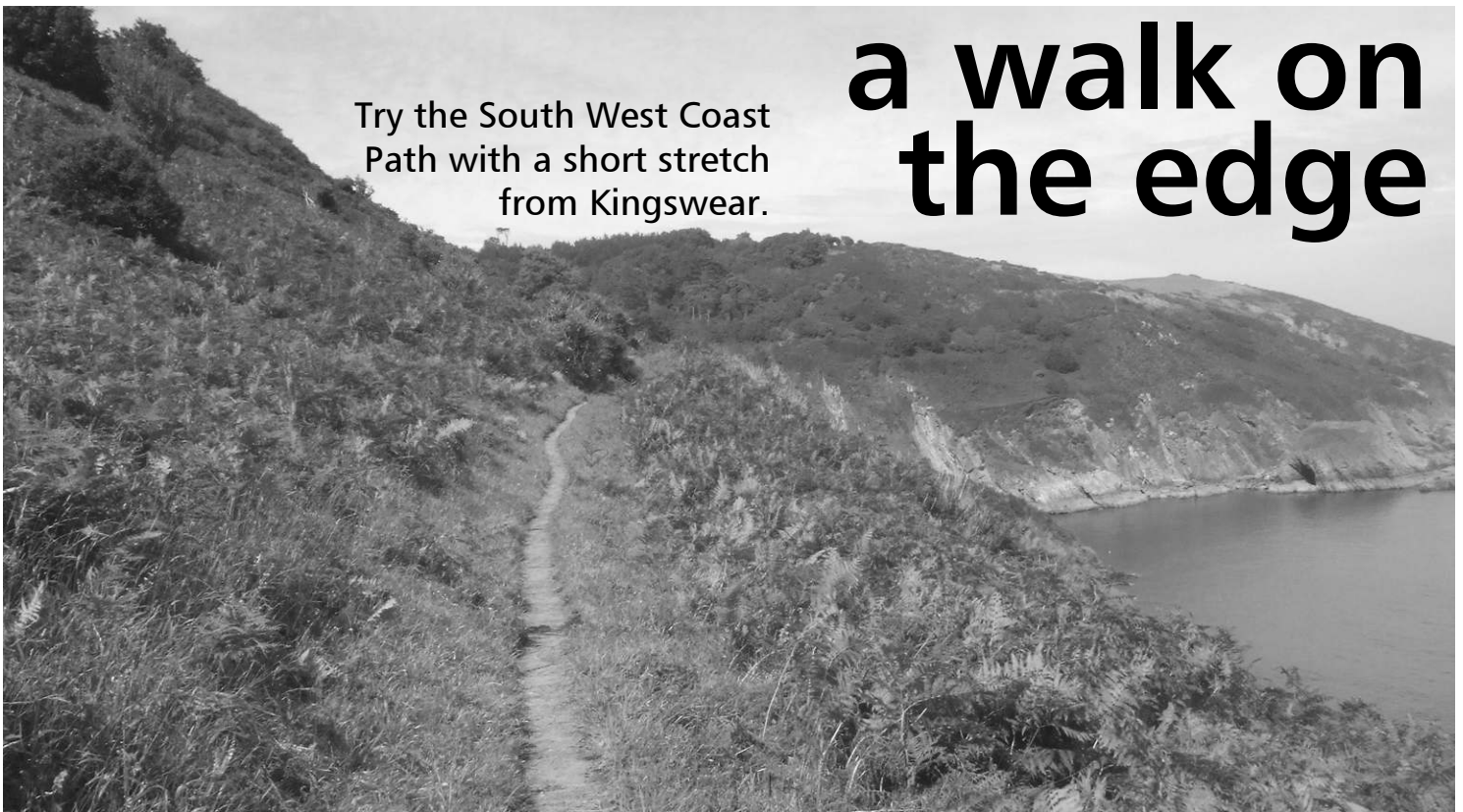


Try the South West Coast Path with a short stretch from Kingswear.

# a walk on the edge



If you don't want to walk the full 630 miles of the South West Coast Path (SWCP), then why not try this short section of path, which is a good sample of the track. The 5-mile (8km) route takes you from Kingswear, which you can reach by bus or by steam train from Paignton, to Coleton Fishacre, an attractive National Trust house and garden with an award-winning café.

The coast path and other footpaths are clearly marked all the way along the route by signposts; the coast path itself is marked by an acorn symbol. Between Kingswear and Froward Point the path is reasonably wide, but there are several steep sections with steps. Beyond Froward point the path is narrow and exposed, but the views are excellent. You should wear sturdy shoes with good grip, and take care as rocky paths can be slippery even in dry weather.

Our route starts opposite the railway station in Kingswear, which is also close to the passenger ferry to and from Dartmouth. Go through the arch past the public lavatories and turn left up the steps. At the top, turn right and walk along the road. As you continue onwards you will pass through lush subtropical plants; you can even find banana plants growing by the road in sheltered places. As you walk further on the houses become less and less frequent until the public road becomes a private track through the woods

alongside the cliffs.

Across the River Dart you will be able to see Dartmouth Castle from time to time. The path passes above its twin, Kingswear Castle (now a private house), a long way below at the water's edge.

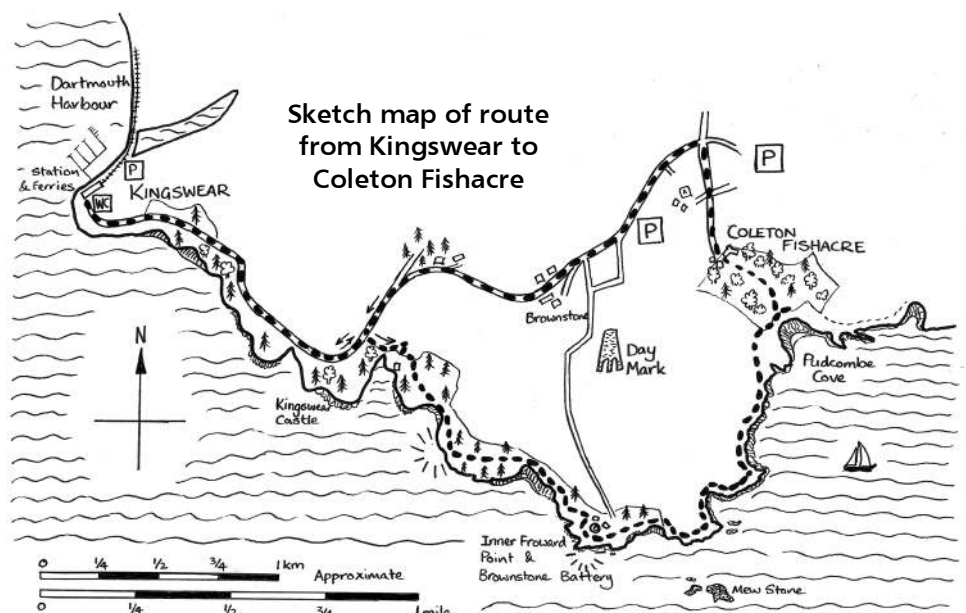
You will come to a signpost on the right where the SWCP (signposted 'Froward Point') leaves the road. Go down the steps, across a lane and down some more steps. Turn right along a hard road, then left to avoid Warren House and climb 84 steps beside the trees.

The path now goes into the wood along a wide track. There is a Mediterranean feel about this section of path, with its

pine woods tumbling down to small beaches. The trees provide welcome shade on hot days, but there are good viewpoints where you can look out to sea and back towards Dartmouth Harbour. The path through the woods lasts for about a mile (1.6km).

At Inner Froward Point you will find a collection of old buildings. This was the site of Brownstone Battery, a World War II defence post guarding Dartmouth and the English Channel, which once had two huge guns manned by 230 soldiers. Now only a couple of volunteers keep watch over ships passing the coast from the Coast Watch lookout building.

The path divides here, and you should



take the path to 'Brixham'. The path becomes narrow and steep and runs close to the cliffs, so take care. Follow the path as it wanders up and down along the cliffs. After about ¾ mile (1km) a sign points to the left to 'Car Parks'; if you wish to avoid Coleton Fishacre, use this path to go around the property; otherwise continue down into the valley and into the woods.

At the bottom of the valley is a gate on the left which leads into Coleton Fishacre gardens; the SWCP carries on along the cliffs. Go through the gate into the gardens, which are rich with lush plants and meandering pathways. The house, café and ticket office (where you will need to pay!) are at the top.

From Coleton Fishacre car park, go up the road (labelled 'Exit'), past Coleton Farm and on to a main road junction. Turn left here. After about 200 metres, pass a car park on your left & continue down the lane towards Kingswear. The lane passes cottages at Brownstone and becomes a rough track with (slippery) exposed rocks. Follow this track to the lane past Home Farm and, about a mile (1.6km) from the car park, you will reach the steps (on the left) where earlier you turned off the road towards Froward Point. Now follow the road back towards Kingswear.

To get to Kingswear:

**Bus:** Take Stagecoach bus 120 from Paignton bus station to Kingswear. Return ticket £4.35, or included in weekly bus passes sold at LAL Torbay. Service runs once an hour.

**Train:** Take the Paignton & Dartmouth Steam Railway to Kingswear. Return Ticket £7.40

Refreshments & WCs:

Kingswear and Coleton Fishacre

Map:

Ordnance Survey Explorer OL20, about £8 from bookshops, or print map from [www.multimap.com](http://www.multimap.com) (follow link from [www.laltorbay.co.uk/stoppress](http://www.laltorbay.co.uk/stoppress)).



Coleton Fishacre is a delightful country house with beautiful gardens, set in a steep valley with dramatic coastal views. It is not a typical National Trust house, being neither very old nor very grand. Instead it is a perfectly formed place for relaxed, modern living and weekend entertaining.

Coleton Fishacre was built between 1923 and 1926 for Rupert D'Oyly Carte, the rich son of a man who had backed the well-know playwrights Gilbert & Sullivan and who owned both the *Savoy* and *Claridge's* hotels in London. Rupert improved his father's business empire and was at the cutting-edge of

hospitality in the 1920s. His understanding of modern needs and fashions was translated into the designs for Coleton Fishacre by Oswald Milne, an architect who had been assistant to the pioneer of the 'arts and crafts' style of house, Edwin Lutyens. The architect's training in simple designs backed-up by high quality craftsmanship, combined with the client's desire for a modern, comfortable interior, have given Coleton Fishacre a welcoming feel that is surprisingly stylish even today.

The valley and coastal setting were the main driving forces behind the creation of Coleton Fishacre, which was definitely a place to indulge in outdoor activities. The valley shelters a stunning garden to be created and the coast gives beautiful views to the property. The house has a garden room open on one side where the family could dine outside on fine evenings, and a bathing hut and tidal swimming pool were built in the cove below the property.

The gardens at Coleton Fishacre are protected from strong winds by tall trees, which were planted before the house was finished. The sea keeps the air temperature high in winter and makes the garden fairly humid, which allows plants from as far away as New Zealand to grow happily. The gardens surround a stream which has been ►►



« channelled through ponds in which water lilies bloom and beside which Gunnera – giant bog-loving plants from Brazil – rise up like alien weeds. The rich mix of plants makes the garden attractive from early spring to autumn, as camellias and magnolias give way to hydrangeas and exotic flowers, before the autumn brings out bright berries and turns the leaves in the garden to a stunning crimson display. There are lots of small paths which wander through the garden, and a lovely gazebo with views right across the garden to the sea.

In contrast to the lush extravagance of the gardens, Coleton Fishacre house is rather plain, but the stonework and roof are perfectly finished and hint at the quality of craftsmanship inside. None of the rooms are grand, but are designed to give the maximum sense of space.

The Library features a wind dial, which shows the direction of the wind outside, and an interesting painted map of Coleton and the surrounding area; look carefully and you can see Rupert D'Oyly Carte sitting on the hill south of Coleton Fishacre with a Dalmatian dog, and farmers in their fields following long-

forgotten agricultural methods.

The grandest room is the Saloon, a 12-metre (40-foot) room which one enters down a theatrical set of semi-circular steps. The room features a grand piano, which is played on some days, unique and original rugs, and is furnished with typical 1930s furniture. The Saloon is built at an angle to the rest of the house, which gives it excellent views over the garden.

Elsewhere in the house the emphasis is on quality and comfort. Seven bedrooms feature tiles around the washbasins from the Savoy hotel. The bathroom features amusing hand-painted tiles showing a range of country hobbies, both ancient and modern. Lady Dorothy's bedroom has been recreated as it was in 1930. Away from the main building, a 'Motor House' (garage) was built for D'Oyly Carte's Bentley.

Coleton Fishacre welcomed family and party guests from far and wide. Today it welcomes the tourist, and it is well worth taking the time to explore this delightfully English gem hidden deep in the countryside.



Coleton Fishacre is open 11.00 – 16.30 Wednesday to Sunday until 28th October, and on Mondays until 20th August.

Admission to the gardens costs £5.90, to the house and gardens £6.40. If you travel to the property by bus or train and foot, ask for a 'green-ways' reduction.

The nearest bus route is Stagecoach 120 from Paignton bus station, which passes 1½ miles (2.4km) from the house.

