

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

Directions

- 1** Leave the car park, crossing the road over towards the beach and turn right along the promenade.
- 2** At the end of the promenade, turn right beside the apartments, then immediately left up the hill
- 3** Climb the flight of steps on your left, taking the path on your right at the top. (If you detour left at the top you will get a good view across the beach and can see some of the WW2 defences.)
- 4** Turn right down the lane, then left to visit the viewing point on your right.
- 5** After visiting the viewpoint, follow the lane back down to the village square.
- 6** Turn left and cross the road to the Duckery on the Ley, before following the main road back to the right to return to the car park.
- 7** Visit the tank and then the Ley viewing point at the far end of the car park to finish.

Further information

A - Sea defences: The village has long been battered by the sea and survived many terrible storms. In 1951 the sea front was devastated when a large section was undermined by the sea. New walls were built, and these provided some protection, but not enough to prevent massive damage in the 1979 storms. Enormous waves washed right over the roofs of the buildings along here and destroyed much of the sea front. The new sea wall was built in 1980.

B - Fishing: Start Bay is well known for its fishing. Traditionally, crab was caught along the coast at Beesands and Hallsands, whilst here at Torcross they generally fished with nets. Seine nets were used for open water fish such as mackerel, pilchard, grey mullet, sardines and herring. Tuck nets were weighted down at the ends, so that they dragged along the sea bed. These caught ground fish such as plaice, dabs and whiting, used as bait or eaten by the fishing families. They also caught sand eels, prized as bait on longlines. In the 1860s fishermen from France came over to Torcross to buy these eels!



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

C - Coastal defences: From here you can see some of the fortifications built during the second world war. Built into the cliff, using the local stone for camouflage is a pill box, further up are remains of an observation post, ammunitions stores and a covered walkway. 'Pillboxes', were gun emplacements, hastily built from June 1940, to provide a last line of defence to any possible invasion. There were seven basic designs but over 26 variations and were often adapted to use the same inner concrete strengthening, whilst the shell was made of local material. This helped them to blend in. Another great example of this can be seen over this hill in the next cove, where a pill box sits over the outflow from the Ley.

D - Slapton Line: From here you have a really good view of the Slapton Line. Behind the village is Slapton Ley, a nature reserve and good example of serial or ecological succession - the process whereby open water becomes reed bed and eventually, as silt and leaf litter builds up, woodland. The beach itself is a good example of a barrier beach: the material that makes up the beach was pushed up by the rising sea levels between 10000 to 5000 years ago.

E - Village History: For many years there was no village at Torcross, only fishing cellars and workshops. Families lived further back from the coast because of the threat from pirates and to be close to work on the farms. As the fishing industry grew and the Royal Navy kept our seas safe in Tudor times, people started to live on the coast and the village of Torcross came about. It was officially recognised in 1602 when representation was made at the Manorial court at Stokenham.

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

F - Slapton Ley: The Ley, (pronounced 'lee') at 70 hectares (173 acres), is the largest naturally occurring freshwater body in south west England. It is split into two at Slapton Bridge. The Higher Ley is at the northern end and the Lower Ley to the south. Three main streams enter the Ley, the river Gara flows into the Higher Ley and the Start and Stokeley come into the Lower Ley. It is important for overwintering waterfowl, passage migrants and breeding birds. Tens of thousands of swallows use the surrounding reeds as a roosting site before they migrate south in the late summer months.

G - Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve: The Reserve covers a wide range of habitats including an open freshwater lake, the beach, shingle ridge, marshland, ancient Oak woodlands and wetland meadows. Reed beds, marshes and woodland surround the lake. These provide excellent feeding and breeding grounds for a rich and varied wildlife including Cetti's Warbler and Great Crested Grebes. If you are lucky you might catch a glimpse of badgers, otters, dormice and bats. It is home to 250 species of lichen (this is the largest number of lichens in an area of this size anywhere in England) and 2000 species of fungi, 29 of which have been described as new to science.

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.