

9 Tamar Trails

Around 15 miles / 25km of new trails have been recently created in the Tamar Valley as part of the Mining Heritage Project, a £7million investment by public bodies to conserve, and improve access to, the rich mining heritage of the Tamar Valley. The trails include routes along old mineral tramways and railways where you can learn about the mining history and enjoy stunning landscapes. At the end of March 2013, the new Tamar Trails Centre opened providing information about the area, activities you can undertake and also includes a café for light refreshments. The following ride is just one of the options you may take starting from the Trails Centre car park.



Park at the newly opened Tamar Trails Centre at Gulworthy, off the A390 west of Tavistock and head north through the gates, past the interpretation shelter and continue through the Tree Surfers outdoor adventure complex. At the junction turn right (signposted to Devon Great Consols) and cycle uphill. At the top, turn left. 1.

1. The Mineral Railway

You're now cycling on the railway trackbed which connected Devon Great Consols – for a while the greatest copper mine in Europe and then later the largest arsenic workings in the world – to its docks at Morwellham Quay. After about 100m you emerge from the woods, with views of the spoil heaps of Devon Great Consols – your destination.

2. Wheal Emma

The path forks at the far end of the fields. Take the lower path on the left – the railway main line; the upper path was a siding which leads up an incline plane to Wheal Emma, opening in 1848. Continue

along the path beneath a recently restored railway bridge.

3. Rubbytown Valley

Follow the path through the dell of Rubbytown Valley; the pool is one of the settling ponds which dealt with the discharge from the Wheal Emma processing works. Follow the curving track, through a wide clearing and on to reach a fork, bear right.

4. Wheal Josiah Railway Bridge

As the trees thin out you'll pass a bridge on the left; Devon Great Consols' dramatic increase in copper mining in the 1860's created so much waste that a bridge was built over the 1858 railway allowing the spoil to be tipped down the hillside. Follow the track as it skirts a large spoil heap and then rejoins the route of the original railway. Continue ahead, ignoring the right-hand path uphill, to soon emerge into a Martian landscape.

5. Wheal Anna Maria Arsenic Works

At the junction, go up the right-hand track (to Scrub Tor car park) turn left and cycle to the viewing platform at the heart of the 1920's arsenic complex (the 1868 works were demolished in 1903). This is where the deadly poison arsenic was made by men and boys protected only by cotton wool in their ears and nostrils, and handkerchiefs across their mouths.

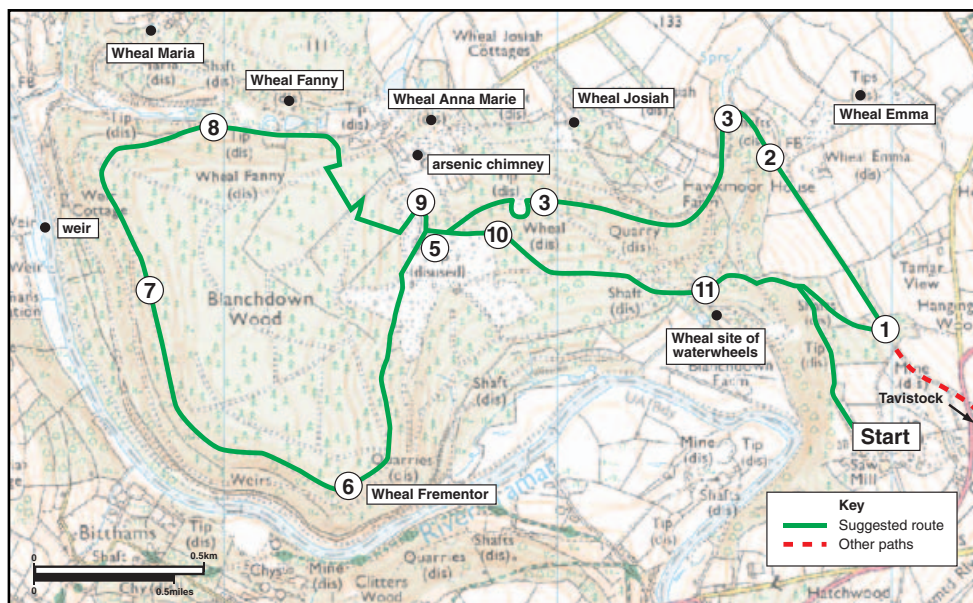
Continue through the arsenic works and walk up to the forestry track, passing a pond on your right, through the gate and turn left, towards Blanchdown Wood. (For Option A, retrace your steps from the arsenic complex to the path junction and go downhill to reach Point 10.)

6. Wheal Frementor

Follow the track to reach Wheal Frementor, where tin and tungsten were mined. The path descends steeply, running parallel to a leat, and further down the slope is the 4.5m-wide Great Leat which carried water from the Tamar round the hill to feed the giant waterwheels (Point 11).

7. Blanchdown Wood

Follow the track as it runs high above the Tamar. You're now near the west end of the copper lode, where the initial shaft was sunk in 1844 at Wheal Maria. After a short distance the track curves inland joined by the path from Scrub Tor car park.



8. Wheal Fanny

Beyond the pools at Wheal Fanny are the remains of cobbled dressing floors, where women and children would break the ore with long spalling hammers. Continue along the track and at the fork go right. Follow the track uphill and back to Wheal Anna Maria.

9. Arsenic Chimney

Emerging from the woods, turn left and follow the fence, with the contaminated sand dunes beyond. At the gates turn right and head downhill, retracing your steps past the office with the interpretation displays, and then take the right-hand lower path.

10. Wheal Anna Maria Arsenic Tailings

Follow the track into the woods, past a low filled-in tunnel on your left, to your right, up the slopes to Wheal Anna Maria engine shaft.

11. Blanchdown Adit

To your left an ochre-tainted stream wends through the trees – the outflow of a mine drainage adit, contaminated with copper sulphate and iron oxide.

Follow the track and go left at the junction, following signs to Sawmills car park. Further details of walks and cycle routes in the area can be found in the leaflet "Welcome to the Tamar Trails" available locally or download from www.tamarvalley.org.uk

Facts & Features

Distance and Duration

Option A: 2.75 miles (4.4km);
Option B: 4.75 miles (7.6km);



Terrain

Woodland, rough tracks. Some moderate climbs and uneven paths; muddy in winter.

Start

Tamar Trails Centre car park, Gulworthy, near Tavistock (Pay and Display - £2 all day) SX 439726

These trails are multi-use, for walkers, cyclists and horseriders. Mountain bikes are available for hire at the Tamar Trails Centre; visit www.tamartrails.com for more details.

Take Care

Although arsenic is no longer mined, the element can still poison anyone who touches or consumes it – even by accident. Please see on-site interpretation boards for the TRAILS Code of Conduct to ensure everyone can enjoy the routes safely.