

WEST BAY DISCOVERY WALKS

Walk Name : Exploring the River Brit and old railway path.

Distance: 2 miles/3 kms

OS Explorer Map Number
105

Terrain : A short ascent to the crest of the beach but otherwise easy.



This walk starts from the West Bay Discovery Centre and explores the lower reaches of the River Brit and returns via the old railway path and East Beach.

Take the short, raised path away from the Centre. This is an old flood wall designed to channel away any flood waters coming over the beach in a severe storm. At the end of the path carefully cross the road towards the Welcome Hub. Pause to take a look at the circle in the middle of the hub, where there is a bronze graphic of the West Bay skyline together with points of direction.

Keep an eye out for pied wagtails around this area. These dashing little birds with their ever-moving tails don't mind crowds. They feed mainly on small insects and probably help themselves to take-away crumbs too! Look out too for the starlings with their iridescent coloured feathers.

Take the small footbridge on the left just before the George pub.

Once across, the official footpath follows the flood bund though it's often possible to walk closer to the River Brit. This watermeadow floods during periods of high rainfall. Because of the grasses and wildflowers found here, it is a designated Site of Special

Scientific Interest. One of these, the bulbous foxtail grass, which looks as it sounds, is rare in the UK. You'll also find the curiously-named corky-fruited water dropwort here. It is up to 80cms high and topped by white flowers in summer.

In summer house martins and swallows often fly low over the meadow. On the ground you can't miss the bright yellow meadow buttercup, you might also see a small blue flower, sea spurrey, growing on bare patches of soil.

Swans and ducks are often on the river, it is also frequented by otters, though you'll be very lucky if catch sight of one of these shy creatures. The river is also home to brown trout, eels and a small variety of other fish, including grey mullet that find their way from the harbour through the sluice gates.

Follow the path until you pass through an old gate in the wall. After a short distance take a diagonal direction towards the houses and along a narrower section of path until it emerges on a lane, go straight across behind the houses on the other side.

Fascinating Fact - The corky-fruited water dropwort, despite its name is highly poisonous and can kill cattle if they graze on it.

Birds to watch out for :

Pied Wagtail	Coal Tit
Cormorant	Blue Tit
Swallow	Chaffinch
Thrush	Starling
Blackbird	Duncock
Wood Pigeon	Robin

The path then takes you right to reach the main West Bay Road. Walk slightly up the road to your left and look for a gap on the opposite marked by two large telegraph poles. You need to cross very carefully as visibility is hampered by bends in the road. On the opposite side, a short path leads between the white bungalows to the old railway path.

The path is the track bed of the former Bridport to West Bay railway. The railway opened to passengers in 1884 and was part of a grand plan to make West Bay a major seaside resort similar to Bournemouth. For various reasons the plan did not succeed and nor did the railway. It closed to passengers as early as 1930 although goods traffic taking shingle, timber and fish from the harbour continued until the early 1960s.

Turn right to head back to West Bay. This is a joint-use path so do keep an eye open for cyclists. Alongside the path there is a wealth of flowers, trees and shrubs and bird life – a real wildlife corridor, look at the variety of leaf shapes and textures and stop and listen for birds and insects! The trackside trees of elder, hawthorn and others carry berries in the late summer and autumn and are an invitation to a range of birds to feed. The buddleia bushes with their long purple flower heads attract a number of butterflies. Some of the plants seen in this area such as the curiously-named stag-horn sumach, are likely to be “garden escapees”.

Further on, as the view opens up to your left, there is a semi-wetland area often frequented by ducks, gulls and other water birds and occasionally lapwings in the colder months of the year.

When you reach the car park continue via the West Bay station platform, the station building and the restored carriage host the Station Kitchen, a popular local restaurant. Cross the road and to your right follow your way back to the Discovery Centre. We hope you enjoyed the walk, do come in and let us know if you saw anything exciting!



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Production supported by the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty 60th Anniversary Fund.