

Coves and cliffs

A self guided walk along the coast at Babbacombe in South Devon



Explore a dramatic coastline of steep cliffs and hidden coves

Discover evidence of the powerful forces of nature

Wonder at the diversity of rocks found along this stretch of coast

Find out how people live and work with an ever-changing landscape

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**the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks**





This booklet is to be used alongside the audio commentary for this walk

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Cover image: Cliff collapse at Oddicombe Beach © Jenny Lunn

Coves and cliffs

Discover a changing coastal landscape in South Devon

Explore this dramatic coastline of steep cliffs and hidden coves.

It's a wonderful place to walk and uncover the stories of this ever-changing landscape. You can also enjoy some stunning views and a ride on a restored cliff railway.

Discover evidence of dramatic earth movements and the powerful forces of nature.

Find out why a red cliff collapsed into the sea while white cliffs were blasted apart with dynamite. Compare flaky black rocks with pink 'Devon marble'.



View across to Babbacombe harbour
© Pat Wilson



Rocky outcrop at Babbacombe harbour
© Nicki Wilson

See where rocks were taken away by day and drugs were brought in by dead of night. Learn of genteel Victorians with their bathing machines and the modern adventure sport of coasteering.

This walk explores the tremendous diversity of rocks found along this stretch of coast.

Discover how their different properties have created the landforms that you can see and have influenced human activities.

There are also some thought-provoking questions about human intervention along the coastline.

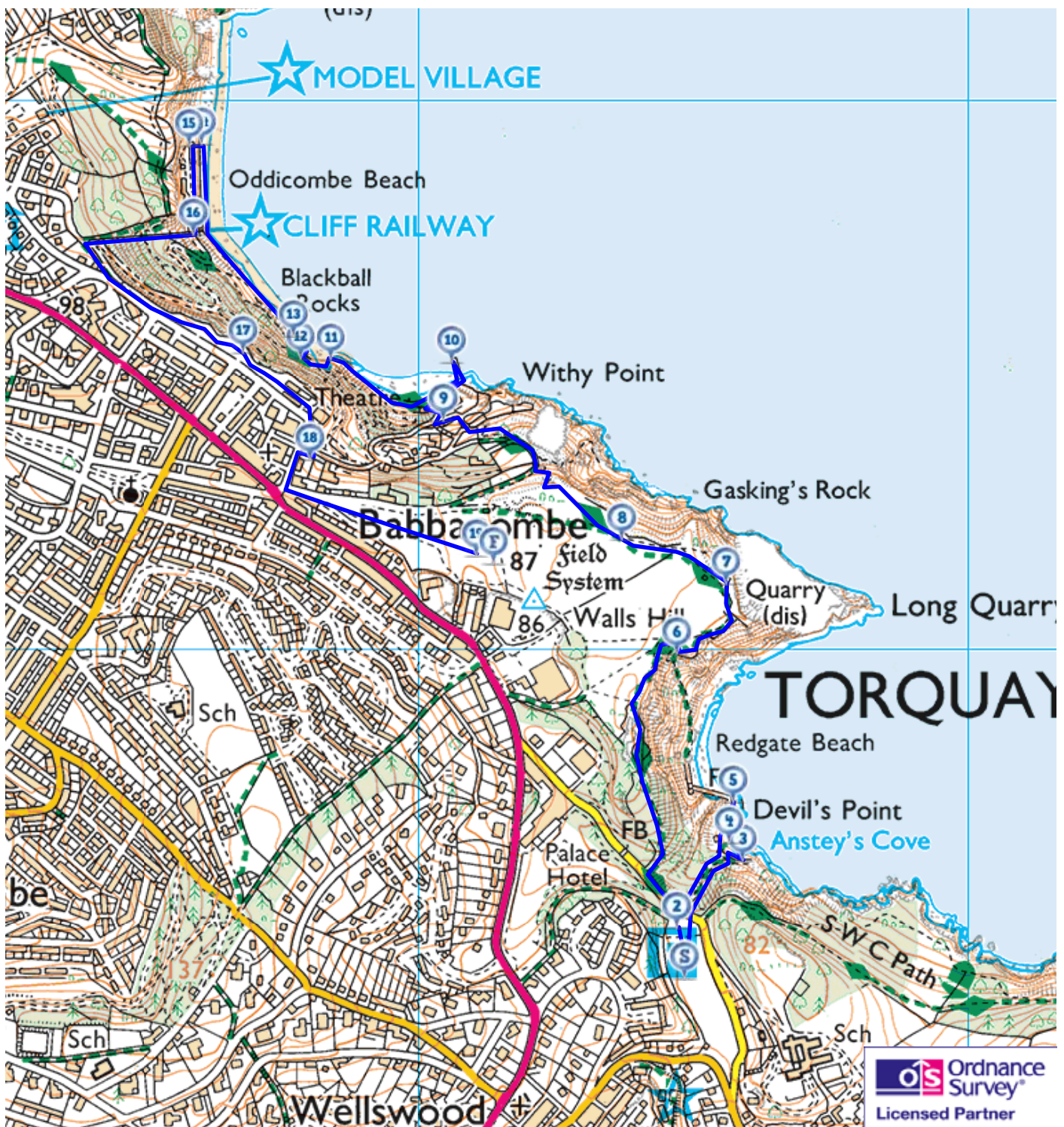
Note: Prolonged wet weather causes cliff instability. Please check in advance for any footpath closures or diversions.

Practical information

Location	Babbacombe, Devon, Southwest England
Getting there	<p>Train - Nearest station Torquay (3 miles); served by direct services from London.</p> <p>Car - 2 miles from the centre of Torquay off the A379 Babbacombe Road. Follow the brown signs to Kents Cavern entrance on the right. DO NOT TURN IN but park on the left side of the road.</p> <p>To reach the start of the walk continue on foot for 100 metres until you see a signed footpath to Anstey's Cove. Follow it into the middle of the recreation ground.</p> <p>Bus - The start point can be reached by bus from Torquay or Teignmouth on Stagecoach routes 11 or 32. Alight on Babbacombe Road at the Palace Hotel and walk about 300 metres down Anstey's Cove Road to the car park. To start the walk, cross the car park into the middle of the recreation ground.</p>
Start point	Middle of recreation ground beyond Anstey's Cove car park, TQ1 2JE
Finish point	Babbacombe Cricket Club, Walls Hill Road, TQ1 3LZ
Onward journey	From the finish, it is just over half a mile back to Ilsham Road or the bus stops
Distance	4 ½ miles
Need a shorter route?	For a shorter route, you can end at the Babbacombe Cliff Railway (Stop 16)
Level	Challenging - the paths and lanes are very steep in places

Conditions	The steep paths and lanes can be slippery in wet or icy weather. Strong boots or shoes are recommended, as is weatherproof clothing. You may like to take a walking stick.
Suitable for	Dogs - though they are only allowed on the beaches at particular times of year (check notices)
Refreshments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anstey's Cove Café – drinks and snacks (Stops 3-5) - Cary Arms, Babbacombe Beach – boutique pub (Stop 9, 10) - Babbacombe Beach Café – drinks and ice creams (Stop 10) - Oddicombe Beach Café – wide range of drinks and snack food (Stop 14, 15) - Cliff Railway Café, Babbacombe Downs Road (Between Stops 16 and 17) - Babbacombe Downs – various pubs, restaurants and cafés (between Stops 16 and 17)
Toilets	<p>Seasonal public toilets available at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anstey's Cove (only available when the café is open) - Babbacombe Beach (after Stop 10) - Oddicombe Beach (Stop 14, 15) - Babbacombe Downs (between Stops 17 and 18)
Things to do	<p>The Babbacombe Cliff Railway is open throughout the summer and during winter weekends. Check opening times before you go (Tel: 01803 328750)</p> <p>Kayaks can be hired from Babbacombe Beach Café while Oddicombe Beach offers sail and paddle boats for hire</p> <p>Look out for grey seals at Babbacombe Beach!</p>
Tourist information	English Riviera Tourism Company, 5 Vaughan Parade, Torquay Tel: 0844 474 2233 www.englishriviera.co.uk

Route overview



Detail of the first part of the route



Stopping points

1. Recreation ground off Ilsham Road
2. Anstey's Cove Road car park
3. Steps at corner of Anstey's Cove beyond cafe
4. Anstey's Cove promenade
5. End of Anstey's Cove promenade looking at Redgate Beach
6. Cliff top above Redgate Beach
7. Cliff top above Long Quarry Point
8. Walls Hill

Detail of the second part of the route



Stopping points

- 9. Old lampost by the Cary Arms, Babbacombe Beach
- 10. End of harbour wall, Babbacombe Beach
- 11. Wooden walkway over Half Tide Rock
- 12. Top of steps between Babbacombe Beach and Oddicombe Beach
- 13. Waterfall beside path
- 14. Oddicombe Beach, looking at cliff fall
- 15. Oddicombe Beach, looking at Petit Tor Point
- 16. Babbacombe Cliff Railway, lower station
- 17. Viewing platform, Babbacombe Downs
- 18. Babbacombe Cliff, Beach Road
- 19. Babbacombe cricket ground
- 20. Babbacombe cricket ground

Directions

These directions are for use with the Babbacombe walk audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

1. Welcome to Babbacombe

Recreation ground off Ilsham Road

Directions 1

From the middle of the recreation ground walk to the Anstey's Cove car park. Stop here and listen to Track 2.

2. A valley without a river

Car Park, Anstey's Cove Road

Directions 2

Leave the car park and cross the lane passing from left to right. Go down the lane that leads down the slope straight ahead. It is very steep and there are steps if you find these easier for the descent. At the bottom turn right, go past the small cafe to the end of the concrete promenade. Go down the steps onto the pebbled beach; if the tide is too high then remain at the top of the steps. Stop here and listen to Track 3.

Note: It is very steep down to and up from Anstey's Cove. If you are not able to manage, stay by the car park to listen to Tracks 3, 4 and 5 then follow Directions 5.

3. Black and white

Steps at corner of Anstey's Cove beyond cafe

Directions 3

Go back up the steps onto the promenade. Stop near the cafe and listen to Track 4.

4. Smuggling, swimming and a cup of tea

Anstey's Cove promenade

Directions 4

Continue along the promenade to the far end where there are some metal railings. From here you can look round the corner to Redgate Beach. Stop here and listen to Track 5.

5. Rock removal

End of Anstey's Cove promenade looking at Redgate Beach

Directions 5

From Anstey's Cove, retrace your steps up the steep lane back towards the car park. When you reach the road at the top, turn right. After about 100 metres look for a footpath on the right signposted "Babbicombe and St Marychurch over the Downs" and "Coast Path Walls Hill". Go up the steps and follow the path uphill through the woods.

After about 300 metres you emerge on to an open grassy area. Stay on the right hand side with a fence and hedge on your right. Follow the fence round until you reach the barred gate and path down to Redgate Beach. Follow the fence a little further round the next corner and stop at the end (near a bench) where there is a good view down onto the beach. Listen to Track 6.

6. Danger from above and below

Cliff top above Redgate Beach

Directions 6

Continue following the fence along the cliff top around the edge of the open grassy area. Near the shelter is a bench facing out to sea. Stop by this corner of the fence. From here you can just see over the fence and cliff edge to the two pointed rocks of the limestone quarry that we saw from Anstey's Cove. Listen here to Track 7.

7. A flat plain and a steep cliff

Cliff top above Long Quarry Point

Directions 7

Continue following the fence along the cliff top. After passing the shelter the path goes through a boundary hedge where there is another "Coast Path" marker post and emerges into another open grassy area. Keep to the path on the right. Stop at the second bench which has a wonderful view along the next section of coast. Listen here to Track 8.

8. A special place

Walls Hill

Directions 8

Continue along the grassy path on the right hand side of the open area. After a short distance is a wooden post with the Acorn symbol for the Coast Path. Follow this path into the woodland, where there is also a signpost indicating "Coast Path Babbacombe". Follow the steps as they zig-zag down through the wood. Take care as they can be very slippery in wet weather. *Continued next page*

8. A special place

Walls Hill

Directions 8 continued

At the bottom turn right along the lane. After about 50 metres the lane bends round to the left and there is a signed public footpath on the right. Follow this path downwards. Just before the archway follow the path down to the right. Shortly after it takes a left turn down some steps and between walls. Then follow the steps down to the right and you emerge at the Cary Arms. Stop by the old lamppost and listen to Track 9.

9. Knock-down price, fall-down cliff

Old lamppost by the Cary Arms, Babbacombe Beach

Directions 9

Turn right down the steep road and follow it past the Cary Arms. At the bottom of the hill turn right and follow the walkway. Stop at the end of the harbour wall and listen to Track 10.

10. From fishing boats to luxury yachts

End of harbour wall, Babbacombe Beach

Directions 10

From the harbour wall, retrace your steps along the walkway below the Cary Arms. Go past the car park and cafe and continue along the promenade to the wooden walkway. The walkway has three short sections. After the second bend – when you are on the third section of the walkway – stop about halfway along and listen to Track 11.

11. A hot rock sandwich

Wooden walkway over Half Tide Rock

Directions 11

At the end of the wooden walkway follow the path as it goes around a small cove at the base of a black shale cliff. The path then goes up some steps into the woodland. After a short distance is a junction – straight ahead are wooden steps upwards and down to the right is a flight of steps to sea level. Stop at this junction and listen to Track 12.

12. Upside down cliffs

Top of steps between Babbacombe Beach and Oddicombe Beach

Directions 12

Go down the steep steps towards the sea. At the bottom turn left. Stop after about 25 metres where there is a small waterfall on the left side. Listen here to Track 13.

13. Waterfalls

Waterfall beside path

Directions 13

Continue along the path towards the next beach. Walk along the promenade or the beach to the fence and danger signs at the far end in front of the cliff fall. Stop by the signs and listen to Track 14.

14. Red and white

Oddicombe Beach, looking at cliff fall

Directions 14

Stay in the same place but look beyond the red rock fall to the next headland of grey/white rock, known as Petit Tor Point. Listen to Track 15.

15. Devon marble

Oddicombe Beach, looking at Petit Tor Point

Directions 15

The new Cliff Railway Visitors Centre on the Promenade is well worth a short visit before moving on. When you are ready go to the centre of the promenade by the toilets and from there take the road up the hill. Just before the bridge over the road is the entrance to the Cliff Railway (lower station). Stop here and listen to Track 16.

16. A unique railway

Babbacombe Cliff Railway, lower station

Directions 16

You can take the train to the top of the cliff if it is running (there is a small charge) or continue up the steep zig-zag road. Outside the door of the top station a Coast Path sign points to the right. This is where we leave the Coast Path. Go left up the sloping path, past the Cliff Railway Cafe and under the arch. *Continued next page*

Note: The walk can be shortened from this point,. At the arch turn right and then left along Babbacombe Downs Road. At the end is Babbacombe Road. There are bus stops a short distance to the left or right and regular services will take you into Torquay or towards Teignmouth.

16. A unique railway

Babbacombe Cliff Railway, lower station

Directions 16 continued

Turn left along the road, keeping on the pavement on the left hand side. After about 30 metres, note a fountain with the figure of a woman which we will learn more about later. Follow the footpath along the top of Babbacombe Downs, which is a grassy area with flower beds. When you reach a raised viewing platform go up the steps on to the platform and look out to sea. Listen to Track 17.

17. A wonderful view

Viewing platform, Babbacombe Downs

Directions 17

From the viewing platform, go down the steps and turn left. Follow the cliff top path to the far end. Cross in front of the theatre and around its right side to the corner of Babbacombe Downs Road. Bear left down Beach Road. After about 25 metres is a gateway on the right into a grey stone house called Babbacombe Cliff. There is also a blue plaque on the wall. Stop here and listen to Track 18.

18. A grand villa

Babbacombe Cliff, Beach Road

Directions 18

Head back up Beach Road but turn immediately left up the slope behind the wall where the blue plaque is. Go up the steps and turn left along the road. The old cottages on either side of the road here are all that remains of old Babbacombe village. Take the first left called Walls Hill Road which is signposted to a car park and the cricket club. Cross Walls Hill car park and go round the barrier on to the footpath across rough grass. After a short distance the rough grass gives way to cut grass. If cricket is not being played walk straight across to the benches at the other side. If a game is in progress you will need to skirt round the edge of the pitch

19. An unusual cricket pitch

Babbacombe cricket ground

Directions 19

Remain at the cricket ground and listen to Track 20.

20. A changing landscape

Babbacombe cricket ground

Directions 20

From the benches beside the cricket pitch follow the footpath past the wooden sign indicating Walls Hill SSSI. Head straight across the open grassy area, which is the site of the Iron Age hill fort that we heard about earlier. At the far side is a gap in the hedge through to the next section of Walls Hill.

To return to the start on foot, head diagonally across the open grassy area to the far corner by the cliff. This is the way we came up from Anstey's Cove car park at the beginning of the walk. Follow the Coast Path signs through the woods and back to Anstey's Cove Road car park and cross the recreation ground back to Ilsham Road

To continue your journey by bus, bear right across the open grassy area to another wooden Walls Hill SSSI sign. Follow the path down to Babbacombe Road where there are bus stops on either side. Regular services will take you into Torquay or towards Teignmouth.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

- **Pat Wilson** for creating the walk, taking photographs and providing the audio commentary
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