

Torcross Shore Explorer



A stroll along Slapton Line

Find out more about Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve and the Shingle Ridge, on this short trail with fabulous views over the coast and the lake.

Start:	Torcross car park, TQ7 2TQ
Distance:	2.5 miles
Difficulty:	Easy
Terrain:	Surfaced and unsurfaced paths.
Parking:	Torcross car park, TQ7 2TQ
OS map:	Explorer OL20
Grid Ref:	SX SX 824 423
Public transport:	Buses to Torcross – www.travelinesw.com
Refreshments:	In Torcross
Toilets:	Torcross car park

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



online walk



downloadable PDF

downloadable route map onto your device

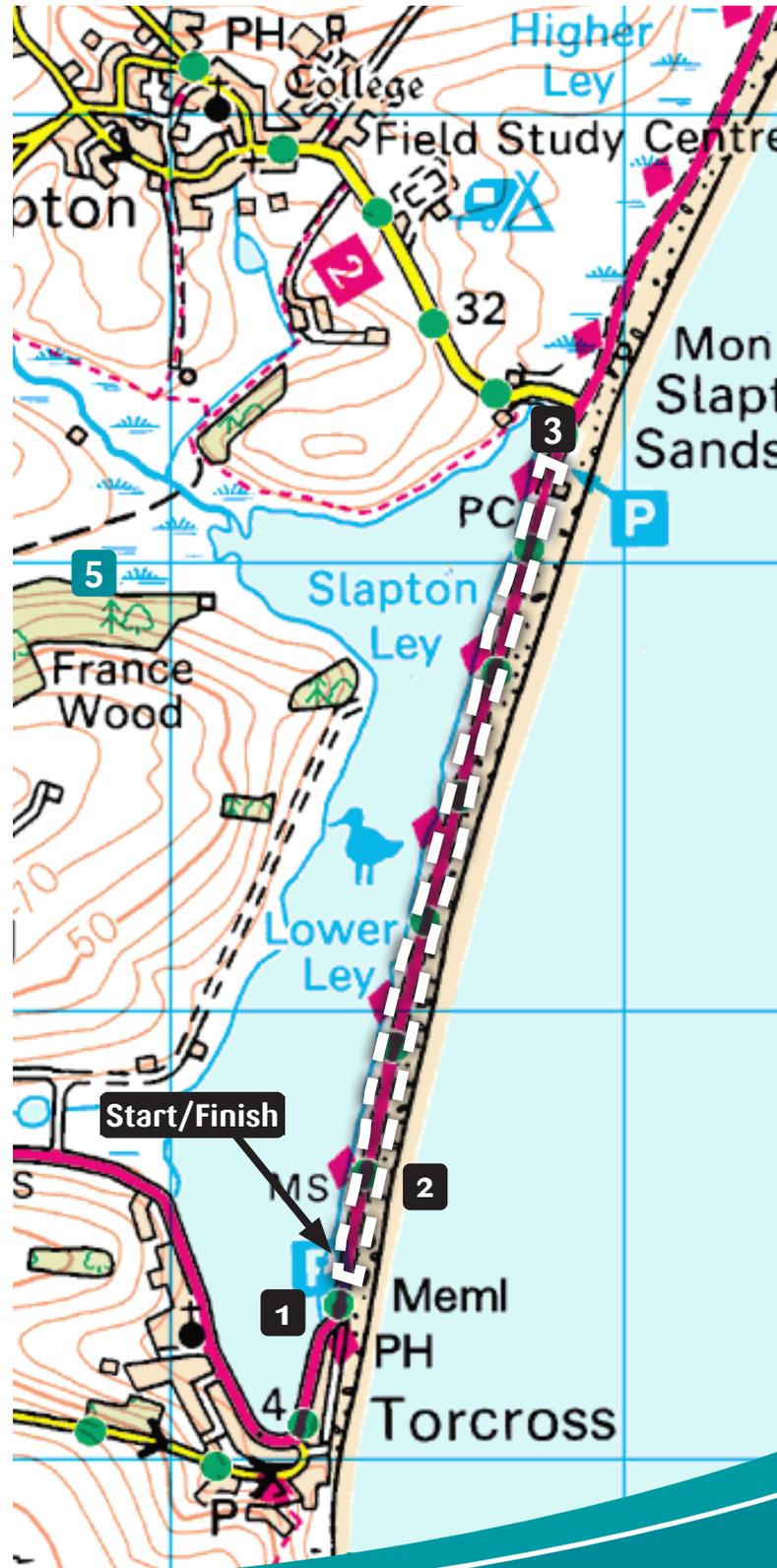


Southwest coast path walking app – enhanced content with photos, audio and film.

KEY

— Main route

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Directions

- 1** Leave the car park, crossing the road over towards the beach and turn left.
- 2** Walk along the beach side path up towards the middle car park.
- 3** Cross the road over to follow the path on the Ley side of the road back to the car park.

Further information

Sea-side Route

A - The beach: Slapton Sands is actually made from shingle, small pieces of rock eroded by waves and currents. The shingle constantly moves around the bay. Longshore drift means the waves hit the shore at an angle and then moves the stones along the beach. Watch the waves and you will see that they don't always go in and out in a straight line! Persistent strong easterly winds can move large amounts of shingle along the beach, and in extreme cases, can cause damage to the village and road.

B - A sea view: From here you can really enjoy the full sweep of Start Bay, from the lighthouse at Start Point right over to the entrance of the Dart estuary, shown by the Daymark Tower on the top of the hill. At the north end of Slapton line is Strete Gate with Torcross at the southern end. The bay is wide and deep and is rich with fish and marine life. It is a popular spot for many watersports and you will often see paragliders taking off from Strete, floating out on the thermals rising as the warm air hits the cliffs.

C - A defensive strategy: It is hard to imagine what this beach looked like during World War 2. Lines of barbed wire and fences ran all along the coastline, pillboxes and gun emplacements were placed to hamper any invading forces. A large area around here was evacuated and the beach was used by American troops in practise for D Day landings. The memorial was unveiled in 1954 by US Army authorities, to thank those who gave up their homes and lands to provide a battle training area. More information on the wartime story can be seen at The Start Bay Inn.



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D - A hardy bunch! Slapton sands is a shingle bar dividing the freshwater Ley from the sea. The shingle is quite unstable and it is hard for plants to become established. But there are a few species which flourish in this harsh environment and they make up a rare and beautiful community. These pioneer plants have amazing adaptations which allow them to survive here, in particular to collect and hold onto any water they can find. The yellow-horned poppy and sea kale have thick, waxy leaves to prevent water loss and a bluish white tinge to reflect sunlight and help prevent sun burn! Rest harrow forms a mat to stabilize the shingle and also helps make nitrogen to enrich the small amount of soil which forms.

Ley-side Route

E - The Royal Sands Hotel and sport on the Ley:

The hotel was built in the 19th century, at the same time as the turnpike road from Kingsbridge to Dartmouth. It stood where the middle car park now stands. The hotel had become renowned for fishing and shooting. It boasted a full size billiard room, coffee room, sitting room, bar and 13 bed and sitting rooms. During the war, whilst the area was evacuated, the hotel was blown up. It is said that the culprit was a stray dog, who had walked into the area and set off one of the mines that was laid around the hotel. It is likely that it was hit many times by naval shells and bombs.

F - Tudor fortifications and a drawbridge: Henry VIII ordered a series of sea defences to be built along the south coast. After his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, he felt the country may be at risk from reprisals and an easy target for attack. A fantastic map was drawn up of his plans, with fortifications ranging from full castles to artillery towers and earthworks. The map shows Slapton, protected by the Ley acting as a moat, with towers at each end. A drawbridge was planned to cross the water to get to the village. This, as with a lot of other work that was planned, was never carried out.

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

G - Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve: Slapton Ley National Nature Reserve (NNR) covers an area of 214 hectares (around 530 acres); the reserve has a diverse range of habitats including the beach, shingle ridge, woodland and freshwater and surrounding vegetation. Slapton Ley is the largest natural lake in south-west England. Although it is only separated from the sea by a narrow shingle bar, it is entirely freshwater. The lake is surrounded by reedbeds, marshes and woodland habitats. Slapton Ley NNR is an important staging post for wintering and passage birds including swallows. If you are lucky you might catch a glimpse of badgers, otters, dormice and bats. 250 species of lichen and 2000 species of fungi have been found here, 29 of which have been described as new to science.

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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 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.