

## Noss Mayo and Revelstoke Drive



### Cliffs and carriageway

The many faces of maritime South Devon in one walk; wild open sea and rugged coast, sheltered estuary, wooded riverbanks, and the waterfront village of Noss Mayo with its chocolate box charm.

**Start:** | Warren car park, Noss Mayo, PL8 1EW

**Distance:** | 4.5 miles

**Difficulty:** | Easy to moderate. 1 stile (can be bypassed)

**Terrain:** | Wide and even coast path; surfaced roads; tracks; optional woodland footpaths

**Parking:** | Warren car park, Noss Mayo, PL8 1EW (National Trust)

**OS map:** | Explorer OL20

**Grid Ref:** | SX 541 466

**Public transport:** | Buses to Noss Mayo (start at point 6) see [www.travelinesw.com](http://www.travelinesw.com)

**Refreshments:** | In Noss Mayo or Newton Ferrers

**Toilets:** | Noss Mayo Hard (end of creek) PL8 1EW

This walk is available in the following formats from [www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walks](http://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walks)



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# South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

## Directions

- 1** Leave the car park through the wooden gate at the far end and join footpath towards the sea. Pass through the five-barred gate and turn right onto the coast path along Revelstoke Carriage Drive.
- 2** Pass in front of Warren Cottage and continue, following the coast path around the headland and into the Yealm Estuary.
- 3** 250m beyond Battery Cottage, either bear left along a footpath through the woods (grade moderate), or continue along the Drive. Both routes join again after a further 700m.
- 4** 20m after the routes meet there is another choice: bear right onto the footpath through Ferry Wood alongside the road (grade moderate), or continue to follow the road itself. The two routes join after another 800m.
- 5** Follow the road through the village. At a sharp left hand uphill bend turn right, by a cottage called Yonda Coombe.
- 6** Go past car park and tennis courts and follow the lane, which leads onto a track up the hill.
- 7** At the road, turn left immediately right into car park.

## Further info

### Heritage

Noss Mayo finds its first historical mention in the 13th Century. The area was then owned by one Matthieu Fitz-Herbert, and the village was known as La Nasse de Matthieu. From that mouthful the modern-day name Noss Mayo evolved.

Much of the walk follows the route of a carriage driveway created on the orders of local landowner Edward Baring, the then Lord Revelstoke, in the 1880s. The Drive forms a nine-mile tour built so that the Lord could entertain guests with a scenic carriage ride and impress them with his property and wealth. He employed local out-of-work fishermen to build the carriageway. It is said that when Revelstoke Drive was finished the labourers looked so dejected at the prospect of unemployment that Edward Baring, in a typically extravagant gesture, ordered them to make



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it three feet wider. Along the drive there are several carriage walls built to prevent the horses from plunging into the sea on sharp bends.

Along the drive, the route passes by Warren Cottage. Once the home of the Membland Estate warrener, it was later rebuilt as a summerhouse and luncheon stop for carriage parties; Lord Revelstoke entertained the future King Edward VII here.

At Gunrows Down you can see the remains of a flag signalling station. This was one of a chain of 25 signal stations, built along the coast at a time when England was at war with France, towards the end of the 18th century. When visibility was good, the system allowed messages to be passed rapidly along the line to the Admiralty and the English fleets moored at Portsmouth and Plymouth. The next ones from here were Maker Heights in Plymouth roughly to the west and Scobbiscombe to the east.

### Landscape

The panoramic views on the carriageway are superb. Looking to the west, you can see from Rame Head, in Cornwall, the Great Mew Stone, Wembury Point, St Werburgh Church and Season Point at the mouth of the Yealm. To the east you can see Burgh Island, Hope Cove and Bolt Tail, across Bigbury Bay.

The area around Warren Cottage was once used for farming rabbits for their meat and skins. The remains of walls built to keep the animals in can still be seen. Off the coast towards Wembury you can see the Great Mew Stone. 'Mew' was an old Devon name for a gull and the rocky island is a haven for many seabirds.

Much of the land passed through on the walk is owned by the National Trust, and is managed for wildlife conservation and to enhance the richness of landscape. The Trust asks that all dogs be kept under close control. For further information on the National Trust visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk).

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## Wildlife

Dolphins and porpoises can sometimes be seen from the coast path section of this walk, along with grey seals. The seals may be seen 'hauled out' on the rocks below, or in the water with just their heads visible above the waves. Around half of the world's population of grey seals live around British coasts.

Cormorants nest over on the Great Mew Stone. You may see their large black shapes perched on rocks, their wings hung half-open, or else flying low over the water with necks outstretched. Their smaller cousins the Shags are also found around the coast here. Both species catch fish in long underwater dives.

The slopes along the cliffs have been grazed by sheep for centuries and annual swaling (burning) of gorse ensures that there's a mix of young and old scrub, with corridors of maritime grassland an ideal habitat for scarce wild flowers such as autumn squill, lady's tresses and slender birds-foot trefoil, as well as common centaury, wild thyme and kidney vetch.

The Shore Dock, an extremely rare species of a familiar type of plant, is found along the coast here. It has greyish green leaves and tiny red flowers. Other rarities growing here include Rock Sea-lavender. The British Isles are home to eight species of Rock Sea-lavender found nowhere else in the world. This hardy little plant has a ray of oval leaves at the base, with lavender florets in delicate masses on the stems above.

In the woods along the estuary younger trees are thinned out to allow more light in. This encourages wildflowers such as Primroses and Violets. It also provides habitat for butterflies such as the brown and cream Speckled Wood, and the orange tip which, as its name suggests, has orange tips to its largely white wings.

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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.