

Kingsbridge to West Alvington



A stroll through the woods

Stroll out of Kingsbridge for a tranquil dawdle through parkland meadow and dappled woodland, just a hop, skip and a jump from the town – an unexpected delight.

Start: | Quay St car park, Kingsbridge TQ7 1JD

Distance: | 2 miles

Difficulty: | Easy, 3 stiles

Terrain: | surfaced and unsurfaced paths, may be muddy in wet weather.

Parking: | Quay St car park, Kingsbridge TQ7 1JD

OS map: | Explorer OL20

Grid Ref: | SX 735 439

Public transport: | See www.travelinesw.com

Refreshments: | In Kingsbridge and West Alvington

Toilets: | At entrance to Quay St car park

This walk is available in the following formats from www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walks



online walk

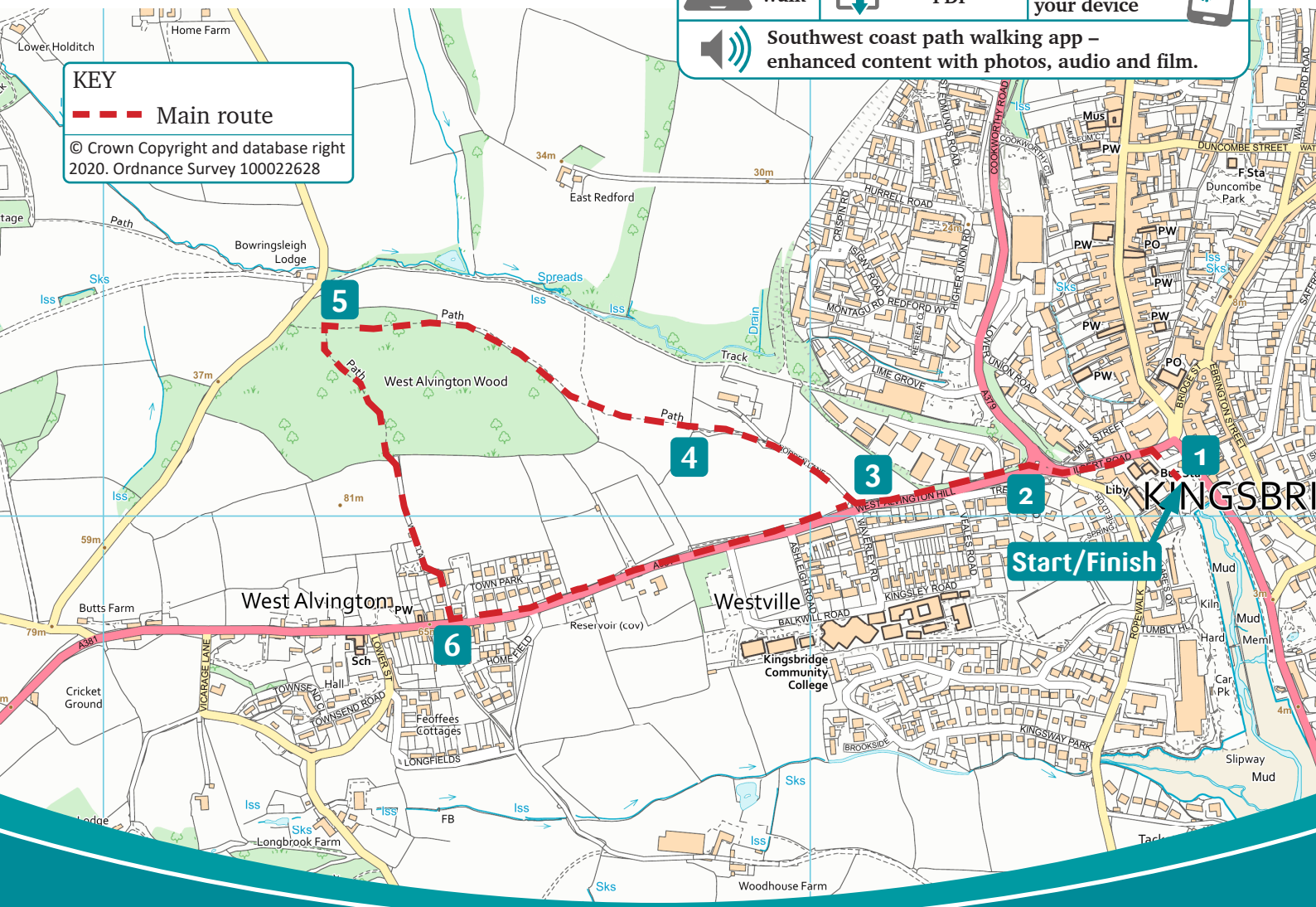


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Directions

- 1 By entrance to car park, pass to left of the Tourist Information Centre to the road. Turn left and head up road past the filling station.
- 2 Cross road above the roundabout and continue uphill.
- 3 Just before a long ramp of steps, turn right down a green lane signed 'Public Footpath'. By the gateway pillars, bear left along footpath.
- 4 Follow path down through field around edge of wood. Enter the wood where you see the stile and follow the path straight on.
- 5 After 200m, and before reaching the lane, turn left in front of the waymarker post. Follow path, which winds up to a stile on the top edge of the wood. Follow the green lane leading down into West Alvington and turn left onto the tarmac lane.
- 6 At the main road turn left along pavement and then follow path above the road back into Kingsbridge. Cross road above roundabout. Continue down past filling station and turn right past Tourist Information Centre to car park.

Further Interest

Heritage

The name West Alvington means 'Aelfwynn's Town'. Like many other settlements in the South Hams, it takes its name from its one time Saxon chief. Times have changed rapidly since, but only a hundred and fifty years ago this village was a thriving and independent little hub. Back then West Alvington had blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, plumbers, a shoemaker, tailor, and general shopkeeper. The parish was a largely self-sufficient world of its own, despite being so near to the main town.

As you walk up past the filling station, you pass the end of a road called 'Ropewalk'. This marks a place where fibres were twisted and stretched into rope in vast quantities for the vessels which were built in the shipyards of Kingsbridge.



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A little further up the road, the distinctive roof of the old Kingsbridge railway station can be seen over the fence of the industrial estate on the right. This was the terminus for the 'Primrose Line' running from South Brent. It was the fashion among Victorians to come down to Kingsbridge by steam train and take a paddle steamer trip around the estuary. Eventually the railway met the fate of so many rural branch lines, being closed in 1963 as part of the Beeching reforms.

Landscape

Looking into the creek from the quay at the start of the walk, you can see seaweeds flourishing. This is a rarity. Such a variety of seaweeds seldom survive so far 'upriver'. They are only able to thrive here because the estuary is not fed by any major river, and so the water remains very salty even up here at the head of the creek.

The land on which you stand on the quay was once also a part of Kingsbridge Creek, and lay underwater. Over the centuries the area was reclaimed and quays built over the original mudflats.

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

Wildlife

A buzzard is often to be seen circling above the parkland meadow by West Alvington Wood. The biggest of our common birds of prey, it is a majestic sight sailing the thermals on its broad, 'fingered' wings. Buzzards hunt rabbits, small rodents and birds, but they're not above picking around in the fields for earthworms too, particularly in the winter.

West Alvington Wood is a wonderful little pocket of old woodland. Its trees are mostly oak, beech and sweet chestnut. Below these taller trees grow many-stemmed, silvery barked hazel. Their catkins – known as 'lamb's tails' - come out very early in the spring, and if you look closely you can see the tree's tiny red female flowers poking out of the end of some of the buds, looking a bit like miniature sea anemones. Later in the year, their nuts feed many woodland creatures. If you come across a hazelnut shell on the ground that has been split right through,

the nut will have been eaten by a squirrel. A neat round hole gnawed in the shell, on the other hand, is the tell-tale sign of a mouse.

The tussocks of downy green blades carpeting the woodland floor are great woodrush, which throws up sprays of chestnut brown flowers in the late spring. Spring also brings washes of bluebells to the wood, along with the right white star-shaped flowers of wild garlic with their pungent, oval leaves.

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Working in partnership



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development Europe investing in rural areas has supported Explore South Devon to promote circular walks within the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.