

## Totnes town trail



Discover the Totnes of times gone by

A walk through Totnes' narrow streets to discover a town crammed full of history. This walk can be extended by following the River Dart to nearby Dartington along the riverside path.

- Start:** | Totnes Wills Memorial Monument on the Plains, TQ9 5DR

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- Distance:** | 1 mile, approx 1 hours walk

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- Difficulty:** | Easy to moderate. Steep climb in High Street

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- Terrain:** | Surfaced paths.

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- Parking:** | Victoria St. car park, Totnes TQ9 5EF (short stay), North St. car park, Totnes TQ9 5NZ (long stay)

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- OS map:** | Explorer OL20

- Grid Ref:** | SX 805 602

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- Public transport:** | Buses and train to Totnes – [www.travelinesw.com](http://www.travelinesw.com)

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- Refreshments:** | In Totnes

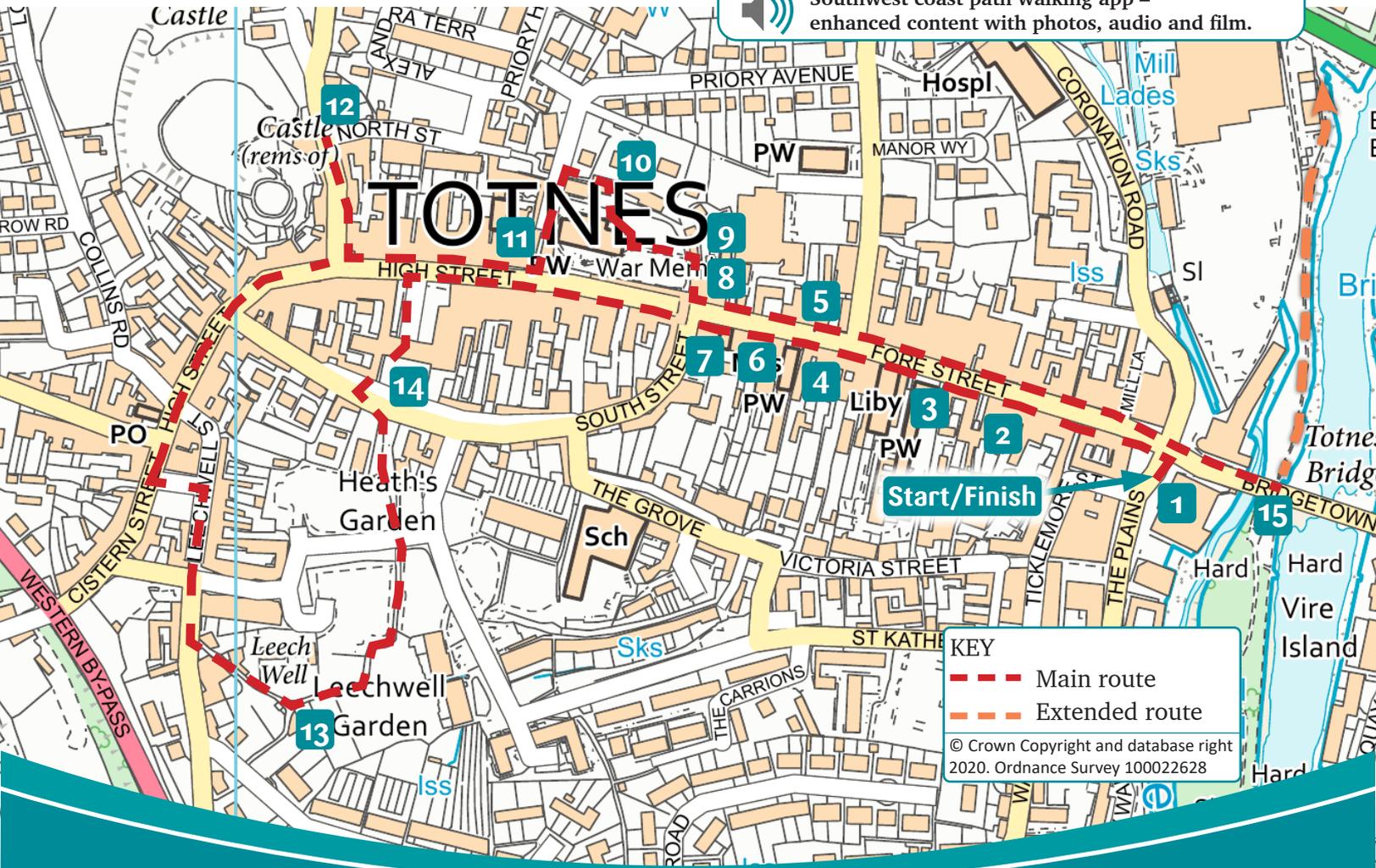
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- Toilets:** | Just off Coronation Rd, opposite Morrisons or underneath the Civic Hall steps in the market place

This walk is available in the following formats from [www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walks](http://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walks)

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



# South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

## Directions

- 1 The Plains:** The walk starts from the Wills Memorial monument on The Plains. This is an elegant open area and many of the riverside warehouses that once stored cider, apples, bacon, grain and timber have now been sympathetically restored for residential use. The granite obelisk commemorates explorer William Wills, born at No 3 The Plains. In 1860-61 he crossed Australia, but sadly he and others perished on the return journey. Across the square you will see the Royal Seven Stars Hotel which was an old coaching inn. One of its notable guests in the early eighteenth century was the writer Daniel Defoe. It was given the prefix 'Royal' as all male members of the royal family frequented it when cadets at Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth. Turn left into Fore Street, which is lined with fine buildings dating from Tudor to Victorian times
- 2 The Gothic House:** As you walk up Fore Street, look to the left, down Bank Lane. Here you will see a curious house whose façade features castellations and sharply pointed windows. It is built in a style known as 'Strawberry Hill Gothic'. It also has the unusual distinction of having a Public Right of Way pass right through it. Continue on up the hill until you reach the Mansion, on your left hand side.
- 3 The Mansion:** This fine redbrick Georgian mansion was built in 1795 and has been a centre of education in Totnes for over 100 years. The Totnes Grammar School (which was founded in 1553) occupied the building from 1887 until the 1960's. The Mansion is the main centre for community education in Totnes.
- 4 Atherton Lane:** On your left as you climb Fore Street is Atherton Lane, one of the narrowest of side streets. In summer a profusion of flowers spill from the pots and urns outside the neat little houses.



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- 5 The Brutus Stone:** is set into the pavement exactly opposite Atherton Lane. In the 12th Century the historian, Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote about the landing in Totnes of Brutus the Trojan. It was believed that Britain takes its name from him. Royal proclamations over the centuries have been read out on the stone by the mayor and the custom continues to this day.
- 6 Totnes Museum:** Further up on your left, the museum is a fine example of an Elizabethan merchant's house. Behind what was the merchant's shop at the front, there is a cobbled courtyard leading to a kitchen and storeroom. Beyond there is an authentic Tudor herb garden which you can see if you visit. The building houses period furniture, costumes, toys and games. It also contains a special exhibition devoted to Charles Babbage, a 19th century mathematician who is the acknowledged 'Father of the computer'. He was educated at the Grammar School.
- 7 The East Gate:** Look up the hill and you will see the East Gate spanning Fore Street. One of the two surviving town gates, widened for traffic in the 19th Century, it was badly damaged in 1990 by a fire that spread into the surrounding historic buildings. The clock tower houses the Totnes School of English which was founded in 1980 and offers courses in English Language to students from all over the World. From here, Fore Street becomes High Street.
- 8 Rampart's Walk:** At the East Gate, turn right up the steps and follow Ramparts Walk. The route follows the line of the old town walls. Acid-loving lichens grow on the top of this granite-capped wall, whereas wall rue, mosses, maidenhair fern, spleenwort, ivy-leaved toadflax and valerian prefer the alkaline lime mortar between the stones. Compare this with the section where a cement mortar has been used and very little grows. Turn left to enter the churchyard.

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- 9 St Mary's Church:** Walk through the line of Medlar trees towards the main tower of the church. The church was built in the 15th Century on the site of Totnes Priory. It has a 120 foot tower made of red sandstone from Paignton. Notice the marks on the sandstone blocks which were made by arrows being sharpened on the stones. Go and have a look inside this beautiful church – it contains a fine wooden rood-screen and is well worth exploring. Return to the trail by walking down the steps which are to the right of the tower and lead to the Guildhall.
- 10 The Guildhall - from priory to prison:** In 1553 Edward VI granted the town the refectory buildings of the former Norman Priory for a guildhall, school and prison. In the 19th Century, the King Edward VI Grammar School moved to Fore Street and the prison was closed, but the building is still used as a guildhall. Town Council meetings are regularly held here. Its Dartmoor granite pillars used to be in High Street supporting the old corn exchange but were removed in 1878 to open up the view of the church. Look at the top of the pillars and you will see an inscription of their original date of 1616. If you look at your feet by the base of the lamp-post you will see the inscription 'LA 1615' picked out in cobblestones. These are the initials of a former mayor and the year of his office. The Guildhall is open to the public during the holiday season. From the Guildhall, turn right past Guildhall Cottage and then immediately left into Church Close and walk back towards the High Street. Before you turn right up the hill, look across the street at the grotesque masks scowling down at you. These date from when the building was once a theatre and are just some of the interesting features on the buildings along the street - so keep looking up!
- 11 The Butterwalk:** Turn right into the High Street and continue up the hill. The covered walkway in front of the shops is known as The Butterwalk. In Tudor times the shops were open fronted stalls with accommodation above. The Butterwalk was built to protect the dairy products sold here from the sun and rain, whilst the covered walkway opposite protected poultry stalls. The open market place was the site of the flesh shambles, where meat was sold. After leaving The Butterwalk, turn right into Castle Street. Just before the North Gate to your left, stands the Castle.
- 12 Totnes Castle:** This is a fine example of a Norman motte and bailey castle, built in the 11th Century by Judhael of Totnes. Approximately 95 homes were recorded here in the Domesday Book of 1086 but were destroyed soon afterwards to build the castle. The castle is open to the public during the summer months and is well worth a visit for the magnificent panoramic views of Dartmoor and the South Hams from the ramparts. You can also pick out the original medieval shape of the town. From the castle, return to the High Street, turn right and walk through The Narrows towards the site of the old West Gate. Turn left across the open space area called The Rotherfold and walk up Leechwell Street, towards the Kingsbridge Inn. On your right is the site of the old sheep market, the cattle market (now a car park) is on your left. Turn left in front of the Kingsbridge Inn, down the narrow lane signposted 'To the Historic Leech Wells'.
- 13 The Leechwells:** These natural springs were claimed to have medicinal properties and were often visited by lepers from the nearby colony. Records in Totnes Museum show that in 1444 two wardens were responsible for their care. The three troughs are known as snake, toad and long crippler. Beyond the wells, the banks are damp and dark, and mosses, lichen, lords and ladies, herb robert and celandine thrive.



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# South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

**14 The Civic Hall and Market Place:** Follow the lane out to the road. Turn right between the car parks, then left. Go up the slope, in front of you. The Civic Hall and market place are ahead of you at the end of the car park. Market day is Friday, when this area is a hive of activity. From here walk out to the High Street, turn right and walk downhill and straight across The Plains to the bridge.

**15 Totnes Bridge and the River:** This site has long been a bridging point. In 1210 a narrow stone bridge replaced a wooden bridge built in the 12th century, but not until 1828 was it replaced by the present day Georgian structure. Its architect was Charles Fowler who was also responsible for Covent Garden Market. Vire Island below the bridge is a public park, named after Totnes' twin town in Normandy.

If you would like to extend your route, you can follow this path along the river all the way up to Dartington Estate. It is a pleasant easy route with woodland and riverside views. The Estate has plenty of footpaths, gardens, refreshment stops and a gallery. See [www.dartington.org](http://www.dartington.org)

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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.