

**DAY OUT:** Chesil Beach, Dorset

# FICTIONAL FOOTSTEPS

The ocean swells, wildlife-rich berms and wave-sculpted pebbles of this iconic storm beach provide the setting for one of Ian McEwan's most important short novels, says **Adrienne Wyper**

**B**ehind the 18-mile shingle bank of Chesil Beach lies the Fleet, an enormous tidal lagoon. Once you start walking this isolated landform, you're committed.

There is no deflection, as noted by novelist Ian McEwan, who used the pebble bank in *On Chesil Beach* as the location for a wedding-night

argument between Edward and Florence as they struggle with the consummation of their marriage.

Walking in the fictional footsteps of the newlyweds, you'll discover the graduation of the beach's stones; from pea to potato-sized, west to east. Chesil is best viewed from the South West Coast Path on the rugged cliffs of the Isle of

Portland, where the seemingly infinite shingle stretches away towards West Bay. Follow the path around the land-tied island to Portland Bill Lighthouse, beyond old quarry workings, modern stone carvings, nesting seabirds and wildflower-rich maritime grassland. A full loop of the island is 13 miles, otherwise, retrace your steps.

**Ian McEwan** (born 1948) is an English novelist and screenwriter, with work spanning five decades – his most recent novel *Nutshell* was published in 2016.



**Adrienne Wyper** lives in Kent and loves walking, cycling and kayaking.