

Kingswear and Waterhead Creek



- Start:** | Darthaven Marina car park

- Distance:** | 2 miles

- Difficulty:** | Easy to moderate. 2 flights of steps, surfaced and unsurfaced paths.

- Terrain:** | Unsurfaced footpaths, tarmac paths, steep ascent and descent

- Parking:** | Darthaven car park, Kingswear TQ6 0SG

- OS map:** | Explorer 0L20

- Grid Ref:** | SX 884513

- Public transport:** | Buses to Kingswear and Dartmouth – www.travelinesw.com; Steam train to Kingswear www.dartmouthrailriver.co.uk; Ferry details at www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walks

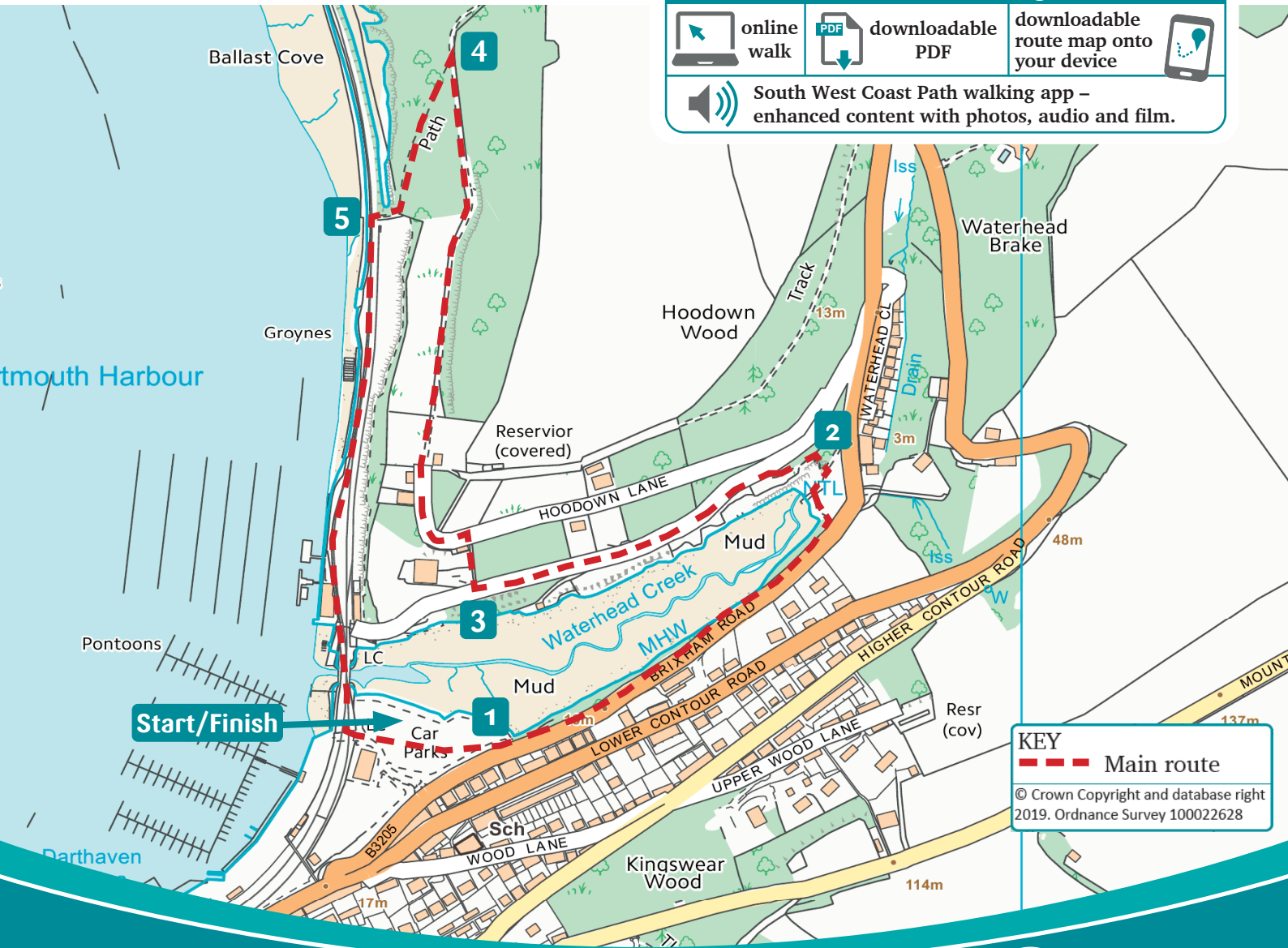
- Refreshments:** | In Kingswear

- Toilets:** | In Kingswear

This walk is available in the following formats from www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walk

online walk	downloadable PDF	downloadable route map onto your device
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South West Coast Path walking app – enhanced content with photos, audio and film.



Directions

- 1** Leave the car park through the path at the rear of the site, near the creek. Follow the creek-side path up and across Jubilee Meadow at the head of the creek and climb up the steps.
- 2** At the top of the steps, turn left into the lane. Follow this back towards the other end of the creek
- 3** Just before the entrance to Whitegates, turn right up the steps, signposted 'public footpath'. Turn left at the top and remain on this path through Hoodown Woods.
- 4** Take the footpath which doubles back down on the left towards the water. Go through the gate at the bottom and cross the railway line with care.
- 5** Follow the path to your left down towards the marina, crossing the railway lines back over to car park.

Further Information

Heritage

The village of Kingswear, often called 'the sunny side' by its residents, due to it catching the sun for most of the day, is around 100 years younger than Dartmouth, first being recorded around 1170. The 'King' in the name derives from Kingston – a village on the plateau above the village. 'Wear' comes from a tidal mill which used weirs to regulate the water flow, producing power to grind corn.

The town was a landing point for pilgrims from Europe who came to visit the shrine of Thomas Beckett, murdered in 1170 by followers of King Henry II. This led to the village church being dedicated to St. Thomas.

There has been a ferry across to Dartmouth since at least 1365, possibly due to quick links to the Exeter road and in 1864, the railway into Kingswear was built by the Dartmouth and Torbay Railway. The original aim of the railway was to reach Dartmouth, but although they had a station, which sold tickets



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and processed parcels, the link across the water has only ever been by ferry. The line is now operated by the Dartmouth Steam Railway company. The station has retained much of its original character, you can find out more about it in the station museum.

Waterhead Creek is an idyllic spot in the village and is enjoyed by residents and visitors for moorings, walks and quiet enjoyment. But it very nearly didn't look quite so picturesque! In the 1960s, the parish council came within one vote of buying the creek to solve its waste disposal problems – the plan was to fill it in with the village's rubbish, then landscape it as a public open space. Luckily, they decided it was too expensive and shelved the idea!

The stone structures you can see around the edge of Waterhead Creek are lime kilns. They are often found around the tidal estuaries and were used to convert limestone to quicklime by burning it. Layers of limestone and fuel (charcoal or culm, a type of poor grade coal) were loaded into the kiln from above and burnt for 24 hours. The finished product, quicklime, was shovelled out through the grate very carefully, as it is highly corrosive and unstable. It was used to 'sweeten the soil', adding fertility, especially to acid soil. It was also used as a cleanser and in rural industries such as tanning, as well as being diluted carefully, with water to make slaked lime used in lime mortar, lime wash or lime putty.

Rural lime burning came to an end with the arrival of the railways and industrialisation. Most of these kilns would have been out of use by the First World War.

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

Landscape and wildlife

Dart' is an old English word for 'oak'. You can see where the name came from on this walk, as the river is fringed with oak trees for much of its length. Oaks support more other organisms – birds, animals, plants, ferns, mosses, lichens, and especially insects – than any other kind of tree in this country.

Seals follow the salty waters of the river upstream and are not an uncommon sight. Look out for their long- muzzled, whiskered heads bobbing just above the surface as they 'hang' in the water between dives. The river is rich in birdlife. Herons nest in the riverside trees on the Greenway Estate. You can see these tall birds standing motionless by the water's edge, or flying overhead with ponderous grace on

long slow wing beats, their necks tucked back in on themselves. Wading birds feed on the shore, following the tide out. You may see small flocks of white- breasted, brownish- backed dunlin, along with orange- billed oystercatcher. Turnstones have short bills, short orange legs, black breasts and white undersides. Flocks of them ferret around in the seaweed and debris on the shore. Curlews – whose name comes from the sound of their piping call – can also be seen here, as can ringed plovers, with their orange bills, black and white heads, and a distinctive black ring around the neck.

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Working in partnership



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas has supported Explore South Devon to promote circular walks within the South Devon AONB using the South West Coast Path National Trail.



South West Coast Path Association