

BEST WALKS IN SOUTH EAST CORNWALL

1. LOOE TO POLPERRO WALK - Distance: 9 kms. Time: 2 hours

If you enjoy walking, love coastal views and spectacular scenery, then this 9 km walk is for you. It starts from Hannafore, heading west across three flat fields, passing the remains of a 11th-century monastery looking out to Looe Island. If you take the path and wooden steps down to Port Nadler beach, you can stop for a swim, before striding out on the South West Coast Path to Talland Bay. Rest here for lunch at the Talland Bay Beach café or Smugglers Rest then complete the last stretch to Polperro for a stroll around this pretty Cornish smuggling village.

This moderately challenging clifftop walk can be completed as part of a circular day out using Bus 73 which picks up and drops off outside Polraen Country House in the Looe Valley. The walk takes approximately 2 hours, but we suggest you allow the whole day.

2. LOOE VALLEY BLUEBELL WALK - Distance: 3.5 miles. Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

From Polraen Country House Hotel in the Looe Valley, you can walk to one of Cornwall's most photographed bluebell woods. In April and early May, as the road climbs from Sandplace toward Duloe, the woodland to either side is a sea of bluebells bordered by wild garlic. You can admire the scene from your car window, but we recommend taking the time to ramble on foot. On the lane spurring off to the left, you can access a footpath over a stile leading you across a carpet of blue to reach the river opposite Polraen Hotel.

If you continue walking on the country lane past Treworrey Cottages, you'll see wonderful views down the Looe River Valley. The route descends to Terras Bridge, crossing the Looe River and Looe Valley Railway Line. You'll need to carefully pick your way back along the A387 to Polraen Hotel for a short stretch, but this round-trip walk is so worth it.

3. WALKING IN KILMINORTH WOODS - Distance: 2.6 miles Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Just a few minutes from the hustle and bustle of Looe, you can find peace and solitude on delightful walks by the West Looe River. At the end of the Millpool Car Park is the entrance to Kilminorth Woods. You need only stroll a short distance on this accessible path to reach a picnic spot beside the water's edge, where you might see herons, egrets, wading birds and kingfishers.

Steeper woodland paths continue to Watergate through ancient woodland dissected by the Giant's Hedge – an ancient earthwork dating back to the Dark Ages marking the boundary of a now-forgotten Cornish kingdom. A series of interpretation boards placed by Friends of Kilminorth Wood help you identify various habitats. Look out for moths, mammals, birds and insect life. A circular route on a parallel path brings you back to the starting point.

4. WALKING ON BODMIN MOOR - Distance: 3 miles Time 1.5 hours

There are many wonderful walks on Bodmin Moor. The one we favour involves parking at the village of Minions, 4 miles north of Liskeard. You will pass the Hurlers Stone Circle as you stride out toward a natural rock formation of eroded granite slabs called the Cheesewring. Once you've climbed it, the expanse of Bodmin Moor unfolds before you. In another direction, you can walk to the abandoned 'Gold Diggers Quarry'. Hidden from view until you are almost upon it, this flooded quarry is a surprising discovery with spring-fed crystal clear water. Take a wild swim! Some even jump from the ledges 'tombstoning'. During your moorland hike, you will undoubtedly encounter wild ponies, sheep and some grazing cattle. Hopefully not the Beast of Bodmin Moor.....a phantom wild black cat purported to live there.

5. WALKING AT SIBLYBACK LAKE - DISTANCE: 4 MILES TIME: 1 HOUR 15 MINUTES

This walk has got to be our top recommendation for accessibility and a great day out for the entire family. Against a striking backdrop of Bodmin Moor, you can stroll, run or cycle on a 5 km path around this South West Lakes Trust reservoir. The path is perfect for pushchairs, wheelchairs and bicycles.

After breathing in the fresh air, stop at the wonderful Olive and Co Café. You may encounter fishermen fishing for rainbow and brown trout or twitchers in the bird hide as the moorland habitat attracts a range of birdlife. Imagine what it's like to be here after dark, stargazing in the midst of an internationally recognized Dark Sky Landscape – magical!

6. WALKING IN TREMADART WOODS - Distance: 3 miles Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

This lesser-known area on the upper reaches of the West Looe River Valley is highly valued by local people as a place to get away from everyone. Just a short drive up the hill from Polraen at Sandplace to Duloe and then a steep descent leads you to miles of well-maintained Forestry Commission paths. Starting out at Churchbridge, you can do a 3-mile double loop walk. Most of this walk has only gentle gradients on a path that wanders on either side of the river. Sometimes in autumn and winter, the river can be a dramatic torrent of water charging toward Looe. At other times, it's a gentle stream babbling along through shaded woodland with pine trees soaring above. In May and June, the foxgloves stand erect saluting you as you walk past but beware the horse flies in summer. Autumn is a particularly good time to walk here and even winter casts its magic in the greenery of ferns, mosses, fungi and lichens.

7. WALKING AT SEATON NEAR LOOE

Three miles east of Looe, the Seaton River winds its way from the pretty village of Hessenford to Seaton along a flat bottomed flood plain known as the Seaton Valley Country Park. It joins the sea at Seaton – a small village and community with a long beach, popular with surfers, dog walkers and families. From Hessenford going south, the walking route is largely on boardwalks raising you above the flood plain.

The stretch from Seaton going north provides a flat path of over a mile with a surface suitable for pushchairs, cycling and walking. The route goes through two nature reserves with mixed habitats including grassland, ponds and semi-ancient woodlands where you're likely to see fritillary butterflies, otters, dormice, kingfishers and birdlife. Other facilities include a car park, toilets, picnic area with benches, children's play area, outdoor gym and a sensory garden.