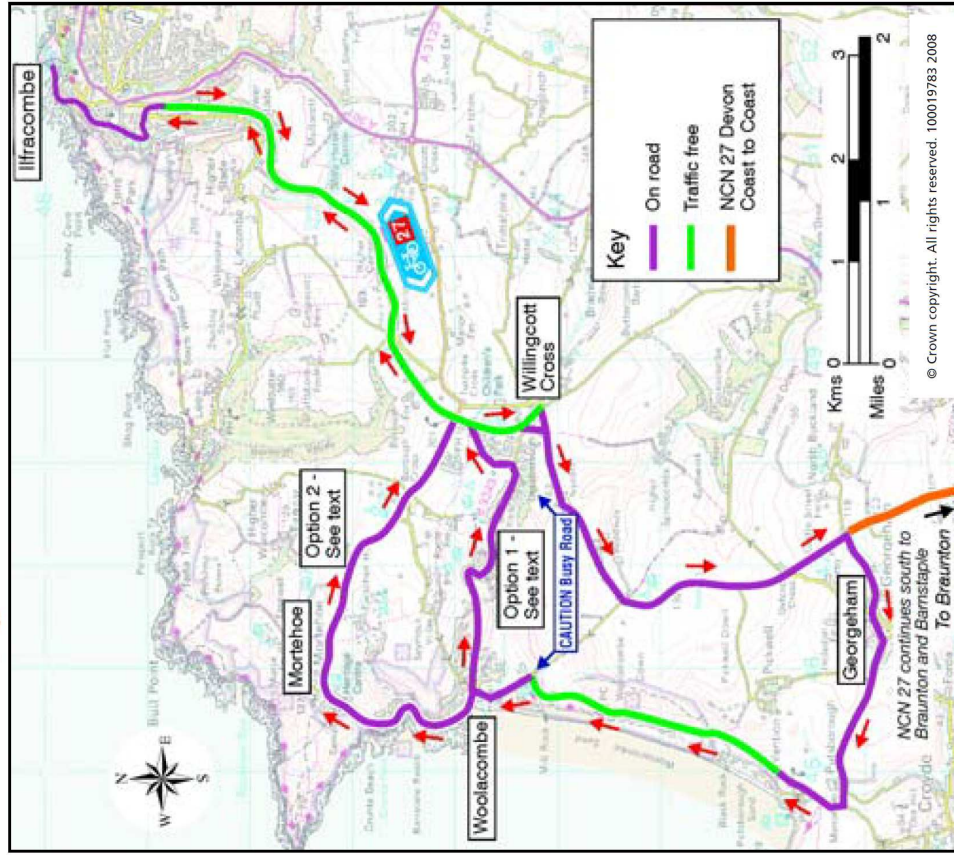


5 Ilfracombe/Woolacombe Circuit



This is a wonderfully scenic circular route on the north Devon coast with a link that allows a start and finish in Ilfracombe. Much of this route is part of the National Cycle Network, Devon Coast to Coast Route 27, and takes in two superb traffic free sections, the National Trust coast route beside the sea at Woolacombe Sands and the former railway path from Ilfracombe to Willingcott Cross. The remainder is along attractive minor roads through quiet villages and rolling Devon farmland.

From Ilfracombe start at the Quay and follow the National Cycle Network (NCN) 'Devon Coast to Coast' Route 27 southbound out of the town. Cycle past the splendid Landmark Theatre on the shoreline and around the edge of the town centre. Although initially there are one or two short climbs you soon join the former railway path heading out of town. The gradients are cycle friendly and this excellent traffic free path leads to Willingcott Cross (21/2miles/4kms). Your return will of course be a gentle downhill!



View towards Croyde Bay

On reaching Willingcott Cross follow the NCN27 signs and route map towards Georgeham along the ridge road with great views of the surrounding farmland; this is real Devon countryside.

There are no large settlements until you reach Georgeham so you may want to stock up with drinks (and a snack if you think you'll need it). Georgeham, where Henry Williamson lived whilst he wrote Tarka the Otter, provides a useful halfway point before you head for the coast, again down those traditionally attractive Devon lanes.

The on-road route from Georgeham to Woolacombe takes you along a winding narrow country lane to the sea, which can be busy in summer. It follows the NCN Route which is signed to the coast and along the path on National Trust land to Woolacombe. The path is not standard NCN width in places but can be ridden comfortably by all types of bicycle. The views over Woolacombe Sands are superb and only those in a real hurry will not want to stop here and enjoy this endless stretch of golden sand, renowned for its warm water, good surf and consistent winning of the coveted European Blue Flag Award.

From Woolacombe head back choosing one of two on-road routes. Option 1 uses the more direct but busier B3243 to Willingcott Cross. Option 2 takes the longer but quieter minor road via the ancient village of Mortehoe, mentioned in the Domesday Book. Both these roads have some hills to climb before picking up the traffic free disused railway path back down to Ilfracombe. If you choose Option 1 you will need to fork right after about 1 1/2 miles/2.5 km on the minor road to Hartnolls and then left after a further 1/2 mile/1km to Willingcott Cross where you can rejoin the traffic free cycleway to Ilfracombe. Option 2 takes you along the NCN route following the signs to Mortehoe and then uphill towards Turnpike Cross. At Turnpike Cross you can rejoin the cycleway and head

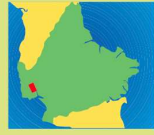
back to Ilfracombe. You are sure to have enjoyed a great day out in spectacular north Devon.

Facts & Features

Route Distance: 15miles/24km
(Traffic free sections 51/2miles/9km;
on-road sections 91/2miles/15km)

Information: (Unless otherwise stated, see page 24 to order)

Devon Coast to Coast route map (DP72)
The Ultimate Devon Coast to Coast Guide £5.95
from www.sustrans.org.uk



Maps

O.S. Maps:

- Explorer (1:25,000)
No. 139 Bideford, Ilfracombe and Barnstaple
- Landranger (1:50,000)
No. 180 Barnstaple and Ilfracombe
- Tarka Trail Cycle Map

Places to Visit:

- Ilfracombe Quay
- Tunnels Beaches, Ilfracombe
- Landmark Theatre, Ilfracombe
- Willingcott Children's Park
- Woolacombe Sands
- South West Coast Path

Facilities:

- Refreshments and shops at Ilfracombe,
- Georgeham, Woolacombe and Mortehoe
- Cycle shop at Ilfracombe
- Tarka Trail Cycle Map