of things, from jams and crumbles to sloe gin and wine.

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The hedgerows are very wide and offer excellent habitats for birds. They are home to Yellowhammers and Linnets (pictured) all year round and, in summer, warblers, such as Chiffchaffs and Whitethroats, and lots of Stonechats.

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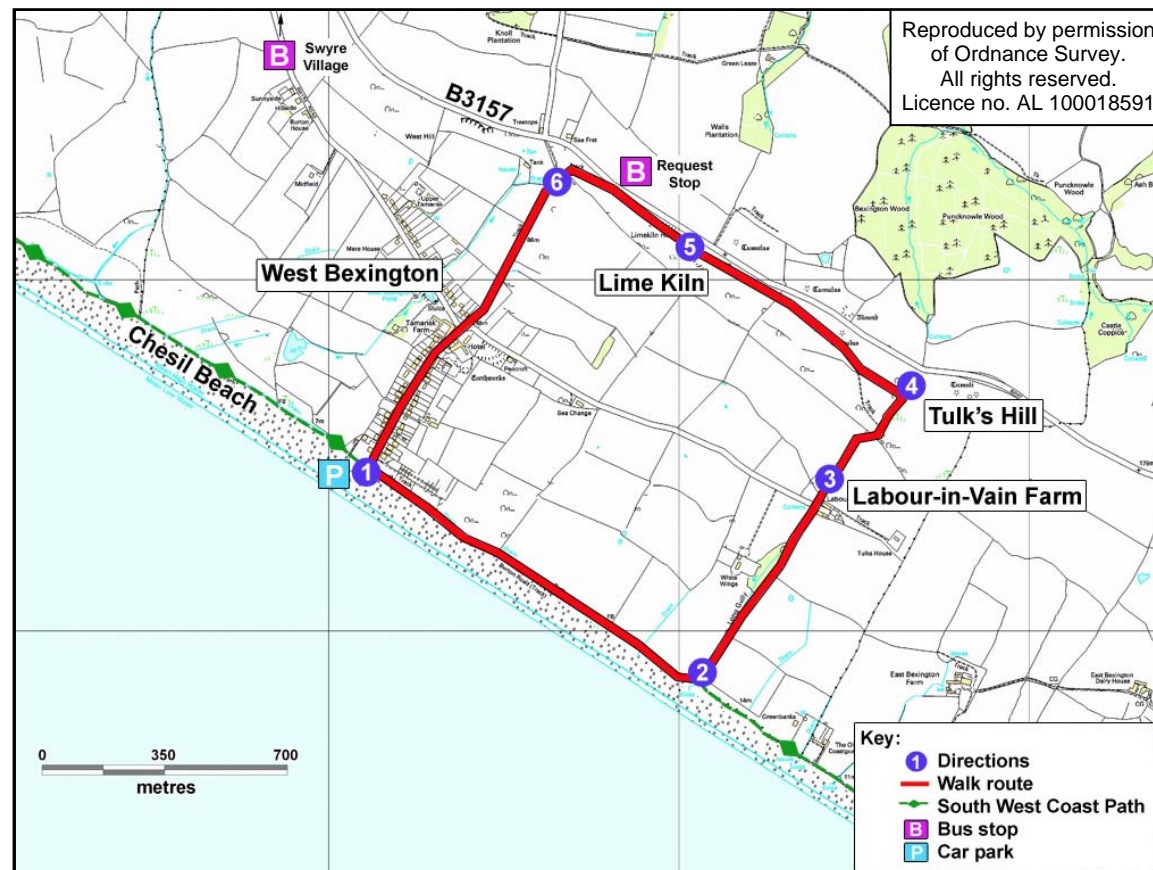


The limekiln at point 5 on the map was used to turn limestone into lime by burning it with coal. It was then spread onto the fields to reduce acidity in the soil.

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Directions

1. From the car park take the South West Coast Path to the left (east) and follow it onto Chesil beach. Along the beach keep an eye out for wild carrot and wild parsnips. Sea Kale also grows here but is only edible in spring.
2. Continue along the beach on the coast path and, after the field with the large house in it, turn left and through a gate into the next field. The concrete structure to the left is a Second World War machine gun emplacement. Carry on straight up the field and through a couple of field gates. The hedgerows here are very good for foraging for wild berries. Look for red clover in the surrounding fields which is planted to add nitrogen to the soil for next years planting.
3. Pass Labour in Vain farm, which has a building dating from the 1860s. Hedge laying, grazing and pond restoration all help wildlife here. The large pond on the left is good for dragonflies in the summer. Continue straight on past the farm (on your right) and through the next field gate. Walk across the field, heading for the isolated stone barn you can see at the top of the field.
4. Turn left after the barn and follow the track across the field to the top of Tulk's Hill. Look for the Bronze Age burial mounds at the top of the hill, before you walk west along the ridge. Keep an eye out for brown hares and roe deer too, which are becoming more common in the fields.
5. Continue west along the path to the site of a limekiln on your left. Carry on past the limekiln and follow the path along the top of the hill and to a field gate in the corner of the field. From here you can see the magnificent sweeping view of Lyme Bay. Turn Left down an old trackway and follow Donkey Lane down into West Bexington.
6. Return to the car park on the track through West Bexington.



Distance, terrain & accessibility

A 2½ mile (4km) circular walk. Easy walking conditions, with a long uphill section. Height gain of 150m over the walk. Walking boots advised. If on the beach beware of strong currents. Dogs allowed on leads and under control so as not to disturb the grazing animals.

Contact us

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Did you enjoy this walk? We'd love to hear from you, please email your comments to us at: walks@nationaltrust.org.uk

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