

## **A Shorter Devon Coast to Coast Walk**

Devon has its own Coast to Coast walk, stretching some 117 miles/188 km between the north and south coasts. Most of its length follows the Two Moors Way, but at its southern end it follows one arm of the Erme-Plym Trail, between Wembury and Ivybridge.

This circular walk uses the Erme-Plym Trail from Wembury, then follows the Trail's other arm towards Plymouth. It branches off this route to meet the coast at one of Devon's short lengths of west-facing coast, at Bovisand. The walk then follows the South West Coast Path back to Wembury.

### **Fact File**

There are regular bus services to Wembury from Plymouth. There is also a slightly less frequent service between Plymouth and Heybrook Bay via Staddiscombe (both on the walk) and a seasonal service between Plymouth and Bovisand. For timetable details contact Traveline on 0870 608 2 608 or visit [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk).

**Walk Length:** 12km/7.5 miles: there is a total of 10 stiles, of which 4 are easy one-step squeeze stiles; there is one short descent and climb of 25m/80ft each.

**Facilities:** Wembury Beach - car park, toilets, café; Staddiscombe - shop; Bovisand - car park, toilets, café/shop (seasonal); Heybrook Bay - pub.

### **The Walk**

**Start the walk at the entrance to the beach at Wembury, next to the Old Mill café and by the public toilets.**

This is adjacent to the beach car park. If arriving by bus, walk down the lane and then the footpath signed to the beach.

The café was formerly a water-powered corn mill. The sitting area outside the café is the old wheel pit and old millstones are used as tables.

**Walk down the steps towards the beach, then turn right along the path and over the footbridge.**

Just over the footbridge is the start and finish of Devon's Coast to Coast walk. There is an information board as well as a signpost indicating that it is 117 miles to Lynmouth. Our Coast to Coast walk today is rather shorter.

It is surprising that this attractive area was the subject of plans in the early 20th century to create an enormous harbour which it was hoped would rival Liverpool and Southampton as a passenger port. Fortunately for the local environment, the scheme never progressed.

**Go through the gate and follow the Coast to Coast route next to the stream. Follow the path up the valley to a lane. Turn left, then bear left up the concrete track, following the Coast to Coast Waymark. Bear left off the driveway onto a rougher track. After a short distance go past the wooden barriers onto a footpath ahead.**

The lower parallel route is a bridleway and is often rather muddy. The higher footpath route continues up the Churchwood Valley, which was planned to be the route of the railway access to the dock scheme mentioned earlier.

**Continue on the path to arrive at a lane. Turn left, downhill, then at the bottom turn right along a track signed as the Erme-Plym Trail and a footpath to Train Road.**

This is Ford, the location of the family cottage of the Galsworthy family. John Galsworthy, author of "The Forsyte Saga", often visited here and Wembury and its church is used as the description of one of the Saga locations, though placed in Dorset in the book.

**After the second house follow the path ahead uphill through the bushes. Where it divides, take the right fork and continue uphill. Emerging at a field, follow the right hand edge ahead to the top of the field. Continue ahead across the next field in the same direction to a gap in the hedge. Bear slightly right to cross the next field.**

On the right can be seen Knighton. An ancient settlement in its own right, it was first recorded in 1281, although it is almost certainly earlier in origin. It now forms a residential part of Wembury and is the location of the village school, pub and shop.

**Follow the obvious path to another gap. Bear right across the next field to the bottom corner and emerge onto a lane. Turn left here. Follow the lane uphill. After it levels out watch for a stile to a footpath on the left, signed Erme-Plym Trail to Staddiscombe.**

Devon's Coast to Coast follows the Erme-Plym Trail from Wembury to Ivybridge, but there is a western arm which branches off to the edge of Plymouth. This is where that arm leaves the Coast to Coast route, and our walk now follows that branch.

**Cross the stile then bear diagonally across the field to the hedge on the far side.**

There are extensive all round views from here, to the sea on the left and Dartmoor on the right. Ahead and left on the edge of the wooded valley can be seen Langdon Court. It was one of the four Domesday manors of Wembury. The present house may itself have medieval origins, though it is largely Elizabethan, remodelled in the 18th century. It is now a hotel.

**Follow the hedge to the corner of the field, cross the stile and continue ahead. In the next corner cross another stile and bear left over the field down into the valley. Cross the footbridge and stiles at the bottom and then climb the opposite side, bearing slightly left. A short steep climb leads to a stile into a field. Continue uphill in the same direction. At the top cross another stile into a fenced green path and follow this to arrive at the village of Staddiscombe.**

This once quite remote settlement is now on the outer edge of Plymouth. There is a shop just off to the right and buses to and from Plymouth city centre.

**Cross over to go down the lane opposite (Staddiscombe Road). Follow the lane round to the left to arrive at a road junction.**

At this point the Erme-Plym Trail climbs the steps on the right on its journey towards Plymouth. Our walk now leaves that Trail and heads for the "west coast" at Bovisand.

**Continue ahead along the road (Hooe Lane) and almost immediately bear left along the narrower lane. This lane descends to a junction. Go ahead here, past the gate and down the track.**

This is Bovisand Lane, once the only road access to what would have been a remote cove. It is a very attractive walk, the track following alongside the stream which has cut the valley to Bovisand (and here and there, actually in shallow lengths of the stream).

**Nearing the coast, the track passes a caravan site and arrives at a surfaced lane. On the left is the imposing building of Bovisand Lodge.**

The Lodge was built in the early 1800s. It was a lodge for the extensive Kitley estate, based near Yealmpton but once stretching this far. It was used as a base by John Rennie and Joseph Whidbey, the engineers building Plymouth Breakwater during the first half of the 19th century.

**Just past the Lodge, leave the surfaced lane for a footpath heading ahead on the left, below the lane. This path soon leads to Bovisand Bay and the South West Coast Path.**

There is a seasonal café and a bus stop for Plymouth up the hill to the right.

**From here back to Wembury the walk follows the Coast Path. Follow the acorn signs and waymarks. Turn left behind the Bay and follow the path at the back of the beach and up the hill to Bovisand Park holiday estate.**

There are views now opening out to the right of the mouth of Plymouth Sound, with the famous breakwater being seen end on. This took much of the first half of the 19th century to complete, from 1812 until 1841 and was, and still is, important in sheltering the Sound from southerly winds and making it a safe anchorage for naval shipping.

**Pass the shop and café and continue to the end of the holiday estate.**

As the angle changes, the view to the right extends further up Plymouth Sound to include Devonport, Drake's Island, Millbay Docks and the western end of the Hoe.

**Follow the Coast Path along the low cliffs.**

Out to sea on the skyline, if it is clear, can be seen the needle shape of the Eddystone Lighthouse - if it's really clear, you may also be able to make out the stump of an earlier lighthouse alongside. The lighthouse is 14 miles/22 km offshore on a largely submerged reef. The first light was built in 1696 but swept away seven years later. A replacement was built and then in 1759 this was in turn replaced. This light was eventually dismantled in 1881, leaving a low stump which may just be visible from the Coast Path. The lighthouse itself was re-erected on Plymouth Hoe, where it still stands today, known as Smeaton's Tower, after the engineer who designed it. The current lighthouse dates from 1881.

**Keep on the Coast Path to arrive at Heybrook Bay. Turn right at the road, cross the brook and climb the other side of the bay to the right. Bear right at the end of the houses on the Coast Path.**

Soon the path passes a stone engraved with an anchor. Originally this indicated the boundary of naval land, later MOD land. The walk is now entering what was until recently the naval shore base of HMS Cambridge on Wembury Point. This was a naval gunnery school, guns being mounted inland of the present path and targeted out to sea. The area is currently being restored by the National Trust, which purchased the land with the help of public subscriptions.

A prominent feature offshore from Wembury Point is the Great Mew Stone. Its name derived from the Saxon word for "gull", the island was for a while used as a prison, a criminal being sentenced there for seven years in the 1700s. Later, Sam Wakeham, a rabbit warrener, lived there and supplied rabbit meat to Langdon Court.

Leaving the Point behind, Wembury Church comes into view ahead. It is thought there was a church of some sort here at the time of King Alfred in the 9th century, but the present building is largely 14th and 15th century. Historically, its tower was an important landmark for sailors approaching Plymouth.

**Follow the Coast Path along the low cliffs to arrive back at Wembury beach.**

### **Further Information**

A leaflet pack on the Erme-Plym Trail is available from local Tourist Information Centres price £2. Alternatively, it may be obtained from the Discover Devon Information Service, Westacott Road, Barnstaple, EX32 8AW, telephone 0870 608 5531, price £3.50 including post and packing (cheques payable to Devon County Council). Quote reference DTY/DP40.

A range of information is available on the South West Coast Path. Especially useful is the guidebook and accommodation list produced by the South West Coast Path Association, price £6 and available locally. It may also be obtained for the address above, price £7.50 including post and packing. Quote reference DTY/DP33.

For further local information, there is a National Trust leaflet on walks between Wembury and Ayrmer Cove, available from National Trust outlets price £0.75. There is also a pack of five guides to the Coast Path between Plymouth and Hope Cove, produced by South Hams District Council price £2.40 and a book "Discovering Wembury" by the Local History Society which includes walks, price £4.95. These publications may be bought locally.

For information on the wider network of walking routes in Devon, obtain the free brochure "Discover Devon - Walking" from local Tourist Information Centres or the above address. Alternatively, visit the website [www.discoverdevon.com](http://www.discoverdevon.com) which has all the walks information and order form.

OS maps for this walk:

Explorer (1:25,000 scale): no. OL20 South Devon;  
Landranger (1:50,000 scale): no. 201 Plymouth and Launceston