

DISCOVER DORCHESTER

Sustainable Tourism Marketing Plan 2025 – 2028

This plan sets out the Marketing Activity of the Dorchester Tourism Partnership for the next three years. Each year a specific Delivery plan will be agreed and delivered by the tourism partnership, based on this plan.

1. Aims

1. Raise the profile of Dorchester for short breaks
2. Raise the profile of Dorchester for day trips
3. Raise the profile of Dorchester as base for a Dorset adventure
4. Increase the number of visitors via Cruise and Coach
5. (Overarching Aim) Ensure all the actions above result in a measurable positive economic, social and environmental impact on the town.

2. Background

The Dorchester Tourism Partnership was formed in 2021 and has worked together to achieve the following vision set out in the 2020 Dorchester Heritage Tourism Strategy¹:

“To become known as a progressive and welcoming town in Wessex, passionate about and celebrating its wonderful and extensive heritage and its environment and offering an exceptional visitor experience that encourages repeat visits.”

In the last three years, the tourism partnership has run several targeted marketing campaigns. The success of these campaigns has been evaluated as much as possible and the lessons learnt from these campaigns has been used to inform this marketing plan.

This marketing plan also uses the Visit Dorset Market Segmentation Research (VDMSR)² to help determine who the tourism partnership should target, how to access them, how to attract them, how to engage them, and how to build loyalty. In addition, the VDMSR also helps to inform this marketing plan by setting out some of the perceptions and barriers to visiting Dorset².

Visitor Experience

Bringing people to Dorchester is only half of the story. The Dorchester Tourism Partnership also wants to ensure that visitors find it easy to plan their trip and have an excellent experience when they are here. A complimentary Visitor Experience Plan has therefore also been created for the Tourism Partnership, which aims to:

1. Ensure that visitors get the information need/want before they get here
2. Ensure that visitors get the information they need/want whilst in Dorchester
3. Ensure that visitors feel welcomed in Dorchester
4. Ensure that visitors have an excellent experience in Dorchester

3. Delivery

3.1.1 Aim 1 - Raise the profile of Dorchester for short breaks

3.1.2 Objectives

- Increase the number of overnight stays for short breaks.
- Increase visitor spend in Dorchester and create a positive economic impact.

3.1.3 Target Audience

- VDMSR “Learning and Luxury” Segment.
- Luxury and Learning - Lovers of the finer things in life – 5-star accommodation, good food, travel and high culture. They avoid tourist hotspots but enjoy the prospect of rest and recuperation by the sea.
- Do a lot of research in advance of holidays.
- 59% still working
- National marketing
- Age 55 + are the primary target but also young professional who don't have children.
- Couples.

3.1.4 Trusted Messenger - Who do they listen to?

- Will trust official channels (such as Discover Dorchester website, Visit Dorset website or Tourist Information Centres). Will also read luxury magazines and newspapers.

3.1.5 When

- Aim for stay time between March – May and September – November
- Aim to reach audience between February – April and July – October

3.1.6 Barriers

- Distance
- Unpredictable weather
- Associating Dorset with nature but more drawn to heritage

3.1.7 What can Dorchester offer this audience

- Dorchester is very well tailored to this target audience, and it is an easy pitch. It has lots of fine dining, gardens, heritage, museums and performance art.
- Dorchester has some luxurious accommodation options and a spa to signpost and promote
- Dorchester is accessible by coach or train, and you don't need a car to explore the town once you are here.

3.1.8 Tone of voice

For this audience we want to use a descriptive and elegant passages rather than punchy bullet points to entice the audience in.

We want to sell the experience they can have in Dorchester, so we want to describe perfect weekends here with itineraries.

The language should feel like we are talking to them personally and should feel exclusive. Examples include:

- *Discover Dorchester, where culture and luxury intertwine. Bypass the usual South Coast tourist traps and explore this exceptional historic Dorset gem.*
- *The perfect blend of restful retreat and cultural getaway, Dorchester provides an ideal setting for an unforgettable escape.*
- *Escape the hustle and bustle of tourist hotspots and find solace in timeless Dorchester.*
- *Relax in one of Dorchester's luxury hotels, taste premium Dorset produce at one of Dorchester's exceptional restaurants, rejuvenate at a premium spa.*
- *Immerse yourself in the world of Thomas Hardy, where his literary legacy comes to life.*
- *Explore some of the best-preserved Roman remains in Britain.*
- *Experience the heritage quarter and discover outstanding museums with exceptional exhibitions.*
- *Engage with local music and theatre and uncover a vibrant cultural scene.*
- *Stroll through beautifully maintained gardens, relax in charming public spaces, and enjoy a leisurely pace that invites relaxation and rejuvenation.*

Use of Guides and experts to put out messaging.

3.1.9 Marketing Activity to include:

- **Partners** Photo library showing this target audience enjoying themselves in Dorchester. Partners to work together on exclusive packages like The King's Arms, Monart Spa and Dorchester Arts are already doing.
- **Paid Advertising** in luxury magazines and newspapers rather than boosted social media posts.
- **Video** High quality videos showcasing target audience enjoying time in Dorchester embedded on websites rather than 16:9 social media trending videos.
- **Social Media** Use Discover Dorchester, Visit Dorset, luxury magazine and newspaper social media rather than social media influencers.
- **Radio**
- **Press and PR** Press trips for new exhibitions and heritage highlights. Press invites and press releases for festivals and events.
- **Website** Targeted blogs on Discover Dorchester and Visit Dorset. Ensure this target audience can see themselves on the welcome page. Paid advertising on luxury magazine and newspaper website.
- **Email** Target audience in Enewsletters between February – April and July – October.
- **Print** Paid print advertising in luxury magazines and newspapers.

- **Out of Home (TIPs, digital screens, High Street banners, vehicle livery and poster sites)** London specific out of home advertising only (not a priority for this target audience).

3.1.10 Measures of success

- Collect visitor data from tourism partners (especially accommodation partners) to gather information on spend, age bracket, and where people have travelled from and where people are staying.
- Footfall data from South Street.
- Train ticket sales data from South Western Railway and Great Western Railway.
- Event feedback
- Website traffic
- Car parking spend data from Dorset Council.
- Take up data and figures on exclusive offers.
- Postcode data.

3.2 Aim 2 - Raise the profile of Dorchester for day trips

3.2.1 Objectives

- Increase the number of families visiting Dorchester for the day that live in Dorset
- Increase the number of families visiting Dorchester for the day that are staying in Weymouth, Bournemouth and Poole or West Dorset on holiday
- Increase visitor spend in Dorchester and create a positive economic impact

3.2.2 Target Audience

- Families with children. Living in Dorset and wanting to keep the children entertained and take them on day trips locally.
- Families with children staying in Weymouth, Bournemouth and Poole or West Dorset on holiday.
- Grandparents look for activities with children
- Children themselves – want them to see images and want to come.
- VDMSR “Fun and Relaxation” Segment – 57% female. Fun and Relaxation - Bargain hunters who tend to stick to popular leisure options and holiday destinations. Holidays are about letting go and finding a way to relax, so all-inclusive offers are popular. Little research before trip. Happy to stick to tourist hotspots and have easy life.

3.2.3 Trusted Messenger - Who do they listen to?

- Other parents and friends through personal recommendations or on social media
- Things that come up first in google
- Anything with offers and packages sparks their interest

3.2.4 When

- Aim for visit time - Half Term breaks, Easter Holidays and Summer Holidays
- Aim to reach audience – During the school holidays as both audiences do not plan ahead a great deal

3.2.5 Barriers

- Budget – looking for cheap and cheerful
- Don't travel far
- Will not stray from beach if the weather is good
- More interested in relaxing than learning, but do need to entertain the kids so need activities

3.2.6 What can Dorchester offer this audience

- Dorchester is a cheap, easy and fun day out come rain or shine.
- There is a lot to do here that families will enjoy
- Come by bus or train. You don't need a car to explore the town once you are here. It is easy to walk around.

3.2.7 Tone of voice

For this audience we want to be snappy for the parents. Bold headlines. No waffle. Get the discounts and the ease of access very visible. Emphasise value rather than cheap.

For the children we want them to see exciting images of fun activities in Dorchester so that want to visit. Examples include:

- *Dorchester Family Fun – Big Day Out, Small Prices!*
- *Family Fun on a Budget in Dorchester – Exclusive Deals for a Great Day Out!*
- *Kids Go Wild at Kingston Maurward Animal Park – Free entry animal park and soft play!*
- *Dino-mite Day at The Dinosaur Museum – Great value family tickets and interactive fun for dinosaur-loving kids.*
- *Free Family Adventure at Maiden Castle – Explore the great outdoors and soak in Dorset's history for absolutely no cost!*
- *Tasty Treats at Local Cafés – Enjoy family-friendly dining options with budget-friendly menus for all.*
- *Kids go free at Dorset Museum & Art Gallery – this enormous museum will keep the kids engaged and entertained all day!*
- *Catch all the latest family film releases for a steal at Dorchester Plaza Cinema!*

3.2.8 Marketing activities to include:

- **Partners** Tourism partners to provide offers that the tourism partnership can use to bring in the footfall and spend.
- **Paid Advertising** Paid advertising on parent social media pages and guest blogs on parent blogs.

- **Video** Trending social media videos using key hashtags rather than long form.
- **Social Media**
 - Get paid or free advertising in parent social media groups and pages such as Mums Net.
 - Target family social media influencer for social media and blog content.
 - Set up social media opportunities in the town so that parents share the fact that they are visiting Dorchester on social media.
 - Use of Tik Tok and reels on Instagram for younger parents.
- **Press and PR**
 - Work with social media influencers and bloggers that are already reaching our target audience.
 - Regular press releases to Dorset media outlets about events and offers during holidays.
- **Website**
 - SEO targeted blogs to ensure high google rankings for key searches.
 - Ensure that this target audience can clearly see themselves on the front page and the type of day out they would like to have
 - Try and get blogs and presence on Top 10 lists etc. on Visit Dorset and websites like www.dayoutwiththekids.co.uk and www.letsgowiththechildren.co.uk
 - Encourage visitors to write google and trip advisor reviews.
- **Email**
 - Target Dorset schools at end of term asking them to share cheap and free activities happening in Dorchester during school holidays with parents.
 - Run competitions to get audience to sign up to mailing list.
- **Print**
 - Leaflets with offers that promote cheap and cheerful days out in Dorchester for families with lots of offers distributed around Dorset. Make sure leaflet has train times and bus times on it so they don't need to look anything up. All the info in one place to make it SUPER easy.
 - Leaflets need to be at accommodation sites and in supermarkets. This target audience unlikely to visit a TIC.
 - Offer pages in local newspapers.
 - Inclusion in other publications such as Visit Dorset Summer leaflets and Resort
- **Out of Home** (TIPs, digital screens, High Street banners, vehicle livery and poster sites)

- Presence at Holiday Park - Physical stalls with activities and offers - Dora the Dormouse mascot costume that visits holiday parks on popular changeover days.
- Posters at Holiday Parks in communal areas.
- Posters at train stations and bus stops in target towns.
- Street banners.

3.2.9 Measures of success –

- Number of people taking up offers in Dorchester
- Visitor data from tourism partners to gather information on spend, age bracket, and where people have travelled from and where people are staying.
- Surveys at events.
- Number of people sharing social media opportunity that is set up.
- Trip advisor and google reviews.
- Footfall data from South Street.
- Train ticket sales data from South Western Railway and Great Western Railway.
- Car parking spend data from Dorset Council.

3.3 Aim 3 - Raise the profile of Dorchester as base for a Dorset adventure

3.3.1 Objectives

- Get people to book accommodation in Dorchester and use the town as a weeklong base for a wider Dorset adventure
- Get people to spend their evenings in Dorchester eating out and spending in the town on some days too.
- Increase visitor spend in Dorchester and create a positive economic impact

3.3.2 Target Audience

- “Nature and Culture” Segment - Nature lovers with a practical approach to life. They spend their free time exploring beauty spots and historical treasures. Holidays are driven by the destination and activities available and well researched prior to booking.
- 46% of audience are aged 55+ and 33% are aged 35-54
- 62% of audience still working and 29% have children in household.
- Couples.
- Accommodation not important - just a base to explore. However, they do like places with character.
- Coming from South East and East of England.
- Attracted to eco-credentials - Like to eat locally sourced food and support independents.
- Hobbies include walking, visitor attractions, markets, crafting, nature, festivals and events.

3.3.3 Trusted Messenger - Who do they listen to?

- Like to do their own research and lots of it on google.
- Walking sites and ramblers.

3.3.4 When

- Aim for stay time between March – July and September – November
- Aim to reach audience between February – April and July – October

3.3.5 Barriers

- Audience put off by distance, unpredictable weather and not knowing what is here
- Limited bed capacity in the town for expansion in this area

3.3.6 What can Dorchester offer this audience

- Dorchester is in a great position to overcome these barriers with its great public transport links and high number of indoor, rainy-day activities for this active target audience.

3.3.7 Tone of voice

For this audience we want to be informative and helpful for this research loving practical audience. Content that is jam packed with useful information and recommendations rather than descriptive prose. This can be is bullet points, infographics, paragraphs and maps.

For this audience we are selling Dorset, not just Dorchester.

3.3.8 Marketing activities to include:

- **Partners**
 - Dorchester based accommodation providers to echo and reinforce marketing activity carried out by the tourism partnership to this target audience about using Dorchester as a base for a Dorset adventure.
 - Visit Dorset are a key partner for this target audience because their marketing content will be viewed by people who want to visit Dorset overall and might not have considered staying in Dorchester, therefore would not think to look at Dorchester specific content.
 - Widen partnership that we collaborate with for this aim to other towns and organisations in wider Dorset. Make the most of reciprocal advertising and marketing opportunities.
- **Paid Advertising** This target audience are likely to be National Trust members and/or Ramblers
- **Video**
 - Videos that are more like infographics with maps and top tips. Fast paced but don't have to be short, just no waffle.
 - Embed these videos on websites and on social media
 - Promote nature in Dorchester through videos
- **Social Media**

- Infographics with maps and top tips
- Carousel highlights showing a week in Dorset from Dorchester
- Nature spots in and around Dorchester and beautiful photos of nature.
- Hosting influencers that reach this target audience with partners like Visit Dorset, Lulworth Estate or Jurassic Coast Trust.
- Promotion of walking and cycling opportunities in Dorchester and surrounding areas.
- **Press and PR** Joint press and PR with other towns in Dorset and with Visit Dorset. Press trips.
- **Website** Blogs are jam packed with useful information and recommendations rather than descriptive prose. This can be is bullet points, infographics, paragraphs and maps. Having this content on our website, Visit Dorset and partners websites.
Promotion of walking and cycling opportunities in Dorchester and surrounding areas.
- **Email** Reach new audiences through Visit Dorset and partner newsletters.
- **Print** Leaflets are not useful for this audience as they plan before they arrive in the county.
- **Out of Home** (TIPs, digital screens, High Street banners, vehicle livery and poster sites) - Posters at train stations along the South Western Railway line.

3.3.9 Measures of success –

- Visitor data from tourism partners (especially accommodation partners) to gather information on spend, age bracket, and where people have travelled from and where people are staying.
- Footfall data from South Street.
- Train ticket sales data from South Western Railway and Great Western Railway.
- Car parking spend data from Dorset Council.

3.4 Aim 4 - Increase the number of visitors to Dorchester for group travel via Cruise and Coach.

3.4.1 Objectives

- Increase the number of group travel visits to Dorchester
- Increase visitor spend in Dorchester and create a positive economic impact

3.4.2 Target Audience

With this aim we are not marketing directly to those visiting Dorchester. Instead, we are targeting the group travel organisers.

3.4.3 Marketing activities to include:

- **Partners** Curate unique and exclusive experiences for cruise and coach that can be shared with group travel organisers.

- **Website** Photo library on website that group travel organisers can use to promote Dorchester as a destination.
- **Email** Circulate a quarterly newsletter for coach and cruise contacts to share new and existing opportunities in Dorchester.
- **Print** Ensure Dorchester leaflets are easy to pick up at Portland harbour
- **Out of Home** (TIPs, digital screens, High Street banners, vehicle livery and poster sites) - Tourist Information Signage at Coach Car parking stops. Clear signposting to TIPs in Dorchester so that group travel groups that are dropped off in town can find them easily.
- Try and get a physical presence down at Portland Harbour

3.4.4 Measures of success –

- Number of Dorchester group travel packages being taken up by group travel organisations.
- Comparing footfall data on days when Cruise ships are in Portland Harbour to days when they are not.
- Reports from partners and tour guides of groups visiting the town.
- Coach parking data from Dorset Council.

3.5 Aim 5 - (Overarching Aim) Ensure all the actions above result in a measurable positive economic, social and environmental impact on the town

Sustainable Tourism

The Tourism Partnership recognises that Dorchester isn't just for visitors. It is important that Dorchester residents and communities feel pride and ownership of the town. A great visitor experience should not create a detrimental resident experience and the number of visitors should not have a detrimental economic, societal or environmental impact on the town.

To measure the economic impact, we will:

Aims 1-4 each have measures to assigned to assess whether the marketing activities have a positive economic impact on the town. In addition to this, the following will also be carried out to measure the social and environmental impact of this marketing plan:

To measure the social impact, we will:

- Ensure regular contact with Dorchester Town Council Community Development Officer who works with lots of different community groups and organisations.
- Monitor community social media groups for any negative impacts of visitor numbers or behaviour noticed.
- Create resident survey annually to understand residents' perceptions and pride of Dorchester as a place to live.

To measure environmental impact:

- Ensure regular contact with Dorchester Town Council outdoor services team.
- Collect Beryl bike user data.
- Collect Train and bus ticket information.
- Engage with Dorchester BID keeper of the walks to monitor litter level observation.
- Car parking data.

4. Prioritising

Each of the marketing aims in this plan attracts a different target audience/market segment and each of these audiences have a different market opportunity for Dorchester.

The table below shows that the **Nature and Culture** segment and **Luxury and Learning** Segments have the highest spend potential with the least marketing effort required.

The Tourism Partnership will therefore prioritising marketing activity between 2025 – 2028 on these audiences and achieving Aims 1 and 3 of this plan.

Table 1 – Market Opportunity of Dorchester – Data sourced from VDMSR²

	Size of audience	Size of opportunity	Ease of attracting	Spend in Dorchester potential
Nature and Culture	22% (7.0m adults)	High (and off-peak potential)	Easy	High
Luxury and Learning	13% (4.2m adults)	Low (but there is off-peak potential)	Easy	High
Fun and Relaxation	25% (8.0m adults)	Moderate	Moderate	Low
Active and Mindful	20% (6.4m adults)	High	Difficult	Medium
Comfort and Convenience	19% (6.1m adults)	Low	Moderate	Low
Coach and Cruise	Not known at this time	Not known at this time	Difficult – once have got trip set up, no guarantee that people will sign up to go on it. Little control	Low – Accommodation not in Dorchester. Free food back at Cruise ship or

			and long lead in time for planning.	evening meal back at coach hotel.
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5. Key dates and events

There are a number of key heritage highlights that are coming up in the next four years that marketing activity related to our aims should tie in with. These include exhibitions that Dorchester museums will be running that relate directly to Dorchester’s heritage.

Good marketing and press campaigns have a catch, something new, a reason to visit now and not at any other time. Tying our campaigns in with these key dates and events can really help with this.

Each of the museums running the exhibitions will be running their own marketing campaigns. The Tourism Partnership will support their marketing campaigns and put in marketing effort to ensure that the people coming to visit for the exhibitions spend additional money and time in the town generally.

Year	Heritage Highlights
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience Roman Britain in Dorchester – Roman Gladiator Exhibition at Dorset Museum & Art Gallery • Tolkien and Maiden Castle – Exhibition at Shire Hall Museum • Judge Jeffreys - Exhibition at Shire Hall Museum • Dorchester on TV and film (to compliment The Keep Military Museum exhibition)
2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Justice (and injustice) through the ages - Exhibition at Shire Hall Museum • Thomas Hardy birthday celebration
2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience Roman Britain in Dorchester - 90 years since the Roman Town House was discovered 50 years since the Roman baths were discovered (1977)
2028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Hardy - 100 years since Thomas Hardy died

6. References:

1. Dorchester Heritage Tourism Strategy, 2020 - <https://www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk/docs/downloads/2020-Dorchester-Heritage-Tourism-Strategy-Final.pdf>
2. Visit Dorset Market Segmentation Research, 2023 - <https://www.visit-dorset.com/industry/research/destination-performance/dorset-market-segmentation-research/>
Perceptions of Dorset - Past visitors particularly associate Dorset with beautiful beaches, fossils and picturesque market towns. However, only 15% of non-visitors are aware of Dorset’s fossil fame.

In comparison to its competitors, Dorset had a higher percentage of survey respondents associating the county to literary connections and culture, as well as getting close to nature, which suggests these may be drivers for some visitors.

Barriers to visiting Dorset - The main barriers to visiting for previous visitors are distance and unpredictable weather (underlining the fact that Dorset competes with foreign holidays as well as other southern counties).

For non-visitors, distance is again the biggest barrier, followed by not knowing enough about the area and what is on offer.

38% of respondents said that they would not consider visiting Dorset because it was too far to travel.