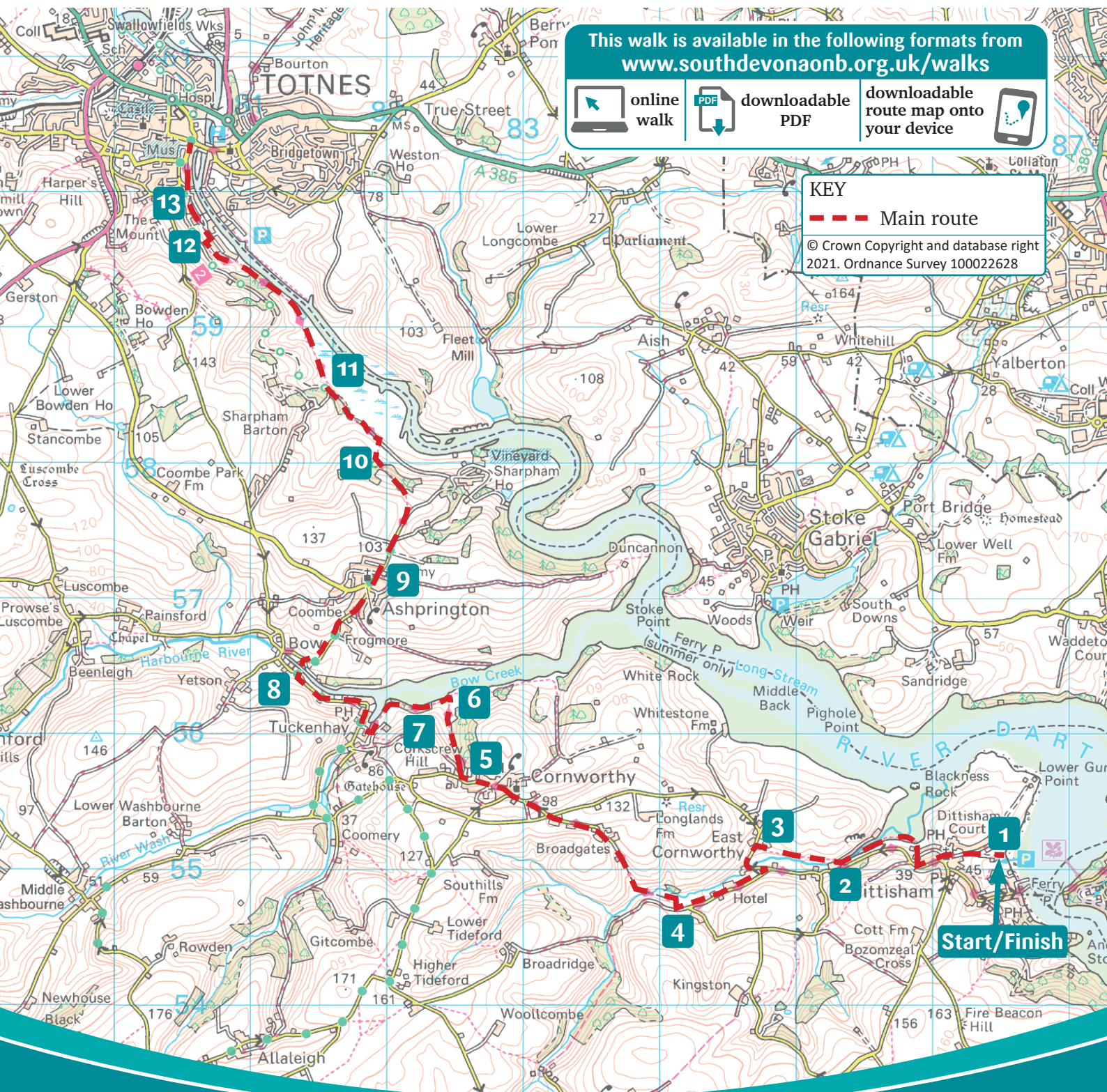


Dittisham to Totnes - The Dart Valley Trail



A linear walk following the Dart upstream -
link with The Dartmouth Greenway Round walk to complete the whole Dart Valley Trail



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

- online walk
- downloadable PDF
- downloadable route map onto your device

KEY
- - - Main route
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South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

A perfect, gentle day's journey, this walk links village to nestled, unspoilt village as it follows the silver ribbon of the Dart estuary through Devon's rolling hills.

Start: | Dittisham Ham car park, Dittisham TQ6 0HS

Distance: | 8 miles

Difficulty: | Moderate 9 stiles; 6 flights of steps; 2 steep ascents.

Terrain: | Footpaths, fairly even underfoot, occasional mud in wet weather; surfaced roads.

Parking: | Dittisham Ham car park, Dittisham TQ6 0HS

OS map: | Explorer 0L20

Grid Ref: | SX 866 551

Public transport:

Ferry from Dartmouth to Dittisham and from Greenway to Dittisham – see ferry details on www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walks. Return buses from Totnes to Dartmouth see www.travelinesw.com

Refreshments: In Dittisham and Totnes

Toilets: | Public toilets at Dittisham Ham car park. Or Totnes - just off Coronation Rd, opposite Morrisons or underneath the Civic Hall steps in the market place.

Directions

- 1 Walk back up road to the village. At t-junction just past church turn right. (If coming to Dittisham by ferry, walk up through the village. Turn right at the t-junction and join the route by the church). Follow road down to Dittisham Mill Creek.
- 2 Turn right just before Old Mill over wooden footbridges onto public footpath leading along field edges and old green lane.



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

- 3 Turn left at the road. Climb hill after the bridge and take first right signed 'Coombe'.
- 4 Go straight on at Barberry Cross then turn right down green lane signed 'Broadgates Lane'. Follow lane and then road, and go straight over at Longland Cross. Turn right at junction and walk down through the village of Cornworthy.
- 5 Just past Court Prior Farm turn right along footpath in front of cottages. Turn right into Charleycombe Wood and take the path ahead dropping down through the valley. Cross the footbridge and turn downhill through kissing gate onto public footpath.
- 6 When you reach the fingerpost, turn left signed 'Tuckenhay ½m'. Follow steps to left.
- 7 Bear left through next kissing gate along woodland path. At road turn right, and then right again over the bridge to follow road through Tuckenhay and along Bow Creek.
- 8 After 500m turn sharp right down steps and over stepping stones, then bear left up track and turn right at road. (At high tide continue along road, turn right over bridge by Waterman's Arms, and right again signed for Ashprington and Totnes).
- 9 Follow road up through Ashprington, past church on left and along Sharpham Drive. At the 'Sharpham' pillars, bear left along path.
- 10 As you emerge from the woods, turn right over stile and down path through field. Turn left along track at the bottom.
- 11 As the path rises and curves left, branch off right at the 'Public Footpath' fingerpost down and across field.
- 12 Path follows river through woods and fields to emerge at the wharf in Totnes. Bear left and follow the path up behind the houses. At the road turn right then left, take the path on your right just past the Steam Packet Inn to take the riverside path.
- 13 Where path rejoins road, bear right and continue to The Plains.

Further Interest

Heritage

Dittisham takes its name from a Saxon chief named Deedas, who settled here after the Saxon invasion of Devon around 600 AD. The village once boasted seven inns and cider houses, and is famous for the Dittisham Plum, a variety peculiar to the village. The plum is said to have arrived from the sea, a cargo of them having been dumped here by a ship's captain who had been unable to sell them. In the heyday of the Dittisham plum orchards, people would travel from far and wide to stock up on the rare and delicious fruit each year. Beyond Dittisham Mill Creek, the old mill down in the valley to the left of the footpath is Brambletorre Mill. Although now a residential property, you can still see what is said to be the largest waterwheel in Devon sandwiched between the buildings.

The tower of St Peter's Church, Cornworthy, with its three 'layers' one upon another, is of a style unique to Devon. The church is also known for its roodscreen, Georgian pulpit, and the font, the only surviving relic of the original Norman church which stood on this site.

Tuckenhay did not evolve over centuries like most Devon villages. It was established in 1806 by one Abraham Tucker as an industrial centre. The old paper mill can still be seen – look back up to the left near to where the path emerges on to the road. The distinctive clock on the building was brought from Totnes Parish Church. The mill processed rags, which were 'thrashed' into fibres, bleached, boiled, and finally hand-made into paper. The mill was once a very successful enterprise, producing the highest quality paper, used for artist's paper and bank notes the world over. Aside from the mill, Tuckenhay also had a cider factory, lime kilns, and bustling quays. These days the creeks have silted up, and the mills, quays, and warehouses have been converted.

Ashprington developed as an estate village for Sharpham House. It is because of this that many of the stone built houses are in such a similar architectural style, with their diamond shaped windowpanes. The 19th century squire, Richard Durant, had such influence that in 1871 he began to impose fines for swearing in public places. Penalties ranged from one shilling for a labourer to five shillings for a gentleman!

The ruined building on the exposed hill across the estuary, seen as you walk along the waterside between Sharpham and the wharf at Totnes, was called appropriately Windwhistle Cottage. The last owner of this atmospheric ruin is recorded as having nineteen children.

As you leave the wharf you enter 'Little Totnes', one of the oldest parts of the town. Originally a tidal marsh, the area around the Steam Packet Inn was in Victorian times an elegant 'pleasure ground', complete with bowling green. The quay itself is much older and was once the site of the 11th Century St Peter's Chapel, used by monks from Totnes Priory. The broad street of The Plains where the walk ends was reclaimed from marshland in the 15th century. The shops and residential properties here were once warehouses storing grain, apples, bacon, cider and ale. Even the old Methodist chapel on the right became a cider store after it closed its doors to worshippers in 1901.

Wildlife

The estuary is rich in birdlife, including heron, swan, mallard, and the white, orange and black shelduck. The Canada goose is found here, with its distinctive black head and neck, and white 'chinstrap' in between.

You may also see the large, black, ungainly-looking shapes of cormorants, sitting low in the water or flying low over the water. Unusually, cormorants do not have naturally waterproof feathers, and so you may also see them perched on branches or rocks with their wings hung out to dry by their sides.

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

The brilliantly vivid kingfisher is most often seen as a tiny whirring flash of blue and orange. As well as being perhaps our most spectacularly colourful bird, the kingfisher also has a reputation as one of the smelliest. Its nest holes in particular are said to have a strong pong of rotting fish.

Atlantic salmon are still caught commercially on the Dart, although these days in strictly limited quantities. Small boats catch the fish using netting techniques that have changed little for centuries. The salmon is a handsome, silvery fish with varying colourings and blotches. Salmon hatched from eggs in the upper reaches of the Dart and its tributary streams head off to their feeding grounds off the coast of Greenland. Incredibly, they later find their way back across the vastness of the ocean to spawn in the very same spot where they first hatched.

The woodland through which you walk after branching off the Sharpham drive is carpeted with bluebells and primroses in spring. Along with mixed broadleaved trees are larches, Britain's only deciduous conifer. Its tufted needles turn a beautiful golden colour in the autumn, and its heartwood makes dense and durable timber.

Reed warblers breed in the reedbeds you pass on the estuary south of Totnes. Small brown birds with white throats and sharp slim beaks, reed warblers weave nests suspended from several reed stems.

