

## ITINERARY #6 - WEYMOUTH



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### WEYMOUTH

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**WEYMOUTH** (popn. 2011, 52,323) is situated on a peninsula, sheltered from the north by the Ridgeway, from the west by Chesil Beach and, from the south, by Portland. The estuary of the River Wey, already a port during the Iron Age, was developed by the Romans as a military and commercial deep water harbour. Later it became a major commercial port, trading with Europe and North America. Some of the earliest emigrants left from here in the 1620s.

**Seaside Resorts** were becoming very popular with the rich by the late 1700s. Weymouth, with its long sheltered sandy beach, mild climate and good harbour, developed rapidly after King George III became an enthusiastic visitor. The Georgian and Regency style houses on the Esplanade were built for wealthy businessmen and their families who flocked to this newly upmarket and fashionable resort.

Apart from its fine beach, Weymouth has a great deal to offer today's visitors. Its compact size

means everything is within walking distance of the centre. The shopping precinct is partially pedestrianised, while the towns offers a huge range of hotels, guest houses, restaurants, pubs, traditional fish and chips and many small shops selling traditional seaside wares.

**Royal Navy** developments greatly affected Weymouth from the 1860s, with the construction of the Nothe Fort. The Whitehead Torpedo Works were established in Wyke Regis 1891, immediately creating a demand for skilled labour. During WWII it employed about 1,600 people, producing up to 20 torpedoes per week. It finally shut down in 1997.

**Annual Events** include Weymouth Carnival, Dorset Seafood Festival, Weymouth Beach MotoX and the Sand Sculpture Festival. Weymouth Pavilion has live performances throughout the year. In keeping with being a year-round resort, Weymouth offers something for everyone whatever the season.

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

OS Landranger Map 194  
OS Explorer Map OL15

Dorchester & Weymouth  
Purbeck & South Dorset

## WEYMOUTH

**1. Weymouth** (page 180) is situated in a beautiful sheltered position overlooking Weymouth Bay. With its beautiful long sandy beach and many facilities, the town is a fine and popular seaside resort.

**2. Weymouth Harbour** (page 183) remains a working ferry and fishing port with a large marina upstream. The quaysides have many interesting old buildings, shops, pubs and restaurants, as well as boats and anglers to watch.

**The Esplanade** (page 182) was mostly built between 1780 and 1850 by rich Londoners. Today this elegant curve of buildings is largely hotels and guest houses with shops and offices below.

**The George III Statue** (page 182) was erected in the centre of the town to commemorate the King's 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee in 1810. He still surveys the Esplanade from his high plinth.

**The Jubilee Clock** (page 182) on the Esplanade, celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> year of Queen Victoria's 50<sup>th</sup> year in 1887. Both the statue and the clock were renovated for the 2012 Olympic Games.

**The Shopping Precinct** (page 183) is partly pedestrianised. Apart from the ubiquitous chain stores it has a wide choice of independent shops, ranging from upmarket fashion and jewellery stores to outlets selling seaside resort goods.

**The Pleasure Pier** (page 184) is dominated by the Weymouth Sea Life Tower. The viewing capsule commands fine panoramic views over the town.

**Sand Sculptures** (page 182) have been a feature on the beach near the Pleasure Pier for over 90 years.

**Tudor House Museum** (page 183) in Trinity Street dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The nearby Old Rooms are an even older merchant's house.

**3. The Nothe Fort** (page 188) was originally built as a gun battery by Henry VIII. The current impressive fort dates from the 1860s and houses a fascinating military museum. There are many military artefacts from over 100 years of usage of the site.

**4. Melcombe Regis** (page 180), north of the harbour is the oldest part of town. The first town bridge was built in 1594. Originally Weymouth was the settlement on the south side of the harbour.

**5. Wyke Regis** (page 184) is the former industrial part of Weymouth, now mostly housing estates.

**The Rodwell Trail** (page 184) follows a disused

railway line from Weymouth Harbour to Ferry Bridge. There are fine views across Weymouth Bay.

**Sandsfoot Castle** (page 184) is a "device fort" built by Henry VIII off the Rodwell Trail. The ruins of this large gun platform have recently been stabilised.

**6. Ferry Bridge** (page 184) spans the Fleet estuary. The first bridge was built in 1839, while the current one dates from 1985.

**7. Chesil Beach** (page 186) is a shingle barrier beach, stretching 18mi (29km) from West Bay to Portland. It is up to 200m wide and 15m high and is very hard walking.

**East Fleet** (page 186) is the southern half of the Fleet Lagoon. The "Fleet Observer" runs boat trips here in summer. The South West Coast Path follows the beach from Ferry Bridge to Langton Herring.

**Fleet** (page 186) inspired the novel *Moonfleet*. The Fleet can be accessed in several places near here, including via the romantic Moonfleet Manor Hotel.

**8. Bennett's Water Gardens** (page 186) are 2mi (3km) west of the town centre on the B3157. Former clay pits have been imaginatively redeveloped and landscaped into a delightful exotic fairyland.

**9. Radipole Lake RSPB Reserve** (page 185) is a large area of lakes and wetland northwest of the harbour. There is a visitor centre, several hides, boardwalks and a choice of trails.

**10. Lodmoor Country Park** (page 186) has a host of attractions including Weymouth Sea Life Park.

**Lodmoor RSPB Reserve** (page 185) is another wetland site with several hides and nature trails.

**11. Upwey Wishing Well** (page 182) off the A354 north of Weymouth, was regularly visited by George III and is the source of the short River Wey.

**12. Jordan Hill Roman Temple** (page 180) is signposted off the Furzy Cliff road above Bowleaze Cove northwest of the town. Only the footings remain.

**13. The Osmington White Horse** (page 186) is carved into the chalk of White Horse Hill. Said to represent George III leaving Weymouth it is best viewed from the A353 west of Osmington.

**14. Ringstead Bay** (page 187) is overlooked by the dramatic chalk cliffs of the White Nothe and Burning Cliff. This lovely shingle and sand beach can be reached by toll road off the A353 or by footpath from the National Trust White Nothe carpark.