

Upwey House Walks –Smugglers and Fossils

Osmington Mills to Ringstead Bay or Spring Bottom Hill

This walk is approximately 3 miles.



Background

This is a lovely, easy walk that we do regularly with the kids and dogs. There's a little bit of everything that's best about Dorset – fantastic views over sea from the cliff tops, access to a long beach where we actually found fossils, the crystal clear and sheltered waters of Ringstead Bay which is great for a dip in the summer (though some hardy souls can be found in their trunks in February) and the enticement of some sustenance at the excellent Smugglers' Inn at the end.

The Route

The starting point for this walk is a 10-15 minute drive from Upwey House. Park at the car park (ticket required) by the Smugglers Inn pub at Osmington Mills. Follow the signs to The Smugglers Inn from the A353 just after you have passed the white horse chalk carving of King George II in the hills to your left.

The pub itself, on first viewing, set as it is in the valley of the cliffs, is a magical sight for kids who like all things pirate-like – the walls are crammed full of photos of local shipwrecks and antique nautical maps and memorabilia. It's quite a lovely sight for adults. The food and drink is very decent and as a venue is it equally appealing in the summer and winter. There is copious outdoor sitting space as well as comforting and warming log fires. Kids and dogs all very welcome. We tend to do the walk first and then come back to the pub but it can work either way around.



To start the walk, descend the steps and cross the bridge to the pub and then follow the signage to the left through a narrow pathway and signposted for the SW Coastal path. This is just one section of 680 miles of walkable coastline and inland areas across the West Country. The path has apparently been forged by many years of watchmen searching for smugglers below and by fishermen watching the weather.



Follow the path up the hill behind the pub and along the cliffs. There are a few gates you have to open but nothing onerous and no stiles. The views of the coastline will take your breath away as you reach the summit. You can follow the path which is clearly marked or drop down onto the shingle beach once it is accessible. You can carry onto Ringstead Bay either via the beach (we found a brachipod here!) or along the path on the cliff. Once you get to Ringstead Bay, you will see that the bay is sheltered and fantastic for swimming. There are toilets at Ringstead Bay, along with a café selling refreshments and ice-creams. If you are feeling energetic after your swim/paddle you could follow the path Eastwards inland past the remains of a deserted Medieval Village, whose church still remains, although it is now a private cottage. From here the route climbs through serene woodland, dotted with daffs and snowdrops in the spring, to the top

of Spring Bottom Hill, where there are tremendous views down over the landscape below and out to sea.



Take stock, take in the view, and then retrace your steps back to The Smugglers Inn.