

Brownstone Froward Point



Start: | Brownstone Car Park. TQ6 0EH

Distance: | 3 miles

Difficulty: | Moderate - some steep ascents and descents, and steps, 1 stile

Terrain: | Route fairly even underfoot. Coastal footpath and field footpaths with occasional mud in wet weather; surfaced road.

Parking: | Brownstone Car Park (National Trust)

OS map: | Explorer OL20

Grid Ref: | SX 903 510

Public transport: | See www.travelinesw.com

Refreshments: | Coleton Fishacre (National Trust) or Kingswear

Toilets: | Kingswear

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Directions

- 1** Leave the car park, follow the path signposted down to Froward Point. The path takes you through the World War 2 military site. If you want to visit the information centre, it is near the National Coastwatch Lookout.
- 2** At the bottom of the site, follow the South West Coast Path to the right, signed Brixham 8³/₄ miles, towards Outer Froward Point. As you follow the path around the headland, you get great views of the Mewstone out to sea.
- 3** Follow the coast path on to the edges of Pudcombe Cove. Here the route heads inland, it is steep in places.
- 4** Follow the footpath inland (this section is steep in places), until you reach Brownstone Road. If you want to make a detour to Coleton Fishacre or Coleton Camp, turn right here, before returning to make your way back.
- 5** Take the field edge path to the left to reach Brownstone car park.

Heritage

The tall limestone tower you can see in the field on the way down to Froward point is the Daymark. This hollow octagonal tower was built in 1864 by the Dartmouth Harbour commissioners and rises to 80 feet (24m) high on tall arched legs. It was built as a guide for ships to find the safe entrance to the harbour and is now a Grade 2 listed building. You can have a closer look by following the path across the field to it.

The path which you take down from Brownstone car park is an old military road put in place when the gun emplacement was built at Froward Point during the Second World War.

In 1940 the land at Froward Point was requisitioned from Brownstone Farm to build a coastal defence battery. Brownstone battery has great views across Start Bay and included two gun positions, two searchlight positions and other buildings including an observation post, generator room, stores and mess rooms, many of which can still be seen. It is one of the few coastal batteries still largely intact in the country. The battery was manned by around



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230 soldiers of the 52nd Bedfordshire Yeomanry Regiment between 1940 – 42, then by the Home Guard. It was finally decommissioned in 1956 and is now owned by the National Trust. An interpretation panel tells you all about the site and has a map to show you where the buildings are. The Battery Observation Post is now the NCI Watch Station.

The National Coastwatch Institution lookout point stands at 209 feet (63.7m) above sea level and has an excellent field of view. Trained and qualified volunteer watchkeepers share daylight watches operating everyday throughout the year, providing eyes and ears along the coast, ready to help with emergencies which might arise. You can pop into the lookout to see what is going on if someone is there, there is also a visitor centre in the buildings nearby.

Coleton Fishacre was built in the 1920s by the D'Oyly Carte family (of opera fame) as a holiday home. The house was built in the Arts and Crafts style and is imbued with Art Deco style of the Jazz Age. The 24-acre garden lies in a moist and sheltered valley and is planted with many exotic species from the Mediterranean, South Africa and New Zealand, which thrive here.

The family built a tidal swimming pool at Pudcombe Cove, the small beach below the house. The family enjoyed an outdoors lifestyle and entertaining their friends at the beautiful countryside residence. You can still see remains of the pool on the beach, as well as great views out along the coast from the viewing point, although erosion has meant the steps down to the beach are no longer accessible.

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

Landscape and wildlife

Much of the area around Froward Point is owned by the National Trust. The Trust works with its tenant farmers, with funding from Natural England, to manage the cultivated land for farmland birds and rare arable plants. Many of the fields are home to the Skylark, a species declining on farmland in many areas. The liquid song of this crested bird can often be heard as it rises in its characteristic songflight. The Linnet, a sociable ground-feeding finch is also found here, as is the rare Cirl Bunting, with its yellow and black facial stripes and green-brown plumage. Among the rare arable flowers in these fields are the pink lipped flowers of the lesser snapdragon, the bright blue cornflower and the purple and yellow flowers of the sharp-leaved Fluellen.

The conifers you pass after leaving the battery are Monterey and Corsican pines, which are tolerant of salt winds and harsh weather, and so thrive in coastal situations. Keep an eye out for peregrine falcons particularly as you pass high above Newfoundland Cove. With blue-grey plumage above and white and dark bars below, this falcon is the world's fastest animal. When swooping to catch their prey, it can reach speeds of more than 200 miles per hour.

The large outcropping of rock you can see as you round the headland from Froward is the Mewstone, popular with seabirds including Razorbill and Guillemots, who roost and nest here. It is also the most easterly haul out point for Grey Seals in the English Channel – you can regularly spot them on the rocks at low tide or swimming around the island. This rocky island, along with many in the area, got its name from the old Devon word for gull – Mew, probably taken from the sound it makes when calling.

The cliff tops are ablaze in Spring with coastal wildflowers, including massive swathes of primroses and violets on the open tops between Old Mill Bay and Pudcombe cove and bluebells in the wooded copses nearer to Coleton Fishacre.

You can often find Lizards basking in the sun on the warm rocks near to the coastal path and sometimes, if you are lucky, pods of common dolphins or harbour porpoise swimming out at sea.

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Working in partnership



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas has supported Explore South Devon to promote circular walks within the South Devon AONB using the South West Coast Path National Trail.



South West Coast Path Association