

Dartmouth Greenway round



The lower half of the Dart Valley Trail, a great circular walk in itself!

One of the area's truly great walks, this day-long ramble follows the wooded banks of the broad and beautiful Dart estuary, on a route crammed with gems and jewels of human and natural history.

- Start:** | Mayors Avenue car park, Dartmouth. TQ6 9NG

- Distance:** | 9.7 miles (8.7 using alternative inland route)

- Difficulty:** | Moderate to strenuous. 10 stiles (3 can be bypassed); 3 flights of steps; 4 steep ascents; 2 steep descents.

- Terrain:** | Footpaths, fairly even, occasionally muddy through fields in wet weather; surfaced roads.

- Parking:** | Mayors Avenue car park, Dartmouth. TQ6 9NG (length of stay restricted May-Sep). High season option – Dartmouth Park and Ride. Proceed to Mayor's Avenue car park for start of walk.

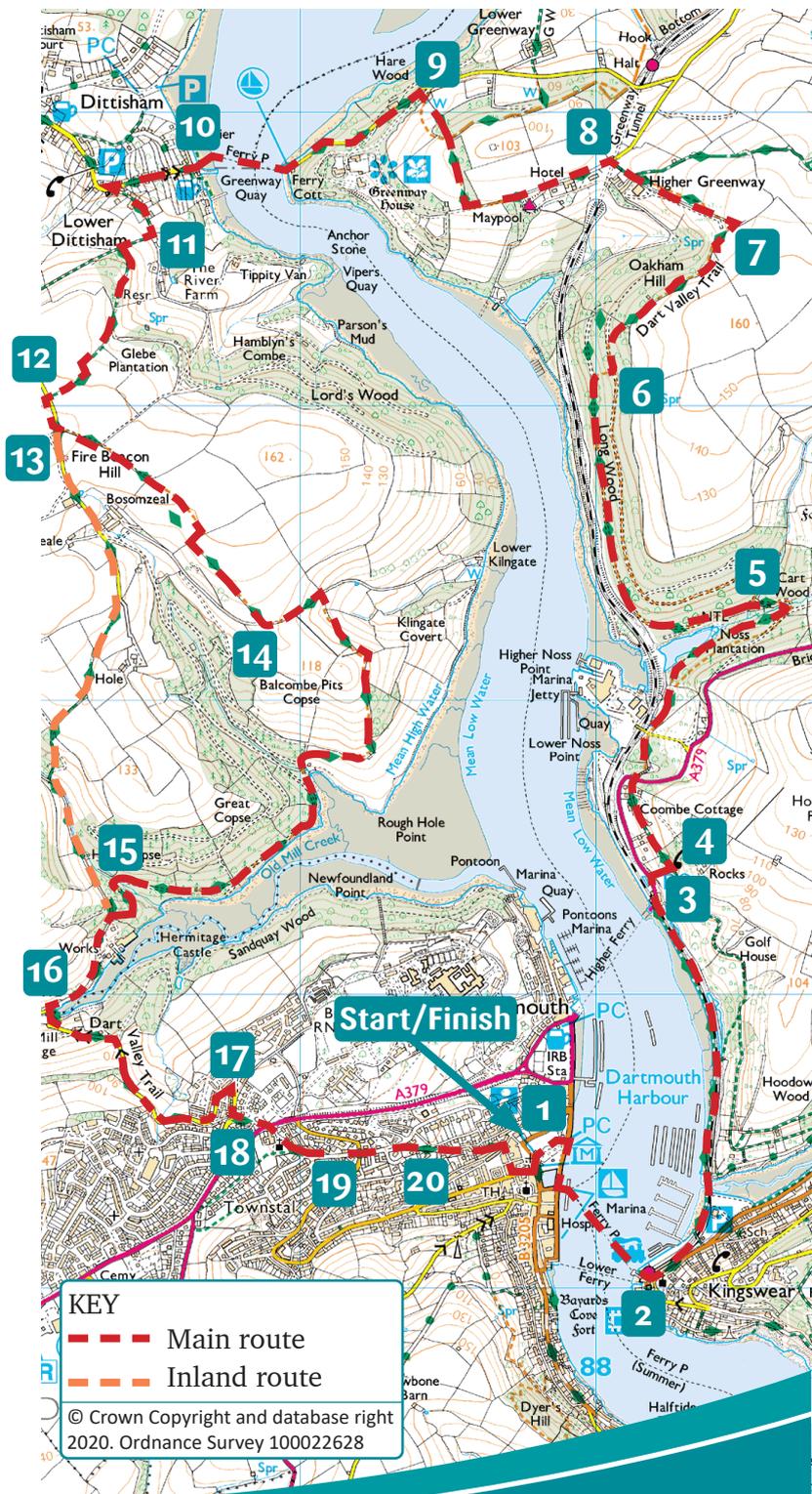
- OS map:** | Explorer OL20

- Grid Ref:** | SX 878 515

- Public transport:** | Buses to Kingswear and Dartmouth – www.travelinesw.com; Steam train to Kingswear www.dartmouthrailriver.co.uk Ferry details at www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walks

- Refreshments:** | In Kingswear, Dartmouth, Dittisham and Greenway Quay

- Toilets:** | On waterfront by Mayor's Avenue Car Park



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Directions

- 1** Leave car park past public toilets and turn right along the waterfront. Just past Station Restaurant turn left onto pontoon. Take passenger ferry to Kingswear.
- 2** From ferry at Kingswear turn left up road. Turn left opposite village stores over railway footbridge and follow yellow- marked footpath alongside railway line.
- 3** At the Higher Ferry slipway, turn right over the level crossing and up road. Just beyond public toilets, bear right up ramp and steps to climb through woods.
- 4** At t- junction, turn left along drive, signed 'Greenway Ferry and Maypool' then at main road take footpath opposite and to left down steps and through woods. At the tarmac drive take footpath opposite and to right, leading into Long Wood.
- 5** At t- junction in woods, turn left and follow track through woods above river. Track eventually curves to right and uphill. Turn left along terrace path.
- 6** After steep climb, turn left over stile and follow path. Part way down hill, cross into field to right over stile and continue down along hedge line.
- 7** At field exit turn left, signed 'Greenway Gardens ¾m'. Pass through gate and down track past houses. Turn left at road.
- 8** Continue through gate. By bench in open field, turn right through gate. Once over brow of hill bear left down field edge path. At the bottom turn right along Greenway Drive.
- 9** By the lodge house turn left down road to quay. Cross river via ferry.
- 10** Walk up road through Dittisham. After 350m, turn sharp left along Rectory Lane.
- 11** Turn right after 250m up track along public footpath. After a further 100m, turn left over stile and follow path up along field edges.
- 12** Turn left at the road. (Alternative easier route from here: continue along road past Bozomzeal then turn right and follow waymarkers through fields and round edge of wood. Turn left down green lane to rejoin main route at the bottom).



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- 13** Main route: After 250m, turn left, signed 'Permissive Path – Old Mill Creek'. Follow well-used track initially then follow waymarkers along field edges.
- 14** Where path meets green lane, turn left. After 200m, turn right down path which leads towards river. After crossing a stile cut diagonally down across next field, and through woods.
- 15** At bottom of steps bear left, and then left again where you join a further track.
- 16** At Old Mill Creek cross over bridge and follow road up out of valley.
- 17** At t- junction in Townstal, turn right along Archway Drive and then first left onto Townstal crescent.
- 18** Cross main road at pedestrian crossing and turn left down hill. Turn first right along Church Rd and down the hill.
- 19** Cross at next junction down Mount Boone. Fork right down Townstal Hill. At the junction with Vicarage Hill carry straight on down the narrow lane, Clarence Hill.
- 20** Turn right down steps of Brown's Hill and bear left. At the bottom, head towards the church tower, along Foss St. At the road turn left. Cross into Royal Avenue Gardens and bear left past toilets into car park.

Further interest

Heritage

Dartmouth developed from two tiny hamlets on either side of a tidal creek to become a tremendously important naval and civilian port. The very earliest settlement in the area was actually up the hill in Townstal – through which you pass as you re-enter Dartmouth to end the walk. Centuries ago, the threat of seafaring raiders made living down on the waterfront too hazardous, so settlers perched their dwellings on the high ground away from the water.

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The grand- looking building up on the hill above Dartmouth is the Royal Britannia Naval College. The institution has trained officers here since 1905, including Prince Charles and Prince Andrew.

Greenway House and its 300 acre estate, given to the National Trust in 2000, has a long and illustrious history. Best known as the home of Agatha Christie, Greenway was also the birthplace of the Elizabethan explorer Sir Humphrey Gilbert, and a haunt of his half-brother Sir Walter Raleigh.

Gilbert founded the colony of Newfoundland while searching for the North West Passage. He was the father of the famous cod industry of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland – a place where the waters were at that time said to be so teeming with fish that you could walk across the surface of the sea on their backs. Many local men were shipped across the Atlantic to work catching, salting and drying the cod.

Further downstream from Greenway – and visible from the Estate and several other points on the walk - are the old shipyards sited on both sides of the estuary. Dartmouth's biggest employer for over 100 years, the yards built all kinds of vessels, including the steel yacht in which Chay Blyth sailed around the world from East to West.

From Greenway Quay, you can see Guro Point, across the water and a little upstream. From this low promontory in 1894, early aviator Albert Liwentaal flew a plane he had designed and built himself. The plane got off the ground successfully, but unfortunately 'landed' again in the river!

On the top of the hill beyond Dittisham, you will see the basket of a fire beacon. The original beacon was sited up here to raise the alarm on the sighting of the Spanish Armada in 1588.

Since early times a ferry must have existed between Dittisham and Greenway. In the days before motor transport, goods, people and cattle were carried by boat between local villages and towns. At the beginning of this century it was a common sight to see cattle driven down Manor Street; sometimes penned overnight, in what is now the Pound House and taken on the horse ferry to Greenway Quay, to be driven to the Tuesday market in Galmpton.



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The horse ferry was a float propelled by two extra long oars - and very strong men! This was succeeded in later years by a float pushed by a launch which could carry two cars. This in turn was replaced by a 'water jet' ferry which carried six cars. That ferry finally finished in 1974. There is now only a passenger ferry, and it is traditionally still summoned by ringing the bell.

Just before the head of Old Mill Creek you might spot an old piece of slatey stone with a 'C' on it, by the side of the road. This dates right back to the time of Henry VIII. Local monasteries used to keep up the roads, but after they were dissolved, county authorities agreed to maintain the roads for 100 yards either side of bridges. The 'C'- stone marks the spot where their work stopped.

At the top of the town of Dartmouth you pass by the Church of St Clement. This is the oldest church in Dartmouth, and may even have been founded by the Vikings, who revered St Clement. It remained the 'mother church' which Dartmouth people had to attend until the 14th Century. Your walk back down into Dartmouth is a historical one along old medieval streets. The stepped lane of Brown's Hill was once the only route into Dartmouth. Known in past times as 'Slippery Causeway', it was usable only by packhorses which meant that carriages could not enter the town at all.

Landscape

The waterfront area of Dartmouth, through which you walk as you begin your route, used to be underwater – as did much of the lower part of the town. This part of the Dart estuary was once a more sprawling affair, and was gradually reclaimed over the centuries for quays and housing.

'Dart' is an old English word for 'oak'. You can see where the name came from on this walk, as the estuary is fringed with oak trees for much of its length. Oaks support more other organisms – birds, animals, plants, ferns, mosses, lichens, and especially insects – than any other kind of tree in this country.

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Until around a hundred years ago, the oaks in Long Wood were harvested by cutting them periodically and then allowing them to re-grow – a practise known as coppicing. This produced bark for use in tanning leather, and wood for charcoal making. Old charcoal burning sites can still be found in the wood. The National Trust now manages Long Wood for conservation, access and landscape. For more information on the Trust visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk

The wooded National Trust gardens at Greenway are planted with many native wildflowers and have ‘an atmosphere of wildness and timelessness’. Originally landscaped using prisoners from the Spanish Armada, the gardens also contain rare trees, shrubs – particularly magnolias and rhododendrons – and many exotic southern hemisphere plants. They are open to the public from March to October.

Wildlife

Seals follow the salty waters of the estuary upstream and are not an uncommon sight. Look out for their long- muzzled, whiskered heads bobbing just above the surface as they ‘hang’ in the water between dives. The estuary is rich in birdlife. Herons nest in the waterside trees on the Greenway Estate. You can see these tall birds standing motionless by the water’s edge, or flying overhead with ponderous grace on long slow wing beats, their necks tucked back in on themselves.

Wading birds feed on the shore, following the tide out. You may see small flocks of white- breasted, brownish- backed dunlin, along with orange- billed oystercatcher. Turnstones have short bills, short orange legs, black breasts and white undersides. Flocks of them ferret around in the seaweed and debris on the shore. Curlews – whose name comes from the sound of their piping call – can also be seen

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here, as can Ringed Plovers, with their orange bills, black and white heads, and a distinctive black ring around the neck.

Woodland birds include Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, and the bounding flight of the red, black and white Great Spotted Woodpecker. The National Trust estate at Greenway is managed particularly for farmland birds. These include Yellowhammers, with their unmistakable brilliant yellow heads, and the rare Gull Bunting, a small green and brown bird with a black and yellow striped face. You may also hear the airborne Skylark’s liquid song from high above these fields.

Long Wood is home to the Silver- Washed Fritillary butterfly. This large and handsome fritillary has deep orange wings with black markings. Roe deer also find shelter in Long Wood. The Roe is a fairly small and delicate deer, with short antlers. It is a rich brown in colour, with a white patch at the rump and a large black nose.

As you walk up the hill towards Greenway gardens, butcher’s broom can be seen growing in the woodland edge to the right. This spiky, spiny little shrub has small oval leaves clustered up its stems, and bright red berries. Bundles of it were once used to scour butchers’ blocks, and were made into prickly ‘tents’ around meat to keep the mice off.

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 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.