



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

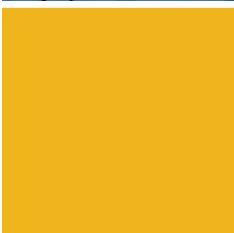
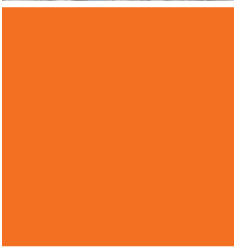
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the Government's designation for Britain's finest landscapes; there are 40 in England and Wales. Together with Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, Devon's 5 AONBs cover 35% of the County. AONBs share a common commitment to secure sustainable living landscapes. Each 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.

Bantham and Thurlestone

- **Start/Finish:** Bantham Sand car park
- **Distance:** 3.5 miles (5.5 km)
- **Circular walk:** Yes ■ **Grade:** Moderate
- **Terrain:** Fairly even coastal footpath; surfaced roads; fields and footpaths.
- **Obstacles and steep gradients:** 6 stiles; 1 fairly steep climb; 1 steep descent.
- **Accessibility:** Route from Bantham to Leasfoot Sand suitable for ambulate disabled users as a linear route. Parking at either end.
- **Public transport:** Bus service 162 from Kingsbridge to Thurlestone. From the bus stop in Thurlestone, pick up route at Instruction 4 by war memorial.
- **Toilets:** Public toilets at Bantham Sand car park, and across the road near Leasfoot Sand.
- **Parking:** Bantham Sand car park. Pay attendant
- **Other Facilities:** Public payphones and village stores just off route in Thurlestone and Bantham.
- **Accommodation:** Please contact Kingsbridge Tourist Information Centre 01548 853195 www.kingsbridgeinfo.co.uk or www.discoverdevon.com/site/where-to-stay
- **OS map:** Explorer OL20 ■ **Grid ref:** SX 665437
- Follow the Countryside Code: for more information www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk





Trade and Settlement

In the early Stone Age, Devon was sparsely populated. Much has changed since then. Successive waves of human settlement have swept across the landscape, bringing Celtic tribes and Roman invaders; Viking warriors, Saxon settlers, and the Norman conquerors. All have come and gone – or stayed to build homes and lives here.

Through this succession of influence, and beyond, the Devon we see today has taken shape. Villages, hamlets and farms have evolved. Towns have grown up, and centres of trade and power have developed, faded, and shifted.

This rural county has always had agriculture at its heart. But other industries have made their mark.

Men have long burrowed deep into the Devon earth to extract valuable tin, copper, silver, lead, and arsenic. Boat- building, lime- burning, cloth- making, and the woollen trade all helped bring affluence. And Devon's stream-sides are dotted with the old mills that once ground grain, or made paper and textiles. Lastly, we cannot forget the contribution made by Devon's 'free traders' – the smugglers of old.

Meanwhile, Devon's coast has always provided the county with a portal to the wide world. For centuries, galleons, schooners, clippers and cutters have plied their trades in and out of the county's ports. There is even persuasive evidence that tin was being traded with visiting Phoenician and Greek galleys in the Bronze Age.

Today's Devon - home to three quarters of a million people – has roots sunk deep into a long and fascinating history.



Directions

Numbers in brackets refer to Points of Interest.

1. Follow main track through car park. This leads past lifeguards' hut (1,2) and through kissing gate onto the coast path signed for Thurlestone.
2. Follow waymarked coast path (3,4,) alongside the golf course (5,6) and past Broad Sand and Yarmouth Sand beaches (7).
3. At Leasfoot Sand (8), turn left by the beach safety sign. Past the golf clubhouse, turn left along the road up to Thurlestone (9).



4. At the war memorial, leave the road and continue straight on along track signed 'Public Footpath Bantham ¾ mile'. (Alternatively, for local facilities and refreshments, take a short detour along the road to the right here. Retrace your steps to memorial and turn right).
5. Cross over stone stile beyond the church and follow waymarked path across fields and steeply down to the valley bottom.
6. At stile with large granite block base, cut diagonally across field to left, then over

another stile onto the path into Bantham (10).

7. Turn left at the Sloop Inn, and follow road back to the car park.



Points of Interest

1. From the surf life saving club hut you can see Bantham Ham, the spit of land that extends behind and beyond Bantham Sand. Excavations on the Ham have revealed evidence of settlements from around the 5th to 7th centuries. Hearths have been found, along with fragments of iron and pottery, shells and bones. Imported fragments such as spindle whorls and bone combs have also been uncovered, suggesting that the site may have served as a trading port.



It is thought that the Danes invaded at Bantham Ham in the 9th century, but were defeated in a bloody battle.

2. Across the estuary is Bigbury, with Burgh Island standing just off the shore. The local area used to be a centre of pilchard fishing, until over-fishing put paid to the industry in the late 1800s. A lookout was stationed in the huers hut, situated at the highest point of the island, to keep watch for the shoals and to summon the fishing boats when they were sighted. The hut was once a chapel for the monks who lived in the monastery, which stood on the site of the hotel.
3. The coastal section of the walk is rich in wildflowers. Depending on the season, you may see the clustered yellow flowers of Kidney Vetch, or the even lower lying yellow and deep blush Birdsfoot Trefoil, also known as 'eggs and bacon'. The distinctive Sea Campion is also to be found here. Behind its white flower is a small bladder-like sac, formed from the fused sepals. Other plants include the pink bobbing heads of Thrift, and the large lacy rosettes of Sea Carrot.
4. Along the sea cliff and golf course the Stonechat is a common sight. This small chunky bird with a white patch at the neck has a 'chack' call like two stones being tapped together. The black and white Pied Wagtail is also found here, as is the Wheatear, a small bird with a black patch through its eye and a distinctive white rump.

Seabirds include the Fulmar, a baby-faced gull-like bird which glides effortlessly on the sea



wind off the cliffs. On the rocks below the cliffs, the dark, rather prehistoric shapes of Shags can often be seen gathered.

5. The golf course was created in 1897 from a stretch of coastal scrub. It was originally grazed by sheep, and maintained using rollers pulled by horses wearing special shoes to protect the fairways.
6. The slates, gravels and sands which make up the coast here are 'relatively soft'. They are vulnerable to erosion from the sea, which is pushing the coastline inland little by little over time.
7. Thurlestone Rock is the stone arch standing just out to sea as you look along the coast. The Rock is a remnant of New Red



Sandstone, the type of rock which would once have covered all of the South Hams. The village of Thurlestone takes its name from the Saxon term for this pierced, or 'thurled', stone.

8. At Leasfoot Sand, the eroded dunes behind the beach have been stabilised by filling fenced-off enclosures with discarded Christmas trees. The trees slowed down the passing wind, causing it to drop the sand it was carrying. This dropped sand gradually reformed the dunes.
9. The village of Thurlestone is first mentioned as the Saxon 'Torlestan' in a charter of 846. The first record of a church there appears in the Domesday Book of 1086. A fire-pan on top of the tower served as a lighthouse in former times, and is said to have been lit as a beacon fire upon the sighting of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Timbers taken from one of the Armada ships wrecked on the coast nearby – the San Pedro el Major - are built into the Village Inn.
10. Smuggling was once a thriving industry in Bantham, when the windows of the houses in the village were known as 'smuggler's eyes'. This was the haunt of the notorious Nat Cleverly, who plied between Roscoff and Bantham with 'tubs' of brandy and other illicit goods. When he was finally caught by the Revenue men, Cleverly had the good fortune to be tried by a magistrate who was one of his best customers. Unsurprisingly, the verdict was 'not guilty'!

Refreshments

Village Inn, Thurlestone

01548 563525

www.thurlestone.co.uk/village_inn.htm

Freehouse that has been owned by the same family for over a century. Seasonal menu with seafood specialities. Open all day every day in season, and off-season weekends. Off-season week days open lunchtime and evening. Children and dogs welcome.

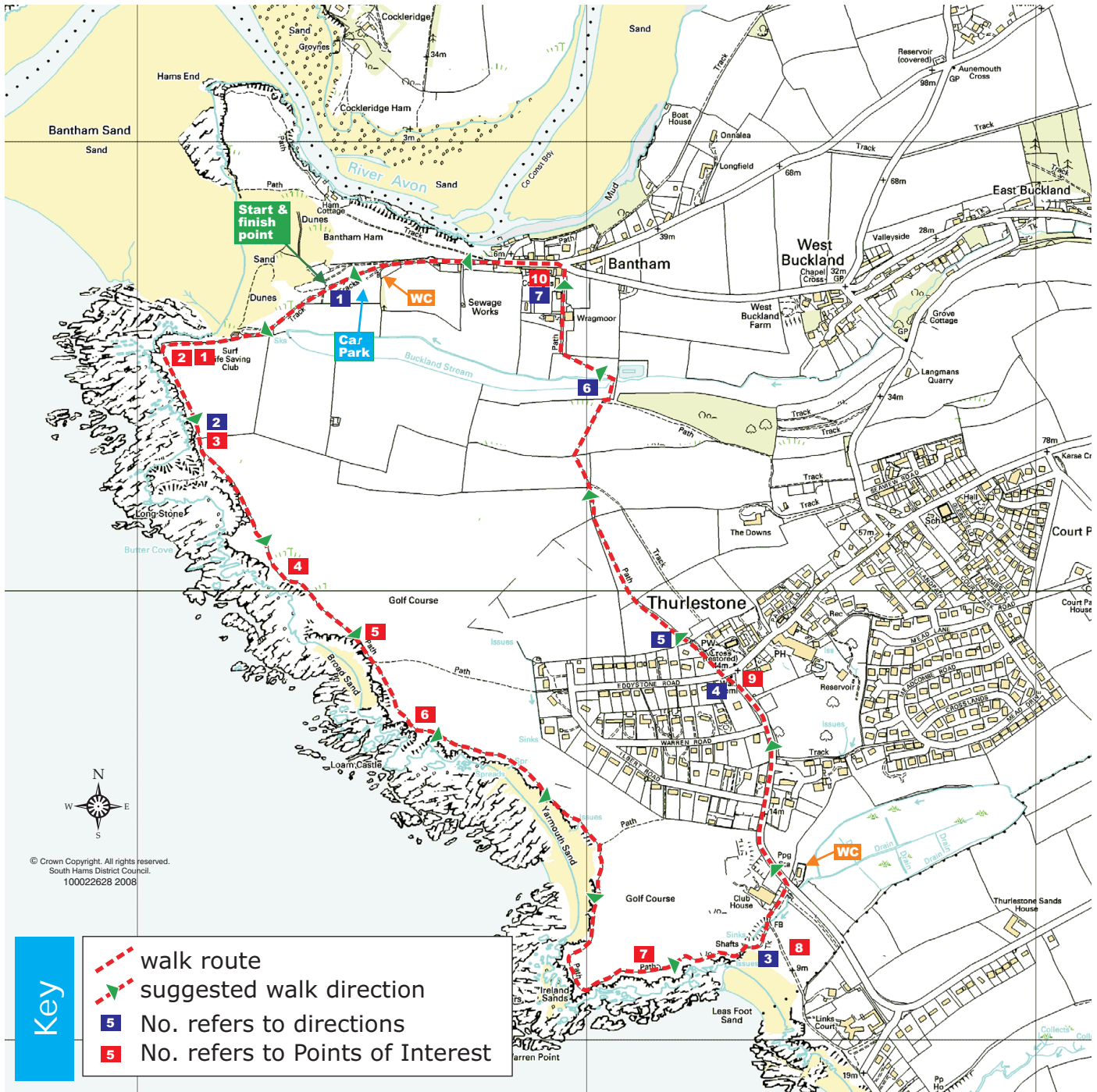
Sloop Inn, Bantham

01548 560489

www.sloopatbantham.co.uk

Thatched inn serving drinks, along with a menu including seafood, local meats, and homemade desserts.





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 South Hams District Council.
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Key

- walk route
- suggested walk direction
- No. refers to directions
- No. refers to Points of Interest