

**Location & Access:**

West Bay is the port town for Bridport, and is found at SY461 904. It can be accessed via the A35 road from Dorchester to the east, and via the A35 road from Lyme Regis to the west.

Bridport and West Bay are served by a regular Wessex bus service (number X51). This service is also known as the 'Jurassic Coaster'.



View along Dorset coast from Golden Cap

**Key Geography:** Stunning section of the South West Coast Path - part of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. Cliffs, coastal management, fossils.

**Description:** In order to make a full day of exploration, this 7 mile walk can start at West Bay – setting for the popular TV series 'Broadchurch'. The south west coast path can be followed from here, climbing Golden Cap (the highest cliff on the south coast) along the way, before the walk ends at the beach at Charmouth.

At West Bay, the shingle beach is backed by the impressive sheer wall of East Cliff. Here, horizontal beds of golden Bridport sands alternate with nodules of more resistant calcareous sandstone, which jut out giving the cliffs a serrated appearance. There are some interesting rock armour sea defences to look at before continuing along the coast path to pass Eype Mouth.



Beach and cliffs at West Bay

After this, you embark on the first steep climb of the walk to the top of Thorncombe Beacon. From here, there is a great view back towards West Bay, and further eastwards along the Jurassic coast towards Weymouth and Portland.

Continuing westwards, a lunch stop at the Anchor Inn at Seatown forms a natural midday break to the journey. Suitably refreshed, it then becomes time to slog up a zig-zag path to the top of Golden Cap. The effort is rewarded with a tremendous view from the flat summit in both directions along the Jurassic coast. The name is an apt description for this headland, with the exposed upper greensand (from the lower Cretaceous) on the seaward side producing the characteristic golds and yellows of the Cap, a sharp contrast with the grey mudstones and clays of neighbouring strata.

After dropping down to pass the ancient lost village of St Gabriel's – once a thriving medieval

*(continued overleaf)*

**Curiosity Questions:**

- # The market town of Bridport is famous for what old industry?
- # Golden Cap is part of the Jurassic Coast, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Can you name any others found in the UK?
- # What warning is written on a sign on the bridge crossing the stream as you walk into Charmouth village?

**Further information:**

<https://jurassiccoast.org>  
[www.visit-dorset.com/things-to-do/golden-cap-p1296663](http://www.visit-dorset.com/things-to-do/golden-cap-p1296663)  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/golden-cap](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/golden-cap)

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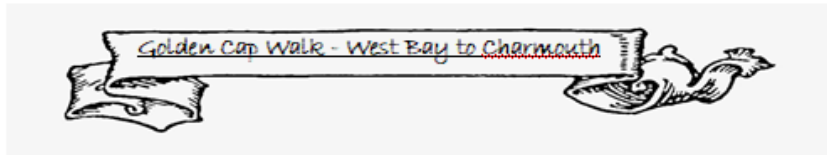


Fossils found at Charmouth

community before the Black Death took its toll – the path heads on towards Charmouth. Part of the coast path here has now been diverted inland over Stonebarrow Hill to avoid some recent cliff collapse.

After strolling through part of the village, it is possible to reach the beach at Charmouth, which is one of the finest fossil beaches in the country. A series of mud flows and mud slides (I like the term ‘mud glaciers’) have pulled numerous Jurassic ammonites and dinosaur fossils out of the cliffs and dumped them across the beach.

A quick visit to the excellent Heritage Centre housed on the top floor of a former cement works is highly recommended. There are excellent displays, samples, and films here about fossils and the features to be found on this stretch of the Jurassic Coast. Throughout the year, guide walks leave from here to explore the beach, and are well worth joining. However, it is easy to explore the beach yourself, and you should be able to go home with a collection of specimens of ammonites and belemnites, or maybe something unusual if you are lucky. If luck is not with you, there is a really well-stocked fossil shop below the Heritage Centre with plenty of locally found samples for sale.



Unstable mud cliffs at Cain's Folly, Charmouth



**Answers to Curiosity Questions:**

- # The market town of Bridport is famous for what old industry? (*Rope making - from locally grown flax and hemp*).
- # Golden Cap is part of the Jurassic Coast, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Can you name any others found in the UK? (*Bath, the Lake District, Ironbridge Gorge - 32 in total!*).
- # What warning is written on a sign on the bridge crossing the stream as you walk into Charmouth village? (*'Any person wilfully injuring any part of this county bridge will be guilty of felony and upon conviction liable to be transported for life by the court'*).