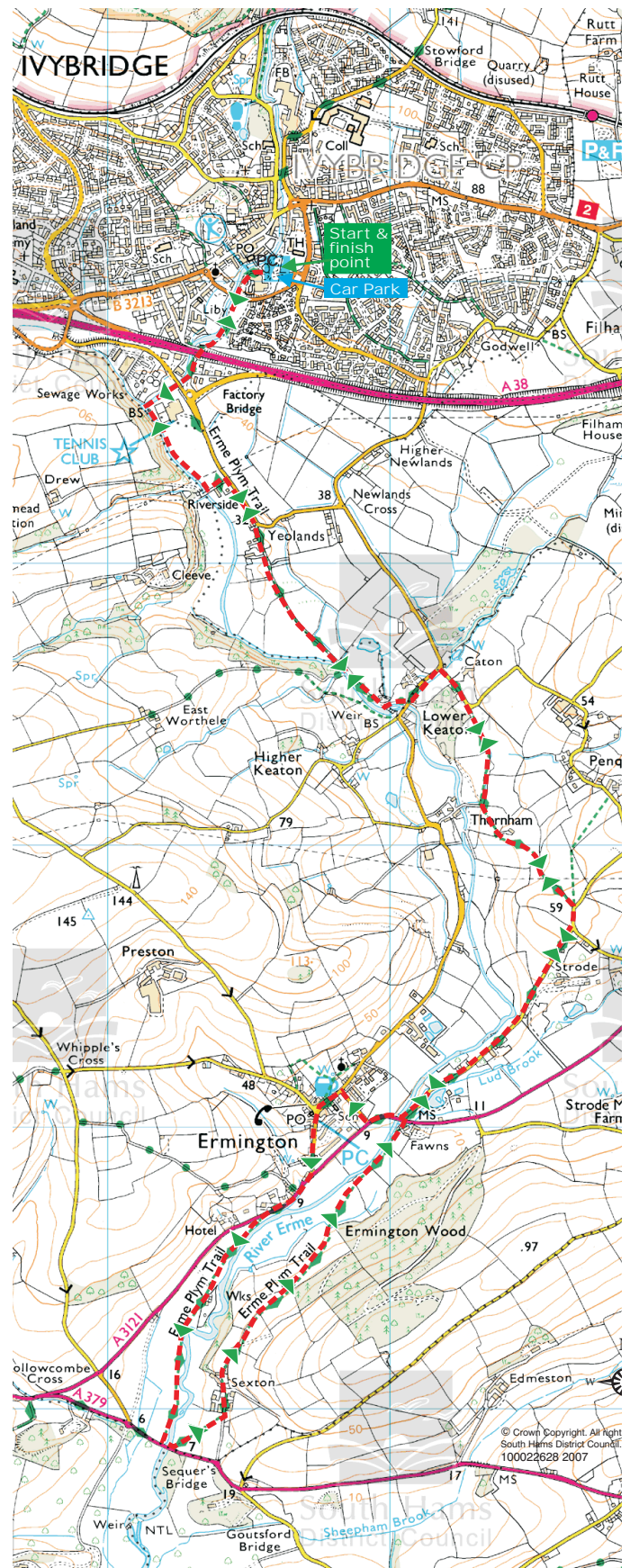


The River Erme Ivybridge to Ermington

A lovely wander following the valley of the River Erme, in an area where the wild beauty of the moor and the mellow delights of rolling South Devon meet and merge.

Start:	Glanvilles Mill/Leonards Road Car Park, Ivybridge
Distance:	7.5 miles
Circular Walk:	Part- circular
Grade:	Moderate
Terrain:	Footpaths, often through fields; fairly even underfoot, occasional mud after rain; surfaced roads.
Obstacles & Steep Gradients:	19 stiles (3 can be bypassed); 1 flight of steps. This route is not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs.
Public transport:	Bus service X80 from Totnes, Torquay and Plymouth. Service X38 from Exeter, Ashburton and Plymouth.
Refreshment stops:	Several pubs, cafes and restaurants in Ivybridge. Crooked Spire Inn, Ermington 01548 831288.
Toilets:	Public toilets at Glanvilles Mill Car Park, Ivybridge.
Parking:	Glanvilles Mill/Leonards Road Car Park, Ivybridge. Pay and display.
Accommodation:	Please contact Ivybridge Tourist Information Centre 01752 897035 www.ivybridge-devon.co.uk
Other facilities:	Many shops in Ivybridge. Post office and village stores in Ermington. Public payphones: in Ivybridge by car park; in Ermington 20m up street to left of pub.
OS map:	Explorer 0L20
Grid Ref:	SX 636561



Directions

1. For much of its length this walk follows the green and white Erme–Plym Trail / Coast to Coast waymarkers.
2. From the Leisure Centre in Ivybridge, take the riverside path downstream. Turn right opposite the recycling centre, and follow path around edge of playing fields.
3. Turn right along the road, then right again onto a footpath front of Yeo Bungalow, across fields and along river.
4. Turn left at road, and then first right at Caton Cross. After 200m bear right over a stone stile, and across fields to a second stone stile. Cross an open field via the telegraph pole, and follow the next field edge to the road. Turn right. At main road, take footpath opposite and to left, signed 'Sequer's Bridge'.
5. Follow yellow waymarker arrows across fields, through Sexton Farm, and across a field to the right. At the road, turn right over Sequer's Bridge, then immediately right again over a stile. Follow field footpath upstream alongside river.
6. At main road turn right. After 220m turn left up Town Hill into Ermington.
7. Take cobbled path to right of pub and cross fields to the church. Drop straight down from church to road and turn right. Turn first left down road past the school.
8. At main road turn left over bridge, then left again up lane signed for Penquit and Strode. From here you are retracing your earlier steps.
9. Turn left beyond brow of hill onto public footpath and follow yellow waymarkers back through fields.
10. Bear left at the road. Turn left at Caton Cross. Turn right just before Keaton Bridge onto riverside footpath. Where path enters field, fork away from river along remains of green lane and field edge.
11. Turn left onto footpath alongside road. After 200m, turn left and follow path around back of playing fields alongside river.
12. Turn left opposite recycling centre and follow river back to car park.



Further Interest

Heritage

Ivybridge owed its past prosperity to the River Erme which runs through the town centre. The river once powered a corn mill and paper mill, along with a fulling and tucking mill to prepare and 'felt' or thicken fleeces. The mills are largely silent now, but the population of Ivybridge has shot up from 477 in 1817 to around 12,000 today. Many of its inhabitants now commute to Plymouth for work.

From Sequer's Bridge the castellated form of Fleet House can be seen across the field. Built on the edge of the Erme floodplain, its name comes from the Saxon word 'fluite' meaning 'flood'. Flete House became a maternity hospital during World War II – 10,000 babies have been born there!

The Church of St Peter and St Paul in Ermington is famous for its crooked spire. The use of unseasoned wood in the construction may have been the cause of the kink. However, local yarns suggest that the steeple craned its neck too far in trying to catch a glimpse of a particularly beautiful bride.

Landscape

The old apple trees in a large field just south of Keaton are the remains of an orchard. In times past most South Hams farms kept a large orchard to produce cider, which was once the staple drink of the people of these parts. The brew also formed part of a farm labourer's pay.

The river Erme rises high on Dartmoor, where many prehistoric settlements can still be seen along its banks. It runs to the sea at Wonwell and Mothecombe, and its relatively undisturbed estuary plays host to many wading birds and wildfowl.

Hedgebanks are the norm in lowland South Devon, so the area you walk through just south of Ivybridge is unusual in that the field boundaries are mostly dry stone walls – more commonly found on the moor. These walls, encrusted with lichen, provide safe havens for all sorts of creatures, including small mammals, toads, snakes, and a variety of insects.

Wildlife

The woodland part of the path between Yeolands and Keaton is rich in wild garlic in the spring. This pungent plant, with its clusters of brilliant white star-shaped flowers, has edible leaves with a mild garlic flavour.

As you walk down the lane past Strode and Ermecot towards Erme Bridge, the hedge to the right contains field maples. A compact and elegant tree most often found in hedgerows, the field maple has delicate and smooth lobed leaves which turn bright yellow in the autumn. Its wood is prized for carving and turning, and has been used throughout history for the making of harps.

The heron - majestic and surprisingly graceful for its size - is a frequent visitor to the riverbanks in the fields by Sequer's Bridge. Gangly, greyish-white, and with a long dagger for a beak, the heron waits motionless on the riverbank waiting for fish. Protected today, all herons were once the property of the crown, and were eaten at court feasts.

Buzzards were once persecuted to the brink of extinction. Nowadays the brown, barred plumage and broad, 'fingered' wings of this bird of prey are a familiar sight on this walk, wheeling overhead on the thermal air currents.