

the left route signposted to Dorchester. After approximately 200 yards go through a metal gate showing a blue footpath sign. Continue along a grassy track and after passing through another metal gate immediately turn left following the brideway sign.

12. When the track goes downhill you will see a "No public right of way" sign. Head now on the grassy track to your right looking for a metal gate in the distance, keeping close to the trees on your right. After going through the gate follow the sign to Charminster heading in a diagonal way towards the top of the hill. Look now for a metal gate in the right corner and a blue footpath sign.

St Mary's Church

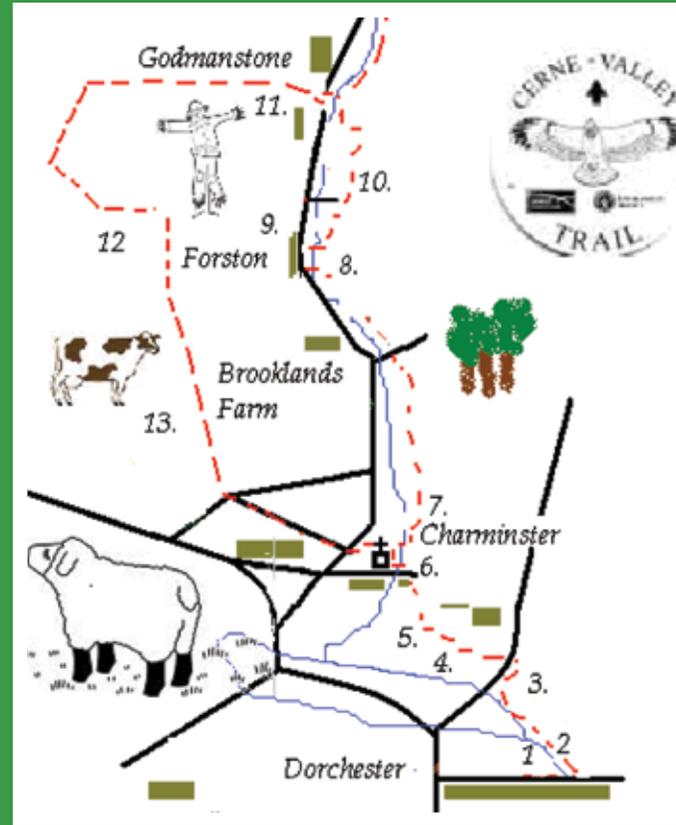


13. You now will see a barn in front of you. Head past this and follow the signs to Charminster eventually reaching a farm track, passing a few houses leading you onto the road. Follow this round past Charminster Depot until you come to another road junction. Head straight into the opposite field and this will lead you back into Charminster churchyard. From here retrace your steps back to Dorchester.

www.westdorset.com
www.visit-dorset.com

Recommended reading

'The Cerne Valley Trail' Dorset County Council free publication



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West Dorset Walks

Circular walk around the Cerne Valley



The Cerne Valley trail is a circular route of 26 miles. The rich and varied habitat sees the eastern arm running parallel to the river whilst the western route follows chalk hills that frame the valley. Most of the route is well signposted showing the trail's motif. If you wish to see Cerne Abbas, with its famous giant, it is an enjoyable walk to do it as a one-way walk. A bus service from Dorchester to Cerne Abbas is operated by Nordcat, telephone 0845 6024547.

We have also devised this scenic circular walk that can be started from Dorchester, a total distance of approximately 11 miles. Walking boots or stout shoes are recommended.

1. Leaving the Dorchester Tourist Information Centre walk to the traffic lights and turn right. Cross the road at a suitable point and carry on walking down the main high street until you pass a derelict pub with a stag above its entrance. Once over the bridge turn left and follow the path along the river.
2. When you come to a 't-junction' with an old cottage opposite and a pond on your right hand side, turn right, walking along a tarmac lane and then you will see two signposts, one directing you to Charminster and the other titled 'Frome Valley Trail'. They will first direct you left over a wooden bridge and then around to your right over a second bridge. You should now see the 'The Sun Inn' pub opposite.
3. Walk to the left of the pub and then cross the road at the pedestrian crossing. Follow the sign

to East Hill. Walking around the farm buildings you should then see a small wooden gate that will lead you into a field. Head straight through the middle of the field and you will come to a wooden gate.

4. Pass through the two gates and then into a field with a line of trees on the left. Follow them along to the other side of the field where you will then need to pass through another wooden gate. Follow this narrow path around until you come to another gate. Walk straight across and follow the sign to 'East Hill' (do not walk right along the car track). You will now follow this narrow path into the picturesque village of Charminster. Once you meet the road, turn left and walk down the hill, over the bridge and take the first gate on your right into the churchyard. Follow the sign to 'Mill Lane'.
5. Once through the churchyard you will see two signposts indicating the Cerne Valley Trail. Follow the one to the right, over a wooden bridge and turning left once you meet the road again. You will now walk along a farm track for 10 minutes, passing Miller's Community Orchard and the 'Lost Garden' on your left.
6. You will eventually see a brown garage with a blurred inscription of 'Giddy Cottage' on it. At the garage turn right into a field and head towards the cottage at the far end of the field. Do not pass through the gate into the cottage, as this is private. The correct gate has the Cerne Valley Trail motif displayed and is located midway between the cottage and the upper fence. Once through the gate and after a few hundred yards, take a narrow footpath on your left. You will walk through a metal gate and then pass a series of houses to your right. Once you meet the road head straight across and follow the green sign towards Forston. Pass through three gates and then head through the middle of the third field.

7. Once across the field head down a tree-lined lane and then through a rusty gate. Shortly after, head through a second gate and head across the field to the opposite gate. Pass through this and make your way past the barns heading left down towards the road. At this point turn right, here you will walk 500 yards along the road. Cowden Hill will be signposted.
8. At this point avoid the signpost on your left that directs you to Watcombe Bottom (although if you wish to begin the journey back at this stage you could follow this path) and turn right. Walk through a gate into Forston Farm. Although this looks as if you're trespassing through someone's garden, fear not as this is the correct path. Once past the house and into the adjacent field head right ignoring the grass path over the river. You should now have a line of trees and bushes on your left hand side. You should after another few hundred yards pass through a farm gate with the Cerne Valley Trail motif on.
9. Once in this field stay close to the fence on the right and follow it all the way upward to the gate in the upper far side of the field.
10. Pass through the gate and turn left towards Godmanstone. Follow the path downwards and look for a small gate located on your left hand side. Turn left following the path around the field and then head uphill. Pass over the stile and then head straight on through another two gates. You will now see a signpost on your left. Turn left, head over the stile towards Godmanstone. On your right you should see the Smiths Arms (built in the 18th century, it is reputed to be the smallest in the country, now closed). Once at the road, turn left and after 20 yards turn right and follow the signs 'The Turning Point'.
11. After three quarters of a mile travelling uphill go through a gate. You are rewarded for your effort with outstanding panoramic views. Here take

The Sun Inn



Built on land once owned by Henry VIII who gave it to the Earl of Ilchester, the surrounding farmlands are still owned by the Ilchester Estates. The Sun Inn is a 17th Century pub, which doubled as the blacksmiths at various times in the past.