

# Horse Riding in Devon

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# Horse Riding in Devon



## Key to abbreviations used in this booklet

AGLV	Area of Great Landscape Value	NNR	National Nature Reserve
AW	Ancient Woodland	SAC	Special Area of Conservation
CWS	County Wildlife Site	SPA	Special Protection Area
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

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# Horse Riding in Devon



Public Bridleway

Devon is unsurpassed for the beauty and quality of its landscape. The beaches, shores and estuaries, the traditional farmed landscape with its rolling fields, woods and hedgerows, the lowland heaths, the moors and uplands - all make Devon one of the most stunning destinations in Britain.

Where else can boast two National Parks, five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, twelve estuaries punctuating over 400 km of coastline, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and parts of two World Heritage Sites, including England's first natural Site?

This booklet aims to inspire anyone interested in horses, riding or just enjoying Devon's beautiful countryside. It does not matter if you are an experienced rider or a beginner, this booklet will give you information about where to ride, how to ride, equestrian attractions and nine areas where you can enjoy horse riding in Devon.

The nine areas detailed within this booklet have been chosen because they give you a taste of what Devon has to offer for horse riding from all around the County. They are split into sections: the two National Parks of - Dartmoor and Exmoor; four Circular Trails - the Tarka Trail, Ashreigney, Bratton Clovelly and Dittisham; and three Free-riding Areas - Cookworthy Moor, Haldon Forest Park and Woodbury Common. These areas also cater for the different needs and abilities of riders and offer a huge array of beautifully scenic horse riding opportunities.

If you are considering a horse riding holiday in Devon, don't forget that Devon is also a haven for wildlife and has excellent access for walkers and cyclists as well as horse riders. This leaflet is part of a series of Discover Devon publications covering walking, cycling, wildlife and geology.

## If you enjoy Devon's Countryside...



available from local Tourist Information Centres or downloadable from

[www.devon.gov.uk](http://www.devon.gov.uk)



© Devon County Council

Dartmoor Pony

Horses are such a large part of the history and culture of Devon. There are a wide range of horse riding activities available such as full or half day treks, moor riding, beach riding, carriage riding and even western riding! One of the oldest traditions on horse back in Devon is hunting and there are many opportunities to join a hunt in Devon.

Don't forget Devon's environment has something to offer throughout the year, not just in the spring and summer. To top this all off, access to these horse riding sites has never been better. If you decide to have a break from horse riding and want to travel around Devon why not leave the car at home or at your accommodation for a day or two? Devon has an integrated bus and train network, 3500 miles (5632 km) of footpath, 734 miles (1181 km) of bridleway and 150 miles (241 km) of National Cycle Network. Make your visit even more special and help to preserve Devon's natural beauty for others by using public transport where possible. For more information please view [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk) or phone 0871 200 2233 (calls from landline cost 10p a min).

All of these sites featured are special for horse riding but they can only provide a glimpse of what Devon has to offer. There are many more locations to explore and further information on riding plus other activities can be found at [www.visitdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk)

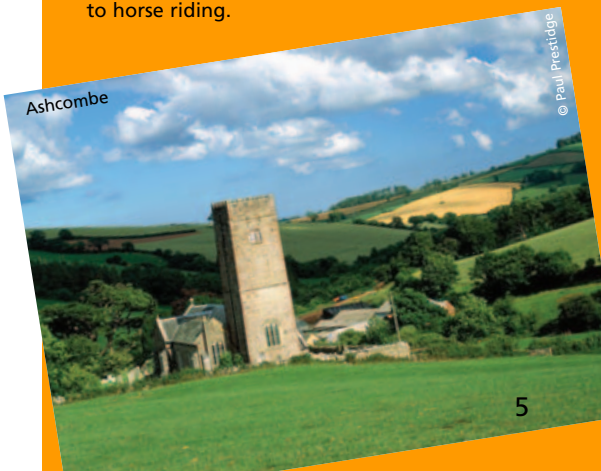
# 10 Interesting Facts about Horse Riding in Devon

## Did you know that...

- 1 *Horse and Hound* magazine ranked Devon as the horsiest county in the land.
- 2 Horse riding is one of the best outdoor activities for burning calories.
- 3 In Devon there are approximately 24,300 horses.
- 4 Approximately 23% of the Devon path networks are bridleways.
- 5 Champion race horse Best Mate died at Exeter Race Course in 2005.
- 6 You can still have donkey rides on some of our beaches in Devon.
- 7 There are three native ponies in Devon, the Dartmoor, Exmoor and Lundy
- 8 The champion horse trainer Martin Pipe worked on the Devon/Somerset border.
- 9 Devon is home to one of England's most famous horses - Uncle Tom Cobby's grey mare. Widecombe fair is still held in Devon each September.
- 10 You can learn how to drive a horse and carriage at the National Trust's Arlington Court in North Devon.

## Further Information

For information on horse riding in Devon visit the horse riding section of [www.visitdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk) for a list of accommodation, activities, attractions, places to eat, towns and villages to visit, that relate to horse riding.



© Paul Prestidge



# Public Rights of Way and Other Information

Horse riding is a significant part of rural life in Devon, not just for recreation but also for business. Horses can use any part of the road and public rights of way network except for footpaths. As well as public roads, routes that they can legally use include:

- **Bridleways** (approx 1175 km or 730 miles). On bridleways horse riders may encounter cyclists, who can use them provided they give way to horse riders and walkers. Bridleways are often waymarked with blue arrows and they should be signposted where they join or leave a road.
- **Byways open to all traffic** (BOATS) (approx 72 km or 44 miles). Byways are often waymarked with red arrows.
- **Unsurfaced unclassified county roads** (UCRs) (approx 728km or 450 miles) which may also be referred to as field roads or green lanes.
- **Common land** within Dartmoor National Park.


























## Stewardship areas

The Environment Stewardship Scheme introduced by the Countryside Commission (now Natural England) in 1991 meant that farmers and other land managers were paid to enhance and conserve landscapes, their wildlife and history and to help people to enjoy them. For more information please view [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk) These areas can include permissive riding areas and provide you with safe, off-road routes. You can view these areas on the interactive online map “My local paths” at [www.devon.gov.uk/mylocalpaths](http://www.devon.gov.uk/mylocalpaths) and clicking on the ‘layers’ button and selecting ‘DEFRA Stewardship Sites’.

## Devon County Council’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Devon County Council’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan (known as the RoWIP) has been drawn up in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and takes account of guidance issued by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. It includes sections by Dartmoor and Exmoor National Park Authorities.

## Legal Users on Public Rights of Way

Access Route	Legal Users	Approx Length in Devon
Footpath 		3650km
Bridleway 	  	1200km
Restricted Byway 	   	15km
Byway Open to all Traffic 	     	80km
Unsurfaced Unclassified County Road 	     	700km

The main objective of the RoWIP is to improve public rights of way and access for all. It sets out the County Council's policies and actions for the maintenance and improvement of public rights of way and access, and includes specific policies relating to horse riding and carriage driving. More information and a copy of the RoWIP is available at [www.devon.gov.uk/rowip](http://www.devon.gov.uk/rowip). If you have any suggested improvements then please email [rowip@devon.gov.uk](mailto:rowip@devon.gov.uk) or write to Public Rights of Way, Environment, Economy and Culture Directorate, Devon County Council, County Hall, Exeter, EX2 4QW

## Open access rights

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 created new rights for people to walk on areas of open country and registered common land. The Open Access symbol is used to mark the boundaries of land available for area-wide access.



However you cannot ride your horse on open access land and registered common land apart from the Dartmoor Commons (see page 9). You might want to enjoy Devon's landscape on foot as part of your horse riding holiday or day out when you have finished riding. You can also search for walks as well as horse rides on <http://cwr.defra.gov.uk>

For more information about open access land and to view online maps please see [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk)



Riders with disabilities

© Devon County Council

## Pleasure rides

Pleasure rides are usually run by local equestrian groups in areas which provide good horse riding access and facilities. They are sometimes described as sponsored fun rides. They can range from roughly £5 - 15 per person to participate and can be between a few miles (3km) to 10 or 15 (16 - 24km) miles long, often on quiet lanes, byways and bridleways. You can normally search the internet for pleasure rides or enquire at local riding centres and clubs. Look at the British Horse Society's website [www.emagin.org](http://www.emagin.org)

## Riding for people with disabilities

There are also many facilities that allow people with disabilities to enjoy horse riding. For further information please visit

[www.calvert-trust.org.uk/exmoor](http://www.calvert-trust.org.uk/exmoor) and [www.southwestregionriding-for-disabled.org.uk](http://www.southwestregionriding-for-disabled.org.uk)



© Devon County Council  
Countisbury, North Devon

# Planning Your Route

For more information on public rights of way and where you can ride your horse in Devon please visit the Devon County Council Public Rights of Way webpage [www.devon.gov.uk/prow](http://www.devon.gov.uk/prow) From here you can access the interactive online map called "My local paths" or directly at [www.devon.gov.uk/mylocalpaths](http://www.devon.gov.uk/mylocalpaths) This will help you to plan your journey and find rights of way that you and your horse can enjoy. Remember to look out for bridleways highlighted in green and byways which are highlighted in red and permissive routes in orange.

## Simple tips on how to use an OS map

The best maps to use whilst riding are the Ordnance Survey "Explorer" maps 1:25, 000 (2.5 inch to the mile) since these show the field boundaries.

## Symbols

On the 1:25, 000 scale Ordnance Survey Explorer maps bridleways are represented as a line of green dashes, byways are represented as a line of green crosses. Unsurfaced 'C' roads are marked by a line of green dots.

On the 1:50, 000 scale OS map, bridleways and byways are the same markings but in pink instead. Unsurfaced 'C' roads are marked as a line of pink dots.

## Map reading

Using the grid lines on the map (the faint blue lines) read the number horizontally first (eastings) and then the number vertically (northings) to find your location on the map giving you your grid reference which you can give to others (such as mountain rescue) to locate where you are. The grid reference can either be a four figure (single km square) or a 6 figure (by dividing the single km square into 10ths and using those numbers too). You should always read the eastings (along the corridor) first and the northings (up the stairs) second.

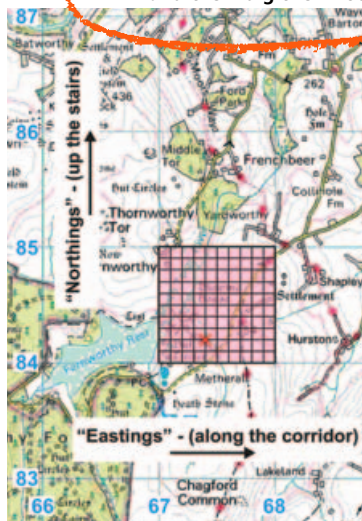
## Compass reading

You can also use a compass to help you navigate:

1. Place compass on map making sure the direction of the travel arrow is pointing in the direction of your route across the map.
2. Keeping the compass base plate still, turn the compass housing so the index line and orienting lines match up with the easting on the map.
3. Keeping the map flat and the compass still, you need to rotate your body so that the compass needle settles in line (opposite) with the index line.
4. Adjust for magnetic variation by carefully turning the compass housing 4° clockwise and turn your body again to realign the magnetic needle with the index line. Your map is now orientated to north.

You can also use landmarks and features around you to orientate your map and help you to get your bearings.

For example on the map below, the 6 digit grid ref would be 674842 and the 4 digit ref would be 67,84.





# The Countryside Code

When horse riding you will probably come into contact with other public rights of way users. Please remember to be courteous and considerate and to care for the land and the needs of owners and occupiers as far as you are able. For further information on the Countryside Code please visit [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk/things\\_to\\_know/countryside\\_code](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk/things_to_know/countryside_code)

## Riding on moorland

Exmoor and Dartmoor have good bridleway networks where you can ride and good accommodation where you can stay with your horse. The Dartmoor Commons Act (1985) dealt with the regulation of grazing rights and the control of public access on the commons (37% of the National Park). The Act established a legal right of access on foot and on horseback to the commons for the purpose of open air recreation.

When riding on the moors please be wary of soft and boggy areas. The best months to visit the moors are between June and September. Should your horse sink get off at once and encourage him to extricate himself.

In Spring be aware that you could disturb ground nesting birds and that lambing may be taking place and farmers will be busy. If you do visit during the lambing season, take great care not to disturb the sheep.

Your horse will need to be fit enough to cope with rough ground and steep slopes. You may have to lead your horse downhill. The horse must be willing to ford rivers and cross bridges so practice before you set off. A cooperative well-trained horse will be a great help.

Always follow a promoted route or discuss your plans with a local rider. Carry a compass, a whistle and an OS Explorer map.

Check the weather forecast before you go. Never ride alone and a party of three is best.

Tell someone where you are going each day.

Close and latch all the gates.

Allow plenty of time to complete your ride.

## Remember to ride with Moor Care

- Ride only where you're allowed.
- Be prepared, with the right equipment and clothing including a helmet.
- Be considerate of other users.
- Avoid riding fast on wet ground as hooves can soon turn fragile moorland into mud.

For further information on safety and horse riding please view [www.bhs.org.uk](http://www.bhs.org.uk) where you can find advisory leaflets about safety and access issues.



# Road Safety

It is often necessary for horse riders to have to ride on roads and therefore it is important to consider your own and others safety carefully and keep in mind the following points:

- △ **Be aware of the Highway Code** and avoid main or busy roads if possible.
- △ **Ride on the left hand side of the road** near the kerb even when approaching a junction and intending to turn right.
- △ **Never ride more than two abreast.** Riding two abreast is particularly recommended if riding with a young or inexperienced horse, with the more experienced horse being nearer to the centre of the road. However, when traffic approaches or where the road narrows or on the approach to a bend it may be necessary to ride single file with the experienced horse taking the lead. There should always be a gap of a horse's length between each horse being ridden behind another.
- △ **Use bridleways where possible.** Remember you must not take a horse onto a footpath, pavement or a cycle track without the landowner's permission. Do not ride on footways next to the road.
- △ **Before you take a horse onto a road, you should:** ensure all tack fits well and is in good condition; make sure you can control your horse keeping both hands on the reins unless you are signalling; always ride with other, more experienced horses if you think that your horse will be nervous in traffic; always ride with a saddle or bridle; keep both feet in the stirrups; do not carry another person; do not carry anything which might affect your balance or get tangled up in the reins; keep a horse you are leading to your left and move in the direction of the traffic flow on a one-way street.
- △ **Always wear a helmet fastened securely** that complies with current regulations. Children under the age of 14 **MUST** wear a helmet. It may also be advisable to wear a



body protector, and a fluorescent tabard particularly if riding a young or inexperienced horse.

- △ **Wear boots or shoes with hard soles and heels.** Light-coloured or fluorescent clothing in daylight and reflective clothing if you have to ride at night or in poor visibility.
- △ **It is safer not to ride on the road at night or in poor visibility,** but if you do, put reflective bands on your horse above the fetlock joints. Carry a light which shows white to the front and red to the rear.
- △ **Always look behind regularly** to be aware of traffic behind and continually look and listen for hazards which may alarm the horse.
- △ **Before turning or approaching a junction always check for traffic and signal to indicate your intention.** When signalling your intention to turn left or right, ensure that your whip is in the hand that remains on the reins and hold your other arm out horizontally for 3 seconds so that surrounding traffic is able to clearly see the signal. Always watch and listen for traffic and be prepared to stop if necessary.
- △ **Additional hand signals may sometimes be required.** Holding out the right arm and slowly waving it up and down indicates to an approaching driver to slow down, whilst holding the arm out with fingers pointing up

showing the palm of the hand to the car driver indicates that the rider requires the driver to stop.

△ **If necessary avoid hazards by taking a detour.** If approaching a noisy or dangerous hazard reassure your horse and if your horse seems reluctant to pass the hazard get another horse to lead.

△ **Always signal your intention to move towards the centre of the road to car drivers.** If approaching a hazard such as a parked car which requires the horse to be moved towards the centre of the road, always check ahead and behind for approaching traffic. Be prepared to stop and wait if necessary.

△ **Avoid roundabouts wherever possible.** If you use them you should: keep to the left and watch out for vehicles crossing your path to leave or join the roundabout; signal right when riding across exits to show you are not leaving; signal left just before you leave the roundabout.

△ **Safety/training days.** The British Horse Society (BHS) and many riding schools operate a Riding and Road Safety Test or training days.

△ **Collisions.** It is widely suspected that road collisions involving equestrians are under-reported to the police. If you or your horse suffers injury or damage as a result of the

presence of a motor vehicle on 'a road or other public place', the driver must stop and give his or her details, or else report the collision to the police. (See Road Traffic Act 1988 Part V11). So you and your horse don't actually have to be hit by a vehicle for the driver to be required to report an incident. The more details of injuries and collisions we have, the more this intelligence can be used to develop road safety programmes.

△ **Driven horses.** Make sure you are with an experienced driver, wear helmets and Hi-Viz reflective tabards and take it slowly and carefully on the road. The British Driving Society organises safety courses.

△ **Walking a horse along a road.** Lead on the left of the road with the horse on your left keeping yourself between the horse and the traffic.

△ **Road surfaces.** There are problems with some horses walking up hills where there is no grip between the shoes and the road surface and some horses don't walk over metal inspection covers. Please be aware of parts of the road where the horse may need to change its course, or will be jittery, and consider pulling over to let traffic by.

△ **Traffic.** Where a queue of traffic builds up behind you, pull over whenever it is safe to do so and let them pass.



# Beach Riding

Beach riding can be a fantastic experience and day out for both you and your horse. Beaches are good for building up fitness, the sand can encourage muscle tone and strength and the salt is a natural cleanser. If you do not own your own horse or you are a beginner to beach riding then visit [www.visitdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk) where you can search for riding clubs and trekking centres that will organise treks to beaches with an experienced guide. Beach riding allows you to enjoy spectacular views of the coast and allows both the horse and rider to get closer to nature. However, there are a few things that you need to remember when planning to ride on the beach:

- **Do you have permission to ride on the beach? If so, what times are you allowed to ride there?** There will often be set times when horses are allowed or not allowed. Horses are usually allowed at quieter times of the day such as early morning and late evening. There may also be areas of the beach where you are prohibited from riding, such as sand dunes because of conservation issues. Many beaches are privately owned so please contact the relevant District Council or Tourist Information Centre who will give you details about ownership of the beach and the contact details of the land owner who you can then contact for permission before riding.
- **Car parking.** Check if there is any parking near to the beach before you go. Sometimes you may have to park on the beach which may be difficult when towing a horse box. Height barriers are common on many beaches which can restrict horse trailers and many car parks have car parking charges (usually in the summer months).
- **Be aware of other people!** If there are other people on the beach please remain courteous and ride past them slowly and leave plenty of room.
- **Tides.** Be aware of incoming tides, especially if riding on narrow beaches with coves. Tide tables are often available in local shops.
- **Litter and rubbish.** Although the majority of beaches are well maintained watch out for general rubbish which could hurt you or your horse e.g. glass bottles.
- **Sand.** Be aware of varying texture and depth. Riding through deep 'soft' sand or riding fast on hard sand can lead to injuries to your horse. Be aware of holes in the sand.
- **Salt.** The salt from the sea can often damage leather or metal so ensure that you clean your tack after each visit to the beach. Also, remember to wash your horse's hooves which can be dried by the salt.
- **Be cautious of the sea.** Ride slowly when entering the sea as some shores can be steep and dip quickly. Approach the sea at an angle when riding in to stop your horse from being spooked by the breaking tide and rearing.





'Beach riding can  
be a fantastic  
experience'



# Equestrian Attractions

## Racecourses in Devon

Devon has two excellent racecourses. Exeter Racecourse which is situated on the top of Haldon Hill has wonderful views both over Exeter and Dartmoor. The racecourse organises many different race days ranging from family days to highclass steeplechases. Some of the most famous horses to have raced here include Desert Orchid and Best Mate. Newton Abbot also has a racecourse with an excellent reputation as a holiday racing venue.

## Bicton Arena

For anyone interested in horse shows and events Bicton Arena, near Budleigh Salterton in East Devon, provides a wide range of activities to enjoy. This site has grass arenas, an all weather practice ring, permanent stables, a cross country course and many other facilities. The arena is home to trials, show jumping and one day events. If you are interested in horse shows you can search for upcoming events in Devon at [www.thedevonhorshow.org](http://www.thedevonhorshow.org)

## The Donkey Sanctuary and Devon Horse and Pony Sanctuary

Another site of interest is the Donkey Sanctuary near Sidmouth. Set in the rolling hills of East Devon, elderly and formerly mistreated donkeys are cared for and are waiting to meet you. For further information please visit [www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk](http://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk)

There is also a Devon Horse and Pony Sanctuary at Manaton, on the edge of Dartmoor. For further information please visit [www.dhaps.org.uk](http://www.dhaps.org.uk)

## The Dartmoor Hill Pony

Dartmoor National Park is home to the native breed of registered Dartmoor Ponies and there are also Dartmoor Hill Ponies which are cross bred. The ponies live on the moor all year round. However, they are not truly wild animals but owned by farmers who let them graze on the commons. It is believed that the ponies have

lived on Dartmoor for approximately 3,500 years with the first written evidence of the ponies relating back to AD 1012. In the mid 1800s the ponies were used to transport granite. It is thought that there are almost 3000 ponies on Dartmoor at present. As well as in industry the ponies have been used for recreational purposes such as show jumping, cross country, one day events, working hunter ponies, carriage driving and of course as popular family ponies. For more information please visit [www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk](http://www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk)

## The Exmoor Pony

Exmoor National Park is home to the distinctive Exmoor Pony. This unique breed is thought to be the closest breed to the wild horses of Europe. Many people believe that the ponies are wild but in fact they are all owned and allowed to graze on the moor all year. Exmoor ponies have distinctive features such as a mealy buff colour on the underparts and the area around the eyes and nose while the mane, tail and points are black. The colour on the rest of their body can differ from from dun (a smoky-brown) to bay (red-brown) or brown (dark brown). The summer coat is fine and glossy but in winter the ponies grow a thick, two-layered protective coat. Average height is about 12 hands. For more information please view [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

## Lundy Pony

The Lundy Pony is a breed of pony originally developed on the offshore island of Lundy in 1928. The breed was created by the crossing of New Forest Pony mares and Arabian stallions. The harsh environment of the Island led to the ponies becoming strong and hardy. For further information visit [www.lundyisland.co.uk](http://www.lundyisland.co.uk)

## Grand Western Horseboat Company

Explore the Grand Western Canal near Tiverton aboard a traditionally painted horse-drawn barge. Step back in time as you board the 'Tivertonian' and enjoy the peace and tranquillity

of the Canal. The Grand Western Horseboat Co. is one of only a few, traditional horse-drawn barges remaining in England today. The horse-drawn barge operates in all-weather and has varying lengths of trip available. Other features on the canal include rowing and self-drive day boats for hire and the floating canal gift shop, which also provides refreshments. For more information visit [www.tivertoncanal.co.uk](http://www.tivertoncanal.co.uk)

## Miniature Pony Centre

The Miniature Pony Centre near to Moretonhampstead on Dartmoor gives you a chance to see, meet and touch a range of miniature ponies and donkeys. Please visit [www.miniatureponycentre.com](http://www.miniatureponycentre.com)

## Donkeys on Exmouth Beach

In the spring and summer you can enjoy views of the two miles of golden sand at Exmouth, by riding on the back of a donkey! Exmouth lies at the mouth of the Exe Estuary in East Devon.

## Carriage Driving

Carriage driving is fast becoming a popular horse activity too. There are many centres that provide horse drawn carriages and tuition to help you enjoy a more laid back style of riding. The National Trust at Arlington Court, near Barnstaple, has a magnificent carriage collection on display and even offers courses on carriage driving. For further information about carriage driving please visit the British Driving Society's website at [www.britishdrivingsociety.co.uk](http://www.britishdrivingsociety.co.uk) or the National Trust website [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

## Hunting

Following a hunt allows you to ride where you would not normally be allowed. Hunts ride on different days and around specific local areas. If you are interested in joining a hunt then please contact your local hunt group's secretary for further details. Hunt groups can be found on the Master of Foxhounds Association website at [www.mfha.co.uk](http://www.mfha.co.uk)

below left: Grand Western Canal, bottom left: Donkey Sanctuary





# National Parks

## 1. Exmoor National Park

**Status:** National Park, SSSI, SAC

**Management:**

Exmoor National Park  
Authority



Experience the romance, mystery and beauty of wild moors and beautiful river valleys in Exmoor, one of England's prettiest National Parks. Exmoor is a great place to come and ride and with 693 square km (69,000 ha) of National Park it offers a great sense of freedom and choice for horse riders. There are 400 miles (approx 600 kms) of bridleways. The National Park has a responsibility to ensure that bridleways are open, usable and that every path is signed where it leaves or joins a public highway. The more popular bridleways are way-marked in the national colour of blue.

Exmoor covers mixed landscapes including semi-natural areas of moor and heath, woodland, coast and foreshore. A number of these habitats are of national and international importance. One third of the National Park is in Devon (201 sq km) and two thirds in Somerset (492 sq km). The Park also provides attractive recreational opportunities for cyclists and walkers.

There are facilities available for you to bring your horse with you whilst on holiday in Exmoor with a number of farms and riding stables offering accommodation for both riders and their horses. Please visit the website at [www.visitdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk) to search for accommodation with horse facilities in the area. Exmoor offers varied scenery, from exhilarating rides across open rugged moorland with far reaching views to Dartmoor or even Wales. You may even get the chance to catch a sight of the famous wild Red Deer or a native herd of Exmoor Ponies.



© North Devon District Council

Exmoor Ponies

### Facilities

Exmoor has visitor centres in Combe Martin, County Gate, Blackmoor Gate, Dunster, Dulverton and Porlock (all visitor centres are open daily from the 31st March but are closed for most of the winter season).

### Access

**Road:** Exmoor covers a large area clearly signposted on the Devon and Somerset border. There are many minor roads on and around Exmoor.

For further information about Exmoor National Park please visit

[www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk) or [www.visit-exmoor.info](http://www.visit-exmoor.info) or call 01398 323665





## 2. Dartmoor National Park

**Status:** National Park, NNR, SAC, SSSI

**Management:** Dartmoor National Park Authority



Dartmoor Ponies

Dartmoor is ideal for all horse riders from beginners to more experienced riders; everyone can enjoy what Dartmoor has to offer. You can ride out on the open moorland (providing that it is common land), trot along woodland trails and bridleways or follow historic byways. There is a wide selection of trekking centres and riding centres that allow you to hire horses or ponies and many provide tuition for all levels of needs and ability. Some stables even offer guided tours.

See the famous wild Dartmoor Ponies and Blackface Sheep grazing as you trot by. See for yourself the setting of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'Hound of the Baskervilles' and enjoy the varied landscape brimming with a long and interesting history. You can even take your horse on holiday with you! Many farms and riding centres now provide accommodation for you and your horse to stay. Whilst trekking you can visit the famous granite outcrops of Dartmoor's Tors and enjoy some amazing views across the Park.

The Dartmoor Commons Act (1985) gives a right of access on foot and horseback to 35,531 ha of registered common land within the National Park. There is access to further land through agreements negotiated by Dartmoor National Park Authority through the open access policies of other landowners and through customary use. The extent of access land in 2004 was approximately 43,834 ha (438 sq km).

### Facilities

There are many visitor information centres around the Park: High Moorland Visitor Centre, Princetown (open all year) Postbridge, Haytor or Newbridge (open Easter - end of October).

### Access

**Road:** There are many major roads that run around the boundary of Dartmoor such as the A386, A38 and the A30. There are also a number of minor roads that run across Dartmoor.

For further information on Dartmoor, please visit [www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk](http://www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk) or call Dartmoor National Park on 01822 890414 or Dartmoor Tourist Association on 01822 890567.



# Circular Trails

## 3. Tarka Trail

**Nearest Town:** Great Torrington

**OS Grid reference:** SS 475190 to SS 516105

**Status:** AGLV, CWS

**Management:**

Devon County Council



The Tarka Trail is a walking and cycle route between Braunton and Meeth built on old railway lines through Tarka Country in North Devon. It passes through the largely unspoilt countryside as described by Henry Williamson in his classic novel 'Tarka the Otter' first published in 1927. This part of the trail is designed for walking and cycling but horse riding is only currently allowed along the section between Petrockstowe Station and Servis near Torrington. This is the least well known but most peaceful and tranquil part of the Tarka Trail. This section is a really wonderfully quiet and scenic stretch passing through a varied landscape of woodland and farmland. The former railway track bed has been converted to a surface suitable for walking and cycling, reducing risks involved in mixing such activities with road traffic. The gradients are shallow when compared with much of the surrounding countryside. Many visitors attracted to the Tarka Trail are on holiday, and their recreational use of the facility can help contribute to the local economy by making use of green tourism businesses along the route.

### **Guidance for horse riders on the Tarka Trail between Servis and Petrockstowe Station:**

The following additional conditions need to be observed when riding along the Tarka Trail so as to avoid conflict with other recreational users:

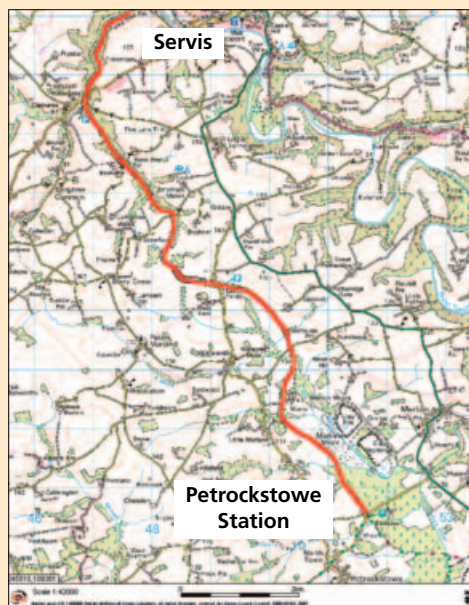
- The horse riding route extends from the bridleway at Servis to Petrockstowe Station. **Use of the trail beyond these points is not permitted.**
- The use of the Tarka Trail by horse riders does not create bridleway rights.
- Riders should give way to other users of the Tarka Trail.
- The route may only be joined or left at the

public highway (or the bridleway at Servis). Other gates and access points may not be used.

- All gates across the route should be left in a closed position.
- Cantering or galloping is not permitted.
- Jumps are not to be erected.
- Riding in a group of more than three horses is not permitted.
- The parking of horse boxes or vehicles used to bring horses to the Tarka Trail is not permitted in Tarka Trail car parks.
- Hunting or following a hunt is not permitted.
- Lights shall be worn after dark.

### **Facilities**

The section designated for horses runs close to Great Torrington which has a car park and a tourist information centre. Other car parks are available at Watergate Bridge, East Yarde and Moormill area.





© North Devon Coast & Countryside Service

Tarka Trail

## Access

**Servis:** There is a bridleway accessing the Servis area. **Petrockstowe Station:** There are roads from surrounding villages. **Road:** The A386 runs parallel to the Tarka Trail connecting Okehampton to Bideford via Great Torrington.

For further information about the Tarka Trail please visit [www.devon.gov.uk](http://www.devon.gov.uk) There is special guidance and conditions for horse riders using the Tarka Trail; please visit [www.devon.gov.uk/advisory\\_code\\_of\\_conduct\\_for\\_tarka\\_trail\\_users\\_2.pdf](http://www.devon.gov.uk/advisory_code_of_conduct_for_tarka_trail_users_2.pdf)

## 4. The Taw Valley Ride

**Nearest town:** Chulmleigh

**OS grid reference:** SS 613125

**Status:** AGLV, CWS

**Management:**

Devon County Council



This circular ride is based around the village of Ashreigney in the Taw Valley. The ride is along public bridleways and is approximately 20 miles (32 km) long. The ride takes you through local woods and past scenic village lanes and cottages, rolling hills and farmer's fields. It is possible to make the ride longer or shorter depending on your experience and fitness. Crossing fields and streams you will really experience the beautiful countryside that Devon is renowned for. There are also many farms to pass and even a mill.

The trail is along public bridleways through woods, over rough fields and through forested land. There are excellent views of the River Taw along the way. Please note that there are a few steep slippery hills.

## Facilities

There are a number of car parks along the trail and in the surround villages and towns. Please check your OS map.

## Access

**Road:** From the Barnstaple to Crediton road (A377) turn off and follow signs and minor roads to Ashreigney village. **For local riders:** There are many bridleways connecting Ashreigney with the surrounding villages.

For further information about this ride in more detail please visit the website at [www.visitdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk)





# Circular Trails

## 5. Dittisham Circular Ride

**Nearest town:** Dartmouth

**OS grid reference:** SX 861549

**Status:** AONB, CWS

**Management:**

Devon County Council



The Dittisham Circular Ride is based in the scenic parish of Dittisham, linking the parish's three bridleways with a network of country roads and green lanes. One section of 'main road' has to be negotiated. The distance is approximately 9 miles (14km). It is suitable for both riders and walkers.

The route follows public bridleways, green lanes and metalled roads. One recommended starting point is from the off-road lay-by at Foxenhole (SX 857538). The trail takes you through Bramble Torre, Coombe Cross past the Coombe Hotel and local farms. The ride also takes you over Barberrly Water Bridge and through Capton Mill and Capton Wood which is carpeted with bluebells in the spring and foxgloves through the summer.

Further along the route, excellent views can be had across the River Dart toward Torbay and Kingswear. The trail passes Little Coombe Plantation and climbs up to Dowton Cross. You will also come across Old Mill Creek and pass boat yards, old quarry workings and reach Fire Beacon Hill at the end of your ride to finish in Dittisham.



Dart Estuary

© Devon County Council

### Facilities

There are two car parks in Dittisham.

### Access

**Road:** There are many minor roads from Dartmouth and the surrounding area to Dittisham.

For further information about this circular ride please visit the website at [www.visitdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk)





## 6. Ruby Rides: Village and Lakeside Trail

**Nearest town:** Okehampton

**OS grid reference:** SX 438912

**Status:** CWS, AW

**Management:**  
Devon County Council



Ruby Country is renowned for some of Devon's most beautiful and unspoilt countryside. Visitors are always struck by its diversity, the wonderful views of Bodmin Moor, Dartmoor and Exmoor, the range of wildlife and clarity of its night skies.

The Ruby Country Partnership is delighted to be working closely with Devon County Council on the Ride the Ruby Country project. This has improved access to the natural environment for horse riders, walkers and cyclists as well as creating economic and social opportunities for many people in Ruby Country.

*Ruby Rides* is available from local Tourist Information Centres or download from [www.devon.gov.uk/horseriding](http://www.devon.gov.uk/horseriding). This highlights a series of six circular routes for riders. One such route is the Village and Lakeside Trail.

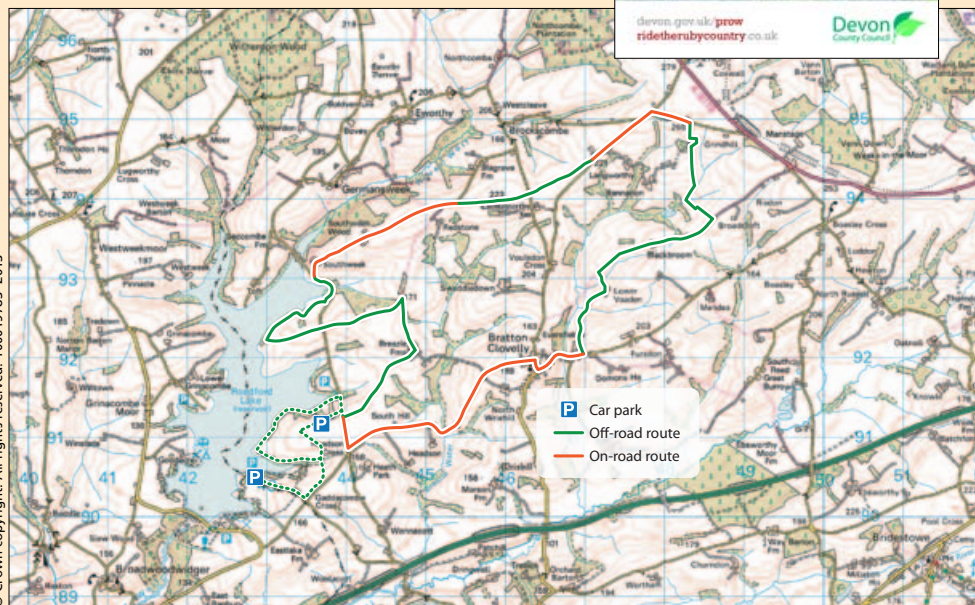
### Facilities

To access the ride, use Roadford Lake Forest or Gaddacombe car parks, both of which are near

the route. From Gaddacombe Cross you can access a permissive bridleway which runs northwards and around the perimeter of the lake, courtesy of the South West Lakes Trust. You can also ride on the cycleway here in dry weather. These routes are shown in green on the route map. Alternatively, paid parking is available at the main visitor centre. If parking with a horse-box or trailer, please use the top two (unsurfaced) tiers of the car park.

### Access

**Road:** Roadford Lake is signposted from the A30 halfway between Okehampton and Launceston. Follow the brown signs.



# Free-Riding Areas

## 7. Ruby Rides: Cookworthy Forest

**Nearest town:** Holsworthy

**OS grid reference:** SS 414014

**Management:**



Forestry Commission

Also within Ruby Country is Cookworthy Forest, an impressive conifer plantation situated in the gentle hills of north west Devon, between Okehampton and Bude. Red Deer are a common sight at dawn and dusk. The Red Deer is Britain's largest native land mammal and has been present since before the Ice Age. The forest is also a good place to spot green woodpecker and barn owls. Cycling is also permitted on all forest roads in Cookworthy Forest. The Cookworthy Forest Centre has a reconstruction of a traditional roundhouse and is a favourite with local school groups. The forest is also popular with orienteering groups.

There are numerous forest roads throughout the forest that horse riders are welcome to use or, you can follow Route One from the Ruby Rides booklet (see page 21) for a circular route.

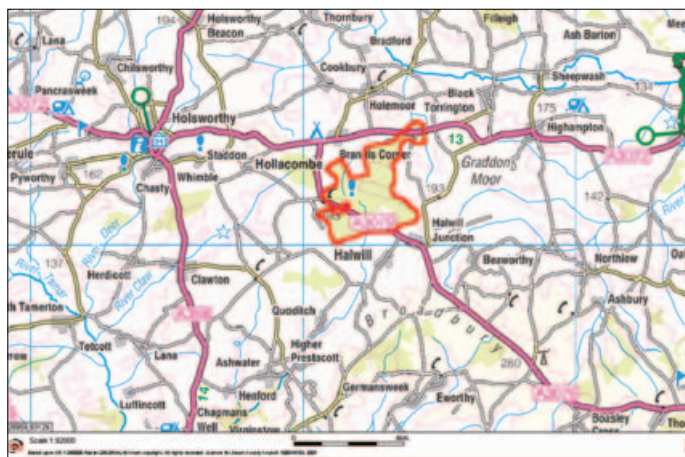
### Facilities

Cookworthy Forest Centre has toilets and public car parking available, the main public car park is situated on the opposite side of the road to the centre. It is possible to de-box in the public car park. However the car park is small so space may be restricted at weekends and busy times of the year.

### Access

**Road:** From Okehampton take the A3079 signposted for Bude. Two miles after passing Halwill Junction, the public car park is on the right and the Cookworthy Forest Centre on the left. From the Bude direction take the A3072 and then the A3079, heading towards Halwill Junction and Okehampton. Follow this road for two miles. The car park will be on your left, and the Cookworthy Forest Centre on your right.

For further information about Cookworthy please visit the Forestry Commission's website at [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk)





## 8. Haldon Forest Park

**Nearest city:** Exeter

**OS grid reference:** SX 884849

**Status:** AGLV, SSSI

**Management:**

Forestry Commission



Situated on the edge of Dartmoor, Haldon Forest Park covers 3,500 acres of clean, green woods with 25 miles (40km) of trails where you can walk, run, cycle and ride at whatever pace suits you. There are dedicated riding trails with a quarter mile stretch for galloping. Haldon Forest Park provides a safe and pleasant place to ride your horse. The Harcombe Riding Trails and the ridge trails are connected so that you and your horse can enjoy a total of 10 miles (16km) of trail in one ride.

Riders are welcome to bring their dogs but should keep them under control and are advised to keep to the designated trails. The riding trails are waymarked with blue signs. Use of the riding trails is also free of charge.

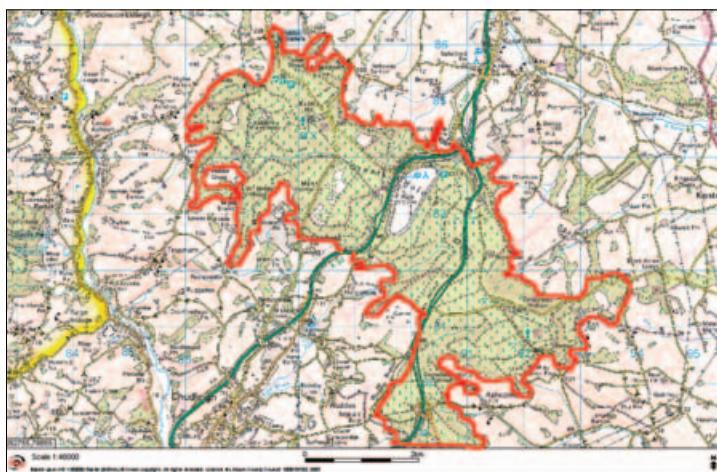
Haldon Forest Park is an excellent place for any level of ability. The Harcombe riding trails link to the trails along Buller's Hill, towards Belvedere Tower. Horse riders are requested not to use the main car park at Haldon Gateway but instead use the designated parking at Harcombe Horse Box Park. This is for horse riders with horse boxes and is free of charge to use.

### Facilities

There are toilets, a ranger's office, a first aid post, a picnic and barbecue area, and refreshments available at weekends and bank holidays. Open all year round 8.30am - 5pm.

### Access

**Road:** Take the Exeter Racecourse turning off the A38 Devon Expressway. Past the Little Chef restaurant and follow lane for about half a mile and car park is on left.



Haldon Forest Park



© Forestry Commission

For further information on Haldon Forest Park, please visit [www.forestry.gov.uk/haldonforestpark](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/haldonforestpark) or telephone 01392 834251

# Free-Riding Areas

## 9. Woodbury Common

**Nearest town:** Exmouth

**OS grid reference:** SY 034872

**Status:** SSSI, SPA

**Management:** Clinton Devon Estates  
Pebblebed Heaths  
Conservation Trust



© Clinton Devon Estates

Woodbury Common

The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths (locally known as Woodbury Common) are a combination of several heaths owned by Clinton Devon Estates and managed by the 'Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust'. The site has several designations. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and has European listings for its rare flora and fauna.

Although the Common is not overburdened with bridleways it has many wide non-dedicated fire breaks and paths that all users can use.

The site comes alive from spring to September when the land is covered by the purple haze of the three types of heathers. The whole year sees one or the other of the two yellow flowering gorses. On the high points of the Commons look



out for Woodbury Castle a hill fort built 500-300 BC and as you ride you will see the many prehistoric barrows (burial mounds). Please do not ride on these monuments. In some places you get views of the coastal cliffs of Sidmouth and on through to Dorset. On a clear day you will see the distinctive shape of Portland Bill poking through the shimmering sea. The heaths are home to rare species such as the Dartford Warbler which can be seen all year flitting around the dense stands of gorse. In the summer expect to see many orchids on the wide and open heaths. There is a major influx of butterflies from spring to autumn. The rare Silver Studded Blue can be found on some of the wide open fire breaks during July and August.



The Common is known for its openness and the wet and dry heaths. Please stick to the hard tracks and do not stray off into areas that have had conservation work on them. The area is also the training ground for The Royal Marine Commandos and there are red flags and sentries in place when they fire live on the grenade range. No motorised vehicles can use the commons without permission.

### Facilities

Car parks are available around Woodbury Common, please check your OS map.

### Access

**Road:** From Exeter, Woodbury Common is reached via the A3052 Sidmouth road. Past the Halfway Inn, turn right onto the B3180 which becomes the B3179. At this turn off you will see signs for the East Devon AONB. After a short drive you will reach the Common and there are several car parks where you can stop.

The Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust is in the process of producing a leaflet with routes that should be available in the summer; please see their website for further information at [www.clintondevon.co.uk](http://www.clintondevon.co.uk)



# Great Places to Stay and Equestrian Facilities



There is a wide range of accommodation in Devon ranging from delightful hotels on the coast, cosy country pubs, idyllic guesthouses and friendly farmhouses ideal for family holidays. You can discover some wonderful and luxurious self-catering accommodation as well as relaxing holiday parks, camping and caravanning... all ideal for that perfect riding break, all year round. You can even take your horse on holiday with you. There are many types of accommodation around the county that provide horse stables and equestrian facilities such as, horse riding lessons and courses, horse hire, DIY livery, breeding, breaking, training and horse riding half day and full day treks. There are even horse caravans available! For more information visit [www.visitdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk) and search the accommodation and activities sections for 'horse riding'.

**Making your selection couldn't be easier.**

**Need more information  
or want to make a booking?**

Visit the website

[www.visitdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk)

For more information about horse riding in general please visit:

British Horse Society [www.bhs.org.uk](http://www.bhs.org.uk)

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
[www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk) (find walks and rides at  
<http://countrywalks.defra.gov.uk>)

Pony Club [www.pcuk.org](http://www.pcuk.org)

Association of British Riding Schools  
[www.abrs-info.org](http://www.abrs-info.org)

Countryside Access [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk)

The National Bridleroute Network  
[www.ride-uk.org.uk](http://www.ride-uk.org.uk)

National Equine Welfare Council [www.newc.co.uk](http://www.newc.co.uk)



# Be a responsible visitor!

## Explore a greener Devon. . .

**Devon has the most fantastic natural environment and we all want it to stay that way.**

If you are not bringing your horse, why not leave the car behind and explore Devon by foot, by bike or even by boat?! Much of Devon's coast and countryside is accessible by public transport and it can be great fun! Why not Discover Devon Differently?



© Mark Passmore/Apex Ltd

### Come and explore!

More and more people are realising that taking the bus or train is an easy, convenient, fun alternative to worrying about driving along narrow, unfamiliar country roads and finding somewhere suitable to leave the car.

Devon is blessed with a very mild climate.

**Spring** arrives early with daffodils and bluebells filling the undergrowth of the valleys and woodlands and delicate yellow primroses, the Devon flower, carpeting the banks of the lanes.

The **summer** lingers for longer in Devon. It can be well into September before any misty mornings herald the start of **autumn**, a season which also lends itself to discovering the countryside on horseback. Rich autumnal colours give a golden glow to the landscape and the upper moorland areas become clothed in flowering heathers.

**Winter** can be an appealing season to explore Devon's countryside too. Riders and walkers can wrap up warm and take leisurely lunch stops relaxing in front of a warming log fire!

### Be a Green Visitor

1. Do not disturb any livestock, keep your dog under close control and fasten all gates.
2. Take your litter home with you and recycle it if possible.
3. Do not disturb wild animals, birds or flowers.
4. Whether you are walking, cycling or driving, take special care on country roads.
5. If possible, leave your car at home and take the bus or train.
6. Buy locally produced goods, including food and souvenirs.
7. Support local shops, garages and other local services.

# If you enjoy Devon's coast and countryside . . .

Why not pick up one of our free booklets at  
Tourist Information Centres across Devon or  
visit [www.devon.gov.uk](http://www.devon.gov.uk)



For visitor information including accommodation availability visit  
[www.visitdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk)

If you need this in a different format  
please contact 01392 382104 or  
email: [environment@devon.gov.uk](mailto:environment@devon.gov.uk)



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