



## Information

Distance: 5.6km (3.5miles)

Gradient: Flat level ground but the paths can get muddy in winter

Starting Point: The Council car park behind Heron Close at Overcombe Corner entrance.

Public Transport: Buses to Overcombe corner (the start point) and from the King's Statue, the end.

Parking: Overcombe car park, a Dorset Council pay and display car park, the start DT3 6SX and the Swannery car park, the finish.

Accessibility: The walk is accessible to people of all abilities, including wheelchair users. There are benches around the trail.

## Facilities

Toilets: The nearest public toilets are at Overcombe corner and Lodmoor country park. There are Toilets and a café in Radipole Lake Discovery centre, the end of the trail.

Eating: There are several cafes and more toilets along the seafront.

1. From the Overcombe car park, follow the path in the corner near the flats, with the road and cycle path on your left and a sign for the Lorton Valley park on your right. Although you are surrounded by houses, there is still bird song. If you listen carefully you should hear, robins, house sparrows, dunnocks and wrens singing for you. The area on your right is wet grassland and scrub managed by the RSPB for wildlife. In winter there are many snipe here but they are good at hiding. Look out for the tracks of deer using a gap under the fence and in summer you'll see cattle grazing the reserve.
2. The path comes out round a metal barrier onto the tarmac cycle path where you turn right and follow the path until you come to a grass triangle and a major path on your right.
3. This is Beachdown way, turn right here. As you walk up Beachdown Way you'll see open pools of water on your left and have a view back into Overcombe on your right. At the brick/stone bridge look for swans and ducks on the right-hand side, they are used to being fed. After the bridge, the scenery changes as you enter the reed-bed.
4. Turn left at the end of the path walking on the grass verge along Southdown Avenue. You get some great views of the reserve here, and the pools in front of you are the last to freeze (come here on a cold morning in winter and you should keep your eyes peeled). For several years, bitterns, (a rare bird that looks like a small brown heron and nearly went extinct from the UK) have been overwintering. This is a great spot to look for them. In winter, there are sometimes large flocks of starlings roosting in the reedbeds, and they coordinate themselves in large murmurations – a fantastic sight to see and hear. This is home for many birds (male reed buntings with their black faces and white collars are easy to see all year round), but that is not all. Come along here at night and see Daubenton's bat flying over the water.
5. At the end of Southdown Avenue, the road ends and a path starts, carry straight on here.
6. Now you will see a gate and footpath sign on your right. This leads to Dorset Wildlife Trust's Lorton Meadows nature reserve and more walks but follow the path round to the left and you will have reeds either side of you. One of the successes of Lodmoor is the breeding of marsh harrier. Rarer than golden eagles, these large birds of prey can be seen gliding over the reeds looking for prey, stay here for long enough and there is a good chance of seeing one overhead. The metal bridge is a good place to see them from.

7. When you come to a wooden barrier and a no cycling sign turn left heading back towards the sea following the route of the Legacy Trail. If you're on a bike, you can either dismount for the narrow paths or continue straight on following cycle path 6 and alternative routes back into Weymouth. Here you get a great intimate feeling of how the habitat changes as you get closer to the sea. The reeds make way for a more open habitat. If you're very lucky you may get sight of a water rail or a kingfisher, they are often seen in the ditch on your right.

The more open areas are fantastic for close views of birds you would normally need a telescope to see... look for little egrets (small white herons) as these stand out at a distance.

8. At the end of the path by the reserve Map and reserve entrance turn right, pass the cycle racks and leave the reserve.
9. Cross the road that goes to the waste management site to get to a safe place to cross the busy road and go up the steps onto the sea wall. Keeping the sea on your left you have views of Weymouth Bay and Portland as you head back to the centre of Weymouth but do stop to look at Greenhill gardens on the way back and take advantage of the options for coffee and ice-creams.
10. At the clock tower, cross the road turning right into King Street, past the railway station, cross the road into the Swannery car park and Radipole Lake Discovery Centre is in front of you, the thatched building in the corner of the car park.