



AllWays Traveller

Coastal South Devon, UK

www.allwaystraveller.com

Natural beauty in coastal south Devon

The county of Devon is sandwiched between Cornwall and Somerset in England's west country.

The coastal area in the south of the county, where it runs along the English Channel, is particularly attractive and an officially designated area of outstanding natural beauty.

The south Devon section of the South West Coastal Path provides walkers bracing experience and stunning views.

There is also a coastal chain link of secluded beaches and small fishing villages.

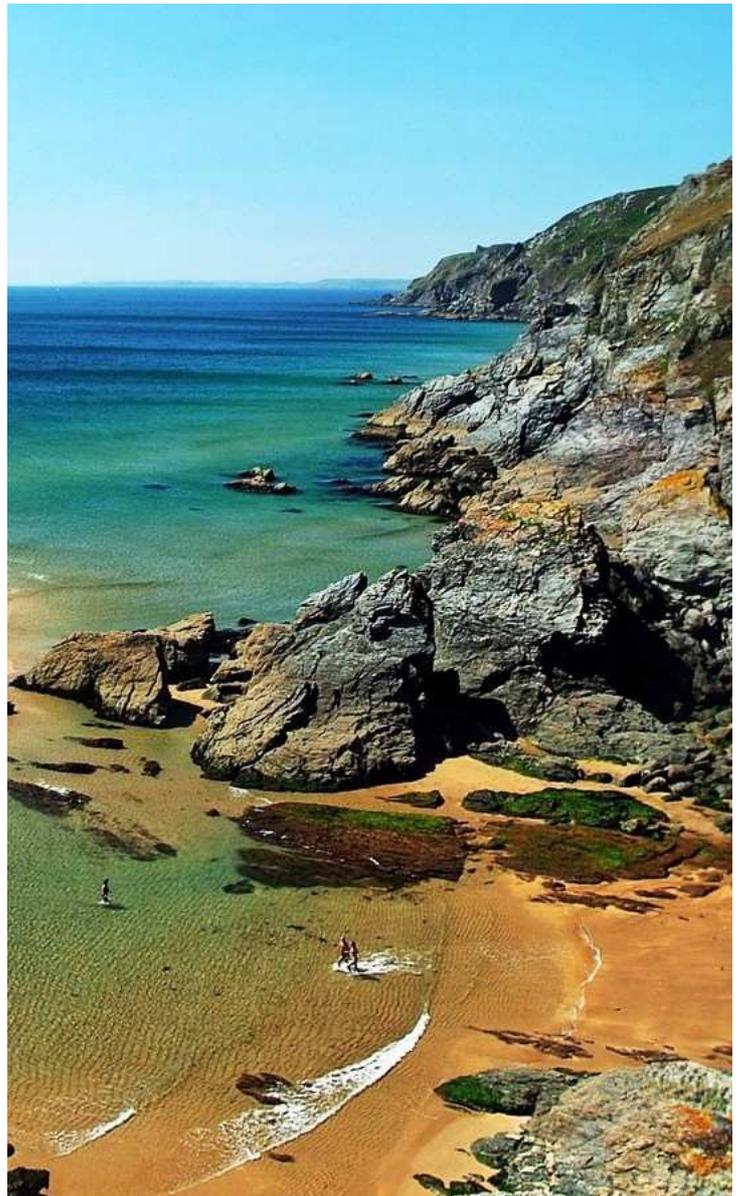
For those seeking more traditional seaside pleasures, the English Riviera offers the resorts of Torquay and Paignton.

The smaller resorts of Dartmouth, Teignmouth and Dalish Warren are also popular.

www.visitsouthdevon.co.uk

Ashley Gibbins

Managing editor
AllWays traveller



www.southdevonanob.org.uk



www.visitsouthdevon.co.uk

A personal view of South Devon



www.southdevonanob.org.uk

As far from the city as one could want

By Ashley Gibbins

There is an old proverb that says a *change is as good as a rest*.

Watching a stunning sun set over Soar Mill Cove, on a balmy, late spring evening, it was clear why they called this 'glorious Devon'.

And a world away from London.

That my peace and quiet was interrupted by the sharp, shrill sound of a greenfinch was no hardship at all.

On the contrary, it provided the perfect soundtrack.

Sweet and crystal clear

Sweet and crystal clear this fellow did not have to compete with the cacophony of noise that its inner-city cousins had to in order to be heard.

Okay, maybe the occasional bleating of a newly born lamb or a supporting chorus of wagtails, blackbirds, collar doves and robins. But that's it.

We had chosen coastal South Devon as somewhere that would be far away from the UK capital - and South Devon is certainly that.

The sound of life

Here at Soar Mill Cove it is the 'sound of life' that is the first difference one notices.

Living in London (and I do love it) the noise is largely manufactured.

The rumbling throb of traffic pierced with a siren wailing somewhere in the distance.

And the base beat of music from cars or from shops and restaurants.

Then there is the 'composite conversations' of so many people, with so many languages.

Here in coastal South Devon the noise tends to be natural.

The bird song and the sheep of course, but also the sound of the wind rustling in the trees and the waves lapping on the shore.

After you, no after you

Driving here is often going to be on quiet country lanes where meeting a car in the oncoming direction means one of us reversing to a passing point.

The nearest thing to a road rage is likely to be a friendly dispute over who should give way.

"After you, no after you" is suggested we are flashing headlights.

It strikes me that the more time people have on their hands the more time they tend to spend being nice.

However the best advice is to forget the car at least one day.

While in the area

The South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



The UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (ANOB), each with their own distinct character, protect Britain's best landscapes.

The South Devon ANOB covers 60 glorious miles of coastline, estuaries and countryside from Jennycliff in Plymouth to Berry Head in Brixham.

The Areas 60 miles of coastline takes in 68 beaches and coves, some large, sandy and easy to access, others small, rural and remote.

www.southdevonaonb.org.uk

The South West Coast Path



The South West Coast Path is a 630 mile coastal walk around the UK's West Country, with the section of path along the South Devon coast one of the most picturesque.

Large parts the coast path in South Devon fall within the ANOB.

For those unable to walk its entire length, there is ample opportunity to walk stretches of a length to suit.

In doing so, one can well spot dolphins, basking sharks and a range of sea birds while stopping off at rocky headlands, hidden coves and sandy beaches.

www.southwestcoastpath.com

A place to put on your walking boots



www.southdevonanon.org.uk

We were lodging at the Soar Mill Cove Hotel, which could not have been better for putting on your walking boots.

The path down to the cove itself makes for an ideal late afternoon walk before dinner.

It's just a great way to get ones mind and body into second gear for the break ahead.

To really appreciate the beauty of this part of south Devon consider taking that part of the South West Coast Path that goes from Soar Mill Cove to Salcombe.

It takes up to the hours each way, including stops to admire the stunning views and for passing the time of day with fellow hikers and their dogs.

A whole day out

But, be prepared for a whole day out, including a leisurely lunch in Salcombe itself, and it really is time well spent.

The initial climb up is a little strenuous but from then on it is truly bracing.

The path falls within South Devon area of outstanding natural beauty and clearly deserves this title.

Salcombe

Salcombe is still a thriving harbour town with a long maritime history.

Until the start of the 20th century the people here earned their living from the estuary and the sea through fishing, seafaring, boat and shipbuilding.

Smuggling and even piracy were not unknown.

Today it's a tourism seafaring trade that comes in the form of a network of ferries that allow visitors to gain access to local beaches that would otherwise be difficult to get to.

Salcombe pubs offer a good selection of locally brewed ales.

www.salcombeinformation.co.uk

Other seaside resorts

On this trip we avoided the more popular seaside resorts of South Devon, for the wild and rugged coastline landscapes.

Had we wished, the English Riviera resorts of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham are but a short drive from where we were at Soar Mill Cove.

And that's the lure of this county, So much to do so close at hand

The English Riviera



www.englishriviera.co.uk



The self-styled 'English Riviera' is the collective name given to the county's 'seaside' towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham.

Torquay

Torquay is one of the UK's premier 'traditional British seaside' resorts known for its sandy beaches, family attractions and Victorian ambience.

Torquay is also the main evening entertainment hub with dining, theatre, cinema and 'summer shows'.

Paignton

With its long sandy beaches, Paignton is a traditional seaside resort with lively seafront and pier.

It was a fishing village until the arrival of the railway, in 1859, brought visitors to the town, which quickly became a favourite tourist destination for the Victorians - and has remained so.

The sand here is claimed to be the best in the UK for building sandcastles.

Brixham

Brixham remains one of the busiest fishing ports in the UK and this adds an authenticity to its colourful quayside, which bristles with tourists during high season.

Brixham museum charts the town's cultural and maritime heritage and there are any number of fishing and boat trips.

www.englishriviera.co.uk



www.nattrust.org.uk : Eric McDolald

A final flourish at Overbecks

And so it was with Overbeck's.

As always we were looking to slot In a National Trust property into our visit.

And so we spent the last afternoon in South Devon at this National Trust property.

A seaside home

This is the seaside home of inventor and scientist Otto Overbeck and his home itself has some interesting displays.

But it is the gardens and the views that really rewards a visit.

And afternoon tea on the lawn.

Glorious views

Perched high on the cliffs above Salcombe, Overbeck's has glorious views over the estuary.

The gardens are a tropical fusion of palm and olive trees, banana plants and exotic flowers.

I met one couple told me they returned again and again to stroll or sit in the gardens.

"A haven of peace and tranquillity in a busy world" they assured me.

We did not need persuading.

Don't forget the ducks

Add to this a delicious Devon cream tea of scones, jam and clotted cream (with the ducks) on the lawn.

Try as we might we could not resist dropping them a few crumbs.

Overbecks is just a fine way to enjoy the final spell of relaxation before the drive back to London.

I began by claiming that a change is as good as a rest.

This short break to South Devon was undoubtedly a change from the frantic pace of life in London.

As such it was a tremendous way to recharge the batteries.



www.nationaltrust.org.uk/overbecks

Dawlish Warren

Built on a spit of sand with the Exe estuary on one side and the sea on the other, Dawlish Warren is one of South Devon's most popular seaside resorts.

The beach has *Blue Flag* status and there are 500 acres of nature reserve, which are home to wading birds, plant and wildlife.

Teignmouth

Teignmouth is an historic port and traditional seaside resort with promenade, Victorian pier and a lido.

It offers visitors the sea front and the harbour side, both with their own character.

Teignmouth River Beach, on the estuary side of town, harks back to days gone by with local fishermen mending nets as their boats bob up and down with the tide.

Dartmouth

Overlooking one of the finest natural harbours in the UK, Dartmouth is a bustling town with genuine coastal charm.

www.discoverdartmouth.com

Bigbury on Sea beach

Located within the ANOB, the *Blue Flag* Bigbury on Sea beach is dotted with rock pools.

Its landmark is Burgh Island, which overlooks the beach itself and is accessible at low tide, when the waters reveal a causeway that links it to the beach.

When the tide is in the 'sea tractor' makes the crossing possible.

The Burgh Island art deco hotel encourages guests to dress in the style of the 1920s.

www.burghisland.com

South Devon Railway

The South Devon Railway is the longest established steam railway in the south west.

It takes in a seven mile former Great Western Railway branch line, built in 1872, along the valley of the River Dart between Buckfastleigh and Totnes.

The railway runs steam trains with heritage rolling stock.

As part of the trip passengers can visit the Totnes Rare Breeds Farm and the Buckfast Butterflies and Dartmoor Otter Sanctuary.

www.southdevonrailway.co.uk
www.totnesrarebreeds.co.uk
www.ottersandbutterflies.co.uk

More information

www.visitsouthdevon.co.uk

A place to stay in coastal South Devon



Soar Mill Cove Hotel : www.soarmillcove.co.uk

By Ann Mealor

Rugged cliffs, pounding waves and glorious sunsets are what make Soar Mill Cove hotel so special. The approach to Soar Mill Cove is via narrow winding lanes bordered by high hedges so, I was not quite sure what to expect on arrival.

However, at the end of the road the view opens out and it is clear on reaching the hotel why so many visitors return here year after year.

The location and the scenery is stunning.

This low rise hotel is tucked away on the hillside, nestled in a sheltered spot with views out across the cliffs to the cove and the sea.

Overlooking the cove

Our room, which was large and comfortable had a patio area with sun loungers and chairs looking out onto Soar Mill Cove itself.

We enjoyed sitting here both evenings, sipping a glass of wine and watching the sun set.

Sometimes dolphins can be seen around the cove and there were binoculars in the room to help us spot them. Unfortunately, it was a no-show for us on that score!

Wonderful walks

There are many wonderful walks out along the cliffs to suit the rambler or the casual walker.



Everyone is therefore able to enjoy the breathtaking surroundings.

Dog friendly

Dogs are welcome at Soar Mill, they even get a welcome pack of 'Farley's treats' courtesy of Farley, whose owner Keith Makepeace, also owns the hotel.

The sense of freedom

The walks, the views, the natural environment, the peace and quiet, the sense of freedom and relaxation.

These are the overriding reasons for escaping to Soar Mill Cove, but the hotel has much to offer too.



The spa at Soar Mill Cove

The hotel spa at the Soar Mill Cove Hotel has an indoor heated pool, a hot tub, sauna and a selection of relaxing massages and beauty treatments.

It is the ideal way to relax after a long day on the coast.

Award winning dining



Fresh sea air certainly stimulates the appetite and for the hungry hiker, dining at Soar Mill Cove couldn't be better.

Ingredients are bought locally wherever possible and are of an excellent quality such as crab from Salcombe and steaks from a local butcher.

The award winning restaurant has two AA rosettes and the seasonal menu changes daily and always has an interesting selection of dishes to choose from.

For my evening meal I enjoyed Salcombe crab with a pot of mayonnaise and brown bread – it was fresh and delicate.

Ashley had the Start Bay hand dived scallops with sauté leeks and a melting *crab thermidor gratinee*.

The scallops were large and juicy and complimented by the *gratinee* - delicious.

For the mains, I chose the West Country beef fillet steak with wild mushroom and blue cheese gratin, triple cooked chips and wild leaf salad.

Steaks done to a 'T'

I am very particular on how my steaks are cooked – if they are done to my liking they are wonderful, if not, I may as well not eat them.

The beef fillet was fabulous, I explained how I wanted it and it was done perfectly.

A real treat, and the peppercorn sauce I had with it was the best I've tasted.

Ashley chose the fish pie with salmon, turbot, haddock and Atlantic prawns, topped with a parmesan crunch.

The pie was packed with fish and the parmesan gave added flavour and texture.

For dessert we went for the hotel's signature dish and a favourite of Audrey Hepburn when she stayed there, the strawberry and raspberry pavlova, first created by the original Mrs Makepeace, a trained pastry chef.

It was creamy, crunchy, sweet and fruity – perfect!

Following our meal, we enjoyed coffee and chocolates in the cosy lounge.



A family affair

Soar Mill Cove has been part of the Makepeace family for three generations.

It has homely traditions such as afternoon tea on arrival, fresh milk for in-room tea and coffee, books and board games and attentive and friendly customer service.

The atmosphere is relaxed and nothing is too much trouble. It is no surprise that for many, one visit just isn't enough.

www.soarmillcove.co.uk

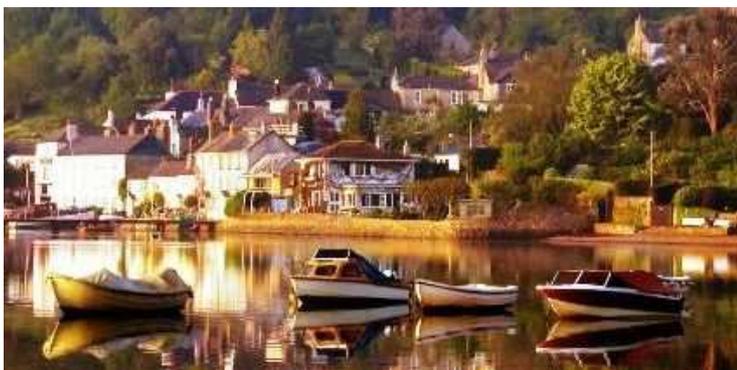
A snapshot of coastal South Devon



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www.allwaystraveller.com



The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

www.itwalliance.com



Ann Mealor is a professional travel writer and photographer and Commissioning Editor of *AllWays traveller*.



Ashley Gibbins is a professional travel writer and photographer and Chief Executive of the International Travel Writers Alliance.