



Coastal walk from Paignton to Brixham

Level
B2
Intermediate

The South West Coast Path is Britain's longest footpath, stretching from Minehead in Somerset to Poole in Dorset - a total of 700 miles. If you don't feel like walking the whole route, you can get a taste of the path between Paignton and Brixham.

Although the path is easy to follow, the route has steep sections, lots of steps and can be slippery - so wear good shoes and take care.

You can start anywhere on Paignton's beaches and walk towards Goodrington Sands - or walk down Braeside Road and across Young's Park (1) if you are starting from Hunters Lodge. Walk south along Goodrington

Sands, which will be full of families enjoying the sand or taking shelter in the colourful beach huts on a hot summer's day. You will pass Quaywest water park - which is the largest in Britain - and the popular Inn on the Quay.

At the end of the beach (2) you go under the railway line, and then turn left onto the coast path proper, signposted "Coast path to Broadsands". The path climbs up beside the railway line, then drops steeply down steps before climbing again up Sugar Loaf hill above Saltern Cove (3); you can go down to the cove if you wish but the main path carries straight on.

You will soon see Broadsands beach

straight ahead of you across the railway line; do not be fooled by the paths on the other side of the track, because the coast path follows the railway line inland, climbing uphill before dropping down again to a road by a railway viaduct (4). Here you should turn left under the viaduct down the tarmac path to Broadsands.

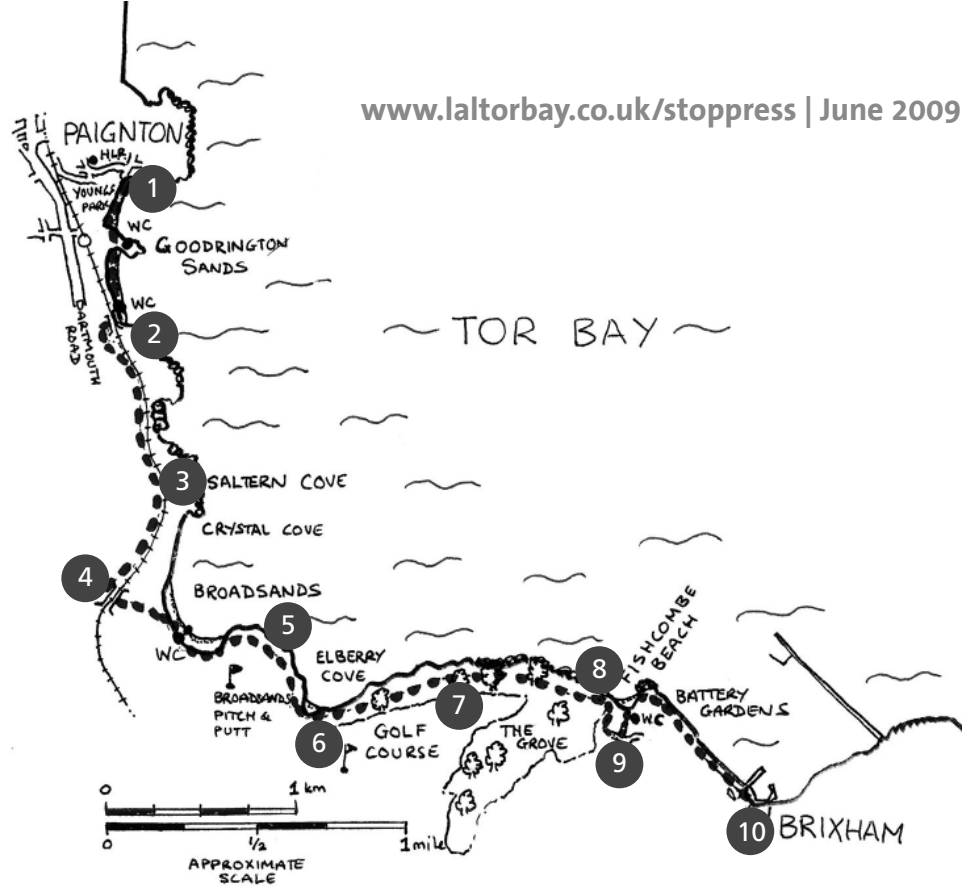
Broadsands, like Goodrington, is very popular with families and has more beach huts and a large cafe. You can hire kayaks here too if you fancy a paddle on the water. The path goes along the seafront and then turns left at the end of the beach. Now you reach a grassy area (5) and follow the cliff round to a small beach called Elberry

Cove (6). Unlike the beaches so far, Elberry's beach is made of pebbles, not sand, and the cove is a favourite place for waterskiing and other water sports. A strict one-way system is operated in the cove to stop the waterskiers getting tangled up in each other's ropes!

On the far side of the cove is a small building, which looks like it might have been a small castle: it was actually a bath house, built for Lord Churston in the eighteenth century so that he could enjoy the refreshing waters of the cove in private.

The path leaves the beach close to the bath house and turns right up the steps. "More steps?" I hear you moan - but don't worry, because these are shaded by trees and cool even on a sunny day. The steps take you up into Marridge Woods (7), sandwiched between Churston Golf Course and the sea. These woods are part of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and are full of wildlife. You may be lucky enough to see deer among the trees. These woods join the Grove, which stretch west up the valley.

This part of Torbay is unusual, because the rocks under your feet are not the red sandstones which give our cliffs and beaches their distinctive colour, nor the slates which make up much of south Devon. Instead, this area is made of limestone, a very popular building material in Victorian times. These woods were once home to busy



The coast path runs along the esplanade at Goodrington Sands.



Get out on the water at Broadsands.



Between Goodrington and Broadsands the coast path is just inland of the Paignton & Dartmouth Steam Railway.



Broadsands beach is another popular beach midway between Paignton and Brixham.

quarries, where much of the stone to build Torbay was cut, and also to lime kilns where the local rocks were heated to make quicklime, an essential building 'glue' and agricultural fertiliser. You can head inland to explore these woods, or carry on towards Fishcombe Point. Here steep steps take you down to Churston Cove (8), which is a popular place to moor luxury yachts for a picnic, where you need to cross the small beach and climb up the hill on the other side away from the sea, before turning left along a tarmac path down to the road among the first houses of Brixham (9). Here you should turn left again, back down to the cove.

They say that the British need nothing more for a day out than a view, a loo and a brew: at this tiny beach you will find a great view across Tor Bay to Torquay, a handy set of public lavatories and a little hut selling teas to complete the trio! You can get a good mug of tea, cold drinks, sandwiches and snacks, ices or even a traditional cream tea here and relax while looking out from this sheltered cove.

To leave the cove you need to walk down onto the beach and through the doorway on the other side: you will find a flight of steps up to the path.

The last section of path before you reach the town goes through the Battery Gardens. A fort was built here at the time of the Spanish Armada of 1588, and its last role was as a major gun and searchlight emplacement during the Second World War, built shortly after the British retreat from Dunkirk. The site was chosen for its excellent views of Torbay, which are just as good today, but never used for defence.

From the Battery Gardens you emerge at the back of Brixham harbour. Past the modern Astra Zeneca building (the international drug company has chosen a beautiful spot for its offices!) you come to the quays, where buildings in bland, 1950s international style are being redeveloped into a modern complex in bland, 21st century international style, and the footpath is forced between metal fences. But this short commercial section soon ends, and you emerge by Brixham harbour (10), where a very British red telephone seems oddly out of place with the more continental pavement cafes along the harbour wall. While Torquay, Paignton and Brixham all have busy marinas full of yachts and luxury pleasure boats (or 'gin palaces', as they are unkindly called by 'proper' sailors!), Brixham is still a busy fishing port too: over £20 million of fish is landed here every year, which is why Torbay has some very good, fresh fish in its restaurants.

Explore Brixham, head up to Berry Head Country Park, or simply come back to Paignton. You could walk back, of course, or you can catch a number 12 bus (£2.70 single to Goodrington) and watch the coast you have just walked fly by from the top deck. 🚗 TG



Elberry Cove is not often this tranquil: it is a popular place for waterskiing.



Brixham's pavement cafes and kiosks are a great place to relax at the end of your walk.