

7. Follow the footpath through the field on the right, climbing gently uphill to go through the hedge into the next field. Cross this field to walk along the hedge in the next, going over the brow of the hill to the stile in the far hedge. Bear left as you start to drop downhill, passing to the right of the small fields by the derelict Coronation Cottages.

Croyde village dates back to Saxon times. The fields you can see below you as you climb towards Saunton Down still bear traces of the strip farming methods used in those days. People working the land owned narrow strips within a larger enclosure. If a farmer owned several of these strips he might enclose them within a hedge, leading to narrow fields such as those below. There are ancient cultivation strips in terraces by the track on beside Coronation Cottages, also thought to date from the same period.

8. Just before you reach the main road, turn right and rejoin the South West Coast Path and walk until you reach, on the other side of the road, the Saunton Sands Hotel.

Support the South West Coast Path

The South West Coast Path Association is the charity that protects and champions the Path for everyone to enjoy. You can help us do this by becoming a member. Sign up and you will receive:

- A free copy of the Complete Guide to the South West Coast Path guidebook
- 2 members magazines a year
- Monthly e-newsletters
- Car sticker
- Satisfaction – you're helping us to protect and conserve this beautiful Path!

Find out more at www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk, call us on 01752 896237 or email hello@southwestcoastpath.org.uk



Other useful information

To download a digital version of this walk go to www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/walksdb/831

Public Transport Bus Service Stagecoach South West 21A from Barnstaple and Braunton to Croyde. For timetable information visit Traveline or phone 0871 200 22 33.



South West Coast Path Association
Unit 11, Residence 2, Royal William Yard, Plymouth, PL1 3RP
Reg. charity no. 1163422



Start/finish: Saunton Sands Hotel
Distance: 3.5 miles (5.7 km)
Difficulty: Moderate

Croyde and Saunton Down Walk



A bracing walk to blow away the cobwebs following a grassy path bordered with wildflowers to pick up the old coastguard path around the low cliffs at Down End. Visit Croyde Beach before weaving your way through a network of old lanes to climb back to your starting point high above three miles of golden sand at Saunton, with its breathtaking views right across Bideford Bay and the Taw and Torridge estuary. This is a lovely walk in spring when the gorse is blazing and the thorn bushes are covered in blossom and home to songbirds; also in autumn, when the heathland is bright with heather and small birds feed in the fields and hedges. The paths are narrow and stony and there is plenty of ascent and descent, some of it steep, with steps as well.

This leaflet is produced by the South West Coast Association to help the guests of Saunton Sands Hotel enjoy their stay.

Croyde and Saunton Down Walk

3.5 miles (5.7 km)

1. Come out of the Saunton Sands Hotel and carefully cross the road to join the South West Coast Path. With Saunton Sands behind you, turn left and follow the coast path through the heathland to where it drops down a few steps to the main road opposite the layby before Chesil Cliff House.

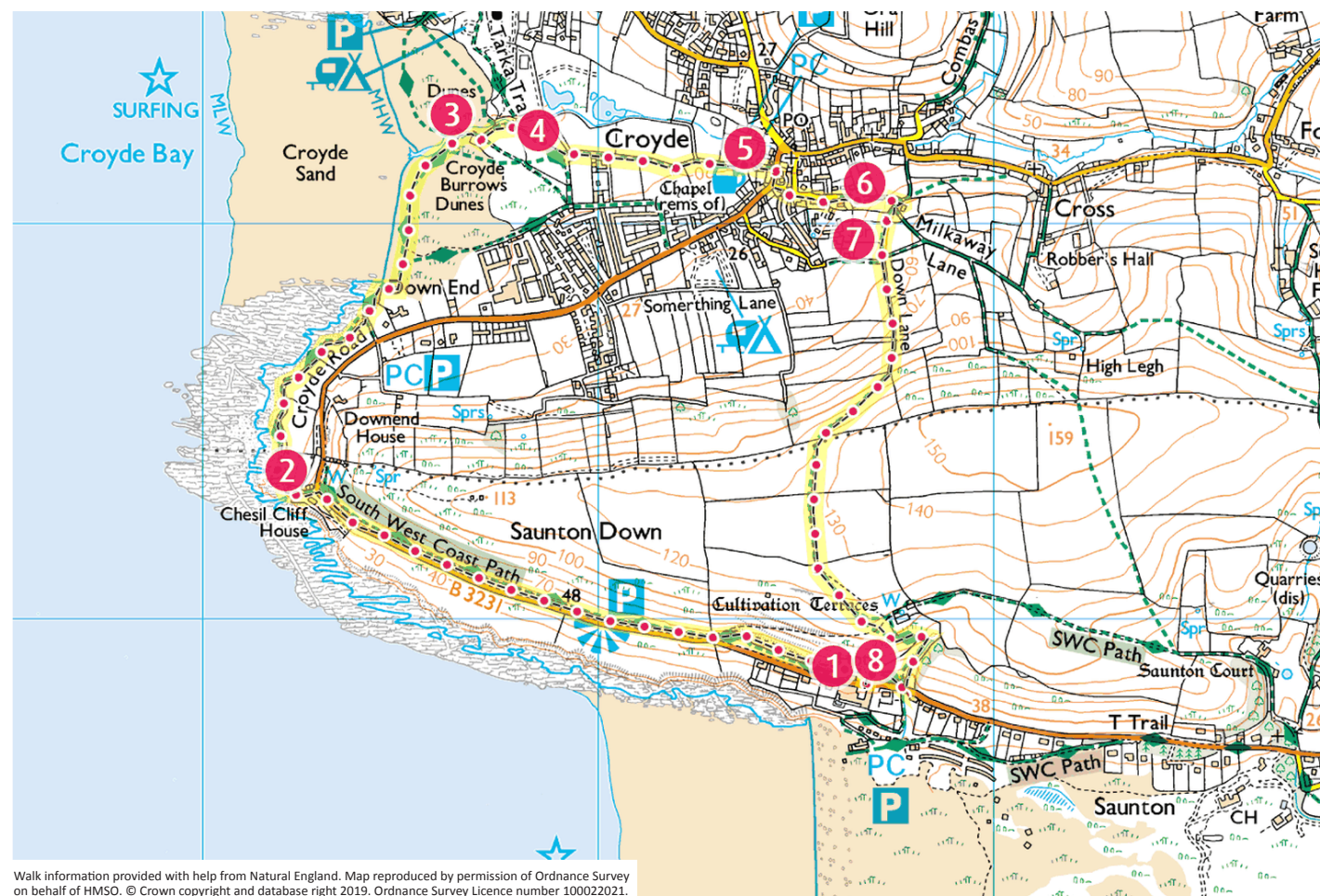
Despite its popularity in the summer, it is easy to get away from the crowds on Saunton Sands if you head away across the beach. The long flat stretch of golden sand facing west across the Atlantic makes it an idyllic place for wildlife as well as for people. It is a good place for spotting waders, including sanderlings, dunlins and ringed plovers. The sandhoppers sweeping up along the tideline attract wagtails, pipits and even swallows. Oystercatchers patrol the edge of the sea and cormorants are often seen on the rocks between here and Down End. The rocky plateau between the two beaches provides an excellent scramble on a falling tide, and the rock pools teem with anemones and crabs. The rocks that are submerged at high tide are encrusted with barnacles and limpets, while along the shoreline the sea deposits cuttlefish, razor shells, whelks, cockles, sea urchins, and sometimes even jellyfish.

To the left of the beach, as you descend towards it, Braunton Burrows is England's largest dune system and is particularly noted for its wildlife, with an enormous range of wildflowers and 14 species of plants and animals on the UK list of species which are under threat. Across the estuary, on the far side of the beach, is Appledore, a picturesque fishing village dating back to Saxon times with a rich maritime history.

Saunton is one of the most important Pleistocene (Ice Age) sites in southern England, being especially noted for the massive erratic boulders sitting on its wavecut platforms. These rocks were carried here on huge sheets of ice, and the most famous is known as the Saunton Pink Granite. This is thought to have been swept down from Gruinard Bay in northern Scotland, and it is embedded in the cliff face, buried beneath bands of crumbly sandy cliffs known as raised beach deposits.

2. Keeping a careful eye on the traffic as it rounds the blind corner to your right, cross the road and walk a short distance to the right to carry on along the Coast Path as it drops steeply downhill by the old coastguard lookout and carries on around the low cliffs at Down End.

Down End is a favoured location among the area's top surfers, who are often to be seen catching the waves here long before the rest of the world clambers out of bed. Both Croyde and



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Saunton are exceptionally popular surfing areas, and enthusiasts from all over the country regularly travel down the M5 on a Friday night to spend the weekend in the water. Down End is particularly highly rated among the experts for its powerful hollow low-tide breakers, which are reckoned to be among the best in the world. It regularly hosts international competitions. Some of the world's top surfers cut their teeth in the very lively surf club here. It is not recommended as a place for the novice, though, as its strong rip currents make it hazardous for anyone starting out. Saunton Sands is a much kinder beach for the less experienced surfer, and it is considered to be the UK's best beach for longboard surfing.

3. The South West Coast Path leads down some steps onto Croyde Beach. Head inland forking to your left. At the end of the hedge bear right and then diagonally crossing the grassy campsite before reaching Sandy Lane.

Here you are following the Tarka Trail as well as the South West Coast Path. The Tarka Trail is a 180-mile walking and cycling route linking locations featured in the novel 'Tarka the Otter', written by local author Henry Williamson. Williamson lived in nearby Georgeham, and his novel featured the exploits of an otter as it swam through North Devon's waterways.

4. Carry on ahead in an easterly direction along Sandy Lane.

5. On the main road turn right to take Cloutman's Lane on the left beyond, walking between two thatched cottages and carrying on past smaller roads to left and right until the road turns sharply left and a track heads off to the right.

6. Turn right onto the track, bearing right a moment later when it forks, to continue ahead along Down Lane. Ignore the tracks leading away on either side, until you come to the end of the lane.