



## Devon's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

This leaflet is part of a series of themed trails in Devon's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); helping you get out there, enjoy, and learn more about the landscape around you.

Trail themes include

- Coast in Conflict,
- Man and the Landscape,
- Trade and Settlement and
- A Colourful Landscape.

Have a look at these websites for further leaflets in the series, and ideas for other ways of enjoying yourself out and about!

See [www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk](http://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk),  
[www.southdevonaonb.org.uk](http://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk) and  
[www.discoverdevon.com](http://www.discoverdevon.com)

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the Government's designation for Britain's finest landscapes; there are 40 in England and Wales. Together with Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, Devon's 5 AONBs cover 35% of the county. AONBs share a common commitment to secure sustainable living landscapes. Each AONB has been designated for special attention because of the quality of their flora, fauna, cultural and historical heritage, as well as beautiful scenery.

Their care has been entrusted to local authorities, organisations, community groups, individuals who live and work in them and those who value them.

*Please recycle this leaflet by passing it onto a friend when you have finished with it. Don't let Devon go to waste.*

## Croyde and Saunton Down

- **Start/Finish:** Croyde Village Car Park
- **Distance:** 3.5 miles
- **Circular walk:** Yes      ■ **Grade:** Moderate
- **Terrain:** Coast path, public footpath, surfaced road. Fairly even underfoot, with a few slippery stretches.
- **Obstacles and steep gradients:** 8 flights of steps; 7 stiles
- **Accessibility:** This route is not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs
- **Public transport:** Bus service 308 from Barnstaple and Braunton to Croyde. For further details contact Devon Traveline 0871 200 22 33 or [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)
- **Toilets:** Public toilets at entrance to car park.
- **Parking:** Croyde Village Car Park. Pay and Display
- **Other Facilities:** Public payphone at entrance to car park on left. Village stores and post office opposite car park entrance.
- **Accommodation:** Please contact Braunton Tourist Information Centre 01271 816400 or [www.brauntontic.co.uk](http://www.brauntontic.co.uk) or [www.discoverdevon.com](http://www.discoverdevon.com)
- **OS map:** Explorer 139      ■ **Grid ref:** SS 444392
- **Countryside Code:** When walking in the AONB always follow the Countryside Code, which is dedicated to helping members of the public respect, protect and enjoy the countryside. Follow the link for more information [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk)





## Man and the Landscape

The Devon countryside has been shaped and affected by man for thousands of years, and the land has a fascinating tale to tell.

From scratching at the earth with sticks and bones, to flicking switches in today's sophisticated farm machinery, we have left our mark as we have sought to meet our needs from the land. The result is an epic story of quiet heroism and struggle, ambition and desperation, and triumph and defeat, etched indelibly into the Devon landscape.

Thousands of years ago ancient Celtic tribespeople were creating enclosures and huge earthworks. Saxon settlers imported their unique systems of agriculture, and medieval farmers set out to claw the land back from nature. Clearing heaths and woods acre by hard won acre for cultivation, they made strides which have been built upon by generations of farmers and workers right up to the present day.

The characteristic hedgeways which enclose Devon's fields are jewels in the county's crown. Many of them date back over 800 years and some, incredibly, are up to 4000 years old. These sturdy and beautiful boundaries, spangled with wildflowers in spring and summer, are a haven for wildlife of all kinds.

Thousands of years of toil and muscle have produced the patchwork landscape of field and farm you see today. The earth has been cut, dug, ploughed and moved for as long as man has been here, and it is no exaggeration to say that, as you look out over the countryside, Devon's history really is laid out before you.



## Directions

1. Turn right out of car park **(1,2)**, then right again up Hobb's Hill (main road). Where the pavement ends, cross road with care, then turn left onto Cloutman's Lane.
2. Follow lane, which heads up hill and round sharp right hand bend, then turn right through five barred gate onto public footpath **(3)**.
3. Go straight on at next junction, signed 'Public Footpath to Saunton'. Path follows old green lane up hill **(4)**.
4. Cross first field diagonally to right up hill **(5)**. Head for fingerpost and stile on the skyline, and cross further two fields straight over the saddle of the ridge.
5. At gate overlooking Saunton Sands **(6,7,8)**, bear left, following public footpath down across field. At next fingerpost before abandoned farm, bear right down hill, signed for Saunton Sands.
6. At the bottom of the hill just before the road, turn right signed 'Coast Path' **(9,10)**. Refreshments may be obtained from Saunton Sands Hotel or car park opposite but take care when crossing the road.
7. Where Coast Path drops down steps to main road, cross with extreme care and turn left. Just on the sharp left hand bend, turn right through narrow gap and down steps, following 'coast path' sign on telegraph pole.
8. Follow coast path down and round to the right, along low cliff edge.
9. At path junction beyond two benches, follow 'Coast Path' sign left down steps and along beach to right **(11)**.
10. After 500m, follow edge of stream inland **(12)** to a concrete pipe bridge, and bear right up track. Around the corner, bear left to continue following track.
11. At field, follow line of evergreen trees up left hand edge, to the end of the row. Turn left here, take the gate straight ahead, and follow footpath.
12. At the road turn left, then left again along Jones's Hill. Car park is immediately on left.



## Points of Interest

1. The village of Croyde takes its name from a Viking raider called Crydda, who settled in the area. In the late Saxon period (10th Century), Croyde was a manor belonging to one Ordulf II. The Lord of 19 manors in Devon, Ordulf was said to be a man of exceptional height and might, capable of great feats of strength.
2. These days, a wall encloses the stream running through the village. Before its construction, however, it was not uncommon for someone, usually a late night reveller from the Thatch Inn nearby, to take a tumble into the stream. Local legend tells that anyone landing in the drink in this way automatically earned the title 'Mayor of Croyde'. Their period 'in office' would last until the next unsteady individual fell in!
3. Work has been undertaken on land bordering this stretch of the route as part of a local project to increase and enhance natural habitat. Trees have been planted to provide 'wildlife corridors' with a wild flower meadow created.

4. The route here follows a classic Devon green lane. These ancient routes formed the rural communications network before the coming of surfaced roads. Farmers, traders, smugglers, and drovers relied on these byways in days gone by. This lane is known as Alf's Path, and was in regular use by locals before the building of the coast road round from Saunton in 1903.



5. Farming techniques from well over a millenium ago are imprinted on land on the edge of Croyde. Back then, peasants worked strips the width of a single furrow, within a very large enclosure. As time went on, those who managed to accumulate a few strips together would often enclose them with a hedge. This practice produced the slender oblong fields which survive here to this day.
6. Braunton Burrows is the largest sand dune system in England. The site of invasion practice by American troops before the D-Day landings in World War II, the dunes are still used today by the armed forces for military training exercises.



7. The dunes and beach form the core area of a UNESCO International Biosphere Reserve. This prestigious designation aspires to more than simple conservation. The aim is to bring people and the land together in a harmonious and sustainable living relationship.
8. Peer hard and you can just make out Braunton Marshes. This is the flat, low lying area beyond the rumpled landscape of the Burrows. Once a wilderness of marsh and mudflat, the area was drained and reclaimed in the early 19th Century. The passing of a dedicated Enclosures Act through parliament made this venture possible, and now freshwater drains separate the pasture fields.
9. Ancient cultivation terraces are still visible on the slopes here. It is not known when exactly the hard work of digging these

flat plots into the hillside was carried out. However, it may be that they are a continuation of the Saxon agriculture practised at nearby Braunton.

The best surviving example of a Saxon 'open field system' in Southern England is found just down the road at Braunton. In this method land was worked in huge communal fields surrounding the villages. You can still make out where peasants would have ploughed their skinny single strips of land, sandwiched between those of their neighbours.

10. Among the rocks at the bottom of the cliff are boulders from Western Scotland. They were carried all the way here by the huge ice sheets which moved down over the country during the Ice Ages. These curiosities, which include a 12 tonne boulder of pink granite, are known as 'erratics'.
11. Croyde is rated by many as the best surfing beach in the country. The shape of the coast funnels waves towards the shore, producing fast, fulfilling rides for experienced surfers. It is, however, not the place for beginners. There are strong rip currents, and



the incline of the beach builds powerful waves which 'dump' with considerable force.

- 12. The dunes here are part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), protected particularly because of their importance for plants, amphibians, and for reptiles including lizards.

### Refreshments

These establishments, specialise in local food, are close to the route.

#### Billy Budd's, Hobb's Hill, Croyde

01271 890606

Very popular with surfers, this pub serves drinks, snacks, and meals. Freehouse. Open all day during the season.

#### Hobb's Bistro, 6 Hobb's Hill, Croyde

01271 890256

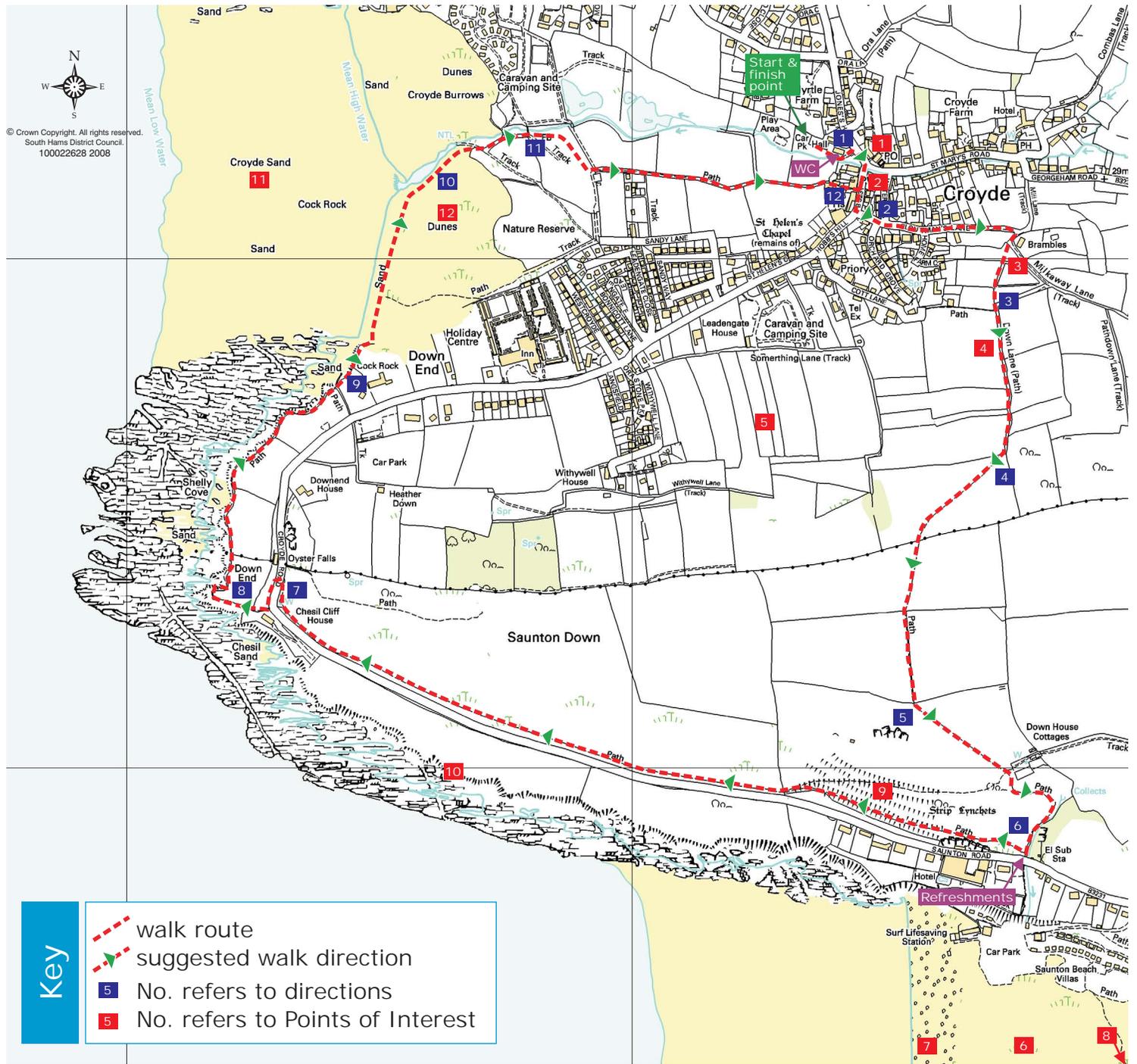
hobbs.croyde@ukonline.co.uk

Mostly open for evening meals – although in some seasons it serves breakfasts – Hobb's has a good reputation for its food. Some produce sourced locally.

#### Blue Groove, 25 St Mary's Rd, Croyde

01271 890111

Popular surfers' café. Drinks, snacks, and meals in a relaxed atmosphere.



Key

- walk route
- suggested walk direction
- 5 No. refers to directions
- 5 No. refers to Points of Interest

