

ROUTE DETAILS

LENGTH: Each loop = 4km, total = 8km

TIME: 1 hour per loop

DIFFICULTY: Easy

GRADIENT: Flat

DOGS: Restricted on red (low tide) loop from 1st May to 30th September. Allowed on yellow (high tide) loop all year round.

Start and end location: Northam Burrows Country Park Visitor Centre (EX39 1XS)

1. Low tide loop (please check the tide times before attempting this route). Leave the visitor centre and walk along the path next to the sand dunes keeping the dunes on your right and walk towards the pebble ridge, carefully cross the pebble ridge onto the beach (be cautious as the pebbles may move under your feet and are slippery when wet).

2. Turn left and walk south along the beach, following the line of the pebble ridge towards the rocky shore. Did you know that the pebble ridge is made out of sandstone which has fallen off the cliffs in Bideford Bay and become smoother as the sea has rolled it along the coast. Make sure that you check the tide times before walking this stretch as it can catch you off guard.

3. When you reach the rocky shore, take time here to look for encrusting coastal wildlife. Can you find a green shore crab or spot a beadlet anemone? If you turn over any rocks to look under them, remember to put them back where you found them. When you've finished exploring the delights of the rocky shore, go back in the direction that you came from until you reach the slipway onto the beach.

4. Leave the beach by walking up the slipway and immediately turn left before the car park. Walk along the path between the arcades and the pebble ridge, down a wooden walkway and join up with the road heading north towards the visitor centre. Along this stretch you may find ponies, horses and sheep grazing on grassland. Watch out for moving vehicles!

ABOUT NORTHAM BURROWS COUNTRY PARK

At the heart of the North Devon Coast AONB is Northam Burrows Country Park. Managed by Torridge District Council this historic grazing common is situated at the mouth of the Taw/Torridge estuary. It is home to the famous pebble ridge, a natural landmark made up of large cobbles that separate the burrows from Westward Ho! beach and the sea. The common is made up of sand dunes and coastal pasture, and these valuable habitats support a number of rare plants. Most notable is the presence of water germander, only known to be found at two other sites in Britain. Northam Burrows has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to protect these key features. Sensitive management is undertaken to ensure the pebble ridge is able to develop as a natural structure. Meanwhile grazing levels are managed and a cutting regime takes place to provide the best conditions for rare plants. Northam Burrows Country Park is open to visitors all year round, so everyone can enjoy this unique coastal site (free entry on foot, vehicle charges apply).

ABOUT THE NORTH DEVON COAST AONB

The North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a stunning coastal area which is nationally protected for the beauty of its landscape. It covers 171 km² of the coastal landscape including special places such as Combe Martin, Lee Bay, Woolacombe, Croyde, Saunton, Braunton Burrows, Westward Ho! and the Hartland Peninsula. Learn more on our website: www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk or on Facebook and Twitter @ExploreTheCoast. Coastal Creatures was a coastal education project by the North Devon Coast AONB funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

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Credits:

Front cover image: Neville Stanikk

Illustrations: Jack Sewell Art



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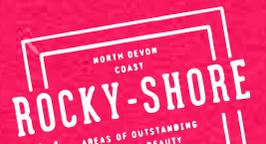
NORTHAM BURROWS COUNTRY PARK WILDLIFE TRAIL

LIFE ON THE SHORE



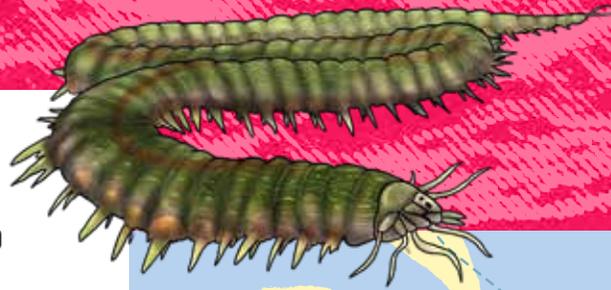
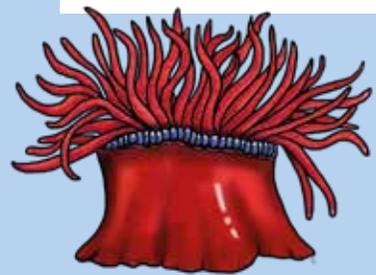
COASTAL CREATURES SELF-GUIDED WALK

This wildlife trail is a self-guided, circular walk around the Northam Burrows Country Park at Westward Ho!, where you will encounter a range of incredible coastal species in the sand dunes, rocky shore, beach, salt marsh and mud flats.



KEY:

- YELLOW LINE:**
Walk best for high tide (clockwise)
 - RED LINE:**
Walk best for low tide (anti-clockwise)
 - PURPLE LINE:**
Caution along this stretch of route
- | | |
|--|--|
|  Beach |  Rocky shore |
|  Golf course |  Salt marsh |
|  Mud flat |  Sand dunes |
|  Pebble ridge |  Visitor Centre |
|  Public toilets | |



5. High tide loop (suitable to walk at any state of the tide). To complete another loop of different coastal habitats take the path from the visitor centre north keeping the sand dunes and sea on your left hand side. The sand dunes contain many species of flowers, butterflies, moths, birds, snails and if you're lucky you may be able to see a reptile such as an adder or a slow worm! You'll see the most flowers during warm summer days.

6. After the sand dunes finish, keep walking along the beaten track keeping behind the pebble ridge. A small detour inland will take you to a scraped out area called a dune slack, which is flooded during winter. It is here that many more coastal plant species survive, many of them are in miniature form as they are young. The water germander, a nationally rare species exists here. Be careful not to pick any flowers. After you've visited the slack, keep following the path in the same northerly direction as you were going before.

7. Walking along this track, you'll see good views of the Taw Torridge estuary where these rivers meet the sea. Follow the bridle path as it turns inland and cross a grass area to meet up with the end of the road where cars may be parked. From here you will be able to see the mud flats (if the tide is out) which is a very biologically diverse area where ragworms, lugworms, cockles and other burrowing bivalves live. On top of the mud flat you may see feeding wading birds. The oystercatcher is particularly striking with a long red bill, black and white body and orange legs. Can you see one?

8. Walk along this road until you see a large patch of salt marsh just before the bridge. Salt marsh develops in brackish water (where salt and fresh water mix). In summer, many flowering plants grow here and the colours can be quite beautiful. Once you've taken a look at the salt marsh, take a sharp right hand turn and head in the direction of the sea across the grass towards the visitor centre. Just before you reach the visitor centre you'll need to cross part of the golf course. Watch out for flying golf balls and be careful not to walk over the green when people are at play.

