



TAUNTON ●
 BISHOPS LYDEARD ●
 CROWCOMBE HEATHFIELD ○
 STOGBUMBER ○
 WILLITON ○
 DONIFORD BEACH HALT ○
 WATCHET ○
 WASHFORD ○
 BLUE ANCHOR ○
 DUNSTER ○
 MINEHEAD ●

DESTINATION HIGHLIGHTS

railway museums (Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor); Watchet Harbour; Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust (Washford); Dunster Castle and village; Minehead Harbour; open-top bus trips to Exmoor (Minehead, summer); South West Coast Path

FREQUENCY

Taunton to Bishops Lydeard:
 2 buses per hour (Mon-Sat)
 1 bus per hour (Sun)
 Bishops Lydeard to Minehead:
 4-7 trains per day (Feb-Nov)

24 MILES

20 MINUTES (BUS) +
 1 HOUR 20 MINUTES (TRAIN)

A restored GWR small prairie tank steams towards Roebuck Lane level crossing on the West Somerset Railway with a train for Minehead.

Opened between 1862 and 1874, the long branch line from Taunton to Minehead became a victim of Dr Beeching's Axe when it was closed in 1971. However, with the support of Somerset County Council and hundreds, if not thousands, of volunteers and well-wishers the majority of this picturesque line, with its ten delightfully restored stations, was reopened as a heritage railway between 1976 and 1979. Today the West Somerset Railway (WSR) is Britain's longest and one of the most successful standard-gauge heritage lines, with hundreds of thousands of visitors bringing a much-needed boost to the local tourist industry.

While restored vintage steam and diesel trains operate for much of the year between Minehead and Bishops Lydeard, the section south of here to the former junction with the ex-Great Western Railway's Taunton to Exeter main line at Norton Fitzwarren sees only occasional use, and beyond here WSR trains are unable to reach Taunton. However, a connecting bus service operates between Taunton station and Bishops Lydeard station thus allowing this particular trip to be made without reverting to car travel.

From Bishops Lydeard station the WSR climbs up through the bucolic Somerset countryside, overlooked from the west by the Brendon Hills and from the east by the Quantocks. Occasional thatched cottages and burbling streams are glimpsed from the train as it proceeds slowly on its journey, pausing at Crowcombe Heathfield and Stogumber stations, to Williton where the railway has its restoration workshops. North of here the Bristol Channel is first glimpsed at Doniford Beach Halt before the line swings west to the historic harbour town of Watchet. It then climbs inland via Washford, where there is a railway museum, before rejoining the coastline at Blue Anchor, a favourite haunt of mobile holiday homes and caravans. The final leg of this superb trip offers fine views over the Channel to South Wales and inland to Dunster Castle and the wooded Brendon Hills, before ending close to the seafront at the popular seaside resort of Minehead.

