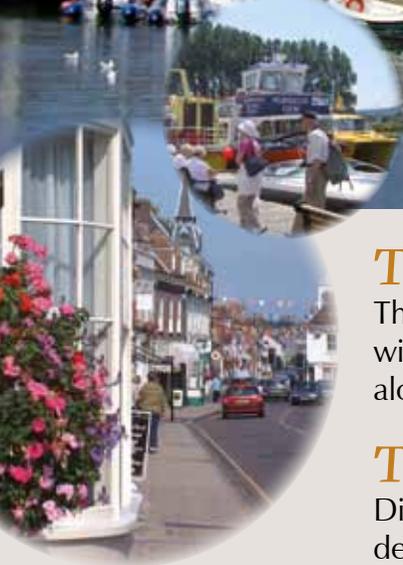


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The essential
visitors' guide to

Wareham

A Saxon walled town



The Walls Walk

This walk describes the history of the walls together with details of wild flowers and birds to be seen along the way.

The Town Walk

Discover Wareham by following this walk which describes points of interest throughout the town.

Saxon Wareham

- situated on a low ridge between the Rivers Frome and Piddle and built on a site that was occupied as far back as the Iron Age.



Wareham became established as an important cross Channel port in Saxon times and the Quay in those days would have been a very busy place. In 876 the town was captured by the Danes, and as a result of this and similar attacks, was one of a number of Wessex towns that were subsequently defended by high walls.

After the Norman Conquest, a castle was constructed near the bank of the Frome, now only the original mound remains. After the prosperous times of Saxon England, when Wareham was one of the most important towns in Dorset and could boast of two mints, the Middle

Ages were a period of slow but inevitable decline, as the river silted up and trade transferred to the new port of Poole.

The Civil War in the 17th Century was a turbulent time for Wareham. The town changed hands several times and it was Parliamentary forces who removed masonry from the defensive walls and reduced them to half their previous height.

Like many other towns at that time, Wareham's centre consisted of a close-packed mass of buildings, many built of timber and thatched. As a result, it suffered from a succession of fires, the worst being in 1762, when over 140 buildings were destroyed. In consequence, no new thatched buildings were allowed and those few thatched roofs still in existence mark the boundaries of the fire.

Wareham men were involved in the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685 and in the aftermath five rebels were executed at Bloody Bank, on West Walls, by order of Judge Jeffreys.

In recognition of its historical importance, Wareham has been designated an outstanding Conservation Area and over two hundred buildings are listed as being of architectural interest.



St. Martin's Church



Wareham in Bloom



Church Green

Explore . . .

Full of history, river and countryside walks, great pubs and restaurants, accommodation and lots of interesting shops to browse around. Also in town are grocery stores and butchers so you can get everything you need whilst shopping locally.

Markets

(Usually held in the mornings)

Thursdays

Produce & Flower Auction and Market, Cottees, East Steet

Home Producers Market, United Reformed Church, Church Street

Farmers Market, Corn Exchange, Town Cross (Fortnightly)

Saturdays

Market, Wareham Quay

Farmers' Markets

Look out for Farmers' Markets where you can buy fresh produce direct from the supplier, including the divine Dorset Blue Vinny cheese, scrumptious Dorset Apple Cakes and locally produced chutneys and jams.

Auction

Tuesday. Antiques and Collectables fortnightly at Cottees, East Street.



Wareham's Saturday Market

The Town Hall

On the site of the present Town Hall there has been the Norman Church of St. Peter, a Guild Hall, Town Jail and butcher's shop.

The Town Hall was completely rebuilt in 1870 with funds entirely contributed by the public. The building was designed by the well known architect C R Crickmay to whom Thomas Hardy was articulated. Today the Town Hall Council Chamber is still used for Council Meetings and is licensed for Weddings & Civil Partnerships. The Corn Exchange is used for social functions and Farmers' Markets. For further information please contact 01929 553006.



The Town Hall



Council Chamber, Town Hall

The Walls Walk

Wareham Town Walls were originally built in Saxon times to defend the town from attacks against the Vikings.

The Walls surround the heart of the town on three sides (the fourth side being defended by the River Frome) and date from the 9th century. They now form a delightful walk around the town.

Park in Streche Road Car Park and follow the Walls Walk signs. The walk takes about 45 minutes. See map overleaf.

The middle section of West Walls is known as Bloody Bank after a number of executions which took place there. Today it is the best place to see wild flowers. Look out for the purplish-blue flowers of wild clary, minute yellow flowers of lady's bedstraw, white umbrella-shaped flower heads of wild carrot and many species of butterfly.

Walk along the top of the walls towards the north end and turn right onto North Walls.

From here there are extensive views over the flood plain of the River Piddle and beyond towards Wareham Forest. Below the Walls the river meanders across Wareham Common. The lush vegetation of the river banks provides nesting habitat for water birds such as the Cetti's warbler, moorhen and mallard. In summer, house martins and swifts fly over the water feeding on insects and use the historic buildings as breeding sites. Continue along the North Walls past the church of St. Edward the Martyr, down Shatters Hill and turn right into North Street. From here walk towards the town centre, cross the road and turn left back towards St. Martin's Church and the War Memorial. Turn right at the Church and walk along Lady's Walk. At the end, turn left into St. Martin's Lane and then right, back onto the Town Walls. Where North Walls meet East



West Walls, known as Bloody Bank



The rare Cetti's warbler

Walls there is an area of open space which was used for fairs in the 18th century. Here, there is a rectangular area surrounded by low banks called the Bowling Green, although it is not known if it was ever used for this purpose. The River Piddle flows beneath the Walls at this point and continues downstream to Poole Harbour. From here walk south to East Street along the top of East Walls.

Cross East Street and continue south along the Walls which fade out into a leafy lane. This point marks the end of the Walls.

To return to your starting point, turn right into Conniger Lane which runs between two Graveyards. From the Graveyard there are impressive views across the Frome Valley towards Redcliffe. Walk towards Lady St. Mary's Church and from here follow the Town Walk from point 15 to 4.

Guided walls walk every Wednesday morning during the school summer holidays starting at the Discover Purbeck Information Centre, South Street, Wareham.



P Car Parks
→ One Way Streets
 Public Houses
 Telephone Boxes
PC Public Convenience
M Wareham Museum
 Taxi ranks
7 Places of interest (detailed below)
PO Post Office
 Town Walk, (approx. 20 mins detailed below)
 Walls Walk, (approx. 45 mins detailed overleaf)
 Access points to Two Rivers Walks, Wareham Forest Way, Purbeck Way and Purbeck Way West
 Northport Greenway Walk

The Wareham Forest Way starts at the Quay is twelve miles long and ends in Sturminster Marshall. The Purbeck Way also starts at the Quay and offers fifteen miles of walking through spectacular landscapes. Leaflets available at Discover Purbeck Information Centre.

A four walks pack showing the routes of these walks is available from the Discover Purbeck Information Centre.

Discover Purbeck Information Centre

The Library, South Street, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 4LU.
 Tel: 01929 552740. (answerphone when Centre closed).
 Email: tic@purbeck-dc.gov.uk
 Website: www.visitswanageandpurbeck.co.uk

Make the most of your holiday!
 Call in, telephone or write to the Discover Purbeck Information Centre. Friendly staff will help you with information on where to stay, what to do, places to visit, entertainment and events.

Many FREE leaflets and guides available including the Swanage & Purbeck Holiday Guide.

- Guidebooks • maps • postcards • greetings cards • stamps • gifts • booking service for accommodation, ferries and local events.

OPENING HOURS
SUMMER
 Monday 9.30am - 5.00pm.
 Tuesday to Saturday 10.00am - 5.00pm.
 Sunday Open - school summer holiday
WINTER - Monday to Saturday 10.00am - 4.00pm

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The Town Walk - Discover Wareham by following the Town Walk which describes points of interest throughout the town and takes about 20 minutes.

Start at the Discover Purbeck Centre Information Centre in South Street.

1. Cross South Street towards **Abbot's Quay** where motor and rowing boats can be hired. Abbot's Quay turns right to become Tanners Lane - walk to the top of the lane.

2. The **Rectory** of Lady St. Mary parish church faces you at the top of Tanner's Lane. The present building replaces an earlier rectory which was destroyed in the 1762 fire. Its most famous resident was Rev. John Hutchins MA, Rector of Wareham from 1744 to 1773. He compiled his "History of Antiquities of the County of Dorset" here. Turn left along Pound Lane, notice the Norman Arch in the garden wall of the rectory which is believed to be reused stonework from Wareham Castle.

3. Further along on the left hand side is the site of Wareham Castle. The castle mound has a large house, Castle Close, on it. Documents imply that the Castle was completed by 1110 but it is not exactly known when it was destroyed. Today the only visible remains are the mound where the house now stands and traces of the surrounding ditch. Massive stone foundations have been discovered at points along the

probable line of the bailey and the base of a stone keep survives inside the mound. These foundations lie about 15ft. below ground and run underneath the present house.

4. At the top of Pound Lane on the left hand side can be found the **Town Pound**. It was originally built to hold stray and impounded animals.

5. Turn right along West Street. The **Rex Cinema** on the left hand side is owned by the Purbeck Film Festival. Both the interior and exterior are still furnished with 1920's style, it shows both the latest and non mainstream films and also has its own bar. Continue along West Street to the crossroads and turn left.

6. **St. Martin's Church** on North Street is a few minutes walk from this point and worthy of a visit. Built in Saxon times, this church stands on the North Walls on the east side of the gateway into the town. The Chancel and Nave are pre-Conquest of the 11th century. There is also a series of wall paintings, the earliest of which are probably 12th century. After a period of disuse it was renovated in 1936 and many people visit it to see the effigy of Lawrence of Arabia carved by Eric Kennington.

7. The present **Town Hall** which has recently been refurbished was built in 1870. It replaces an earlier Town Hall, school, jail and butcher's shop which were built in 1768.



The Black Bear

Before that the parish church of St. Peter stood on this site, the first priest was recorded in 1321. Today the Town Hall is still used for Town Council meetings and the ground floor for social functions.

8. **Wareham Museum** on East Street, next to the Town Hall, houses displays of local bygones and a special section on Lawrence of Arabia. The museum is open from Easter to mid October (Mon to Sat 10.00 - 4.00) and admission is free. Tel 01929 553448.

9. Opposite the Town Hall on the south side of East Street are the **Almshouses**. Founded by John Streche who died in 1418, they were rebuilt in 1741 and have since been modernised internally. The bell tower was originally part of the 1768 Town Hall and was moved to the roof of the Almshouses when the present Town Hall was built in 1870. From here walk back to the traffic lights and turn left into South Street.

10. A few doors along on the left hand side is **Lloyds TSB**. The bank stands on the site of The Bull's Head Inn believed to be the place where the 1762 fire of Wareham began.

11. Further along, the **Manor House**, built in 1712, is set back from the street behind a wall and a tall hedgerow. It is a fine, dignified, early Queen Anne three storey building which has retained most of its original fittings.

12. On the opposite side of South Street, set back in a courtyard is the **Wareham Conservative Club**. Originally this was built as the Unitarian Church and used as such until 1960.

13. The **Black Bear Hotel** 2 doors further down the street has a life sized statue of a bear over the entrance porch. The first reference to a "Bear Hotel" in Wareham was in 1747 but this was destroyed in the fire of 1762 and replaced by the present building in 1770.

14. Turn left into St. John's Hill and follow the path towards the church. **Gold Court** on the south side of the square is reputed to stand on the site of Wareham's mint which was established by King Athelstan in the early 10th century. In 1086 the Domesday Book recorded two mints in the town.

15. Turn right at this point into Church Green. **The Parish Church of Lady St. Mary** faces onto the Green. It is built on the site of an 8th century Minster church and still boasts a 14th century chancel and Tudor Tower with a ring of 10 bells. The church contains a number of objects of interest, including five pre-Conquest

inscriptions, dating from the 7th century to circa 800, a 12th century lead font and two 13th century military effigies. Attendants are on duty in the church whenever it is open and an information guide is available.

16. The **Priory Hotel** next to the church is an early 16th century building which was formerly the home of a monastery. Although the house has been greatly altered, the main features of the 16th century layout can still be traced. The monastery here was preceded by a nunnery founded, according to legend, by St. Aldhelm in the 8th century.

17. Follow the sign from Church Green down a narrow lane to **The Quay**. Now used for leisure only, the Quay was once the hub of Wareham. Ships arrived from the continent and unloaded their cargoes for distribution throughout the area. The trade was chiefly in salt and potters' clay. Nowadays the Quay is lively in the summertime and visitors may take a cruise along the River Frome from here. A street market is also held every Saturday throughout the year.



The Parish Church of Lady St. Mary