

SENSORY-FRIENDLY AND ACCESSIBLE ATTRACTIONS IN SOMERSET & DORSET



The South West of England is packed with stunning landscapes, rich history, and welcoming communities. Somerset and Dorset are no exception, offering a mix of peaceful countryside, coastal retreats, and exciting attractions that cater to a range of sensory and accessibility needs.

Whether you're looking for quiet nature walks, engaging but low-stimulation activities, or venues with excellent accessibility, Somerset and Dorset have plenty to offer. In this guide, we'll explore the best sensory-friendly and accessible attractions in these two beautiful counties.

Why Somerset & Dorset?

Somerset and Dorset both boast breathtaking countryside, charming seaside towns, and fascinating historical sites, but what makes them particularly special is their growing commitment to inclusivity. Many attractions now offer:

- ✓ Step-free access for wheelchair users and those with mobility challenges
- ✓ Quiet spaces for visitors who need a break from sensory stimulation
- ✓ Staff training in autism awareness and accessibility support
- ✓ Clear sensory guides to help visitors prepare for their experience

Whether you're drawn to the rolling hills of Somerset or the stunning Jurassic Coast of Dorset, you'll find a wealth of sensory-friendly and accessible destinations waiting to be explored..

✨ Sensory-Friendly & Accessible Attractions in Somerset & Dorset ✨🌿

📍 Cheddar Gorge & Caves – Cheddar

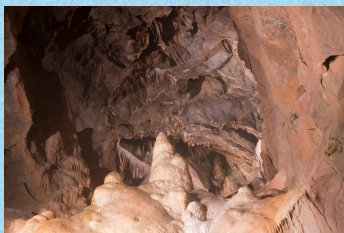
One of Somerset's most famous natural wonders, Cheddar Gorge offers an immersive experience in nature, from towering limestone cliffs to fascinating underground caves.

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:

- 🗂 Calming natural sounds: The soft echoing of water droplets in the caves and the peaceful atmosphere of the gorge can be soothing.
- 🕒 Quiet visiting times: Mornings and term-time weekdays tend to be the quietest.
- 🌍 Sensory maps available: Highlighting areas that may be darker or louder to help plan a comfortable visit.

Accessibility:

- 🚶 The Gough's Cave experience offers an accessible tour for those with mobility challenges.
- ♿ Wheelchair users can enjoy the Gorge Trail and Museum with ease.



⚖ The Roman Baths – Bath

Step back in time at The Roman Baths, a UNESCO World Heritage site that offers a gentle, immersive historical experience.

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:

- 🕒 Quiet sessions: The Baths offer Relaxed Tours with reduced noise and fewer visitors.
- 🎧 Audio guides: Visitors can control their own pace and volume using an audio guide.
- 🌐 Warm, calming environment: The steamy atmosphere and soft lighting create a gentle sensory experience.

Accessibility:




- ♿ The main areas are wheelchair accessible, and a virtual tour is available for those who can't navigate the ancient pathways.
- 🦮 Assistance dogs are welcome, and there are tactile models for visitors with visual impairments.




Somerset Rural Life Museum – Glastonbury

For a quiet, educational experience, the Somerset Rural Life Museum offers a gentle-paced look at rural traditions, crafts, and history.

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:

-  Outdoor space: The museum grounds include a peaceful orchard where visitors can take a sensory break.
-  Interactive exhibits: Hands-on activities like old-fashioned tools and farmyard sounds provide gentle sensory engagement.
-  Relaxed sessions available: These provide a quieter environment with fewer visitors.




Accessibility:

-  The museum is fully wheelchair accessible and offers subtitled video guides for visitors who prefer visual information.


Noah's Ark Zoo Farm – Near Bristol


A smaller, quieter alternative to large zoos, Noah's Ark Zoo Farm provides a gentle animal experience perfect for sensory-sensitive visitors.

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:

-  Relaxed, open spaces: No overwhelming crowds, plus plenty of quiet areas to take breaks.
-  Sensory-friendly days: The zoo hosts specific low-sensory events with reduced noise and dimmed lights.
-  Animal therapy opportunities: Petting donkeys, goats, and rabbits can provide a calming sensory experience.

Accessibility:

-  Step-free paths make it easy to navigate with a wheelchair or pushchair.

 A Changing Places toilet is available for visitors who need additional facilities

West Bay & The Jurassic Coast, Dorset

The Jurassic Coast is one of England's most stunning natural landscapes, stretching 95 miles along the south coast. West Bay, known for its breathtaking golden cliffs and tranquil seaside atmosphere, is a perfect destination for visitors seeking a sensory-friendly and accessible experience. 🦿🌿

West Bay Beach – A Peaceful Coastal Retreat 🏖️

West Bay's sandy and pebble beaches offer a relaxing environment, with the soothing sounds of waves and open spaces to explore at your own pace.

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:

- 🌿 Calming natural sounds: Gentle waves, seabirds, and the distant chatter of boats create a peaceful backdrop.
- 🕒 Quiet times: Early mornings and evenings offer a more tranquil experience, especially outside peak season.
- 🚶 Open space: Plenty of room to move freely without feeling crowded.

Accessibility:

- ♿ Flat promenade makes it easy for wheelchair users to enjoy the seaside views.
- 🚗 Accessible parking close to the beach.
- 🦮 Assistance dogs welcome.



The Jurassic Coast Walks – Gentle Scenic Trails 🏞️

For those who enjoy the outdoors, the Jurassic Coast offers a variety of walking routes, from easy strolls to more adventurous hikes.

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:

- 🌞 Breathtaking views: Natural beauty without overwhelming sensory input.
- 🌿 Fresh sea air: A calming environment with space to take breaks as needed.
- 🚫 Quieter routes available: Opt for less busy times or off-the-beaten-path walks.

Accessibility:

- ♿ Flat, accessible trails at select points, such as Burton Bradstock.
- 🏞️ Benches available along scenic viewpoints for breaks.
- 🗺️ Sensory-friendly maps available online to help plan routes.



Bridport Harbour & West Bay Marina – A Relaxed Waterfront Experience 🚤

A small, friendly harbour with calm waters and beautiful boats, perfect for a peaceful visit.

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:

- 🌊 Gentle water movement is visually soothing.
- 🐟 Fresh seafood stalls provide light and pleasant sensory experiences.
- ☀️ Plenty of seating areas to take in the view without rushing.

Accessibility:

- ♿ Step-free access around the harbour area.
- 🚻 Accessible toilets available near the marina.
- 🌂 Quiet corners for those needing a break from activity.

Charmouth Beach – Fossil Hunting in a Low-Stress Setting 🦴

A short drive from West Bay, Charmouth Beach is one of the best places in the UK to find fossils, making it a great activity for curious minds.

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:

- 🏖️ Predictable, gentle activity: Searching for fossils is calming and requires focus without sensory overload.
- ⌚ Take your time: There's no rush—enjoy the beach at your own pace.
- 🎧 No loud distractions: The beach is relatively quiet compared to busier attractions.

Accessibility:

- ♿ Easy-access paths lead to designated fossil areas.
- 🚗 Accessible parking close to the main entrance.
- 📋 Guided fossil hunts available with sensory-friendly support.

The Etches Collection – A Fossil & Natural History Museum 🏛️

Located in Kimmeridge, this museum showcases incredible fossils in a relaxed, low-sensory environment.


Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:

- 🔬 Interactive displays allow gentle hands-on learning.
- 🎧 Audio guides available for controlled volume and pacing.
- 🚶 Uncrowded layout with plenty of space to move freely.





Accessibility:

- ♿ Step-free access throughout.
- 🚻 Accessible toilets available.




🧩 Sensory packs can be requested to enhance comfort.







 **Weymouth** – A classic seaside escape with golden sands, a historic harbour, and family-friendly attractions.

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:




- Soft golden sands and gentle waves create a calming environment. 
- SEA LIFE Centre offers tactile exhibits and quiet zones. 
- The historic harbour provides a peaceful spot to watch boats. 
- The Nothe Fort offers relaxed openings for those needing a quieter visit. 

Accessibility:




- Beach wheelchairs and accessible ramps available. 
- Changing Places toilet near the beach. 
- Nothe Fort offers relaxed openings for quieter visits. 







 **Poole** – Home to Europe's largest natural harbour, Poole is great for water sports, boat trips, and sandy beaches.     

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:




- Brownsea Island features quiet woodland trails and wildlife watching. 
- Smooth boat rides with gentle movement on the water. 
- Poole Park offers a relaxed atmosphere with swan-filled lakes. 

Accessibility:




- Sandbanks Beach has accessible paths and facilities. 
- Changing Places toilet available. 
- Many boat tours offer wheelchair access and step-free boarding. 



 **Bournemouth** – A vibrant seaside town with seven miles of sandy beaches, lively nightlife, and lush gardens.     

Why it's great for sensory-friendly visitors:

- Seven miles of sandy beaches with space to find quieter spots. 
- Oceanarium hosts sensory-friendly sessions with dimmed lighting. 
- Lower Gardens offer peaceful green spaces with gentle sounds of nature. 

Accessibility:

- Beach wheelchairs available for hire. 
- Accessible toilets along the promenade. 
- Bournemouth Pier has level access for easy exploration. 

Final Thoughts: Somerset and Dorset offer a wealth of sensory-friendly and accessible attractions as well as adventures for all the family.   Don't forget to stay tuned for more guides on inclusive destinations across the UK! 