



Studland sand dunes trail

Knoll Beach Visitor Centre,
Ferry Road, Dorset, BH19 3AQ

TRAIL
Walking

GRADE
Easy

DISTANCE
1 mile (2km)

TIME
30 minutes

OS MAP
Explorer OL15
(Purbeck)

Contact

01929 450259
studlandbeach@nationaltrust.org.uk

Facilities

Parking (charges apply, free to National Trust members)

Bike racks

Café, shop and toilets at Knoll Beach (National Trust)

National Trust

nationaltrust.org.uk/walks

This circular walk takes you through the sand dunes of Studland National Nature Reserve. Look out for the special wildlife or simply enjoy the wonderful views over the heath and across the bay to Old Harry Rocks. If you get lost, just follow the yellow marker posts. Grade of walk: Flip flop (easy and lots of fun) Type of walk: 'Beautiful views', 'Flora and Fauna', 'Waterside'



Terrain

Sandy ground and boardwalks with some steps and gentle hills through the dunes. Dogs are not allowed on the beach from July 1 to September 7. During the rest of the year please keep them under strict control to avoid disturbance to people and wildlife.

Things to see



The Seahorse

The seahorse sculpture was carved by National Trust ranger Mimi Rousell using a chainsaw. The sheltered waters of Studland Bay are the only known breeding site for both short-snouted and spiny seahorses. The tiny creatures can be found in the sea grass meadows beneath the cliffs at the southern end of the bay.

The Dartford warbler

If you hear a soft churr, then see a small, dark, long-tailed bird creeping among the heather or flitting quickly between gorse bushes, you have probably spotted a Dartford warbler. These heathland specialists like the dry, sunny conditions along the sand dune trail where they feed on insects and spiders.

Sea views

The chalk ridge to the south of Studland once stretched more than 40 miles east to join what is now the Isle of Wight. Many thousands of years of erosion have produced Poole Bay. Today the bay forms one of the finest sea views in Britain, framed at each end by chalk stacks - Old Harry at Studland and The Needles off the Isle of White, visible in the distance. These stacks are the remnants of the ancient hills.



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Start/end

Start: Barbecue area, Knoll Beach, Studland, grid ref: SZ 033 836

End: Barbecue area, Knoll Beach, Studland, grid ref: SZ 033836

How to get there

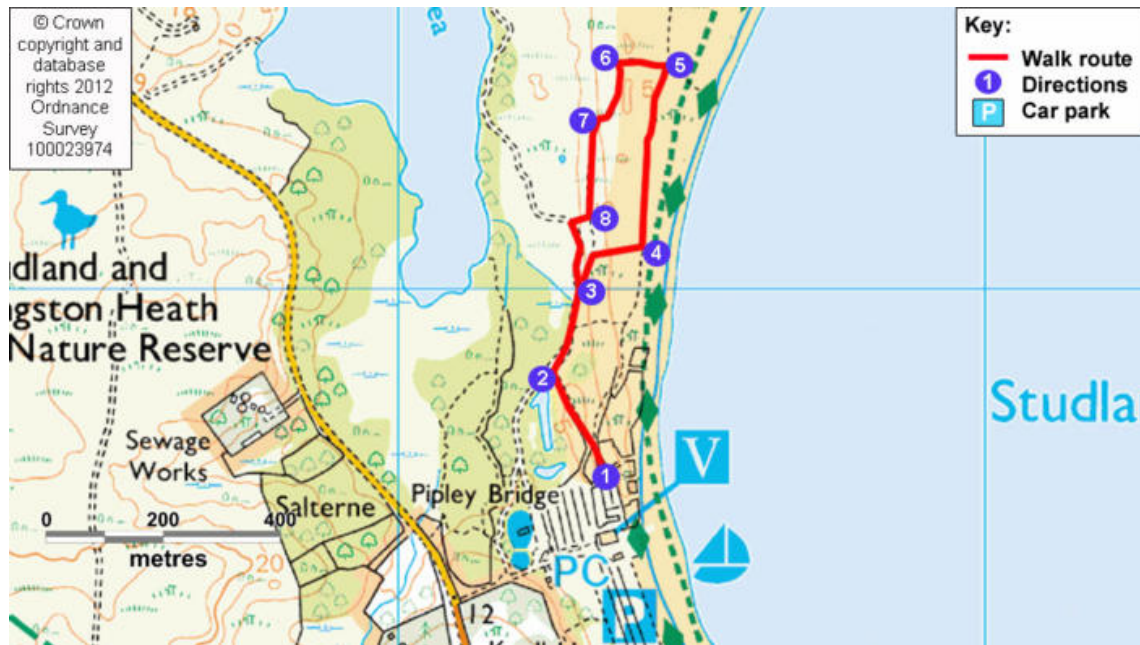
By bus: Wilts and Dorset 50, Bournemouth to Swanage route to Shell Bay and Studland. Bus stop opposite Knoll House Hotel, 2 minute walk

By train: Branksome or Parkstone, both 6.5 miles (10.4km) (via vehicle ferry) or Wareham, 12 miles (19km)

By road: From Poole take chain ferry from Sandbanks to Studland. Before Studland village, turn left off Ferry Road towards Knoll Beach. From Corfe Castle take B3351 to Studland, go through Studland village then right to Knoll Beach. Park in Knoll Beach car park

National Trust

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1. From the barbecue area at the north east corner of the car park at Knoll Beach, follow the broad sandy path north, away from the car park, for about 30 metres until you reach a crossroads. Continue straight ahead, keeping the yellow marker on your left.

2. When you reach a T-junction at the edge of the woodland, turn right. About 30 metres further on, look out for a wooden sculpture of a seahorse on your right. Keep following the path around the edge of the woodland, with the dunes starting to rise on your right. After another 50 metres or so the path forks. Take the right hand fork up a slight rise into the dunes. Keep the yellow and purple marker post on your left and ignore the other yellow marker off to the left, which is on the return leg of the walk.

3. As you reach the top of the rise you will see a large sandy hollow on your right with a fine view of Old Harry Rocks directly behind it. The hollow, known as a blow-out, is the result of wind erosion. The path curves gently to the right through a broad band of heather and heads towards the sea. Turn left at the T-junction just before a line of dunes topped with marram grass marking the line of the beach.

4. Continue north along the path with the heather to your left. Just before the next yellow marker, look down to your right to spot a wooden sculpture of a sand lizard. Just after entering a clump of birch trees, branch sharp left off the main path and follow the boardwalk into the dunes.

5. At the highest point of the ridge, pause and enjoy the panorama from the circular wooden viewing platform, where there are benches for a quick breather. Face north (to your right as you reach the platform) to look along the length of the Studland peninsula. Turn slowly clockwise and Bournemouth, Hengistbury Head and the Isle of Wight come into view. Continue round for views of Old Harry Rocks, Studland village, and the Purbeck Hills. See if you can spot the Agglestone on Godlingston Heath to the south west.

6. Walk down the steps on the opposite side of the dune to the one you came up. Turn sharp left at the bottom, keeping a wooded boggy strip to your right. In summer, look out for dragonflies and damselflies along the path and among the trees. You may also spot a small sculpture of a deer made using found natural materials off to your right among the trees. Ignore two left turns and, at the end of the trees, follow the path sharp right up the steps to the top of the dune, where there is a second viewing platform.

7. From the viewing platform, look back towards the sea for a clear impression of how the Studland peninsula was formed by natural processes. Successive lines of dunes run parallel to the beach, each marking a former coastline. When you have finished enjoying the views, turn left and follow the boardwalk along the top of the ridge. In summer, look out for reptiles basking on the boardwalk itself.

8. At the end of the ridge, follow the boardwalk downhill and sharp right to a T-junction with a yellow marker. Turn left and follow the broad sandy track back to rejoin your outward path at point three. Continue straight ahead, passing the sea horse sculpture on your left. About 30 metres beyond the sculpture, turn left at the yellow marker and follow the path back to the start.