

Ringmore and Bigbury



- Start:** | Bigbury-on-Sea Car Park

- Distance:** | 3.75 miles

- Difficulty:** | Moderate to Strenuous. 4 stiles; 3 steep ascents; 2 steep descents.

- Terrain:** | Fairly even underfoot. Field footpaths; coastal footpath; green lanes; surfaced roads.

- Parking:** | Bigbury-on-Sea Car Park. Pay and display.

- OS map:** | Explorer OL20

- Grid Ref:** | SX 651442

- Public transport:** | See www.travelinesw.com

- Refreshments:** | In Ringmore and Bigbury

- Toilets:** | Bigbury-on-Sea Car Park, Bigbury; at Challaborough, just inside entrance to Challaborough Bay Holiday Park, on left.

This walk is available in the following formats from www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walk

online walk	downloadable PDF	downloadable route map onto your device
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South West Coast Path walking app – enhanced content with photos, audio and film.



Directions

- 1** Exit car park up driveway at top left, passing below the red phone box. Bear left through overflow car park, signed 'Coast Path to Challaborough'. Bear left along road.
- 2** By sign for Ringmore Drive bear left onto track, which drops down to Challaborough.
- 3** Follow road behind beach. 40m past entrance to holiday park, turn right in front of recycling facilities then immediately left, following fingerpost around back of garage and along coast path, signed for Ayrmer Cove.
- 4** Follow coast path along the cliffs. At Ayrmer Cove follow path behind beach over footbridge. At far end of beach turn right and follow footpath inland along fence line and then green lane.
- 5** Path curves to pass round back of Lower Manor Farm. Follow road up to village.
- 6** By the church, turn right, signed for Challaborough. After 130m bear left down a track between The Nook and post box, which leads onto a public footpath.
- 7** At the gate, take right hand footpath straight down field to bottom of valley, then across stream and up the other side.
- 8** Cross road at top and follow footpath down into next valley and again up the other side.
- 9** At the fingerpost at the top of the hill turn right and follow ridge path down to Bigbury.
- 10** Join road down into village. Where the road curves left, cross straight over and down to car park

Further Interest

Heritage

A monastery once occupied Burgh Island, just off the shore from Bigbury. A small chapel was built on the highest point of the island in medieval times, and you can still see the remains of a building there today. This was a 'huer's hut', occupied by a lookout who would scan the seas for shoals of pilchard. When he spied one, he would shout and holler, bringing fishermen running for their boats. At one time, local boats might land as many as a million fish in a day.

The Pilchard Inn on the island dates from the 14th century. It was once the haunt of notorious Elizabethan smuggler Tom Crocker – and the place where he was eventually shot dead by the customs men. A tunnel, now bricked up, used to connect the inn to a cave on the beach where his smuggled goods were landed.

In the 1920s, Burgh Island was a trendy destination for the rich, famous and fashionable who came to stay at the hotel there. The hotel remains open, and is one the best survivors of the art deco era.

The village of Ringmore is first mentioned as the manor of Reimora in the Domesday Book of 1086. In fact, there was probably a settlement there well before then.

Ringmore's pub, Journey's End, takes its name from the famous play by R.C. Sherriff about life in the WWI trenches, said to have been written at the inn. Before this, the pub, originally built to house the labourers who built the church, seems to have had a colourful history. Although described in a church document of 1685 as 'a house of good order', and used for meetings of the very respectable Town Council, it actually had a false wall concealing a secret room where smugglers hid their contraband.

All Hallows Church, Ringmore, was built around 1240. By the 19th century it was in a sorry state, to the extent that its rotting pews occasionally collapsed under worshippers during services. However, the little church was pulled back from the brink by an energetic Victorian rector, Francis Hingeston, and today it is well kept, and open to visitors.



This walk along with many more can be downloaded from www.southdevonaonb.org.uk

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

Another dynamic Ringmore rector, William Lane, roused local men to fight for the king during the English Civil War. He fired cannon at Roundhead soldiers crossing the bridge at nearby Aveton Gifford. Seeking revenge, Roundhead troops landed at Ayrmer Cove and came after him. However, the rector stayed hidden in the church tower in Ringmore for 3 months, before managing to escape to France.

Wildlife

Tree Mallows grow along the cliff edges, particularly at Bigbury. They have woody stems a little like brassica stalks, and large velvety leaves. They produce clusters of pinkish flowers with purple veins on the petals, and plants are generally anything from 50cm to 2 metres tall, or more.

On the cliffs, especially between Bigbury and Challacombe, you can find a wild relative of our cultivated spinach, Sea Beet. Look out for its clumps of thick, dark green leaves among the rough grassland of the cliffs. The leaves are edible, and tasty, although with a bit of a strong aftertaste!

Wild Carrot, another country cousin of a garden vegetable, also grows along these cliffs, this time more commonly between Challacombe and Ayrmer Cove. Also known as Queen Anne's Lace, it has delicate ferny, feathery leaves. It produces rosettes of massed tiny white flowers, often with a light blush in the centre of the flowerhead.

In places the cliffs beyond Challacombe are peppered with Rabbit warrens. This is ideal habitat for rabbits, as they prefer dry well-drained grassland, and the gradual crumbling of these cliffs probably loosens up the soil to make digging easier. It is also nice and open up here, which means that it would be difficult for any predators to get too close without being spotted.

Hazel trees line the hedge bank along the green lane from Ayrmer Cove to Ringmore. Hazel catkins – and the tiny deep red female flowers that poke out from the ends of certain buds – are among the first signs of spring. Later in the year, hazel nuts are a very important food source for, amongst others, the rare, golden-coloured dormouse.

Along lanes and hedgerows inland you may glimpse a Sparrowhawk. This deadly hunter preys on smaller birds, and has a long tail to help it manoeuvre at high speed. It never hovers or soars, but zips along between trees or low along hedges, often switching suddenly up and over a hedgerow to surprise a bird on the other side.

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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.

