

Loddiswell and Middle Avon Valley



A riverside stroll

A beautiful leafy walk following the amber waters of the River Avon through classic English woodland, starting and finishing in the tranquil village of Loddiswell.

Start: | Loddiswell car park, near the village Hall TQ7 4RJ

Parking: | Free parking in Loddiswell, South Brent Road TQ7 4RJ – limited spaces

Distance: | 3.5 miles

OS map: | Explorer OL20

Difficulty: | Moderate. 4 stiles which can be bypassed, 2 sets of steps, 1 steep ascent.

Grid Ref: | SX 720 487

Terrain: | Surfaced roads and paths, green lane, country and riverside footpaths. Ancient woodland with some fallen trees to navigate.

Public transport: | See www.travelinesw.com

Refreshments: | In Loddiswell and Avon Mill garden centre

Toilets: | Loddiswell car park

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



online walk

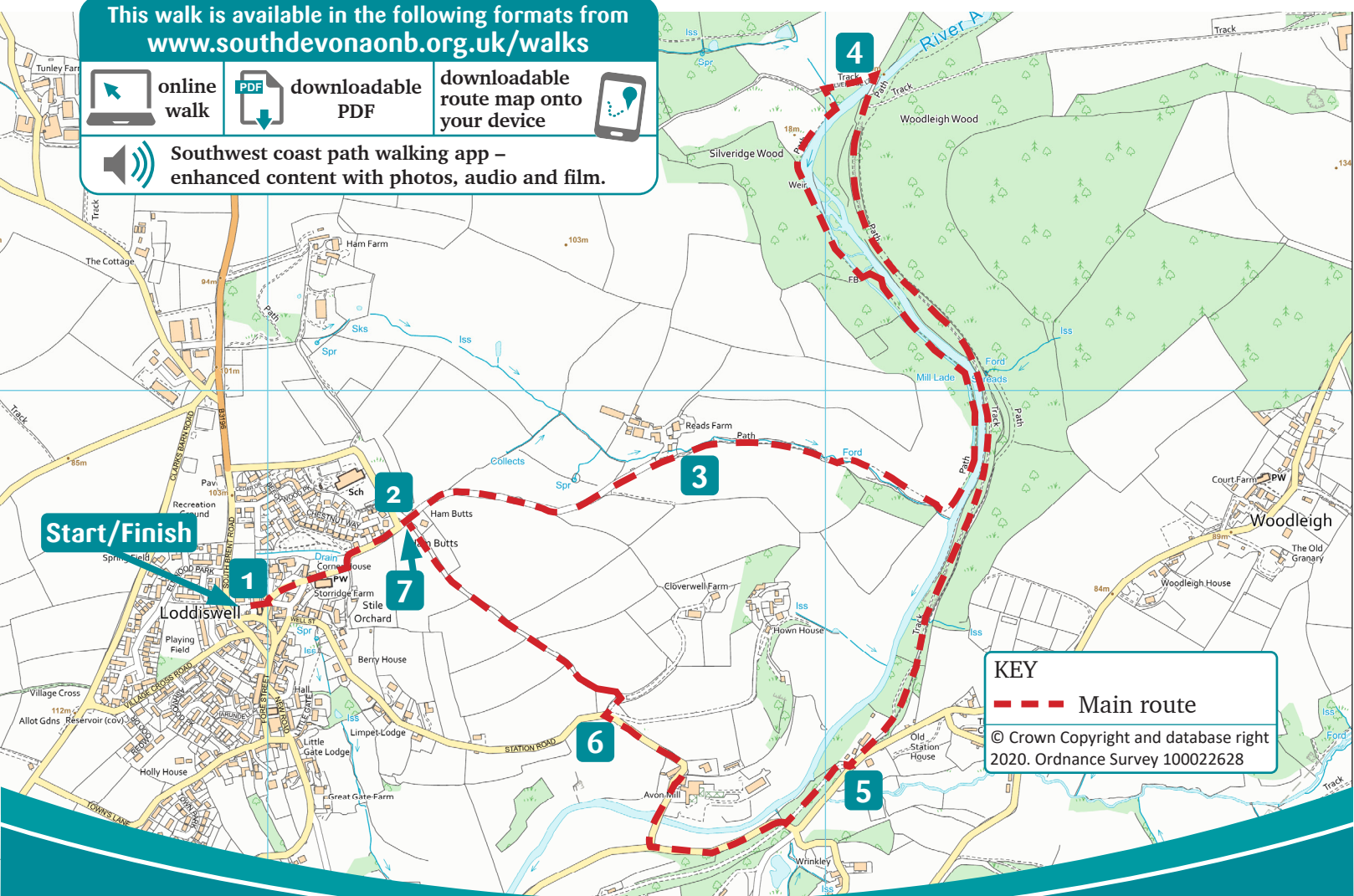


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Directions

- 1** Turn left out of car park and left again. Follow the tarmac lane to the left of the church.
- 2** At Ham Butts go straight on towards Reads Farm. Just before the farm, bear right onto a public footpath.
- 3** Follow the path alongside the stream and cross over on a small wooden bridge and continue to bottom. Turn left to follow the riverside footpath.
- 4** Cross the river at the old railway bridge, and turn right along the path which follows both the route of the old railway line and the river.
- 5** Turn right at the road, by the old railway station. Pass under the railway bridge then turn right onto public footpath along the river. At the road, turn right over the bridge and follow the lane up hill.
- 6** At the second left hand bend turn right into the drive entrance to Cloverwell Farm, then turn left at unmetalled road sign.
- 7** At Ham Butts sign turn left back to village, follow the lane past Church, then right at sign for toilets and right again to return to village car park.

Further Interest

Heritage

The name of Loddiswell derives from 'Lod's Well', after a well in the village belonging centuries ago to somebody with the Saxon name of Lod. The well can still be seen in the village today, rebuilt and refurbished. A chapel was first built in Loddiswell in the years after the Norman Conquest, on lands granted by William the Conqueror. The font is all that remains of that original building, and is housed in the present Church of St Michael and All Angels. The church as it stands today dates from the 14th Century.

Loddiswell was at one time known for the production of ochre, a mineral pigment dug from fields in the area. Found in yellow and red hues, it was commonly used to paint houses.



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The railway line along the banks of the river used to carry the 'Primrose Line' between Kingsbridge and South Brent. The railway had a relatively short life, with the first train running in 1893, and the last only 70 years later. The route passes by the old Loddiswell train station which still retains the distinctive character of a rural branch line station.

Landscape

Woodleigh Wood, alongside which you walk after crossing the railway bridge, is owned and managed by the Woodland Trust. The Trust works to protect, increase, and enhance our native woodlands.

There are five distinct ancient and semi-natural woodlands here and they occupy a special place in the heart of the Woodland Trust as they are earliest acquisitions made by Kenneth Watkins, founder of the Trust, in 1972. In the middle of the 20th century, the woods had been used widely for shooting and there were fears the woods would be felled and converted to conifer. The alarm sparked by these concerns provided the initial drive for purchases in the valley and the setting up of the Woodland Trust. There are now over 1000 woods new and old in its care, for more information visit www.woodland-trust.org.uk

Wildlife

Hazel trees flank the stream between Reads Farm and the river. The trees were traditionally harvested by cutting every few years and then leaving them to regrow – a practice known as coppicing. Strong, supple, and versatile, the wood is often used to make hurdles (a kind of rustic, movable fencing). Jays can be seen and heard along this stretch of the walk. The size of a small crow, the Jay has a harsh, excitable call. A colourful bird, it has white and black markings against pinkish-brown plumage, and a brilliant blue patch on the wing.

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The riverside woods are rich and diverse. Trees include Oak, Beech, Sycamore and Holly. Some Sweet Chestnut also grows here, with its serrated leaves, bristling spiky fruit cases, and characteristic bark forming a spiral design around the trunks of older trees. On the ground here grow the narrow green blades of Wood Sedge, clumped together.

These woods are home to the Dormouse. This is a beautiful and rarely seen creature with golden brown fur, a thick bushy tail and large dark eyes. Their old English name was 'sleeper', and they spend up to three quarters of their lives asleep, cocooned in nests woven from honeysuckle bark and grasses. Daytime sightings of the Otter are rare, but you may see their droppings on stones at the water's edge. This 'spraint' is a small, tarry deposit with a richly musky smell. Birds found close to the water include the Grey Wagtail, an elegant yellow and grey bird. It is often seen on rocks by the water, bobbing its long tail rapidly. The Dipper, another river dweller, is a small plump bird with rich brown plumage and

a white bib. With a characteristic whirring flight low over the water, it also possesses the amazing ability to walk along the riverbed under the surface of the water. Between April and October, the Pond Skater is a common sight, often in groups on slower moving water close to the riverbank. These remarkable insects live suspended on the surface of the water, 'rowing' themselves along with flicks of their long legs. They are covered in fine velvety hairs which stop them falling through into the water below.

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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.