

## Woodhuish and Mansands



- Start:** | Scabbacombe Car Park, Scabbacombe Lane

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- Distance:** | 3.5 miles

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- Difficulty:** | Moderate to Strenuous. 1 stile; 2 steep ascents; 1 steep descent.

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- Terrain:** | Fairly even coastal footpath; green lane with soggy and muddy sections in wet weather; surfaced road

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- Parking:** | National Trust car park, Scabbacombe. Charges apply. Free for NT members.

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- OS map:** | Explorer OL20

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- Grid Ref:** | SX 912 523

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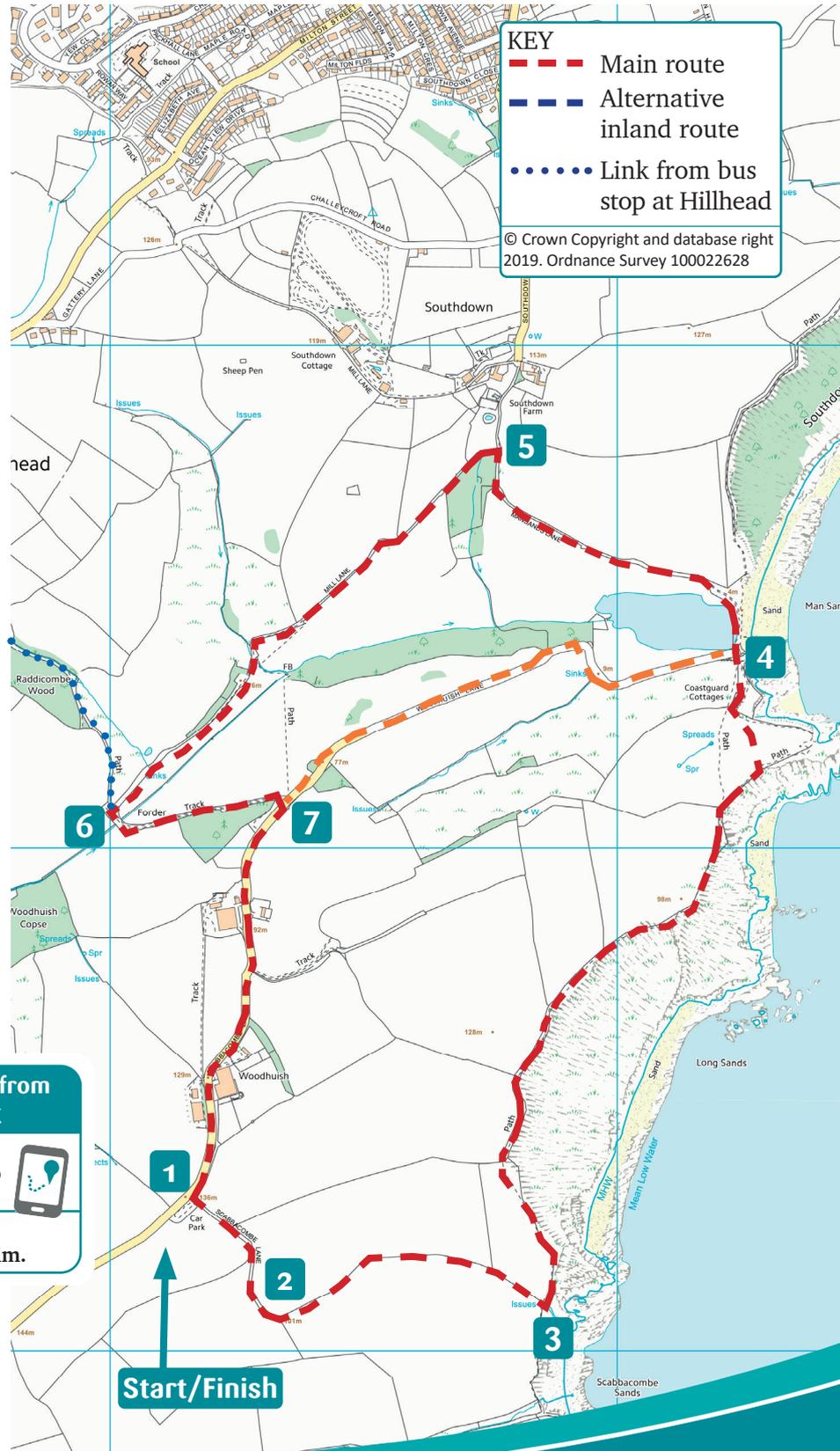
- Public transport:** | See [www.travelinesw.com](http://www.travelinesw.com)

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- Refreshments:** | In Kingswear and Brixham.

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- Toilets:** | Nearest public toilets by ferry slipway, Kingswear or Quayside Harbour, Brixham.



This walk is available in the following formats from [www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walk](http://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 Leave car park through gate and follow green lane down hill signed 'Scabbacombe Sands Link to Coast Path'.
- 2 Where you enter field, follow left hand field edge down.
- 3 At the bottom, if you wish, detour right to visit Scabbacombe Sands then retrace your steps. Otherwise, turn left and follow coast path, climbing steeply over the cliffs and dropping down to Mansands.
- 4 Cross the shingle bar between the former lagoon and beach taking particular care crossing the stream bed, then bear left along footpath up Mansands Lane. (If you would prefer not to risk wet feet – follow the yellow arrow signed Woodhuish Lane)
- 5 At the next junction turn left.
- 6 At the following junction turn left signed 'Woodhuish Lane'.
- 7 At the top turn right and follow road for ½ mile back to car park on left.

## Further Interest

### Heritage

The low whitewashed houses by Mansands beach were originally built by prisoners of war during the Napoleonic wars. They were used as coastguard cottages.

The stone structure by the beach at Mansands is a limekiln. Limestone was burnt in the kiln and the lime used then spread on the fields to reduce the acidity of the soil. It was also used to make lime mortar and lime wash for painting houses.

To try and improve the wheat harvest during the Napoleonic wars, farmers were paid an annual subsidy for having a limekiln on their land during the early 1800s.

Woodhuish Farm houses an old cider press which dates from the 19th century. The press can be viewed in the roadside barn in which it is set, along with information on its use and history. Cider formed part of a farm labourer's pay in times gone by, and was an important part of the rural economy.

### Landscape

This stretch of the coast is in the ownership of the National Trust, which manages the land for conservation and public enjoyment. For more details about the National Trust visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

On the cliffs above Long Sands, you may see the dark shapes of Hebridean Sheep, which are being used to graze the cliffs and maintain the unimproved coastal grassland.

The back of the beach at Mansands used to be protected from erosion by rock filled steel baskets called gabions. The National Trust decided to let natural processes take their course, and in 2004 removed these basic sea defences.

In 2005 the National Trust created a freshwater lagoon, Mansands Ley, behind the beach. The Trust expected that at some point rising sea levels would probably mean that the Ley would be breached by the tide. In fact, this happened sooner than expected, in the spring of 2007 during a large storm. It is not intended to try and restore the Ley, but instead to work with the changing ecological conditions there, allowing the sea to mould this area of the coast.

The route back from Mansands takes you along part of an intricate network of green lanes. These were the ancient rural communication routes, used by drovers, traders and smugglers. The lanes running down to the sea here were probably once used by fisher- farmers. In the past the threat of seafaring raiders meant it was too hazardous to live right on the coast, and most people settled a mile or two inland for safety.



This walk along with many more can be downloaded from [www.southdevonaonb.org.uk](http://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk)

# South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

## Wildlife

Fulmars have formed a colony on the cliffs by Scabbacombe Sands. This is a bird of the open ocean which returns to the coast to breed. The fulmar resembles a gull in build, but with a shorter, thicker neck, and glides smoothly around the cliffs on straight, stiff wings. It has an appealing baby- faced appearance, but spits a foul- smelling oil at anything which gets too close.

The cliffs are rich in wildflowers, including the Early Purple Orchid, which has elegant spikes of lipped flowers and pointed narrow oval leaves with dark blotches. Other species include the delicate white sprays of Greater Stitchwort and Oxeye Daisy.

You may also see the tall Teasel growing along the cliff-top. It produces cones of pale purple flowers, the spiky flowerheads remaining after the blooms have gone. They are often found in dried flower displays, and were also used to card wool and to raise the nap of woven cloth. This process of 'teasing' out the fibres gave the plant its name.

Grass Snakes are found around Mansands Ley. This grey-green snake is around a metre long with striking black lines on the face, and often dark spots along the body. It swims, with its head above water, but catches most of its prey in underwater dives. When threatened, the grass snake puffs up its body and hisses, then produces a foul- smelling liquid to put off attackers. If none of this works, it rolls on its back and pretends to be dead.

The habitat of Mansands Ley changed dramatically with the breaching of the lagoon by the sea in the spring of 2007. The future is likely to bring different species, with fewer wildfowl and more wading birds, which prefer brackish waters. The environment down at Mansands is in a state of flux, and so the list of likely wildlife sightings given below is liable to change!

Wildfowl on Mansands Ley have included the Tufted Duck, with a bright yellow eye, and dark purple head which sports a 'tuft' at the back and down the neck, like an eccentric haircut. The male Teal has a green band on its brown head, and a green flash on the wing, while the Shoveler has a large broad bill, with the male having a green head and brown and white underparts.

Coots and Moorhens both breed on the Ley. The coot is a round- bodied bird with black plumage and an unmistakable white beak and forehead. The moorhen is fairly similar in shape, but browner, with more of a tail. It has a bright red beak with a yellow tip.

Large flocks of Swallows, House Martins and Sand Martins are drawn to the Ley. As are many wading birds. It is worth looking out for the Ringed Plover – a neat grey- brown and white bird with orange legs and bill, and black and white banding on the head and throat.

The Common Sandpiper has a mottled brown back, a white breast and 'crescent' in front of the wing, and a darker brown strip through the eye. Its cousin, the Green Sandpiper, has a more elongated body and gangly legs.

Sightings of the black and white Oystercatcher are common on the beaches at Scabbacombe and Mansands. Oystercatchers have an orange bill and a piping 'kleep' call.

The diverse habitats on the organic farm at Woodhuish support Barn Owls, along with Greater Horseshoe Bats. This is the classic bat, roosting upside down – sometimes hanging by one leg – and wrapping its wings around its body. Greater horseshoe bat numbers have declined by 90% since 1950, and Devon is one of their last strongholds.

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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.

