



Devon's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

This leaflet is part of a series of themed trails in Devon's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); helping you get out there, enjoy, and learn more about the landscape around you.

Trail themes include

- Coast in Conflict,
- Man and the Landscape,
- Trade and Settlement and
- A Colourful Landscape.

Have a look at these websites for further leaflets in the series, and ideas for other ways of enjoying yourself out and about!

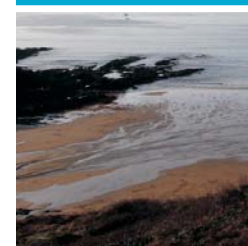
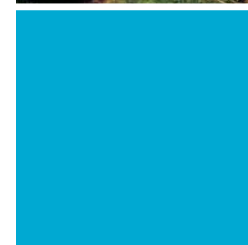
See www.southdevonaonb.org.uk,
www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk,
www.visitsouthdevon.co.uk and
www.discoverdevon.com

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the Government's designation for Britain's finest landscapes; there are 40 in England and Wales. Together with Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, Devon's 5 AONBs cover 35% of the County. AONBs share a common commitment to secure sustainable living landscapes. Each AONB has been designated for special attention because of the quality of their flora, fauna, cultural and historical heritage, as well as beautiful scenery. Their care has been entrusted to local authorities, organisations, community groups, individuals who live and work in them and those who value them.

Please recycle this leaflet by passing it onto a friend when you have finished with it. Don't let Devon go to waste.

Wembury to Plymouth

- **Start/Finish:** Wembury Beach car park
- **Distance:** 12 miles (19km)
- **Circular walk:** Yes ■ **Grade:** Strenuous
- **Terrain:** Coast path and public footpath. Some rocky, uneven, slippery and muddy patches. Surfaced road
- **Obstacles and steep gradients:** 21 flights of steps; 2 steep ascents; 2 steep descents
- **Accessibility:** This route is not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs
- **Public transport:** Bus service 48 to Wembury from Plymouth
- **Toilets:** Public toilets by Wembury Beach; Bovisand Park; and Mountbatten, Plymouth
- **Parking:** Wembury Beach car park.
- **Other Facilities:** Public payphone at road junction, 300m back up lane from Wembury Beach car park
- **Accommodation:** Please contact Modbury Tourist Information Centre 01548 830159 or modburytic@lineone.net
- **OS map:** Explorer OL20
- **Grid ref:** SX 518484
- Follow the Countryside Code: for more information www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk





Coast in Conflict

As part of the frontline of an island kingdom, Devon's coast has for centuries been a scene of confrontation and combat. Along with the fruits of the sea, the county's two long coastlines have also brought the constant threat and reality of attack and invasion.



Well over a thousand years ago, coastal dwellers here lived in dread of the swift longships bearing Viking raiders. A millennium later, Devonfolk still could not sleep soundly in their beds, as corsair pirates from North Africa scoured the county's coast seeking booty and slaves. Throughout ages, the seas you look upon were a treacherous and lawless place.

These cliffs, beaches, and bays have witnessed centuries of tension and clashes. Spain, Holland, and of course France have all threatened these shores, while during the Civil War, the English fought each other along this coast.

More recently, the sea's rim bristled with armaments, as both the first line of defence and the launchpad for attack through two world wars.

Meanwhile another fierce and age-old conflict continues to rage along the Devon coast. Day-in, day-out, the titanic forces of sea and land meet in a mighty clash. The breathtaking Devon coastline we see today is the result of this relentless battle between pounding waves and enduring rock.

The vast power of the ocean, and the jagged rocks of the land have claimed other lives, in the form of the shipwrecks that litter the coast, each telling a vivid tale of heroism and tragedy, of lives, times, and treasures.

Directions

Numbers in brackets refer to Points of Interest.

(For the first half of this walk, you are following 'Coast Path' signs and waymarkers – look for the 'acorn' Coast Path logo).

1. From car park follow path around back of beach and up broad steps then bear left along coast path. Follow coast path along the low cliffs (1).
2. At Heybrook Bay bear left to continue along coast path, signed for Bovisands.
3. At Bovisand Park chalet complex follow coast path up drive, bearing left around bay (2).
4. Beyond holiday chalets bear left signed 'Coast Path'. Follow path behind beach then up steps. At the top, bear left along road, signed 'Jennycliff 1 ½m'.
5. Fork right along front of Bovisand Court, following yellow waymarker arrow. Turn right before the next houses up steps, and follow path (3).
6. After climbing a long flight of steps (4), bear left by spiked railing gateway to pass in front of the radar station.
7. Just before path reaches road at Staddon Heights, bear left through kissing gate to continue along Coast Path.
8. Where you reach Jennycliff and the laid stone reading 'Welcome to Plymouth', bear left ahead. Cut across the recreation area in front of Jennycliff Café and past stone slab with carved Coast Path 'acorn' logo.
9. Bear left across next recreation area down to far corner and follow Coast Path fingerpost, signed 'Breakwater'.
10. At road bear left along pavement, then left again after 100m following fingerpost. Bear left in front of the old fort of Mountbatten Tower, up surfaced path. At top of the ramped path (9), with the tower to your right, turn left down steps to the breakwater (10,11).
11. From here bear round to right following path along waterfront (12,13), passing slipways and boatyards.

(Alternatively, for a view of Brownhill Battery, continue to very top of concrete steps (5,6), then retrace your steps and rejoin route) (7,8).



12. Follow pavement to the right of old red beacon light, then drop down to left beyond it. Cross road at yellow chevron crossing then follow Coast Path fingerpost left. Path snakes around to follow waterfront once again.
13. At top of steps follow red arrow left, then left again down lane, signed for Turnchapel. Turn right at bottom of hill along Boringdon Rd. Before MOD access gates, turn right up narrow lane and follow road. At t-junction at the bottom, turn right following red waymarker arrow along waterfront (14).



14. At end of Hooe Lake turn left along tarmac path, following red Coast Path signpost on lamppost, then bear left up Hexton Hill Rd.
15. At the top of the rise, by Hexton Lodge, bear left down public footpath, then fork immediately right following red Coast Path fingerpost. Turn sharp left at the next red fingerpost, down hill, around sewage works, and alongside the shore.
16. After passing beneath castellated building between Hooe Lake and Radford Lake, turn right up footpath signed

- for Wembury and Ivybridge. (From here you are following 'Coast to Coast – Erme Plym Trail' waymarkers).
17. Where stone path veers left away from the lake (15), bear right and continue along shore, following yellow waymarker arrow. At the end of the lake follow waymarker arrow straight on.
18. Turn right at the road then cross after 50m at the 'Erme-Plym Trail' fingerpost. Follow footpath straight ahead.
19. Follow waymarker arrows leading left along valley (16), then fork right up hill. At the next fork continue uphill, following edge of housing around to the right. At the stile, cross track and follow footpath straight ahead up through woods.
20. At fingerpost at the top, turn left along public footpath (17). When you come to a track, cross to right over stone stile and follow field edge. At the road, turn left (18).
21. At junction with Bovisand Rd cross over onto public footpath signed 'Traine road 1m'. Follow left side of hedge bank.



22. After dropping down across fields to bottom of valley and up other side, cross stile and follow right hand field edges. Half way along top field, fork left across to road. Turn right.
23. After ½ mile turn right over stile to follow public footpath signed for Ford and Langdon.
24. Path drops from top of hill down through fields and scrubby wood to Ford Farm. Turn left along road.
25. After 120m turn right and over stile to follow public footpath signed 'Church Rd ¼m'.
26. Cross at the road onto road opposite then turn immediately right onto footpath back down to beach and car park (19).

Points of Interest

1. During World War II, Wembury Point was often a deafening spot. In 1940, HMS Cambridge, the most important naval gunnery school in the country, was sited here. The boom of its practise guns were a part of life in the area for the next 60 years.

After decommissioning, The National Trust bought the HMS Cambridge site in 2005, and set about demolishing all the school buildings. The land is now being managed for conservation by the Trust, and already you would hardly guess that a military complex used to stand here.

Since being chosen as the regional headquarters of the navy in 1690, Plymouth has been a site of major military strategic significance – and a prime target for enemy attack. Because of this, the city steadily accumulated defences over the centuries, until it fairly bristled with fortifications and guns.

In the mid 1800s, a formidable ring of forts was built around Plymouth to protect the city and its naval installations, in particular from a feared attack by the French. They were called the Palmerston Forts after the then prime minister. As things turned out, the threatened invasion never came, and in time the forts were dubbed 'Palmerston's Follies'.

2. Like many of the other Palmerston Forts, Bovisand Fort had a new lease of life during World War II. During the conflict, its guns swept the Sound looking for German E-boats, and an anti-aircraft battery on the roof chattered away at enemy planes. Beneath the fort lie deep tunnels built to store ammunition safe from enemy bombardment.

The quay below Bovisand Fort was built in 1816. Warships would dock here to take on water from a purpose-built reservoir nearby.

3. Above Bovisand, the path follows a footbridge across a curious 'gorge', now overgrown with scrub. This steep cutting was used at one time to lower equipment and ammunition down to Bovisand Fort.
4. Work to construct Plymouth Breakwater began in 1812, and took over 30 years to complete. What you can see above the waves is just the tip of a huge iceberg of rock, and the project was a phenomenal feat of engineering for its time. Huge stone and concrete blocks are still added from time to time, to counter the scouring action of the sea - to date a total of 4 million tons of stone has been used!



The breakwater was built to protect shipping – and especially the naval fleet. Before its construction southerly gales would wreak havoc in Plymouth Sound, wrecking 10 ships in a single day in 1804. The beacon which stands on the eastern end of the breakwater was built with a metal globe at the top for shipwrecked sailors to climb into.



Just behind the breakwater, perched in the water, sits Breakwater Fort. Although a small construction, it meant business, equipped with 2 foot-thick steel armour plating and powerful 12-inch guns. The fort ended its working life as a semaphore station.

5. Brownhill Battery is another Palmerston Fort, built more for its imposing appearance than for any defensive capability.

The less impressive Staddon Fort (6) nearby had the firepower, with heavy artillery and barracks for 200 men. It was sited to prevent an enemy taking control of these heights and bombarding the city below. Staddon Heights was also the site of the defeat of a Danish Viking force in the 9th century.

7. Plymouth had a narrow squeak in 1779, when the entire French and Spanish fleets massed in Plymouth Sound. They had intended to invade, but lost their nerve, not realising that the city lay undefended.
8. Across the Sound, you can make out the unmistakable squat, strong, rounded shape of a fortress. This is Picklecombe Battery, from where over 50 heavy guns once protected the Sound. Its artillery and iron shields long gone, the fort was converted into apartments in the 1970s.
9. The atmospheric Mountbatten Tower was in use for hundreds of years, from the 1600's through to WWII. It was named after William Batten, commander of the parliamentary forces during the English Civil War. Plymouth came out very strongly in support of Cromwell's victorious Roundheads during the conflict.
10. The breakwater offers a good view of Plymouth Hoe across the water. The Hoe – meaning 'high ground' – is a much-quarried limestone ridge sitting above the city. It was here that Sir Francis Drake is said to have



casually played bowls before setting sail to take on the might of the Spanish Armada.

On the Hoe stands Plymouth Citadel. Built in 1665 to defend against a threatened Dutch invasion, it also had guns trained on the city itself, in case the townsfolk got any uppity ideas! The Citadel remained England's most important fortress for over 100 years.

11. Drake's Island is situated perfectly for the defence of Plymouth. Its 16th century defences were improved and extended over the centuries until the little island was crammed with guns and fortifications.
12. Mountbatten was once home to a seaplane station, which later became RAF Mounbatten. During World War II, Sunderland flying boats from the base hunted and harried German U-boats in the Channel.
13. None of Plymouth's many defences could prevent the city suffering severely during World War II. In the 'Plymouth Blitz' of 1941, German bombing raids flattened much of the city centre and the naval dockyards.
14. Hooe Lake has long provided refuge from the fury of the sea. In past times it was not unusual to see 60 schooners anchored here, safe from the storms.
15. Radford Lake is part of the Radford Estate, which dates back to the 13th century. A banquet was held here for Sir Francis Drake after he returned victorious, having defeated the Spanish Armada. A less fortunate knight, Sir Walter Raleigh, was held on the estate before being taken to London for execution in 1618.
16. The land to the left of the path here was home to ten huge storage tanks during World War II. Connected to RAF Mountbatten via long pipelines, they contained aircraft fuel.
17. The gloriously open vista from here includes uninterrupted views to Dartmoor. The high point up above Lee Moor China Clay Works is called Shell Top. You can even see North Hessay Tor, crowned by a television mast, which lies in the middle of the moor beyond Princetown.
18. The wall to your left on the roadside is a happy home for plants including Polypody Ferns, Navelwort, and Red Valerian. There is a striking contrast between the life that thrives on this old lime mortar wall, and walls built with cement, on which little or nothing grows.
19. The Church of St Werburgh at Wembury can trace its roots back to Saxon times. Its situation, out beyond the edge of the village, is a curiosity. One theory suggests that the original settlement it was built to serve was destroyed by the sea, without trace or record.



Refreshments

Old Mill Café,
 Wembury Beach
 01752 862314
oldmill@nationaltrust.org.uk

Characterful former mill with old millstones for tables and front step. Owned by National Trust. Café is holder of the Green Tourism Business Scheme Gold Award.

Mountbatten Bar,
 Hotel Mountbatten, Mountbatten, Plymouth
 01752 484660
www.hotelmountbatten.co.uk

Waterfront bar with outdoor seating serving drinks, and food from midday. Children welcome.

Clovelly Bay Inn,
 Boringdon Rd, Turnchapel, Plymouth
 01752 402765

Cosy, attractive little pub with a log fire. Serves food, and hosts around 100 guest ales every year.

Other Interest

Wembury Marine Centre,
 Church Rd, Wembury (just behind the beach)
 01752 862538
www.wemburymarinecentre.org

The marine centre is run by a partnership led by Devon Wildlife Trust. It raises awareness on marine ecology and conservation. From spring to autumn, the centre runs public events for children and adults including 'rockpool rambles'. Contact the centre for more details.

