

## Walk No. 1 - The Dart Circuit

This walk is based on the Dart Estuary in South Devon. It includes the attraction of two ferry crossings of the Dart and is a relatively short and gentle walk.

### Fact File

Lower Dart Passenger Ferry operates 7 days a week, regular service 7 a.m. until late, Monday - Saturday; 8 a.m. until late, Sunday.

Higher Dart Ferry operates 7 days a week, regular service 6.30 a.m. until late, Monday - Saturday; 8 a.m. until late, Sunday.

Walk length:

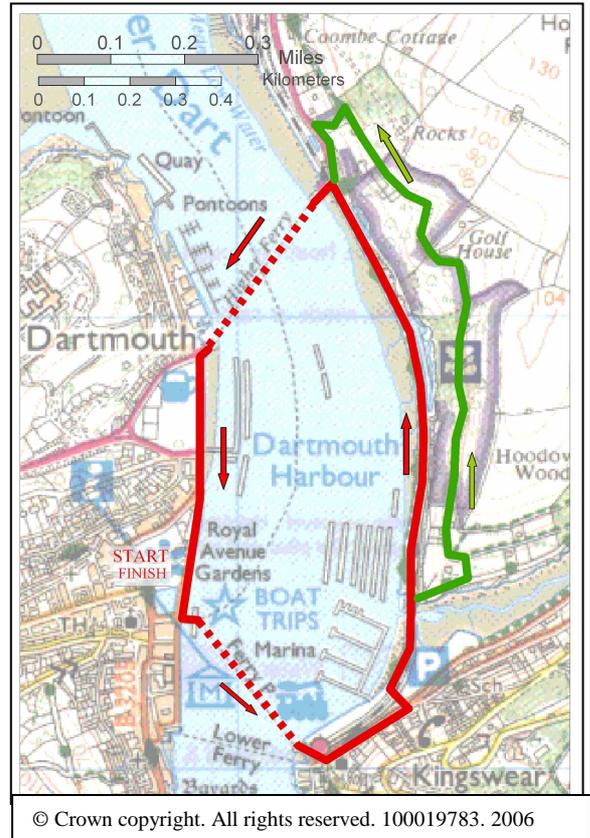
Basic route 2.25km/1.5 miles

Higher path option 3km/2miles

Higher path/lower path circuit 4 km/2.5 miles

OS Maps: Explorer (1:25,000) No. OL20  
South Devon.

Landranger (1:50,000) No. 202  
Torbay and South Dartmoor



### The Walk

**Start the walk at Dartmouth Station on the riverside Embankment.**

The Station Restaurant has the unmistakable architecture of a GWR building, although no trains ever ran to Dartmouth. It was originally intended by Brunel that the line from Paddington would cross the Dart a little upstream to terminate in Dartmouth. However, difficulties meant that a bridge across the Dart was never built and the railway only ever went to Kingswear on the opposite bank. However, tickets to and from Dartmouth could be bought, including the ferry crossing, hence the station.

**Walk down to the ferry pontoon behind the station and take the passenger ferry to Kingswear.**

The ferry lands next to Kingswear Station. This was the end of the GWR line from Paddington and was closed by British Rail in 1972. However, a private company bought the length of line from Paignton and it now operates as a steam railway. This offers a wonderfully scenic trip of 30 minutes which follows the coast as well as climbing high above the estuary. Kingswear Station has featured in numerous period films and television series, including "The French Lieutenant's Woman" and episodes of "Poirot".

**Walk out to the road and turn left uphill. Turn left down the steps which descend to cross the railway on a metal footbridge. On the far side continue between the boatyard and the railway.**

Until fairly recently a fish quay occupied the area where the boatyard and its associated marina are now. Kingswear was especially important for the crabbing industry, the shellfish being both sold locally and transported up country on the train.

**Cross the marina access road (1) and follow the path upriver between the railway and the Dart.**

This path gives superb close-up views of the estuary as well as a splendid panorama of the Dartmouth waterfront opposite and the Britannia Royal Naval College on the hill above.

**The path leads to the slipway for the Higher Ferry. Board the ferry to return to the Dartmouth side (2).**

There was a station on the railway at this point, known as Britannia Halt. It was built to serve the Naval College opposite. The college was built in 1902-05 to train naval officers and replaced an old ship, the "Britannia", which was moored in the estuary.

The Higher Ferry is technically a "floating bridge" and runs on two chains which cross the river and return to the bed once the ferry has passed. It was opened as long ago as 1831.

**Now walk back along the Embankment to return to Dartmouth Station.**

Much of riverside Dartmouth comprises land reclaimed from the estuary. The first part of the Embankment was reclaimed as recently as the 1930's whereas the central area around the Boat Float [the little inland harbour] dates to reclamation in the 17th century.

### **Higher Path Option**

**Follow the route described above to the riverside footpath from Kingswear (1 above). Just after crossing the creek beyond the marina access road, leave the riverside footpath and cross the railway at the small level crossing.**

**Follow the lane, then take the footpath up the steps on the left - look out for the sign screwed into the wall. At the top of the steps turn left and follow the path through the woods, high above the estuary.**

The views tend to be best early in the year, before the trees are in full leaf, but wherever there is a gap the panoramas up and down the estuary are superb. This is Hoodown Wood, one of the many woodlands clothing the slopes of the Dart Estuary. They may well owe their existence to being used as a source of timber for shipbuilding at and around Dartmouth.

Just before the houses at the far end of the woods take the footpath which zig-zags steeply down to the left - it is signed to Kingswear and Dartmouth. Walk down the road at the bottom to the Higher Ferry (2 above).

From here you can cross to the Embankment as described above.

### **Higher Path/Lower Path Circuit**

Another option is offered by walking the Higher Path and then using the lower, riverside footpath to return to Kingswear and so back to Dartmouth on the Lower Passenger Ferry

### **Dart Valley Trail**

The riverside path forms part of a long-distance route, the Dart Valley Trail, one of a network of such Trails in Devon. The Dart Valley Trail links Dartmouth and Kingswear with the picturesque village of Dittisham in a 13 km/8 mile circuit, with an extension of a further 13 km/8 miles to the attractive town of Totnes at the head of the estuary. A detailed information pack is available from the Dartmouth Tourist Information Centre, price £2.

### **Further Information**

Information on the Dart Valley Trail and other walking routes in Devon is available from [www.discoverdevon.com](http://www.discoverdevon.com) and the Discover Devon Holiday Line 0870 608 5531 - quote DP42 for Dart Valley Trail (£3.50 incl. p and p), or DP311 for Discover Devon Walking - A complete guide to walking trails in Devon (free publication). They can also be ordered from Discover Devon Information Service, Westacott Rd, Barnstaple, EX32 8AW quoting references above.