A Walk Around Snapes Point on the Salcombe Estuary

Salcombe and its estuary are well known for their scenic attractions. The coast around here is very popular for walks and, of course, forms part of the South West Coast Path. For some variety, this walk explores Snapes Point, an inland headland which is in the ownership of the National Trust and which extends into the estuary. Whether visiting Salcombe in its own right or crossing the estuary on the Coast Path, the views from the walk to, from and around Snapes Point are well worth experiencing, as spectacular in their way as any of the better known coastal views.

Fact File

There is a regular bus service from Kingsbridge to Salcombe, and a good but less regular service from Totnes. There are also buses from Exeter and Newton Abbot, some of which are direct, others timed to link at Kingsbridge with the local services. For timetable details contact Traveline on 0870 608 2608, or visit www.traveline.org.uk.

During the summer, there is a park and ride service between the edge of the town and the town centre.

Walk Length: 7km/4.5 miles: no stiles: a long gentle climb of 60m/200ft.

Facilities: Salcombe - all facilities (car park, bus stop and toilets at start and finish of walk).

The Walk

The walk starts in Salcombe at the corner of Gould Road and Island Street. This is where the buses, (including the summer park and ride services), stop and is also adjacent to the two main town car parks.

From the road junction walk along Gould Road, past the Fire Station and public toilets.

On the right is Shadycombe Creek. The far side of the creek is lined with boat repair yards. In the 19th century this little headland on the far side of the creek was an island (hence the name of Island Street). At that time it built small wooden ships, coasters and "fruit clippers" for the Azores fruit trade.
Keep walking along Gould Road. Alternatively, it is usually possible and generally more pleasant to walk through the car and boat park on the right. This keeps you nearer the water.

In this area, the small Shadycombe Creek joins with a larger creek, Batson Creek.

Continue after the car and boat park alongside the lane on the edge of Baston Creek.

Notice the lime kiln on the opposite edge of the creek. Kilns were built to burn lime, which was then used to help fertilise the soil. Around here the lime was generally brought in by sea from the Plymouth area. During the Napoleonic Wars, when the country experienced a sea blockade for a time, farmers were paid subsidies to construct and operate such kilns.

Continue along the creek, past another kiln, to the picturesque hamlet of Batson at the head of the creek.

At this idyllic location the substantial Batson Creek suddenly disappears. This is a feature of the creeks of estuaries such as that between Salcombe and Kingsbridge. Technically known as "rias", they are typical of the south coast of Devon and Cornwall and actually are drowned river valleys rather than true estuaries.

The hamlet of Batson complements the creek head perfectly, with its green, traditional telephone box and row of early 19th century cottages.

At Batson cross the green, bearing round to the right, and on reaching the lane follow this uphill on the far side of the creek. Keep to the lane as it rises and falls. At the bottom of the second descent to the creekside, take the footpath through the gate on the left.

(Note that the lane beyond here only leads to the private land of Snapes Manor). There are good views back across Batson Creek towards Salcombe from here.
The path climbs to a field edge. Turn right here and follow the path through a small area of woodland to another field edge.

Snapes Manor can be glimpsed on the right. Much of the building dates from the 1700s but part of the house is said to originate as far back as the 12th century.

At the end of the field, turn left up the hedged track. Go through the gate at the top to the wider track. Turn left here.

This wide track was once used as a carriageway for Snapes Manor. It was built in the 1800s by the then landowner in preparation for development which was thought would occur when the planned Kingsbridge-Salcombe railway was built along the estuary. Neither the railway nor the development ever materialised.

At the top of the track, turn right to a small National Trust car park. Go through the gate in the far corner of the car park and follow the gravelled footpath at the top of the field.

There are superb views over the estuary between Kingsbridge and Salcombe from here. On clear days, Dartmoor forms the horizon beyond Kingsbridge. This location gives a good overview of the estuary and its creeks, its drowned valley nature being seen to good advantage.

Go through the gate on the left of the path and follow the hedge downhill. At the bottom corner turn right and follow this hedge.

This path gives you a good view of one of the estuary boatyards below, at Lincombe. Directly ahead can be seen Frogmore Creek, one of the major creeks of the estuary complex, as it enters the main estuary.

Follow the field edge round to the right and go through a gate into another field.

This is another superb viewpoint over the estuary. Prominent is the boat which serves as the headquarters of one of Salcombe's sailing clubs. On the opposite bank is the village of East Portlemouth, with the outline of its church tower just visible against the skyline.

Having gone through this gate, turn left along the field edge. The path now rounds the headland of Tosnos Point.

Note how the fields here have retained wide margins and well maintained hedgerows. These features are retained for nature conservation reasons, forming an ideal habitat for farmland birds. Particularly benefiting is the rare cirl bunting, found in Britain only along the southern extremities of Devon.

Keep following the obvious path, passing through two more gates and staying parallel to the estuary. The path bears slightly right to a waymark post. Just beyond is a cairn and a seat; head for these. This is Snapes Point.

The views down the estuary from here, past Salcombe to Bolt Head and the sea beyond, are wonderful.
From the seat go ahead downhill to a kissing gate. Go through and down the steps to a hard track. Turn right here.

This is the carriageway track again. The track gives a good view of Salcombe over Batson Creek.

Keep on the track until it reaches an obvious path going off to the left signposted to Batson; a group of pine trees marks the spot.

From here, the route retraces the way out from Salcombe. Follow the path down to the lane, turn right and follow this to Batson then back along the creekside to Salcombe.

Further Information

A range of information is available on the South West Coast Path. Especially useful is the guidebook and accommodation list produced by the South West Coast Path Association, price £6.00 and available locally. Alternatively, it may be obtained from the Discover Devon Information Service, Westacott Road, Barnstaple EX32 8AW, price £7.50 including postage and packaging (cheques payable to Devon County Council). Quote reference DP33.

There is also a National Trust leaflet on walks around the Salcombe Estuary, available from local National Trust outlets price £0.75p.

For information on the wider network of walking routes in Devon, obtain the free brochure "Discover Devon - Walking" from local Tourist Information Centres or from the address above.

OS maps for this walk:-

- Landranger(1:50,000 scale)202 Torbay and South Dartmoor
- Explorer(1:25,000 scale)OL20 South Devon