



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

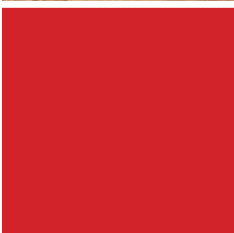
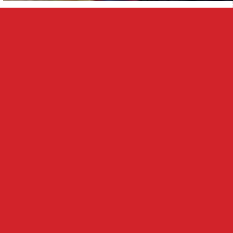
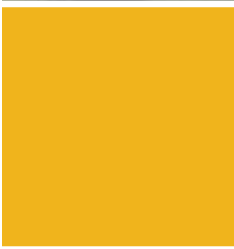
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the Government's designation for Britain's finest landscapes; there are 40 in England and Wales. Together with Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, Devon's 5 AONBs cover 35% of the County. AONBs share a common commitment to secure sustainable living landscapes. Each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

Torcross and Stokenham

- **Start/Finish:** Torcross Car Park
- **Distance:** 6 miles (9.5km)
- **Circular walk:** Yes
- **Grade:** Moderate
- **Terrain:** Coast path, green lane, surfaced road. Mostly fairly even underfoot, with some slippery and muddy patches in wet weather.
- **Obstacles and steep gradients:** 4 flights of steps; 2 stiles
- **Accessibility:** This route is not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs
- **Public transport:** Bus service 93 to Torcross from Dartmouth, Kingsbridge, and Plymouth
- **Toilets:** Public toilets at Torcross Car Park
- **Parking:** Torcross Car Park. Pay and Display
- **Other Facilities:** Public payphone in Torcross, 400m from post office along main road around back of Ley (passed near end of walk). Start Bay Stores and Post Office, Torcross
- **Accommodation:** Please contact Dartmouth Tourist Information Centre 01803 834224. See www.discoverdartmouth.com or www.discoverdevon.com/site/where-to-stay.
- **OS map:** Explorer OL20
- **Grid ref:** SX 824423
- Follow the Countryside Code: for more information www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk





Man and the Landscape

The Devon countryside has been shaped and affected by man for thousands of years, and the land has a fascinating tale to tell.

From scratching at the earth with sticks and bones, to flicking switches in today's sophisticated farm machinery, we have left our mark as we have sought to meet our needs from the land. The result is an epic story of quiet heroism and struggle, ambition and desperation, and triumph and defeat, etched indelibly into the Devon landscape.

Thousands of years ago ancient Celtic tribespeople were creating enclosures and huge earthworks. Saxon settlers imported their unique systems of agriculture, and medieval farmers set out to claw the land back from nature. Clearing heaths and woods acre by hard-won acre for cultivation, they made strides which have been built upon by generations of farmers and workers right up to the present day.

The characteristic hedgebanks which enclose Devon's fields are jewels in the county's crown. Many of them date back over 800 years and some, incredibly, are up to 4000 years old. These sturdy and beautiful boundaries, spangled with wildflowers in spring and summer, are a haven for wildlife of all kinds.

Thousands of years of toil and muscle have produced the patchwork landscape of field and farm you see today. The earth has been cut, dug, ploughed and moved for as long as man has been here, and it is no exaggeration to say that, as you look out over the countryside, Devon's history really is laid out before you.



Directions

Numbers in brackets refer to Points of Interest.

1. From car park, cross road to seafront and turn right along the sea wall (1). At the end take the steps signed 'Coast Path'
2. Follow the track at the top, then turn left following yellow waymarker arrow up hill and onto footpath. Path climbs inland around the back of old quarry (2), and drops down to Beesands Cellars.
3. Shortly before the path reaches the beach, turn right at fingerpost onto public footpath signed for Widewell. Alternatively, to visit beach, go straight on. Retrace your steps and turn left here.
4. Follow path up field edge (3), cross track, and continue, following yellow waymarkers.
5. Route emerges past cottages at Widdicombe (4), then bears right up drive. After 200m turn right at fingerpost along public footpath signed 'Widewell ¼m' and drop down through field. At road turn left.
6. At the junction go straight on, signed for Totnes on blue cycle route sign. Proceed with care down right side of this sometimes busy road, staying on raised verge where possible. As you approach right hand bend, cross road to follow left hand verge, then turn very sharply left down narrow lane.
7. Past caravan site at Island Farm, turn right down green lane signed 'Sumerye Lane'.
8. At road, cross, turn left and walk with care down main road through Chillington. After 100m, opposite butcher's shop, turn sharp right up narrow lane leading up green lane signed 'Frittiscombe Lane' (5).
9. Cross road at top (6) and follow public footpath diagonally down across field opposite (7), signed 'Stokenham ½m'. Cross second field (8) to the road. Turn right down hill.
10. At the junction, turn right and immediately left to continue down narrow lane into Stokenham village (9).
11. At junction at the bottom turn left (or right for Tradesman's Arms, 20m on right). Continue past 'T' no-through-road sign, and turn right through lych-gate. into churchyard (10). At left of church turn left. Leave churchyard through iron gate, following public footpath fingerpost ahead and to left across field.
12. Turn right at road. Just before main road turn left signed 'Permissive Path Torcross ¾m'.
13. Follow path to left through caravan park. Leave site via gate in far top corner past play area.
14. At road, continue along roadside footpath (11) back to Torcross and car park on left.



Points of Interest

1. Originally just a cluster of fishermen's stores, Torcross began to develop into a village in the 17th century. Back then it was at the dead end of the road running out from the west, and must have been a very sleepy backwater.

In 1824, a turnpike road was constructed from Dartmouth. This marked a turning point for Torcross, which soon became a bustling little staging post for coaching traffic.

2. Beesands Quarry once produced a renowned bluish slate used extensively for roofing and building in the area. Much of the stone was transported by boat from the beach at Beesands Cellars for sale and use along the South Coast. There was little slate production in Devon, and the quarries of Stokenham parish were famous in their day.

3. The large pasture here was once three fields, whose boundaries are thought to have formed part of a pre-Saxon field system. Even when divided, they would have been fairly large fields by local standards. Many old field hedgebanks have been lost during the last century, as small fields have been enlarged to accommodate modern mechanised agriculture.

Nevertheless, South Devon still retains its patchwork landscape – the loss of field boundaries in Devon has been much less than in many other parts of the country.

4. Back in the Dark Ages, Widdicombe was the site of a

settlement with a small parcel of enclosed and cultivated fields around it. By the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066 it was an established manor. The estate gets a mention in 1242 as Withy Combe, which suggests that its name stems from the growing of coppiced willow here.

Widdcombe House itself grew in stature after being reconstructed in the 18th century, with a semi-wooded formal garden said to have been designed by Capability Brown. The house was taken over by General Eisenhower during World War II and used as a Combined Services headquarters.

5. Look up to either side as you walk up Frittiscombe Lane and you will notice how much higher the level of the fields are than the green lane itself. As with many of Devon's backroads and byways, centuries of erosion from feet, hooves, and water has created this sunken lane.
6. The 360° view from Coleridge Cross provides a perfect spot to pause and consider the evolution of this landscape. Although once more or less



entirely covered with forest, woodland has formed only a very small part of the scene here for many centuries now.



However, the 'taming' of the landscape has not been a constant process. Land has come in and out of cultivation as the population has fluctuated. Much of the land you see has been tilled, reverted to heathland, and been reclaimed again at various times.

Look back across the road from the stile here, and you can see a glimpse of the Salcombe – Kingsbridge estuary nestled down in the folds of the land. A sliver of the town of Salcombe itself is also visible on the hillside, along with the distinctive church tower at Malborough on the horizon.

7. These fields you walk across once formed part of an open field system. Peasants would till individual strips within large communal areas. Although most would farm more than one strip, the strips worked by each man or family would be scattered about a large area. This ensured that no one person got all the best land, or all the wet, steep, or poor land.

8. The land over to the left across the lane formed a medieval deer park, reserved for the local lord's hunting. To prevent the deer from escaping, a bank was created all the way round the park, with a ditch on the inside. By the early 16th century the deer park had fallen out of use, but remnants of the earthworks can still be seen at some points around the perimeter.
9. Stokenham was known as Stoc in 1057 – meaning enclosure or farm – and as Stoc in Hamme by the 13th century. Hamme is an old English term meaning in this case pastureland bounded on three sides by water.

The parish of Stokenham is still a very large one, despite having had corners chipped off it over the centuries to create other parishes. It owes its size to its origin as part of an Anglo-Saxon royal estate.

10. The church of St Michael and All Angels at Stokenham has had a colourful history of dedication. At one time it was the church of St Barnabas, and before that was dedicated to St Humbert the Confessor. The building you see today dates from the 15th century and is built of Stokenham slate. It was badly damaged during World War II when the US Army used the area for exercises.

11. Slapton Ley has only existed since rising sea levels pushed up the shingle ridge after the last ice age. In medieval times, the Ley gradually silted up with soil washed down from the fields. However, as the old open fields were partitioned and enclosed with hedgebanks which retained the soil, the clogging of the Ley slowed and stopped.



Refreshments

Start bay Inn, Torcross

01548 580553

www.startbayinn.co.uk

Seafront pub, famous for its locally caught seafood. This thatched inn has an open fire, outdoor seating overlooking the bay, and children's menu. Open all day.

Tradesman's Arms, Stokenham

01548 580313

www.thetradesmansarms.com

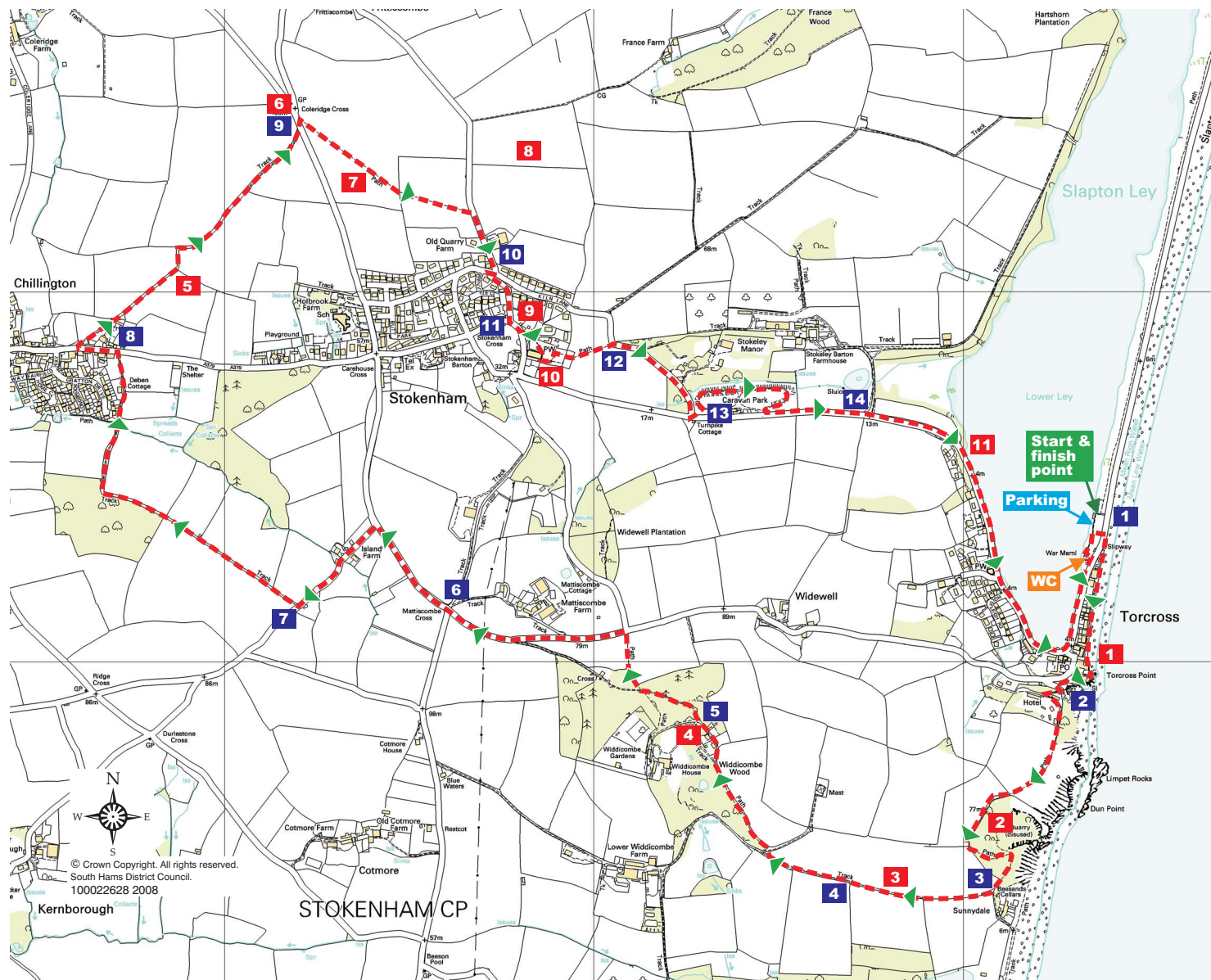
Freehouse with wide selection of real ales, wines, and soft drinks. Serves sandwiches and light bites, along with full lunchtime and evening meals. Fish and meat locally sourced. Beer garden.

Seabreeze Café, Torcross

01548 580697

www.seabreezebreaKs.com

Serves toasted sandwiches, paninis, cakes, using locally sourced produce wherever possible. Teas, soft drinks, organic coffees. Milk, and some cheeses and breads organic.



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

