

2 Tarka Cycle Trail Braunton to Meeth



Stretching over 32miles/52km from Braunton to Barnstaple, then to Instow, Bideford, Great Torrington and on to Meeth. Entirely traffic free, this section of the 'Devon Coast to Coast' is known as the Tarka Cycle Trail as it follows the journey of Tarka the Otter in the classic tale written by Henry Williamson. The route can be broken up into easily managed sections for shorter rides. Part of the National Cycle Network (NCN) 'Devon Coast to Coast' Route 27, the complete 102 mile route runs between Ilfracombe on the north Devon coast to Plymouth on the south coast.

2) Barnstaple to Bideford

You can join this section at Barnstaple railway station and head out westwards on this popular traffic free path towards Bideford. This route gives you superb views across the mouth of the Taw estuary and there are some interesting sculptures to peruse along the way before you reach Fremington Quay. Here, along with cycles for hire, there is a café, teashop and scenic spots for picnics before heading on to Bideford East-the-Water via Instow.

Sections

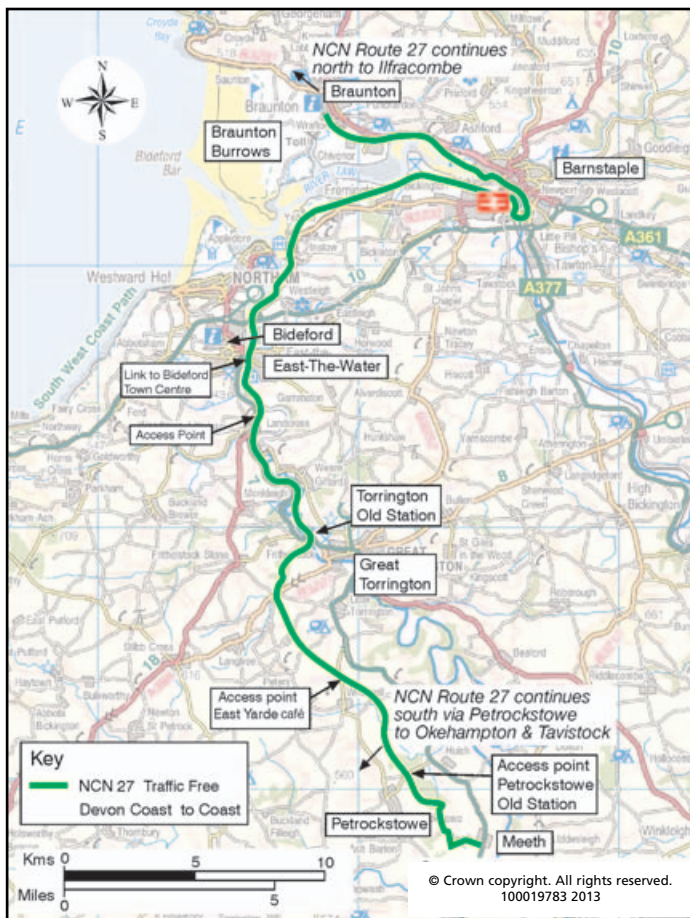
1) Braunton to Barnstaple

Easy, flat, traffic-free, family off-road route along the banks of the Rivers Taw and Torridge, with scenic views across the estuary and tidal creeks towards Instow and Appledore.

The route is signposted (NCN 27) from the Tourist Information Centre in Braunton and from the new Yeo Bridge in Barnstaple.

Close by is the UNESCO Braunton Burrows Biosphere Reserve, a wildlife haven, near this section of the Tarka Trail. The Braunton Burrows Dune System is an active dune system, known for its exceptional diversity of flora and fauna including marram grass and rare species of flowers, birds and insects.

The Trail also takes you near to Crow Point, where you can enjoy watching swans, ducks and moorhens in the drainage channels of the Taw-Torridge estuary.





Tarka Trail sculpture

The restored Instow Signal Box, built in 1873, is worth a stop. You may also like a short diversion off the route to paddle along the sandy shore at Instow and wander amongst the shoreline shops.

From the buffet carriage at the former railway station at Bideford East-the-Water, it's a short crossing over the Bideford Bridge to Bideford Quay. On the Quay there's plenty to do and see at this attractive riverside coastal town.

3) Bideford to Great Torrington

This section (again entirely traffic free) takes you up the Torridge estuary. With the river on your left, the path continues on the old railway bed that once carried clay from the quarries at Meeth to Bideford Quay. You pass along causeways and through cuttings, through tunnels and across bridges; if you are lucky you may catch a glimpse of an otter or spot the turquoise flash of a Kingfisher whilst taking in the fresh country air on one of the many bridges across the Torridge.

4) Great Torrington to Petrockstowe/Meeth

This is the least well known but most peaceful and tranquil part of the Tarka Trail. It's a really wonderful quiet and scenic stretch that heads south on the old railway path through East Yarde towards Petrockstowe and Meeth. Ahead of you, there are some great views of Dartmoor National Park, as you sail through wooded and remote countryside leading to the clay workings.



Tarka Trail Cycle leaflet (see page 24)

The last section from Petrockstowe Old Station to Meeth is a real treat, winding as it does through the edge of mixed woodland. Again it's all level – only for the last few metres up to Meeth Halt will you really earn that drink at the 16th century inn in Meeth itself! Take care when leaving the Trail at Meeth Halt where you turn left and head the 200 metres up the main road to the village square.

Facts & Features

Route Distances:

Braunton to Barnstaple 6miles/10km
 Barnstaple to Bideford 9miles/14km
 Bideford to Great Torrington 6miles/10km
 Great Torrington to Meeth 11miles/18km



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

- Tarka Cycle Trail (free)
- The Ultimate Devon Coast to Coast Guide
- £5.95 from www.sustrans.org.uk

O.S. Maps:

- Explorer (1:25,000)
 No. 139 Bideford, Ilfracombe and Barnstaple
 No. 126 Clovelly and Hartland
 No. 113 Okehampton
- Landranger (1:50,000)
 No. 180 Barnstaple
 No. 191 Okehampton and North Dartmoor

Places to Visit:

- Barnstaple Heritage Centre
- UNESCO North Devon's Biosphere
- Dartington Crystal, Torrington
- Torrington 1646
- RHS Garden Rosemoor, Torrington

Facilities:

- Refreshments available at Braunton, Barnstaple, Fremington, Instow, Bideford, Great Torrington, East Yarde, Meeth
- Cycle hire in Braunton, Barnstaple Station, Fremington, Bideford, Torrington Old Station