

Walk description:

From the car park on the ridge above Ringstead, the route goes eastward along the downs. Gradually the coast and the Purbeck Hills come into view. Descending to Lulworth Cove with its holiday-maker facilities, it is a must to go exploring, especially Stair Hole, a baby cove in the making where the rock strata are truly distorted.

Amphibians may consider a paddle or even a dip from the stony beach at Lulworth Cove or the far-less-stony beach at Durdle Door.

The route now returns on the clifftop, climbing over Hambury Tout to Durdle Door. Beyond the Door are three sharp climbs, Swyre Head, Bats Head and the White Nothe. Should they seem too daunting (or if too much time was spent at Lulworth) a short cut converts this into a single, more gentle climb onto a flat route slightly inland. From the end of the White Nothe, the route descends to Holworth House and back to the car park. The walk is firm underfoot except after wet weather. There are no facilities at start and finish except parking and an excellent view.

Access information:

Walk starts from the Ringstead Bay National Trust Car Park on the ridge above Ringstead. Take Ringstead turning off A353 between Poxwell and Osmington. (Note this is a very sharp turning if approaching from Poxwell). Follow road ahead to car park, parking towards the far end.

There is no practical access by public transport.

Start grid ref: SY761823**OS map:** Outdoor Leisure 15**Walk length:** 9.25 miles**Duration:** 270 minutes**Height gain:** 490 metres**Contributor:** Al Rodger**Weathercall:** Get a local forecast for this walk.

Call 09068 020 504 from your phone or mobile. Or dial 09065 22 45 02 from your fax machine to receive a fax.

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Features:

- Hills or Fells
- Sea
- Pub
- Toilets
- Wildlife
- Great Views

- 1**  Exit car park at the stile by the gate at far end and continue down track. (Grid ref: 761 823)
- 2**  Where track bears sharp right, cross stile and continue up track straight ahead. Keep ahead for two more stiles and a gate. (The rolling downs obscure most of the views, giving a stark landscape. Inland, beyond the dry valley, the industrial buildings on the heath are the old experimental nuclear reactor site at Winfrith}. (Grid ref: 764 819)
- 3**  At second gate an information board describes the conservation area ahead. Keep straight ahead over the next two rises. (The first view of the coast that can now be seen is St Alban's Head. The further east, the more will come into view. Also note the obelisk - a second is positioned nearer the cliff. Further on are giant snail sculptures in niches beside the path and just beyond the second rise, look out for the curious 'wobbly nuts' in the field forty yards right of the path). (Grid ref: 780 810)
- 4**  As path rises for a third time, turn right over the stile at the fingerpost to Newlands Farm Camp Site. Make for a post in the field; if the path is indistinct, dogleg right through Newlands Farm and keep straight ahead on tarmac roads past West Lulworth Church and down to Lulworth Cove. (Beyond Bindon Hill ahead the Purbecks start, a chalk ridge to the left and a limestone one to the right. Here at Lulworth Cove the sea has broken through the limestone ridge but not the chalk, forming a cove in the soft rocks between. Poole Bay must have started this way). (Grid ref: 800 811)
- 5**  The walk resumes from the pay-and-display car park up Hambury Tout on the stone-built path, dropping down to cliff above Durdle Door on the far side, then over the small rise into Scratchy Bottom. (From early afternoon in summer an ice cream van is conveniently situated on the clifftop at the Door). (Grid ref: 820 801)
- 6**  From Scratchy Bottom the path continues up three more clifftop climbs: Swyre Head, Bats Head and the slopes of White Nothe. (Should the walker feel daunted by this, an inland route reducing the climbing to one gentler climb is possible. There are also paths from the top of Swyre Head and Bats Head across to this inland route. Cross the stile at the foot of Swyre Head and follow the path diagonally uphill. Cross the stile at the top, making a detour to the left round the dense gorse to well-used sheep path. Follow path until obelisk). (Grid ref: 802 804)
- 7**  At the obelisk, the two paths join. Take any of the paths round the hillside and over the summit to the coastguard cottages at the White Nothe. (Grid ref: 782 809)

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Continue on the coast path along the lumpy clifftop, with Weymouth Bay in sight ahead. Cross the stile and descend field through patches of gorse, onto a track at the second stile. Some of the routes through the gorse can be churned by cattle. (The houses halfway down the Nothe are part of the hamlet of Holworth, almost two miles away inland. Holworth and Ringstead down on the beach were both thriving villages which were deserted in the decades following the Black Death).

(Grid ref: 772 810)

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Follow track uphill, bearing round to left at a postbox. Then keep straight ahead uphill to car park.

(Grid ref: 764 817)