

# ITINERARY #10 - PURBECK - INLAND



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## PURBECK - INLAND WAREHAM TO BOVINGTON & BERE REGIS

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**NORTHERN PURBECK** stretches from Wareham in the east to Bovington in the west and Bere Regis in the north. The Rivers Stour and Piddle traverse the mostly flat landscape, which still retains many areas of heathland. This small, rural region holds some world class places to visit, cultural and natural.

**Wareham** was founded by the Saxons in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Its development has always been constrained by its old walls and the surrounding terrain. As a result it retains its old character more than any other Dorset town. St Martin's is the only intact Saxon church in the county.

**The Tank Museum** is a world-class collection of military hardware, with an unrivalled display of armoured vehicles, many in working condition. These range from the earliest prototypes to WWI, WWII and modern tanks.

**TE Lawrence**, aka "Lawrence of Arabia", was based at Bovington Camp and lived in the little house at Clouds Hill during this time. He is buried at nearby Moreton and has an effigy in St Martin's Church, Wareham. Aficionados can follow the "Lawrence of Arabia Trail" through Moreton plantation.

**Arne RSPB Reserve**, east of Wareham, is one of the star attractions of Dorset. Over 220 species of birds, 33 of butterflies, 23 of dragonflies, 31 of mammals, all 6 British reptiles and c.500 of wild flowers have been recorded here. This large and varied reserve is a year-round destination.

**Upper Hyde Heath**, near Bovington Camp, is an internationally important nature reserve famous for its butterflies and dragonflies. All six species of British reptiles are present, as well as an interesting selection of plants and birds.

## ORDNANCE SURVEY 1:50,000 &amp; 1:25,000 MAPS

OS Landranger Map 194 Dorchester & Weymouth; Map 195 Bournemouth & Purbeck  
OS Explorer Map OL15 Purbeck & South Dorset

## PURBECK - INLAND

## WAREHAM TO BOVINGTON &amp; BERE REGIS

**1. Wareham** (page 226) stands on a small promontory between the rivers Frome and Piddle, protected by their marshy flood plains. The town retains its Saxon street plan within the Town Walls.

**St Martin's Church** (page 226) is the most complete Saxon church in Dorset and dates from the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The interior has many ancient wall paintings as well as an effigy of TE Lawrence.

**The Saxon Town Walls** (page 226) surround Wareham on all sides except for the south, which was protected by the river. Still over 4m high, they can be followed for about 1,500m.

**Wareham Quay** (page 227) on the River Frome is highly attractive and unspoilt, with an open square, wooden piles and old stonework. There is access to Poole Harbour via Wareham Channel for shallow-draughted small craft.

**2. Arne RSPB Reserve** (563ha, page 228) is quite simply one of the best nature reserves in the country. It is about 4mi (6km) southeast of Wareham, off the B3075. Its diverse habitats make it an essential visit for wildlife enthusiasts all year round. There is a Visitor Centre, several trails as well as hides overlooking Arne Bay and Middlebere Lake. Nearby, Hartland Moor and Stoborough Heath National Nature Reserves should also be visited.

**3. Wool** (page 236) has a very picturesque old bridge across the River Frome, with an Elizabethan manor behind. The bridge is now bypassed; it is said to be haunted by a coach and horses.

**4. Winfrith and Tadnoll Heaths** (pages 236, 237), south of Moreton are a mixture of dry and wet heathland. The Tadnoll Brook runs through the reserve, which provides habitats for many dragonflies. Silver-studded Blue butterflies are found on the dry heath which also attracts many birds.

**5. The Tank Museum** (page 232) at Bovington Camp is a world class collection covering the development and history of armoured vehicles from the first prototype tank of 1915. The museum has nearly 300 tanks from all over the world as well as about 100 other military vehicles. Many events, including tank action days are held annually.

**6. Monkey World Centre** (page 236) is on Tout Hill about 1mi (1.5km) north of Wool, opposite Bovington Camp. Founded in 1987 by Jim Cronin, the Centre is home to large numbers of rescued and rehabilitated apes and monkeys.

**7. TE Lawrence** lived at Clouds Hill (page 234) from 1923 to 1935, whilst he served in the Army at Bovington Camp. Today the house belongs to the National Trust, who maintain it as it was in 1935.

**8. Moreton** (page 234) is about 3mi (5km) southwest of Clouds Hill. TE Lawrence is buried in the cemetery here. St Nicholas Church in the village has a unique collection of engraved windows by the artist Laurence Whistler.

**9. Higher Hyde Heath** (54ha, page 237) is northeast of Bovington Camp about 1.5mi (2km) east of Clouds Hill. With a wide range of habitats in a relatively small area this is one of the best nature reserves in Dorset. It is famous for its reptiles, butterflies and dragonflies. The best time to visit is late spring and throughout the summer.

**10. Bere Regis** (page 230) is best known for the St John the Baptist Church interior with its very ornate 15<sup>th</sup> century wooden roof. This was paid for by John Morton, Lord Chancellor to Henry VI. **Shitterton** (page 231) is a pretty little village with many old thatched cottages. The Bere River protected it from several disastrous fires suffered by its neighbour. Its slightly unfortunate name makes it a favourite for scatological visitors, who will find its signpost hard to remove.

**11. Charborough House** (page 231) is in the extreme northeast of Purbeck. The A31 main road passes around the grounds in a large loop, following the diverted route of a 19<sup>th</sup> century turnpike. It was here that a meeting was held in 1686 which set the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in motion. The gardens are open to the public on various dates in May. **12. Sculpture by the Lakes** (page 237) at Pallington is on the north bank of the River Frome about 1.5mi (2.5km) northeast of Moreton. Many pieces by Simon Gudgeon are beautifully placed around old gravel pits amid trees.