

Beaches

Bournemouth Beach (Pier)

Bournemouth's main beach has been catering for beach-goers since Victorian times, yet remains one of Britain's favourite beaches. In the summer the beach may get a little too popular for some, but there are plenty of alternatives along this seven mile stretch of sand.

Postcode: BH2 5AA

Chesil Beach (Chesil Bank)

Chesil beach is one of the most unusual beaches you will find anywhere in Britain. Stretching nearly 17 miles from Portland to West Bay the beach is comprised of a huge bank of pebbles. It is on average is 160 metres wide and rises to 12 metres in height.

Postcode: DT3 4LA (via Abbotsbury) or DT6 4RF (near Burton Bradstock) - if using this postcode a visit to the Hive Beach Café is recommended! www.hivebeachcafe.co.uk

Chesil Cove

Chesil Cove is the southern extremity of Chesil Beach. The Cove is very popular with scuba divers, especially those less experienced, as the waters are shallow, with little tidal current.

Postcode: DT5 1AR

Church Ope Cove

Church Ope Cove is located on the Isle of Portland near Weymouth. The beach consists of soft limestone pebbles and is surrounded by cliffs on three sides which provide shelter from the often strong breeze in the area. To get to the beach, you will need to walk down a flight of steep steps which may be difficult for small children or less able visitors.

Postcode: DT5 1HU

Greenhill Beach (Weymouth)

The mainly pebble beach of Greenhill lies in Weymouth Bay and is less crowded than the sandier beaches in the area. One of the main attractions of this beach is Greenhill Gardens, a park area behind the beach. The gardens here have some beautifully kept colourful borders and offer four tennis courts, a putting green, toilets and a café.

Postcode: DT4 7SW

Kimmeridge Bay

Kimmeridge Bay lies within the Purbeck Marine Wildlife Reserve and boasts the best rock pooling and safest snorkelling site in Dorset. Check tide times to gain the most reward.

Postcode: BH20 5PF

Lulworth Cove and Durdle Door

The beautiful white pebble beach of Lulworth Cove, with its blue waters and easy access make it a popular destination. Access to the Durdle Door pebble and shingle beach is on foot via a path and steps over the hill from Lulworth Cove or down from the Car Park.

Postcode: BH20 5PF for Lulworth Cove or BH20 5PU via Durdle Door Holiday Park.

Sandbanks Beach (Poole) (Sandbanks Peninsular)

Sandbanks is a spit of golden sand that crosses the mouth of Poole harbour and continues all the way to Bournemouth, a distance of around 5km. Dubbed Britain's Palm Beach, because of astronomical land prices, Sandbanks is well-served by upmarket hotels and restaurants. To get there from the Isle of Purbeck, take the ferry from Studland across the mouth of Poole Harbour.

Postcode: BH13 7QD

Studland

Studland is a vast area of sandy beaches and heathland. It is a glorious slice of natural coastline in Purbeck featuring a 4-mile stretch of golden, sandy beach with gently shelving bathing waters and views of Old Harry Rocks and the Isle of Wight. Set at the very tip of the National Trust owned Studland Peninsula is the lovely Shell Bay. Across the road from the beach is the Shell Bay Seafood Restaurant, a Michelin listed eatery with fine views out over Poole Harbour and Brownsea Island: www.shellbay.net

Postcode: BH19 3AX for Studland Middle Beach Car Park or BH19 3BA for Shell Bay

Swanage Beach and Bay

The gently sloping, golden sand and clear unpolluted water are just some of the great reasons that Swanage Beach has been awarded a Blue Flag and Seaside Award. Deck chairs are available for hire, as are pedalos, kayaks and sun beds. The beach runs the length of the town and is backed by a promenade lined with amusements and attractions. If you are looking for somewhere slightly quieter then head to Pier Beach.

Postcode: BH19 1LH or BH19 1BS for Pier Beach

Weymouth

With beautiful golden sands sprinkled with deckchairs, safe shallow waters, action packed events programme and a pretty harbour side, Weymouth Beach is recognised as one of the top ten beach destinations in Europe. Weymouth itself is a traditional seaside resort with plenty of quirky shops, places to eat and amusements, including a Sea life Centre.

Postcode: DT4 7AX