

Shaftesbury to Iwerne Minster

IW20a

Linear Walk

9.6 miles

4 hours

Moderate

Walk Overview

A very rural route through the Dorset countryside that has several ascents and provides excellent views, particularly from Melbury Hill.

Points of Interest

1. Before leaving Shaftesbury, do divert to the garden in front of the Abbey remains (follow the path to the R of Costa Coffee) to take in the view. Your route over Melbury Hill can clearly be seen. You might also like to explore the old abbey itself.
2. Your route goes down Gold Hill, which is always associated with the Hovis advert of many years ago and Dvorak's New World Symphony. The steeply ranked cottages are worth a picture.
3. (867209) At the bottom of the valley, take note of the old mill on the RHS and the sluice gate.
4. (873198) The view from the trig point on the other side of the fence is far reaching. You can appreciate the hill top setting of Shaftesbury and the contrast between the clay farmland of Blackmoor Vale to the west and the chalk hills to the east and south is much evident. Your route along Melbury Down with its airfield can be picked out.
5. (913178) The village of Ashmore (a very short diversion off your route) is the highest village in Dorset and the village pond and thatched cottages provide a real picture postcard setting.

Places to Eat

1. Shaftesbury is well endowed with coffee stops. You could try Turnbills in High St (near The Grosvenor Hotel), Indulge just along from the Post Office or The Salt Cellar (behind the town hall and at the top of Gold Hill).
2. (891185) Compton Abbas airfield's cafe offers a good choice for lunch and a view of flying activity.
3. (866144) The village Post Office and stores in Iwerne Minster has a small cafe which would be a good stop for tea at the end of your days walk.
4. (865143) The Talbot Hotel is your source for dinner but is closed for food on Sunday evenings.

Part 1 Shaftesbury to Melbury Hill

1. Pass either side of the Town Hall and walk down Gold Hill. At bottom turn R into St James St and, after about 100 yds, turn L into Kingsman Lane (No through road). Where lane becomes overgrown, take LH footpath at fork and then turn R by pillar box when road reached. When roads fork, take LH lane (Frenchmans Lane).
2. (865214) At 3 Ways Cottage, where road comes in from R, bear L and continue to old mill at bottom. Go uphill for about ½ mile and then turn L at cross roads. At main road continue over and then, almost immediately at next road junction, cross that road and go through gate with telephone box on your LHS.
3. (872203) Continue through gates and then steeply uphill to stile in hedge ahead. Pass NT sign on your LHS and keep going straight uphill, passing over cross ditch up to top of the hill.

Part 2 Melbury Hill to Ashmore

1. (873198) At the top your route turns L and stays on this side of the fence going down into the dip between the two hills and then over Compton Down to arrive at the road.
2. (885189) Turn R along the path that parallels the road, passing through the car park, and then through 2 gates to turn L and cross over the road, at road junction to follow minor road, signed Compton Abbas airfield. Proceed along this road, passing the airfield entrance and cafe, for about ½ mile.
3. (895186) Turn R at footpath sign by double gate and into woods, ignoring any tracks to R. Exit woodland over cross paths, continue ahead through 2 gates, keeping the hedge on your LHS as you descend. At bottom of hill, follow track bending to R, ignoring track to L, and climb hill, going through gate and with fence on your LHS. At top corner of field, turn R and follow fence line to a bridleway sign and turn L. Follow this track to the road, where turn R along the road. (If you want to view Ashmore turn L into the village and then retrace your steps.)

Part 3 Ashmore to Iwerne Minster

1. (907175) Walk along the road for about 200 yds and then, where it bends to R, go through gate on L and follow LH hedge line. Just before top LH corner of this field look for 2 blue bridleway signs on trees on your RHS to follow and pass through gate with conifer trees on your R. Then walk along LH hedge to end of field, where go through another gate to enter woods, following path bending L. Where paths fork by bridleway sign, take LH path and proceed to T junction of paths, where turn R and go steeply downhill to valley bottom.
2. (895163) Cross over forestry track and pass through gate ahead by bridleway sign. Turn L and keep to LH field boundary as you go uphill through another gate. At top corner of field turn R, still keeping boundary on your L, bending round to L with this. Again turn R at top corner and then L, with woods on your LHS until you reach tarmac drive. After about 30 yds leave this and continue with hedge on your L up to cottage, where you turn R onto another drive, which you follow to main road.
3. (888153) Cross road carefully and go through gate opposite. Turn immediately L and walk along LH field boundary. At gate with bridleway sign on your L, bear R to cross field and head towards woods. Keep straight ahead on the clear farm track for about 1 mile ignoring any turns L or R and where houses eventually come into sight. Where track bends to R, pass by gate onto grassy path and then exit onto road between houses. Cross this road and turn L by post box onto lane. Continue on this ignoring turn to R but bending to R by playing field entrance. This leads to village centre, with butchers shop on L and village shop after the lane bends R and then L.