ammonite cottage, bridport, dorset
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Built in the 1820s, as two rope workers’ cottages, in a spinning walk, this Grade II Listed cottage has been recently renovated to provide a light, spacious, open plan ground floor area containing kitchen, dining and living area. The cottage has central heating plus a wood burner in the living area for cosy, winter evenings. There is FreeView TV with a DVD player, plus a CD player and radio. A selection of board games and books are also provided. The cottage sleeps 2 to 4 having one double bedroom and a sofa bed in the living area. Linen, towels and ironing equipment are provided while a launderette is available in town. Electricity, gas and a basket of logs are included in the price.

A small garden in front of the cottage provides a barked seating area, in addition to flower beds and a small pond. A mature cherry tree provides shade and cherries in season. Bramley apples and rhubarb can also be picked from the nearby allotment garden.

Being set away from the road there is no formal parking, although a car park lies within 100 yards of the cottage. Parking permits can be obtained in advance at an additional cost; this would also cover parking in all the District Council car parks within West Dorset, though some restrictions may apply. A bus service between Exeter and Weymouth links with railway stations at both Axminster and Dorchester and also stops within 100 yards of the cottage.

While the cottage is conveniently located for all the facilities offered by the town, close to hand are formal gardens, play areas and local nature reserves. Riverside or hill walks with views across the town and surrounding countryside are also within easy reach. A mile and a half to the south are the harbour and beach at West Bay, part of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site.

Prices range from £190 to £390 with booking on a weekly basis running between Saturdays. Short breaks may be available on request.
Bridport and West Bay

Nestled amongst rolling hills in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Bridport and its harbour at West Bay also lie within England’s only natural World Heritage Site. Known as The Jurassic Coast, it is celebrated for its geomorphology and internationally important fossil beds.

The town dates from Saxon times and its wide, spacious streets reflect its heritage as a market town. Hiding behind these streets are rows of terraced workers’ cottages with their long gardens used for production in Bridport’s other main industry of rope and twine manufacture. Fine Georgian architecture, including the Town Hall, exists throughout the town while the parish church, Chantry and museum all date back to medieval times. The museum opens throughout the summer while the Chantry is only open on Heritage Open Days.

The markets are still thriving today and the main streets are lined on Wednesdays and Saturdays with a wide variety of stalls. The Women’s Institute Market is open on Saturday mornings and the early queue indicates the popularity of its food, plants and crafts. The Art Centre hosts the farmers’ market on the second Saturday of the month, selling the best in local produce. Car boot sales take place at West Bay on Sunday mornings, from April to December. A Charter Fayre, celebrating the award of the borough charter by Henry II, takes place in July while a Christmas evening market brightens the streets in early December.

Bridport also supports a variety of locally run shops and is recognised for the quality and range of produce available. There are several independent bookshops, one of the few remaining record shops in the country and a number of galleries. Butcher’s, bakers, fishmongers and green grocers. Tours of Palmer’s brewery take place throughout the summer. The importance of quality local produce is also evident in the fifty or so cafes, bars and restaurants. Rabbit curry is popular at The Taj Mahal Restaurant, where it recently featured on Channel 4’s River Cottage 2009.
There is plenty more on offer in the surrounding area with fossil hunting and rock pooling at Charmouth. Within 20 miles there are the coastal towns of Lyme Regis and Weymouth and the county town of Dorchester. See cygnets hatching in late spring at the swannery in Abbotsbury or enjoy an evening of entertainment in the sub tropical gardens. Local craft centres, Fine gardens and national trust properties are all a short drive away. Other popular attractions include Monkey World, the Tank Museum, the Fleet Air Arm Museum, the Donkey Sanctuary, Crealy Adventure Park or day trips to the Channel Islands.

Regular annual events occur throughout the year starting with the fancy dress celebrations on New Year’s Eve, followed by the Powerstock Cider Festival, Dorset Arts’ Weeks, the Vintage Traction and Stationary Engine Rally, the World Nettle Eating Championship, The Bridport Food and Beer Festival, many village fêtes during summer, RNLI raft race and fun day, Carnival Week culminating in a torch-lit procession to the beach, the Melplash Agricultural Show, Bridport Open Studios, Heritage Open Days, the Hat Festival, Eggardon Kite Festival, Dorset Food Week, The Bridport Prize and Literary Festival, the Round Table firework display, the Christmas Tree and Shopping Festival and the West Bay Wallow fancy dress swim.

Entertainment is available throughout the year with the Arts’ Centre and Electric Palace offering a wide and varied programme covering film, theatre, exhibitions, music, dance, comedy, literary and craft events. A number of pubs and bars offer live entertainment, music, quizzes, darts, skittles and big screen sports.

Without leaving town, enjoy riverside walks or relax in the Millennium Garden with its wooded walk around Coneygar Hill, where you will find spectacular views across the town to the coast and surrounding countryside. The town has three nature reserves with well defined paths, or for a slightly longer jaunt the beaches and harbour can be reached through the fields along the valley of the River Brit, or by following the route of the disused railway track to the old West Bay station. The surrounding area offers many beautiful walks through open countryside or along the South West coastal path, including Golden Cap, the highest point on the south coast of England. For a more unusual walk why not try llama trekking?

The town has a range of sports facilities, many at Bridport Leisure Centre including swimming, squash, badminton, table tennis, a gym and fitness classes. Both indoor and outdoor skate parks are found near the centre of town along with a bowling green, tennis courts and two playing fields with children’s play areas. A real tennis court has been restored to a high standard and is open to all with lessons available. West Bay also has a new play area and during summer hire boats can be taken out on the River Brit. Bridport and West Bay Golf Club, with 18 hole course and driving range, is situated on the cliff at West Bay offering stunning views around Lyme Bay. There are local fishing lakes while Chest Beach is popular for sea angling. Mockernut and deep sea fishing trips are also available from the harbour. Scuba diving takes place in Lyme Bay around the wrecks and reefs or for the more adventurous enjoy the beauty of the area while paragliding.

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As with most rural areas the car offers the most convenient means of travel in and around West Dorset. Within an hour’s drive of Bridport you can get many of Dorset’s, Somerset’s and Devon’s tourist attractions and shopping centres. The coastal road between Bridport and Weymouth offers stunning views of Chesil Beach and Lyme Bay and is one of the top motorcycle routes in the country.

If you don’t have a car Bridport has many local hopper bus services and several taxi firms operate from the town, including wheelchair taxis.

The two main bus routes that run through Bridport are the 31 and X53. The 31 bus travels hourly between Axminster and Weymouth stopping in many of the pretty inland and coastal villages en route. It also runs from two of the nearest mainline stations Axminster, where trains are available to Exeter or London Waterloo and Dorchester South which runs to Waterloo via Poole, Bournemouth and Southampton. Trains to Bristol run from Dorchester West station approximately 10 minutes walk from Dorchester South.

The X53 is now one of the most popular routes in the country and runs every two hours between Exeter and Poole. An explorer ticket provides an ideal way to discover the Jurassic Coast.

The Dorchester South train service stops at Southampton Airport while Bournemouth and Exeter airports are less than an hour’s drive from Bridport.

National Cycle Route 2 runs through Bridport passing in an east to west direction. Bike hire, including tandems, servicing and bike accessories are available in town.

Walkers will also find a variety of walks in and around Bridport, from short local countryside routes to longer treks along the Jurassic Coastal Path.

The Tourist Information Centre provides bus and train timetables and maps for cyclists and walkers. Coach trips and crossings to the Channel Islands can be booked there.
what had to be done
Seymour Place was originally owned by the Seymour family and was built as a spinning walk for the rope making industry. Spinning walks were often comprised of a row of terraced cottages and allotment style gardens and are a common feature in Bridport, where rope making has been a major part of life for centuries. The factories that produced the rope also used the spinning walks where their employees could live and work and using the full length of the walks for spinning out the new ropes. The gardens at the end of each block were used for subsistence level food production. As the need for the walks reduced when mechanisation became more common place the cottages and plots were sold for private ownership.

Ammonite cottage has been owned by the Altham family since the 1960s. It was formerly two dwellings with number 5 on the ground floor and number 6 upstairs. The original front door for number 6 is still in place but now forms the cupboard door in the bedroom. The staircase leading to number 6 still exists between number 5 and number 7 but was long ago bricked up. The property was first modernised in the 1980s but in recent years the cottage had become close to derelict so Dorset Heritage Coast Building Company were commissioned to renovate the cottage using as many traditional materials and methods as possible. The aim was to give the cottage a bright, modern and spacious feel but still hold true to the cottage’s history and heritage. These pictures give you an idea of the work that was needed.
Bridport market – Wednesday and Saturday

vintage and antique market – st michael’s trading estate bridport
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www.visit-dorset.com
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http://www.visit-dorset.org.uk/
http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/dorset/hi/
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www.visitbritain.com

for booking information:
http://www.westdorset.com/site/where-to-stay/ammonite-cottage-p1086743
emilyaltham@yahoo.co.uk