

Kingsbridge to Bowcombe Creek



Start: | Quay Street car park, Kingsbridge.
TQ7 1JD

Distance: | 2.5 miles (including extended walk to
Newbridge 4 miles)

Difficulty: | Moderate. 7 stiles; 1 flight of steps;
1 steep ascent; 1 steep descent

Terrain: | Surfaced roads and paths; tracks and
green lanes; country footpaths

Parking: | Quay Street car park, Kingsbridge.
TQ7 1JD

OS map: | Explorer OL20

Grid Ref: | SX 735 439

Public transport: | See www.travelinesw.com

Refreshments: | In Kingsbridge

Toilets: | In Kingsbridge

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



online
walk

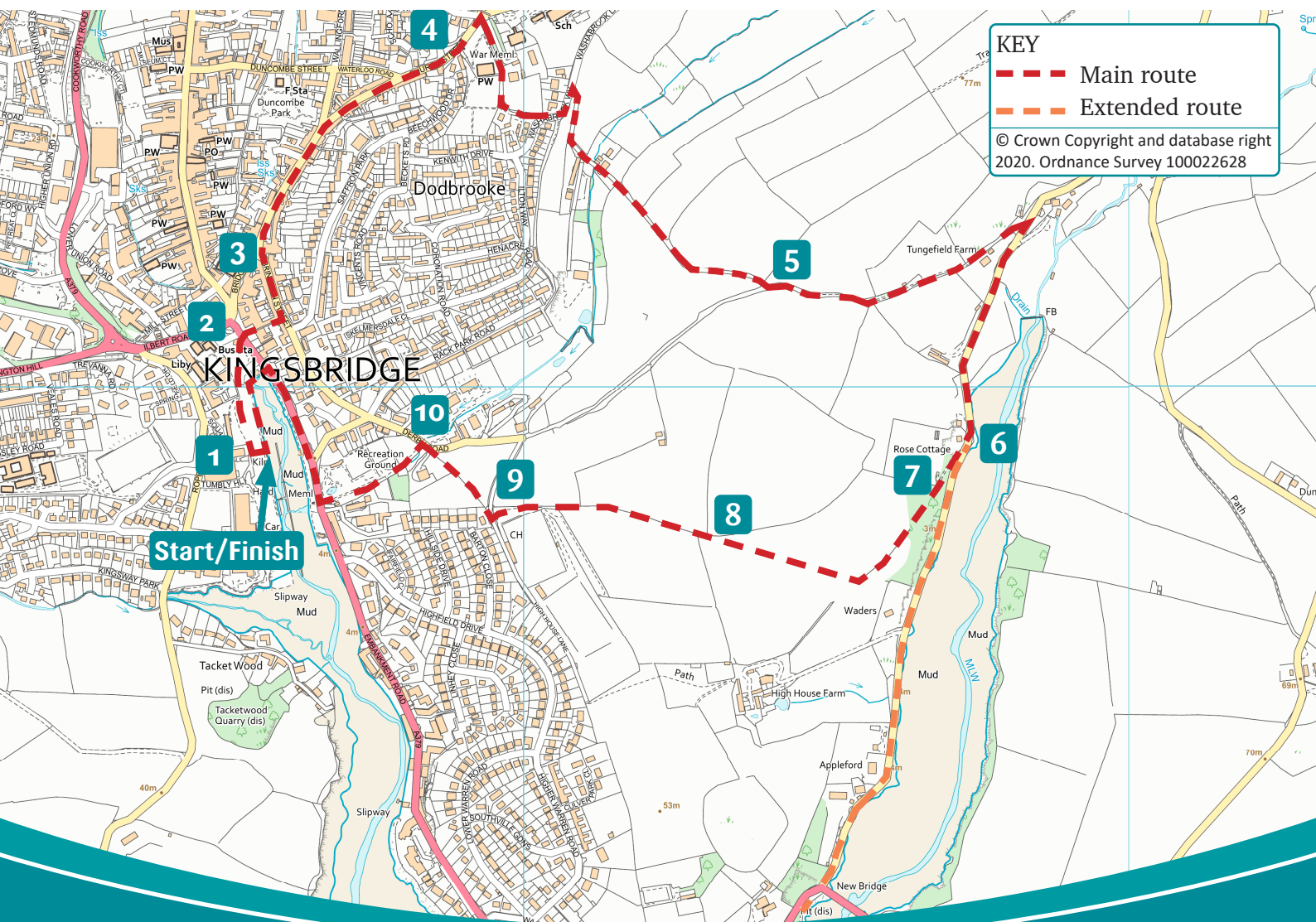


downloadable
PDF

downloadable
route map onto
your device



Southwest coast path walking app –
enhanced content with photos, audio and film.



Directions

- 1 At the entrance to the car park, cross the road at the pedestrian crossing.
- 2 Go through the narrow alley to the right of Harbour House, then left along Ebrington Street.
- 3 Follow the right hand side pavement behind the bingo hall and continue along raised footway up the hill.
- 4 Just above the church, turn right down a tarmac path. Turn left at the road (ignore footpath sign) and sharp right after 100m. Continue past Washabrook Farm, and up the rocky green lane.
- 5 At the junction, take the track to the left. At the bottom, turn sharp right onto the road along Bowcombe Creek.
- 6 (To extend the walk here, follow the road along to the viewing platform, and the recreation area beyond at Bowcombe Bridge. Return the same way).
- 7 Just past Rose cottage turn right over stile and up footpath through a small wood. At the 'public footpath' fingerpost, turn sharp right up across the field to the far corner.
- 8 Cross over the stone stile and follow the field edge path.
- 9 Keep right through rugby club car park. Cross road and stile onto footpath down steep scrubby field.
- 10 Join the road left, then turn immediately left through the recreation ground. At the road, turn right, and follow the creek back to the car park.

Further Interest

Heritage and landscape

Kingsbridge gets its first historical mention in a charter of 962, and the town was at one time owned by Buckfast Abbey. Trade was via the sea. Ships plied between the estuary and south west France in mediaeval times, and at one time clippers, schooners and barges were all built here. Later still, packet steamers loaded and landed goods at the Quay. The advent of steel ships finally put paid to Kingsbridge as a port.



This walk along with many more can be downloaded from www.southdevonaonb.org.uk

Bowcombe Creek was once a busy transport route, with boats taking slate from the nearby quarry, and cider produced on local farms. They travelled up to the head of the creek at the tidal limit. There is still a bridge here but the creek is very silted up and a reed bed is growing. In 1824 an Act was passed to build a turnpike road between Frogmore and Kingsbridge at a cost of £1,402 and in 1828 works commenced to build an embankment and a stone bridge. Originally the bridge was split in two sections with a drawbridge to let barges through. According to local press it was of such good engineering that even a female could open and close the bridge in about 15 minutes without difficulty! In 1845 the drawbridge was replaced with a swing bridge built by a Kingsbridge millwright and engineer Mr A Saunders and surveyor John Eddy. One of the arches of the bridge was originally made of timber and pivoted on 12 cannon balls to allow shipping to pass through. With improved roads and the extension of the railway to Kingsbridge in 1893, water transport from Bowcombe was obsolete and the opening section was replaced with a stone arch. New Bridge is still very narrow for modern vehicles. It is also the longest in the area apart from the bridge crossing the Avon at Aveton Gifford.

The Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary is unusual because it has no large river feeding it, just a series of small streams from Frogmore, Bowcombe, Batson, East Allington, Sherford and other surrounding villages, rising at springs some 140 metres above sea level. It is tidal up as far as Kingsbridge, the bridging point five miles inland. Like the other estuaries of South Devon, the original deep river valley has been flooded as sea levels rose after the last ice age.

As well as being part of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the estuary is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a local nature reserve and lies within the South Devon Heritage Coast. Two tides a day fill this 'ria' or drowned river valley with sea water. With no river input the estuary is almost entirely a marine system which has brought about some rare and important habitats and species. Reed beds, mudflats and eelgrass beds all help to support the abundance of wildlife that inhabits this special estuary.

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

Wildlife

On the right at Washabrook Lane is a mass of Buddleia, with mauve and white cone flower heads. This shrub is a magnet for butterflies in the summer.

The shady green lane from Washabrook abounds in characteristic hedgerow plantings such as Hazel and Blackthorn, along with Elder. All are hung with edible fruits in the autumn. Ferns include the prolific strap-like Hartstongue, and there are Cuckoo Pints along the banks. These shade-loving plants are also known as 'lords and ladies'. They have a distinctive form, with a finger-like purple flower spike framed by a pale greenish cowl, which gives way later in the summer to a cluster of bright red berries atop a fleshy stalk. Butterflies to be found along these lanes include Red Admiral and the delicate brown Speckled Wood with its cream markings and black ringed 'eyes'.

Bowcombe Creek is a haven for many birds. The trees across the creek used to house a huge heronry. This has now gone, but the odd Heron may still be seen standing motionless by the water. Brilliant white Little Egrets are a common sight both here and by the creek in Kingsbridge. Buzzards are often seen overhead, rising on the thermals on broad fingered wings, as is the swifter, smaller Peregrine Falcon.

The Creek is host to Mallard and Shelduck, the latter sporting red bills and black heads, with orange and dark markings against their white body plumage. Wading birds are numerous, particularly in winter. They feed here on worms and tiny invertebrates on the mud banks and shoreline, and have bills adapted to probing the mud and picking around for food. Redshank and Greenshank, with red and grey-green legs respectively, are found here. So too are the orange-billed Oystercatchers, and Curlews with their long, down-curved bills and haunting call.

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



online
walk



downloadable
PDF

downloadable
route map onto
your device



Southwest coast path walking app –
enhanced content with photos, audio and film.

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.