

West Somerset Railway What to see and do guide

The What to see and do guide gives you full information on what to see and do from each West Somerset Railway Station.



Bishops Lydeard

The village of Bishops Lydeard is situated at the foot of the Quantock Hills and is about five minutes walking from the station. The old village is a mixture of red sandstone and brick buildings which are all very charming to look at. Further up the road into the village is Mill Lane which, if followed, takes you to the village watermill which has been splendidly restored. Bishops Lydeard Mill welcomes visitors on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Sundays from 30th May to 30th September (plus Bank Holiday Mondays) and Saturdays in August between 11.30am - 4pm. The mill is home to a working water wheel, the wheelwright's shop and the blacksmith's shop.

Once back on the main road further into the village is the Bird in the Hand Pub offering food and drink, garden and a children's play area. Alongside the pub is a small craft shop.

The Village Church is the very impressive St. Mary the Virgin and the earliest part dates from the 14th Century. There are some beautiful wood carvings in the church and the village charter from 1291 can be viewed.

As you make your way from the station towards the village you will find the Lethbridge Arms, an old established inn, which offers food and drink including real ales in a number of rooms. The large wall in the car park is of historical interest as having been built for the playing of Fives, a Somerset game which was once very popular but which has now died out. A Fives Wall in West Somerset is unusual as the most popular area for the game was the south of the county.

Near the church is a fascinating relic of the tram system in Taunton, a post that supported the electric wires, now in use as a lamp standard. The trams were closed in the 1920's and no one is really sure how it got there.

Other local attractions include [Cedar Falls Health Farm](#) and the [Quantock Hills](#) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Crowcombe Heathfield

The station is the ideal start/end point for a walk on the [Quantock Hills](#) or a cycle ride round Somerset's country lanes.

Stogumber

Stogumber is a picturesque but thriving village set in a valley between the Quantock and Brendon Hills. The main enterprise is agriculture and the village is surrounded by rolling farmland. The Parish comprises the village itself and several hamlets, including Vellow, Capton, Kingswood, Coleford Water and the "Vexfords". The focal point of the village is the Square, which contains the pub shop and St. Mary's Church, a large Norman church with an interesting William Morris style ceiling. The street leading up to the Square, High Street, is the most photographed part of the village, with its mix of colour-washed and thatched properties.

Williton

For those who would like to explore Williton itself leave the station by the Signalbox and walk up Station Road, past the industrial estate to the junction with Long Street. Turn right into Long Street and you shortly reach the first of the town's pubs 'The Foresters Arms'. Thereafter Long Street is a mix of building styles and materials and combines modern houses with older cottages and various business premises such as wine shops and hotels. Finally 'The Royal Huntsman' and the Williton Social Club face each other across the road and the village centre is reached.

On the same side of the road as the 'Royal Huntsman' is the main office of the 'The West Somerset Free Press', a cafe and bakery. A right turn past these takes you to the 'Mason's Arms'. The town centre itself includes a news agent, post office, two banks, pet supplies and County Stores. Along the Taunton Road is the 'Wyndham Arms' whilst a turn onto the Minehead Road takes you past Gliddons Stores to the edge of town and the Police Station. Cross the road here and follow the signposted route to the Bakelite Museum. This museum houses an amazing collection of items from the precursor of the plastics revolution and together with its tea room rewards the half an hour walk from the Station.

Just beyond the Free Press offices is the newly opened West Somerset Antiques Centre which offers items from furniture through to silverware, kitchenalia and other smaller items.

The [Coleridge Way](#) can be accessed from Williton Station. The Coleridge Way is a 36 mile route through the stunning Somerset countryside of the Quantock Hills, the Brendon Hills and Exmoor, a landscape that inspired Coleridge to produce some of his best known work.

Doniford Halt

[Doniford Bay Caravan Holiday Park](#) is a short walk from the station as is Doniford Beach.

Watchet

Watchet is an ancient harbour town with a history of over 1000 years and still has a network of small streets and shops to be explored, including several pubs and cafes. The Star Inn in Watchet was Somerset CAMRA's Pub of the Year for 2005. The station stands right in the middle of the town adjacent to the harbour

which, since the end of commercial shipping calling in the mid-1990's has begun a new lease of life as a Marina and is home currently to a 1950's Vintage Motor Torpedo Boat.

The network of sidings that served the docks has gone and the former goods shed is now a Boat Museum. The town Museum is just off the esplanade and traces the history of the town through the ages and this includes the West Somerset Mineral Railway that once brought iron ore from the Brendon Hills for onward shipping to the furnaces at Ebbw Vale in South Wales. The trackbed of the Mineral Railway is now in use as a footpath.

Washford

Washford itself is also full of things to see and do. A few minutes walk from the station brings you to Cleeve Abbey, a Cisterian Abbey now administered by English Heritage and open from 1st April until 31st October

Although the main abbey church is no more, the remaining outbuildings give a fascinating insight into monastic life. The atmosphere is calm and relaxing and encourages visitors to linger. Further on from the abbey is Torre cider farm where you can learn how Somerset cider is made and even sample some of the produce. There are also several pubs including the Washford Inn at the end of the Station ramp and The White Horse, near the abbey, which serve food.

Blue Anchor

Blue Anchor is a quiet seaside village with a long sandy beach perfect for families and children. At high tide the promenade is a popular destination for fishermen hoping for a large catch. Blue anchor gives stunning coastal views to Minehead and Exmoor and across the Bristol Channel to South Wales and as far as Weston-super-Mare. For meals and snacks visit The Driftwood Cafe or the Smugglers Pub.

Dunster

Dunster village is approximately a twenty minute walk from the station, the latter part being gently uphill. It is worth the exercise. The main feature is [Dunster Castle](#) whose oldest parts date from Norman times and which is now in the care of the National Trust. It stands on an outcrop of rock with spacious grounds below (part were once polo grounds and the ponies' horseboxes were unloaded at Dunster Station). Holders of West Somerset Railway tickets can obtain a 20% discount on Admission to the Castle. Why not travel on a Wednesday and make use of our '[Dunster Castle Express](#)'?

The village itself has a medieval Yarn Market which is flanked on either side by shops and tea rooms, which together with several pubs means there is no lack of refreshment available to the traveller. Worth seeking out are the Mill and the Priory Church and at the top of the village the old packhorse bridge which still spans the River Avill. For the energetic a walk up through the woods to Bats Castle (a prehistoric site) is worth it to take in the view of the village and castle below and the more distant views of Minehead and across the Bristol Channel to South Wales.

Dunster's busiest nights of the year fall at the start of December when the annual '[Dunster by Candlelight](#)' event takes place. On the evenings of the 1st and 2nd of December the village extinguishes most of its electric lights in favour of candles and oil, entertainment takes to the streets and of course the shops and other outlets are open. The West Somerset Railway runs through trains and more information can be found on the [Special Events pages](#).

Minehead

Today's passenger arriving at Minehead has a choice of directions and destinations to follow from the station entrance. A left turn across the adjacent car park brings you to the [Minehead Eye](#) which is an exciting and innovative project which provides a dedicated, purpose-built extreme sports skate park and youth centre. A right turn takes you along the seafront towards [Butlins Resort](#). The path continues past the centre and the golf course and can be followed to Dunster Beach and Blue Anchor.

Passengers looking for the beach have simply to cross the road, and there it is.

Crossing the road and walking along the esplanade takes you towards the tall feature of North Hill. Along the way you pass the start of the South West Coast Path, which if followed in its entirety will take you to Poole Harbour via Lands End in Cornwall. The road eventually reaches the harbour which is the point where historic ships, the "[Waverley](#)" and the "[Balmoral](#)" pay their periodic visits to the town, bringing loads of visitors (and some passengers to the Railway) in an evocation of the Great Days of Bristol Channel Shipping. For those seeking some quiet and tranquillity turning off the esplanade and up into North Hill is recommended but be aware that there is some hard hill climbing involved.

The left turn out of the Station takes you past the Beach Hotel, popular with coach companies as a base for touring the area and into the main shopping area of the town. This is the usual mixture of seaside souvenir shops and the more specialised outlets, the latter being further from the Seafront.

As you would expect there is a variety of accommodation to suit all pockets in Minehead and apart from the railway journey it is a good base to explore Exmoor and the Quantock Hills.