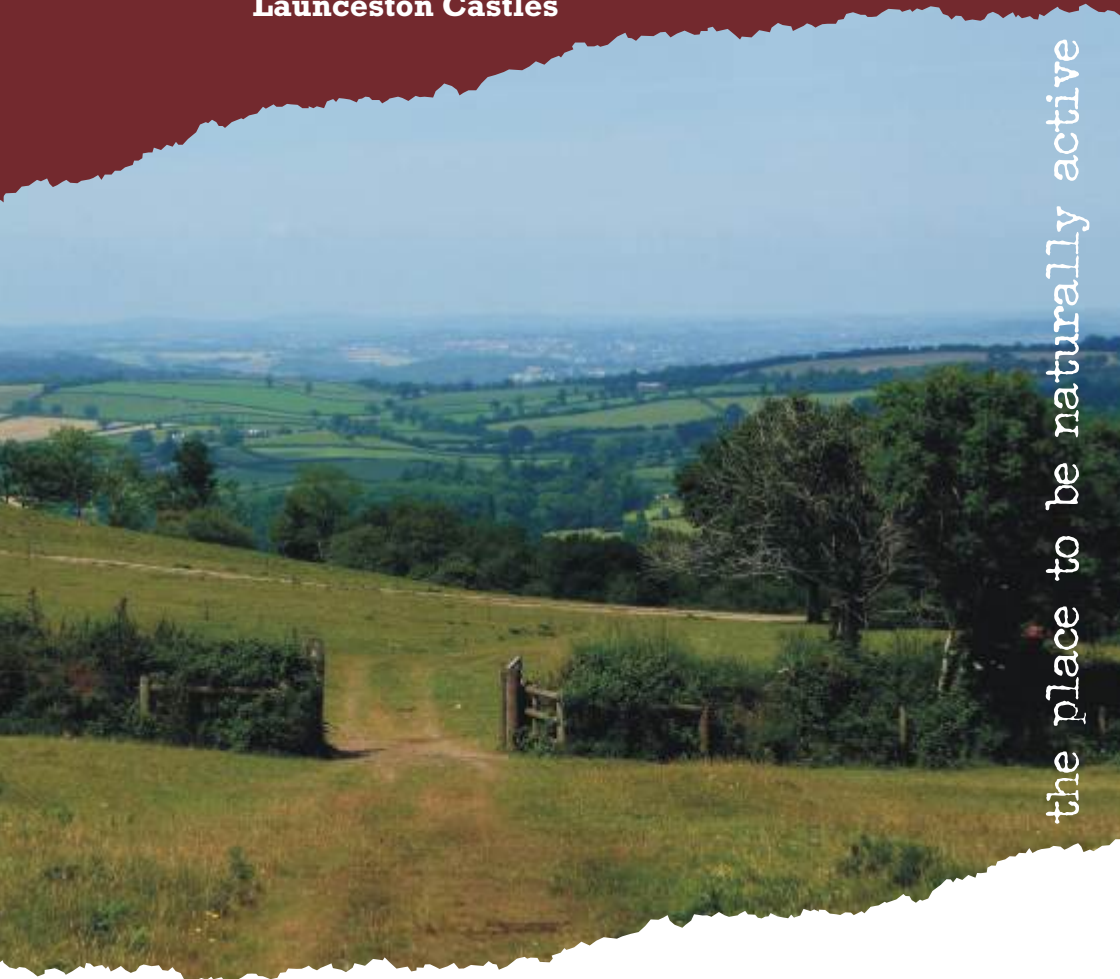


Two Castles Trail

Meander through rolling countryside full of history on this 24 mile waymarked walking route between Okehampton and Launceston Castles

Devon



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www.devon.gov.uk/walking
www.dartmoor.co.uk
www.visitdevon.co.uk





Two Castles Trail

Meander through rolling countryside full of history on this 24 mile waymarked walking route between Okehampton and Launceston Castles

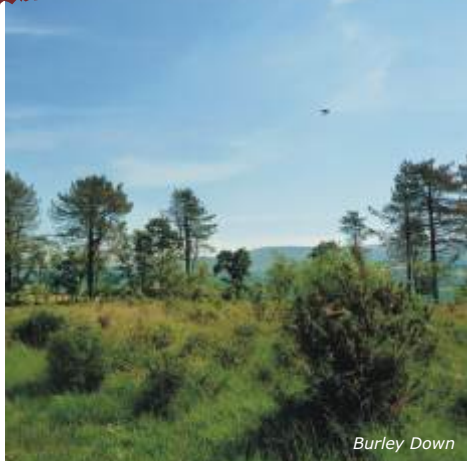
The Two Castles Trail takes you through beautiful and peaceful countryside - from the edge of Dartmoor, past historic battlegrounds to the ancient capital of Cornwall - linking the Castles of Okehampton in the east and Launceston in the west.

At a glance

- 24 miles in total
- Divided into 4 stages
- Easy to follow, waymarked trail
- Good bus links to Okehampton and Launceston
- Route can be followed in both directions

This booklet describes the **westbound** route (Okehampton to Launceston) on pages 4 - 11; and the **eastbound** route (Launceston to Okehampton) on pages 12 - 19.

The route includes a number of climbs and descents and crosses a variety of terrain including stretches of road, woodland tracks, field paths and open crossings of moor and downs. In the summer the route is likely to be dry, however during the winter, woodland tracks, fields and parts of the moors can be particularly muddy.



Burley Down

Along with the waymarking, this booklet makes the route easy to follow, though extra care should be taken across the Sourton section of moorland where waymarking is not possible. While additional maps should not be necessary for the main route, the **Explorer OL28 (Dartmoor)** and **Explorer 112 (Launceston)** Ordnance Survey maps will show further walking opportunities near to the route, and the villages which are within walking distance of the route. Some points of interest along the route are highlighted in boxes within the route description.



The waymarks contain the text 'Two Castles Trail' in burgundy on a white background, along with two historic walkers carrying their provisions in a kit bag tied to a stick (bindle sticks), with the route directions indicated by black arrows.

Most of the trail between Okehampton and Bridestowe is shown by waymarks for the West Devon Way, (below), which follows the same route.





Route of the Two Castles Trail



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Sustainable Travel

The route has been divided into four stages, all accessible at each end by public transport. Since car parking is limited along the route, the use of public transport (see page 23) is recommended, although frequency of buses vary according to the day of the week and location. For up to date bus times call Traveline on 0871 200 22 33 or visit www.traveline.org.uk or www.journeydevon.com

There are car parks (paying) in Okehampton and Launceston. Public toilets, shops, and pubs are indicated on the maps throughout the booklet.

For walkers staying in the area, details of local accommodation can be found at the Okehampton or Launceston Tourist Information Centres or from the visitor websites detailed on page 22 of this booklet.

The 4 stages

Okehampton to Bridestowe:
7 miles (11.25km)

Bridestowe to Lewdown:
7 miles (11.25km)

Lewdown to Lifton:
5 miles (8km)

Lifton to Launceston:
5 miles (8km)

Key to symbols used on route maps on following pages

- Two Castles Trail
- Alternative routes/ loops
- 1** See directions in text
- A** Points of interest
- BUS** Bus services
- i** Tourist Information Centre
- P** Refreshments
- P** Pub
- ♿** Public toilets
- S** Shops
- P** Parking



Okehampton to

Bridestowe

Distance: 7 miles (11.25 km)

Surfaces: Uneven surfaces, including fields, grassy lanes and woodland tracks. Some muddy stretches after heavy rain. Road section into Bridestowe.

Gradients: A steep climb away from the West Okement River below Meldon Viaduct. Fairly steep descent to Sourton. Otherwise gentle gradients.

Obstacles: A few gates. Two foot-bridges with steps. Many stiles south of Sourton (alternative route available).

Until the Two Castles Trail diverges from the West Devon Way at point 8, remember to follow the waymarking discs for the West Devon Way out from Okehampton.

1 The Two Castles Trail begins in the centre of Okehampton. When open, start by passing through a gated courtyard by the Museum of Dartmoor Life and Tourist Information Centre, following a path to the right hand side of the Museum, through the car park onto Jacobs Pool, where you turn left. When closed, walk up George Street, to the left of the White Hart Hotel.

Follow George Street and turn right into Castle Road. Where the road bends right across the West Okement river, continue straight ahead on the path alongside the left bank of the river.

2 Pass through a gate into Old Town Park Local Nature Reserve, bearing left to climb the middle path through the woods, keeping left at two path junctions. Turn right along a surfaced bridleway shared with traffic.

3 On reaching the golf course, take the path ahead across the golf course, taking care as you proceed. After 200m, as the gravel track turns to the right sharply, continue straight ahead

A **Okehampton Castle** was built shortly after the Norman conquest, and has stood in ruins since 1538 when Henry VIII ordered it to be demolished as a punishment for its owner's treason. Today, English Heritage open the grounds to the public over the summer months. Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk for more information.

along the path. Leave the golf course at a metal gate, and follow the right edge of the field ahead. Follow the 'path' signs through a metal gate and through a farmyard, to join a surfaced lane beyond the farm. When you reach the road turn left across the A30 road bridge.

4 Take the path to the rear of the parking area on the right, beside the A30. At a junction where a path goes to your right under the A30, keep straight ahead on the path towards the river. Continue alongside the West Okement, cross the footbridge and climb the hill on the path bearing left. Pass through a gate, turn right onto a track past Meldon Farm, and turn left when you reach the road.

5 Pass under the railway bridge and continue ahead, as the road soon becomes an unsurfaced green lane. Passing through a gate, the lane widens out, then reaches the open moor through another gate with Sourton Tors ahead.

Scenic Detour: Meldon Reservoir

A number of scenic local walks can be reached by following the road on your left signed to Meldon Reservoir at point **5**. To find out more about walks in the Meldon and Okehampton area ask at the Okehampton Tourist Information Centre (see page 22).



6 Follow the stone wall on the left, then bear away past an old granite gate post. As you climb the hill, after 45m, look out for the route along a grass path to the right, running parallel with an old stone wall for most of its length. Follow this path straight across a junction of routes until you reach a shallow cutting on your right between two stone walls.

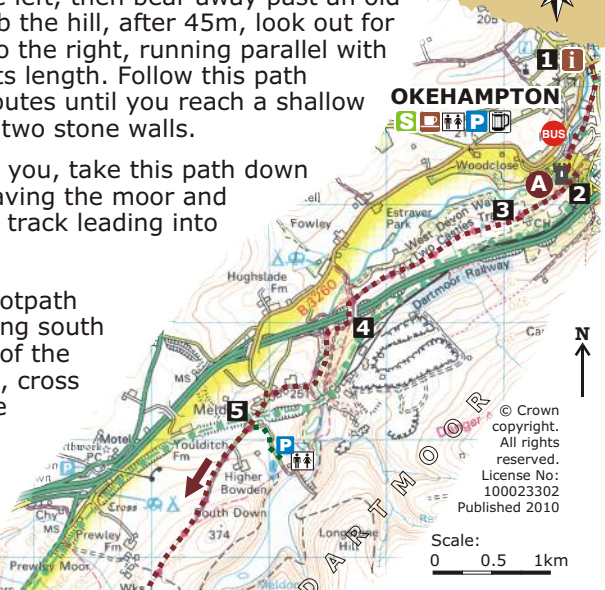
With Sourton Church ahead of you, take this path down between two parallel walls, leaving the moor and crossing the Granite Way on a track leading into the small village of Sourton.

7 From Sourton, follow the footpath alongside the main road heading south towards Tavistock. At the end of the village, 30m past the bus stop, cross the road carefully and take the path next to the tall house, between two stone barns. Follow the track round to the left and through a gate into a field. Follow the track with the hedge on your right through two fields to a small barn.



Cross the stile and continue ahead with the hedge to your left for two more fields. Cross the stile, and head straight across the next two fields to another stile before continuing with the hedge on your left for another three fields to arrive at a lane.

8 At this point, the West Devon Way and the Two Castles Trail diverge. To continue on the Two Castles Trail, turn right at the lane and follow to the village of Bridestowe. In the centre, turn left and follow the road out of the village. (See box **B** on page 6 for more information about Bridestowe)



Alternative route: The Granite Way from Sourton

For an alternative route avoiding stiles, join the Granite Way just before point **7** and follow the track south for just over 1,600m. Follow the track through two swing gates. The 230m of track between these gates is a Right of Way on Bank Holidays and during August, at other times access is by permission of the landowner. (If these gates are locked please retrace your steps and follow the main Two Castles Trail route.)

Turn left down a steep tarmac track to cross a footbridge. Follow the path and turn left through a gate before passing below Lake Viaduct. Follow the track, and cross a footbridge before continuing along the track to the main road. Cross the main road, and climb, turn left at the T-junction and follow for 250m to the sharp left corner at point **8**.



Bridestowe to Lewdown

Distance: 7 miles (11.25 km)

Surfaces: Road, uneven woodland tracks and fields, some muddy stretches after heavy rain.

Gradients: Regular gradual climbs and descents, steep descent from Galford Down.

Obstacles: Gates and stiles throughout the Stage.

B A settlement at **Bridestowe** can be traced back to the Bronze Age and gets its name from the dedication of its church to St Bridget, an interesting survival of a possible Celtic dedication to this Irish Saint and a pointer to a very old settlement. The present church dates from the 15th Century but much of the granite church was restored in the 19th Century.

1 Continue to follow Station Road as it climbs out of Bridestowe for approximately 800m, and then turn right (signed towards Coryton) down a minor lane, which eventually descends steeply to Watergate.

2 Continue straight ahead at the crossroads and take the track on the right just after the bridge. Follow the track straight ahead passing Burley Wood Cottage. After approximately 800m bear left at a T-junction of tracks, and shortly after keep left at the next junction, and climb the track uphill.

3 After climbing for approximately 400m the track bears right to private residences. At this point take the steps to the left of the track signed as a public footpath. Continue to climb this footpath as it becomes a rougher path and reaches a gate as it leaves the woodland.

C The 'Castle' theme of the Trail is continued by another **Norman site** in the woods high above the path in stage **2** (please note, there is no public access to this site). It possibly originated as a defensive site during the campaigns of occupation following the Norman Conquest and was used for a time afterwards. It occupied a strategic high position, giving control over the road to Cornwall.



Burley Down

D The **hillfort** with ramparts on your left dates to the Iron Age, (please note, there is no public access to this site), and includes an arrangement of banks and ditches.

4 Go through the gate and follow the obvious track which bears to the right, and then continue to keep to the right edge of Burley Down. Upon reaching a gate pass through onto a track leading into the woods. Follow this track for around 1,000m to a road at the end.

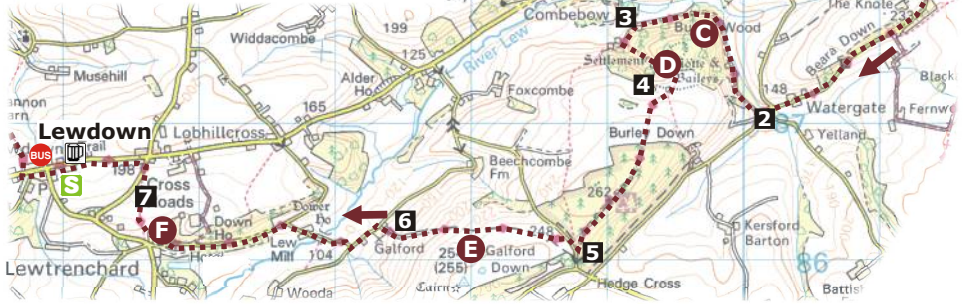
5 Just before the road turn right along a grassy path. Fork left after 30m, and continue along the path for almost 200m. Turn left and cross the road and climb the stile opposite. This next section follows a private path, by kind permission of the landowners. Please make sure you keep to the waymarked route.



Go straight ahead into the field for about 100m, then turn right on a faint grassy path aiming for a gap in the hedge with a gate. Follow the path through and bear diagonally to your left across the next field to another gate. Go through the gate and join the track ahead as it descends steeply between two hedgelines.

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Scale:
0 0.5 1km



Descending from Galford Down

E Galford Down, with its fine views to Bodmin Moor ahead, and Dartmoor behind, is the site of a 9th Century battle between Saxons and Celts. This atmospheric location spelled the end of the Celtic influence east of the Tamar.

6 At the bottom go through two gates, and ahead along the edge of the yard to the road. Turn left along the road, bearing right at the first fork and crossing the River Lew. After passing the 16th Century Dower House and medieval cross upright, at the next T-junction turn left, and continue past the Lewtrenchard Manor Hotel and Lewtrenchard Church.

7 Just before the next road junction, take the footpath on the right, and bear right uphill at the first gate. Cross the stile at the top, and continue ahead, keeping the hedge on your right and cross the stile in the top corner of the field. Continue ahead up the road to the crossroads, carefully cross the main road, and turn left along the pavement and follow for around 800m into Lewdown.

F The remote parish of **Lewtrenchard** was where the famous Victorian, the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, was both squire and parson for many years. He wrote many books on Devon, especially Dartmoor, collected and published an exhaustive list of Devon folk songs and stories, and wrote the stirring hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers.' Lewtrenchard Manor Hotel was originally a small 16th Century manor house, but was later enlarged by Sabine Baring-Gould at the end of the 19th Century. The work was carried out using only local craftsmen and without an architect.

Lewdown to Lifton

Distance: 5 miles (8 km)

Surfaces: Much on road, some uneven and muddy field sections, and good tracks.

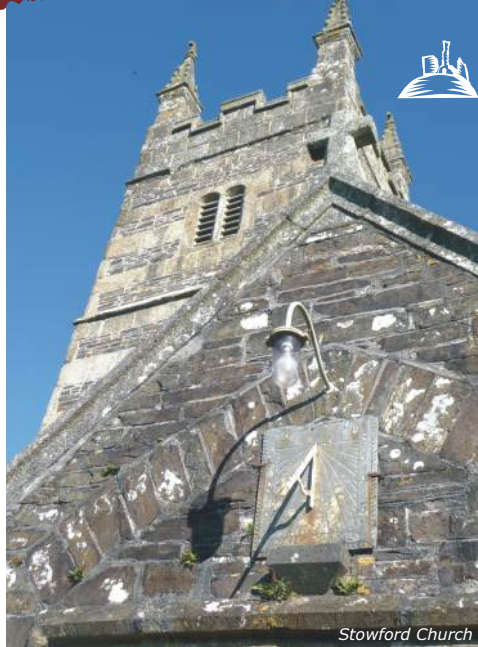
Gradients: Regular climbs and descents, including fairly steep descent from Stowford.

Obstacles: A few gates and stiles.

1 In Lewdown, at the bus shelter just beyond the Lewdown War Memorial, take the footpath on your right, cross a stile and small field. Go straight across the next field to a stile and gate, and in the next field turn left alongside the hedge. Cross two stiles and one further stile before reaching a road.

2 Bear left along the road for around 150m to a gate on the right. Go through the gate and turn right alongside the hedge. At the bottom corner of the field go through the gate ahead and continue downhill, with the hedge now to your left. At the bottom go through the gate and bear left keeping to the hedge to join the concrete track. Bear left on the track through the gate next to the cattle grid, and continue ahead to a road.

3 Continue straight ahead into Stowford village, and bear right to pass the church. Follow the road down to Stowford Bridge across the River Thrushel and shortly after take the second track on the left, towards the white cottage. Pass the cottage and continue up the path as it passes through the trees. At the top, go through the gate ahead and continue down the track. Keep ahead to join a metalled track and follow this to a road.

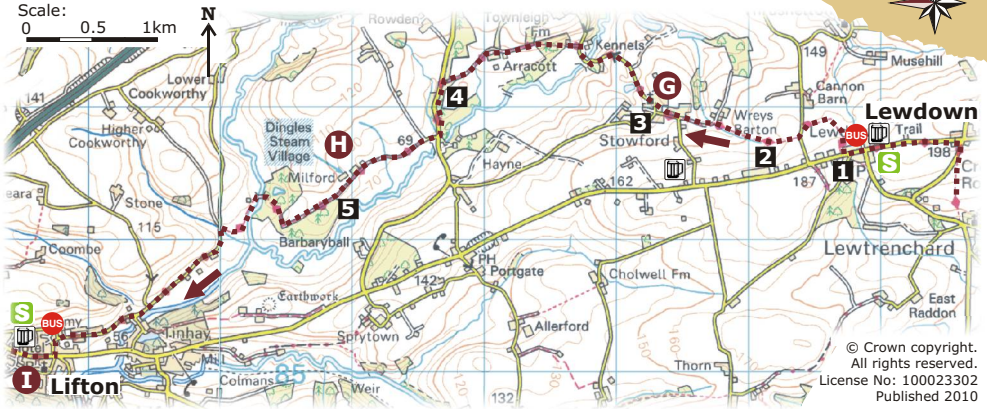


Stowford Church

G Stowford Church dates from the 14-15th Century, and the sundial above the porch is dated 1776. The churchyard may represent a very early Christian graveyard, indicated by its large stone and earth wall as well as a 6th Century memorial stone.



6th Century Memorial Stone at Stowford Church



4 Carefully cross this main road, and turn left here making use of the verges. Follow for 400m and then take the next turning on the right. Follow the metalled lane ahead, passing Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre.



H **Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre** houses the National Fairground Collection offering superb displays of Fairground Art and Memorabilia, and large arrays of vintage rides, stalls and shows. There is also a café at the site for visitors. Visit www.fairground-heritage.org.uk for more details.

5 Bear left onto a signed bridleway, and follow for around 800m as it winds downhill to cross a bridge over the River Wolf, a tributary of the Thrushel. After the bridge bear left into the field, keeping to the right hand edge, before following a hedge on the right, to arrive at a road. Turn left along the road.

Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre



Continue to the second junction, then bear right along North Road and follow into Lifton.

I **Lifton** was one of the earliest villages founded by the Saxons in West Devon. An important frontier outpost of considerable military importance, it was referred to in King Alfred's will, and was the site of a court held by King Athelstan in 931 AD. The church is first documented in the 12th Century and is the largest in the area.



Lifton to Launceston

Distance: 5 miles (8 km)

Surfaces: Mainly road, and an uneven field section.

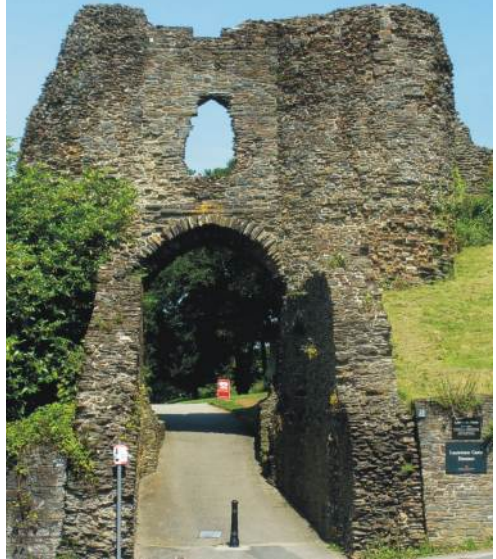
Gradients: Gradual climbs and descents. Steep climb at end of walk up to Launceston.

Obstacles: Small number of stiles and gates on field section.

1 At the main road turn right, past the village shop and continuing on the path alongside the road of the village. Follow for around a kilometre out of the village until passing underneath the A30.

2 Just after the underpass take the road bearing to the right. Continue through Liftondown, following the road downhill into the valley of the River Carey, a tributary of the Tamar. (Be careful to stay to one side of this road, as it is often used by local traffic as a cut through).

3 At the "Slow" sign painted on the road and just before the road bends left, turn left through a gate and cross the field with the hedge on your right. At the end of the hedge, continue into the field ahead and then bear left and slightly uphill to the stile in the top left hand corner of the field. Here, cross the two stiles, and follow the path to another gate. Pass through and cross the field ahead, aiming to the left of the gate and buildings. On reaching the fence line, keep it to your right, and after around 70m, cross a stile on your right in the wooden fence. Bear left on the tarmac track.



4 Follow the track to a stile on your right between two cattle grids. Cross the stile, and head for the corner of the hedge some 40m ahead. Keep this hedge on your left, and go through the gate in the far left corner of the field. Then turn right onto the road to cross the River Tamar at Polson Bridge.

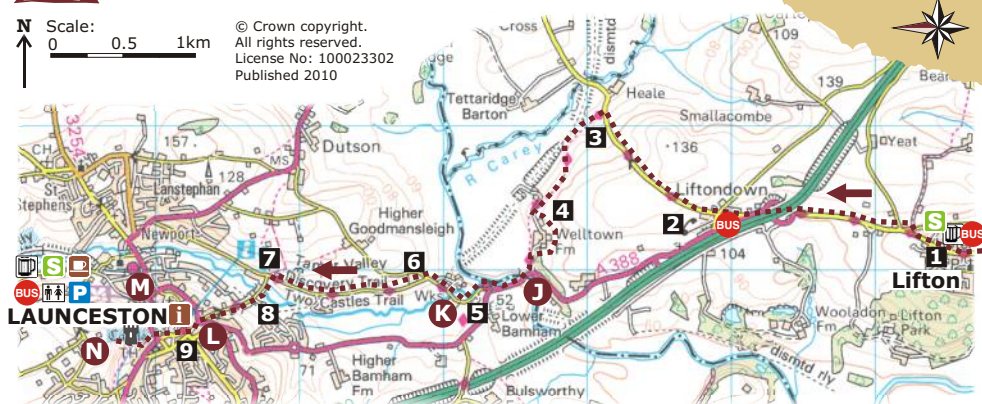
1 **Polson Bridge** was the main entry into Cornwall in at least the 12th Century and possibly earlier. The bridge is first documented in 1338 and has been rebuilt numerous times since, with the existing bridge dating from the mid 19th Century.

5 At this point the Trail enters Cornwall. Take the first road to the right, opposite Launceston RFC ground. Pass St Leonard's, noting the tiny packhorse bridge.



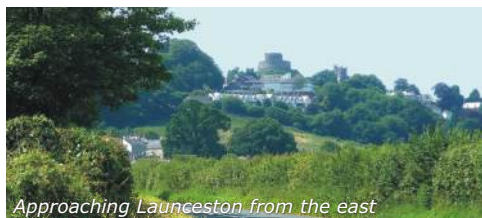
N Scale:
0 0.5 1km

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K The Bridge dates from around 1580. In the fields next to the Bridge and adjacent to the Riding Centre is the site of the **St Leonard's Leper Hospital** (Lazar House). Originally founded in Launceston in 1075, it was moved to the more remote St Leonard's in the 13th Century. It continued in use until the 17th Century.

6 Take the next road on the left, just after the waterworks. The profile of Launceston Castle will soon become prominent ahead.



7 After about 1,000m turn left down a road which drops into the valley of the River Kensey.

8 From the river, the road climbs steeply into the town. At the top, carefully cross the main road to go straight ahead to Angel Hill, then turn right through Southgate Arch (there is a smaller pedestrian archway just beyond the main arch), and proceed along Southgate Street.

L The 14th Century **Southgate Arch** is the only remaining gate into the old walled town. It once had a drawbridge over a moat and was later used as the town prison. It was widened for pedestrians in Victorian times.

9 Turn left along Broad Street, and proceed along Western Road to the entrance to Launceston Castle, the end of the Trail.

M **Launceston** was the first capital of Cornwall and was the only walled town in the county. In Saxon times it was the site of a Royal Mint and now contains examples of every significant type of architecture from the Norman Conquest to the present day. Much of interest can be learned from following the Town Trail, available from the Tourist Information Centre.

N Much of **Launceston Castle's** walling visible today dates to the 12th Century. While the castle was largely disused and partly demolished by 1650, it continued to house the County courts and prison until 1840 after which the castle and surrounds were remodelled as a public park.

Stage 1:

Launceston to Lifton

Distance: 5 miles (8 km)

Surfaces: Mainly road, and an uneven field section.

Gradients: Gradual climbs and descents. Steep descent from Launceston.

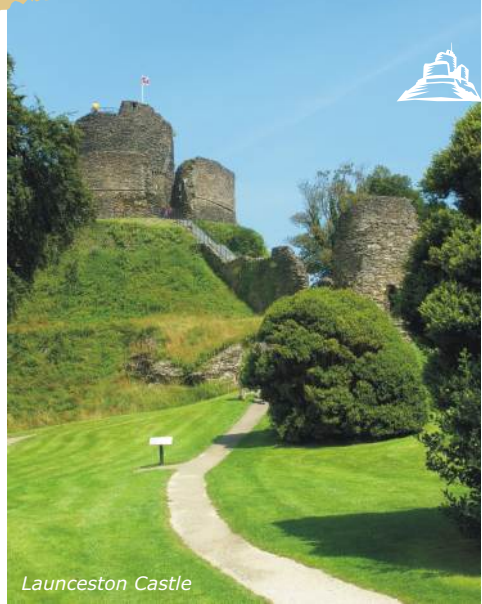
Obstacles: Small number of stiles and gates on field section.

1 The Trail starts at Launceston Castle. From the entrance to the Castle, turn left following Western Road up to the town centre.

A Much of **Launceston Castle's** walling visible today dates to the 12th Century. While the castle was largely disused and partly demolished by 1650, it continued to house the County courts and prison until 1840 after which the castle and surrounds were remodelled as a public park.

B **Launceston** was the first capital of Cornwall and was the only walled town in the county. In Saxon times it was the site of a Royal Mint and now contains examples of every significant type of architecture from the Norman Conquest to the present day. Much of interest can be learned from following the Town Trail, available from the Tourist Information Centre.

2 Follow this road (which becomes Broad Street) through the town centre first as it bears left, then descends and bends sharply to the right. Go through the smaller pedestrian arch in Southgate Arch.



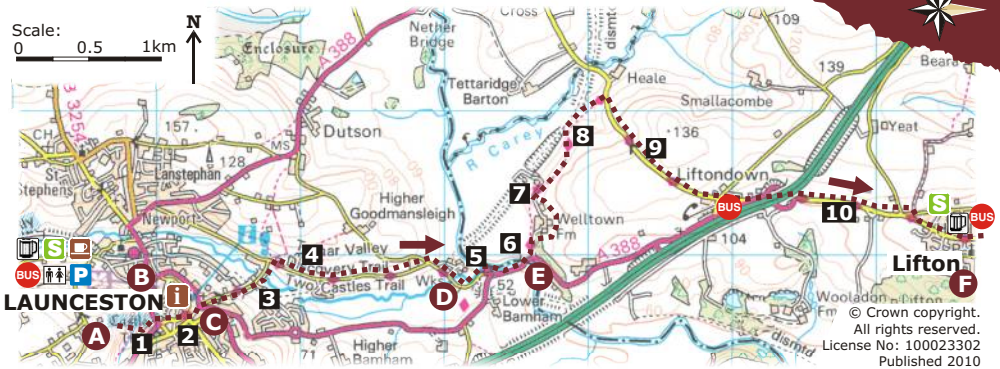
Launceston Castle

C The 14th Century **Southgate Arch** is the only remaining gate into the old walled town. It once had a drawbridge over a moat and was later used as the town prison. It was widened for pedestrians in Victorian times.

3 Almost immediately take the steep and narrow lane to the left (Angel Hill), before carefully crossing the road at the bottom and continuing ahead into Ridgegrove Hill. This road descends steeply into the valley of the River Kensey.

4 After crossing the bridge, turn right at the next T-junction. Follow the lane, and on reaching the end turn right passing St Leonard's.

D The bridge over the river Kensey dates from around 1580. In the fields next to the Bridge and adjacent to the Riding Centre is the site of the **St Leonard's Leper Hospital** (Lazar House). Originally founded in Launceston in 1075, it was moved to the more remote St Leonard's in the 13th Century. It continued in use until the 17th Century.



5 At the end of this lane turn left to Polson Bridge and the River Tamar, and cross into Devon.

E **Polson Bridge** was the main entry into Cornwall in at least the 12th Century and possibly earlier. The bridge is first documented in 1338 and has been rebuilt numerous times since, with the existing bridge dating from the mid 19th Century.

6 Turn left immediately after the bridge, go through the gate on your left, and then bear right, keeping the hedge to your right. After 150m bear away from the hedge slightly to cross a stile in the right-hand corner of the field.

7 Continue ahead on the tarmac track for 250m until crossing a stile in the wooden fence on your right into a field. Bear left, keeping the fence line on your left, and as the fence turns left at 90° cross the field straight ahead, bearing slightly uphill to a small metal gate.

8 Go through the gate, and at the end of the track cross two stiles. Head diagonally downhill across the field, bearing right at the bottom of the slope. Continue across the field, then alongside the hedge, keeping it to the left, to a gate onto a road.

9 Turn right, up the road (be careful to stay to one side of this road, as it is often used by local traffic as a cut through). Go through the small settlement of Liftondown at the top and on meeting the main road bear left on the path alongside the road to pass underneath the main A30.

10 Follow for around 1,000m and descend into the village of Lifton passing the village shop.

Lifton Church



F **Lifton** was one of the earliest villages founded by the Saxons in West Devon. An important frontier outpost of considerable military importance, it was referred to in King Alfred's will, and was the site of a court held by King Athelstan in 931 AD. The church is first documented in the 12th Century and is the largest in the area.

Stage 2:

Lifton to Lewdown

Distance: 5 miles (8 km)

Surfaces: Much on road, some uneven field sections, and good tracks.

Gradients: Regular climbs and descents, including fairly steep climb to Stowford.

Obstacles: A few gates and stiles.

1 Turn left opposite the bus shelter into North Road and follow this as it bears right past the school and out of the village. After 500m, the road bears right over a river. Here, take the minor road which forks to the left. Continue along this road for just over 800m.

2 Go through the gate on the right just before the road starts to climb fairly steeply, signed as a public bridleway. Follow alongside the hedge, keeping it on your left, then bear away to the right to cross the stone bridge over the River Wolf. Follow the track ahead, climbing to the right and following as it winds uphill as a green lane.

3 Continue on this lane to a metalled road passing Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre, and continue to a road junction. Continue ahead at the junction and then at the T-junction with the main road turn left.

Ⓒ Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre houses the National Fairground Collection offering superb displays of Fairground Art and Memorabilia, and large array of vintage rides, stalls and shows. There is also a café at the site for visitors. Visit www.fairground-heritage.org.uk for more details.

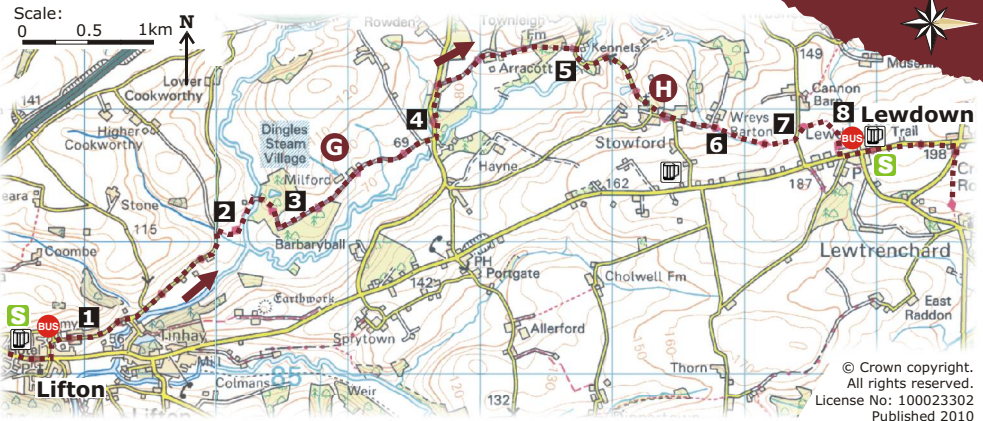


Stowford Bridge

4 Carefully follow this road for 400m, making use of the verges, then turn right along a metalled track. Keep ahead past private residences as the road becomes a sometimes muddy green lane. At the top keep ahead through two gates, and then follow a path as it descends to the right through the trees, bearing left at a fork in the paths. Follow the path past a cottage and continue to the road.



Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre



5 Turn right and continue up the road to Stowford village, passing the church. From the church follow the road round to the left. Where the road bears right, continue straight ahead on a concrete track.

H Stowford Church dates from the 14-15th Century, and the sundial above the porch is dated 1776. The churchyard may represent a very early Christian graveyard, indicated by its large stone and earth wall as well as a 6th Century memorial stone.



On the road to Dingles

6 After the cattle grid leave the track passing through a gate on your right. Follow the hedge on your right, and pass through the furthest gate to the left of the group on the opposite side of the field. Cross the field with the hedge on your right, and at the top of the second field go through the gate and continue ahead, with the hedge now on your left.

7 Go through the gate at the top left corner of the next field, to the road. Turn left at the road, and follow for 150m before climbing a stile on the right between two gates. Keep alongside the hedge on the right, crossing two stiles at a hedgebank.

8 Turn right at a gate and stile. Cross the field to a gate, then cross the stile to the left of the house to reach a road. Turn left along the pavement to Lewdown.



Sundial at Stowford Church

Stage 3:

Lewdown to Bridestowe

Distance: 7 miles (11.25 km)

Surfaces: Road, uneven woodland tracks and fields, some muddy sections after rain.

Gradients: Regular gradual climbs and descents, including fairly steep climb to Galford Down.

Obstacles: Gates and stiles throughout this Stage.

1 Follow the pavement for around 800m to the cross roads at the school. Turn right here, and after 100m turn left over a stile into a field. Follow the left edge of the field, and at the bottom left corner of the field cross the stile onto the enclosed track (can be particularly muddy after wet weather).

2 On meeting a road at the bottom, turn left along the minor road passing Lewtrenchard Church and the Lewtrenchard Manor Hotel. Take the lane on your right towards Lew Mill, passing the 16th Century Dower House and medieval cross upright before crossing the River Lew.

1 The remote parish of **Lewtrenchard** was where the famous Victorian, the Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould, was both squire and parson for many years. He wrote many books on Devon, especially Dartmoor, collected and published an exhaustive list of Devon folk songs and stories, and wrote the stirring hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers.' Lewtrenchard Manor Hotel was originally a small 16th Century manor house, but was later enlarged by Sabine Baring-Gould at the end of the 19th Century. The work was carried out using only local craftsmen and without an architect.



Medieval cross upright at the Dower House, Lewtrenchard

Continue along the road as it bears left, and leave the road on your right at Galford Farm. Here the Two Castles Trail follows a private path by kind permission of the landowners. Please make sure you stay on the waymarked route.

3 Go into the yard and head for the gate in the far left corner. Go through two gates and climb the track ahead. Emerging onto Galford Down, keep on the track ahead for 200m and as the track bears right take a minor path to your left heading towards a gap in the hedge with a gate. Go through and continue straight ahead to another gate in the hedge over the brow of the hill.

1 **Galford Down**, with its fine views to Bodmin Moor behind, and Dartmoor ahead, is the site of a 9th Century battle between Saxons and Celts. This atmospheric location spelled the end of the Celtic influence east of the Tamar.

4 Go through the next gate and take the faint path which bears to the left towards the trees, then after 200m turn left on another faint path to the gate in the hedge. Cross the stile and road beyond into the woods opposite and then turn right along the path until reaching the main entrance into the wood by the road. Turn left onto the wide track leading away from the road.



K The **hillfort** with ramparts on your right dates from the Iron Age, and includes an arrangement of banks and ditches. (Please note, there is no public access to this site).

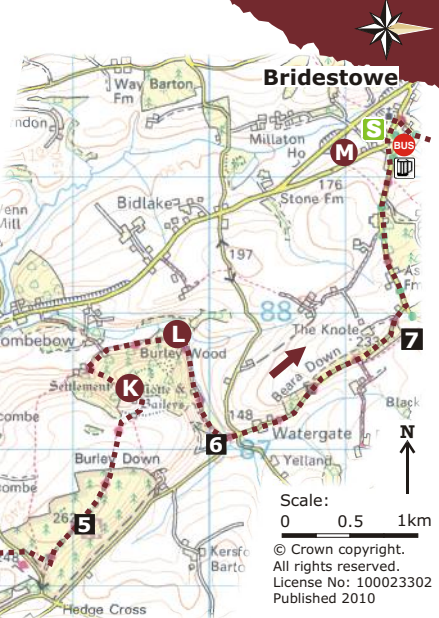
5 Follow the track as it gradually climbs, and go through the gate at the end of the woods onto Burley Down, and follow the left edge of the Down. Keep next to the fence, and then follow a shallow cutting past an old barn to pass through a wooden gate.



Follow the rough track downhill; at its end descend a few steps and follow a smoother track. Keep right at the next three junctions, following a track into the woodland (this track is often muddy for some time after rain).

L The 'Castle' theme of the Trail is continued by another **Norman site** in the woods high above the path (please note, there is no public access to this site). It possibly originated as a defensive site during the campaigns of occupation following the Norman Conquest and was used for a time afterwards. It occupied a strategic high position, giving control over the road to Cornwall.

6 The track eventually passes Burley Wood Cottage before arriving at a road. At the road turn left, then go straight ahead at the crossroads past Watergate to gradually climb for almost 1,600m.



7 On reaching the T-junction turn left and follow the road for 800m as it descends into Bridestowe.

M A settlement at **Bridestowe** can be traced back to the Bronze Age and gets its name from the dedication of its church to St Bridget, an interesting survival of a possible Celtic dedication to this Irish Saint and a pointer to a very old settlement. The present church dates from the 15th Century but much of the granite church was restored in the 19th Century.



Bridestowe shop



Stage 4:

Bridestowe to Okehampton

Distance: 7 miles (11.25 km)

Surfaces: Uneven surfaces including fields, grassy lanes and woodland tracks. Some muddy sections after heavy rain. Road section from Bridestowe.

Gradients: Fairly steep climb from Sourton. A steep descent to the West Okement River below Meldon Viaduct. Otherwise gentle gradients.

Obstacles: A few gates. High number of stiles in fields leading to Sourton, (can be avoided on alternative route).

When the Two Castles Trail joins the West Devon Way at point **2**, remember to follow the waymarking discs for the West Devon Way into Okehampton.

1 In the centre of Bridestowe turn right opposite the church, and climb this road for around 800m until the road turns sharply right.

Alternative route:

The Granite Way to Sourton

For an alternative route avoiding stiles, at point **2** continue on the road for 250m and take a narrow road to the right. Cross the main road and continue straight ahead along a track, across a footbridge, and go under Lake Viaduct before turning right through a gate. Cross another footbridge and climb the steep tarmac path to the Granite Way. Turn right and follow the path through two swing gates. (The 230m of track between these gates is a Right of Way on Bank Holidays and during August, at other times access is by permission of the owner. If these gates are locked please retrace your steps to point **2**.) Follow the track to an arched bridge, turn left to climb a track, rejoining the main Two Castles Trail by the Church in point **3**.

2 At this point the Two Castles Trail joins the West Devon Way. Climb the stile to your left, and walk through three fields with the hedge on your right, before reaching a stile. Head straight across the next two fields to cross another stile. Continue ahead with the hedge to your right across two more fields to a stile by a small barn. Cross two small fields with the hedge on your left, and pass through a gate following a track between two stone barns emerging next to a tall house. Carefully cross the main road and take the footpath alongside the road to your left heading into the village of Sourton.

3 Turn right at the track opposite the pub, passing the Church on your left, and crossing a bridge over the Granite Way. Go through a gate, and continue uphill. As you emerge onto the moors from the shallow cutting continue ahead, and on reaching a junction of routes below Sourton Tors bear left, and follow a path as it continues straight across a junction of paths, running parallel with an old stone wall for most of its length.

4 At a further junction bear left and descend towards a granite post around 45m away. Continue past the post, keeping a nearby stone wall to your right, and pass through a gate onto a green lane between two stone walls. Follow through another gate as the green lane soon becomes a road, and continue as it passes under a railway bridge.

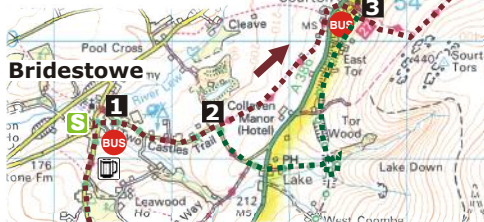
Scenic Detour: Meldon Reservoir

A number of scenic local walks can be reached by following the road on your right signed to Meldon Reservoir at point **5**. To find out more about walks in the Meldon and Okehampton area ask at the Okehampton Tourist Information Centre (see page 22).



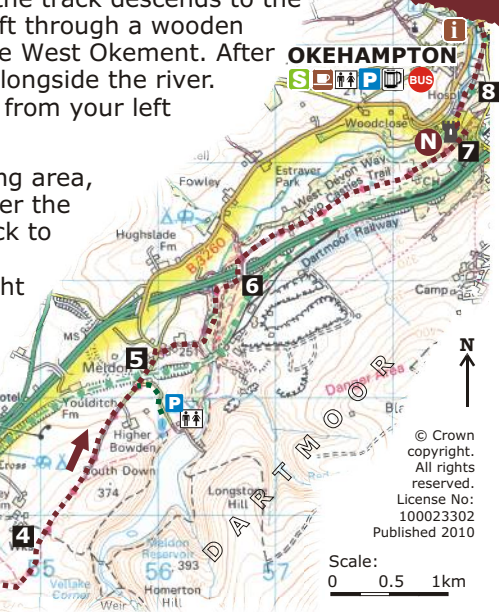
5 In Meldon turn right on the track just beyond the Village Hall and car park passing Meldon Farm. As the track descends to the right, double back on the path to the left through a wooden gate, and follow to a footbridge over the West Okement. After the bridge turn left following the path alongside the river. Keep straight ahead on meeting a path from your left which goes under the A30.

6 When the path emerges into a parking area, turn left along the road as it crosses over the A30. After the bridge, take the first track to your right leading to a farmyard. Walk across the farmyard bearing to your right and a gate. Pass through into the field, and bear left keeping the hedge immediately to your left. Continue until joining the golf course at a metal gate. Taking care as you proceed, follow the signs across the golf course, picking up the clear path as you descend to the surfaced bridgeway.



7 Follow the bridgeway for around 400m until taking a signed footpath forking to your left through the woodland and Old Town Park Local Nature Reserve. On emerging at a grassy area, bear right and go past the footbridge, exiting the park at a gate and following the path beyond.

8 Continue straight ahead at the road, and at the end of the road turn left onto George Street. Either continue straight ahead to reach the end of the walk next to the White Hart Hotel, or turn left onto Jacobs Pool, and immediately right through the gated courtyard of the Tourist Information Centre and Museum of Dartmoor Life.



*Okehampton Castle in an
18th Century engraving*

OKEHAMPTON CASTLE, BEFORE 1788.

N Okehampton Castle was built shortly after the Norman conquest, and has stood in ruins since 1538 when Henry VIII ordered it to be demolished as a punishment for its owner's treason. Today, English Heritage open the grounds to the public over the summer months. Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk for details.



Other Walking and Cycling Routes in the Area

The Two Castles Trail is just one of several walks and circuits that make the most of the impressive scenery in Devon and Cornwall.



West Devon Way

This 37 mile route links Okehampton and Plymouth following the western edge of Dartmoor, passing a variety of historic settlements, over moorland, along green lanes, woodland and riverside paths before descending along the old Plymouth to Launceston railway line towards the coast at Plymouth. For more information, visit www.westdevon.gov.uk



Tamar Valley Discovery Trail

This is an exciting and varied route, straddling two counties, crossing two rivers and taking in the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It runs for 34 miles from Launceston to Tamerton Foliot on the northern outskirts of Plymouth. The river crossing at Calstock can be made by train, and there may be a ferry service during the summer months.



The West Devon Triangle

The West Devon Way, the Tamar Valley Discovery Trail and the Two Castles Trail can be linked together to form a 90 mile triangle of walks through West Devon, taking in a National Park and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Where to Walk and Ride in Devon

Details of a range of day walks near to Okehampton and the Meldon Viaduct can be found at the Devon County Council website. Go to www.devon.gov.uk and search for "Where to Walk and Ride in Devon" to view a map and details of routes.



Dartmoor National Park

To find out more about walking in the National Park including events and guided walks, visit www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk



Ruby Trails

These eight walking trails give a taster of the diversity of the Ruby Country, and are mostly around 5 miles long. The area is renowned for its Culm grassland, the range of wild-life, and wonderful views of and Exmoor. A leaflet pack detailing each of the routes, can be found at the Holsworthy and Okehampton Tourist Information Centres.



Town Trails

There are Town Trails in both Okehampton and Launceston which provide excellent insights to the towns and their history. There are also village trail leaflets for Bridestowe and Lifton. Further information can be picked up from respective Tourist Information Centres.

TamarValley

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Tamar Trails

There are numerous walking, cycling and horse riding opportunities in the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These short routes take in dramatic riverside and woodland scenery, and as part of the Cornwall and West Devon Mining World Heritage Site, you are never far away from some history! Find out more at www.tamarvalley.org.uk



National Cycle Network Routes

There are lots of cycling opportunities with National Cycle Network Routes 3 and 27 passing through the area, which include the Tarka Trail, Ruby Way, Granite Way, and Drake's Trail. Parts of the routes are off road, with new sections being added regularly. For up to date information contact local Tourist Information Centres or visit the Sustrans website at www.sustrans.org.uk

DARTMOOR RAILWAY

Dartmoor Railway

Passenger trains run from mid-Devon to Okehampton Station and onwards to Meldon Viaduct, and the Railway has aspirations to link to the National Rail Network to connect to Barnstaple and Exeter. The railway provides a fantastic car free way to access the walking and cycling opportunities of Dartmoor. Visit www.dartmoor-railway.co.uk for more information.

Launceston Steam Railway

Launceston Steam Railway

Victorian Steam Locomotives haul trains along a 2.5 mile railway through the Kensey Valley, linking the Launceston to the hamlet of Newmills. For more details, visit www.launcestonsr.co.uk



Useful information for Visitors

Local Tourist Information Centres are able to provide details of accommodation, events, recreational activities, places to eat and drink, and visitor attractions in the area and near to the route - everything that's needed to make the most of your visit.

Okehampton

Tourist Information Centre

3 West Street
Okehampton
Devon EX20 1JZ
01837 53020
www.okehamptondevon.co.uk

Launceston

Tourist Information Centre

Market House Arcade
Market Street
Launceston
Cornwall PL15 8EP
Tel: 01566 772 321
www.visitlaunceston.co.uk

*Ponies below
Sourton Tors*



Visitor information about the Dartmoor area can be found at www.dartmoor.co.uk This site includes information about where to stay, things to do, eating and drinking, and events. The site also has an online booking facility for accommodation and includes special offers!

To plan your visit or holiday to Devon, including booking accommodation, food and drink, events and activities (including walking!), you will find a wealth of information at www.visitdevon.co.uk and www.visitcornwall.com

For in-depth information about accommodation, things to do and eating out in the Tamar Valley area, visit the Tamar Valley Tourism Association website at www.tamarvalleytourism.co.uk

Free booklets about Devon's coast and countryside including walking trails, cycling, horse riding and wildlife can be ordered through the Devon County Council website at www.devon.gov.uk





Transport information

Why not leave your car at home when exploring the Two Castles Trail. There are good opportunities to link to public transport along the route.

BUS Bus stops are identified on the individual stage maps throughout this booklet.

From Okehampton there are frequent buses heading south to Tavistock and Plymouth, and north to Barnstaple via Hatherleigh and Torrington.

Every couple of hours throughout the day there is a service linking Okehampton and Launceston which stops at Bridestowe, Lewdown and Lifton on route, although this service is very infrequent on Sunday.

For up to date timetable information call Traveline on 0871 200 22 33, visit www.traveline.org.uk or www.journeydevon.com. Bus timetables can be collected from local outlets including Tourist Information Centres and libraries.



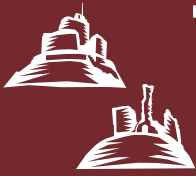
Bridestowe Church

Be a Green Visitor

- Do not disturb any livestock, keep your dog under close control and leave all gates as you find them.
- Take your litter home with you and recycle if possible.
- Do not disturb wild animals, birds or flowers.
- Whether you are walking, cycling or driving, take special care on country roads.
- If possible, leave your car at home and take the bus or train.
- Buy locally produced goods, including food and souvenirs.
- Support local shops, garages and other local services.



Gate at Lew Mill



Two Castles Trail

Meander through rolling countryside full of history on this 24 mile waymarked walking route between Okehampton and Launceston Castles



The Two Castles Trail is a recreational route for walkers of 24 miles, running from Okehampton Castle in the east to Launceston Castle in the west.

The route includes a number of climbs and descents and crosses a variety of terrain including stretches of road, woodland tracks, paths through fields, and open crossings of moor and downs.

The route is divided into 4 stages, and there are a number of opportunities to link to buses along the route.

Passing Okehampton Castle, the route climbs onto the north-western corner of Dartmoor before bearing away past a number of historic settlements dating back to the Bronze Age, Iron Age and the Normans.

Sites of defensive historic hill forts are near to the route, as is the site of a battle between the Saxons and the Celts.

The area is far quieter now, and offers a great opportunity to enjoy a range of landscapes and a sense of walking deep in the countryside away from the beaten track.



This document can be made available in large print, tape format or in other languages upon request.



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West Devon
Borough
Council

