



Walks



Map



News



Soci

Walk - Morte Point

4.6 miles (7.5 km)

📍 Morte Point - EX34 7DT → Morte Point

📌 Moderate - There are a number of stretches of steep ascent and descent, including steps, but there are many shortcuts back across the heath.

An inspiring walk through an area of rare coastal heathland, where the wealth of wildflowers beneath the gorse and heather provides the perfect feeding and breeding ground for many moths and butterflies. Look out for seals and even dolphins. The deadly 'devil's teeth' rocks along the spine of Morte Point continue underwater and have been responsible for many shipwrecks over the centuries. A good walk for older children with plenty of energy, who will love the rugged romance of the area and the fascinating rocks. Visit in spring, when birds call from bushes laden with blossom and the maritime grasslands are full of wildflowers and early insects; or in autumn, when the small flocks of migrant seabirds passing by offshore can sometimes include rare breeds among the terns and kittiwakes.

This walk is particularly good for dogs as it passes a beach and pubs where dogs are welcome. Have a look at our [Top Dog Walks on the South West Coast Path \(/top-dog/\)](#) for more dog friendly beaches and pubs.

Use this walk (or part of it) to visit the hidden beaches at either Rockham Bay or Lee Bay.

👤 [Family \(/walksdb/tags/family/\)](#) [Heritage \(/walksdb/tags/heritage/\)](#)

[Culture \(/walksdb/tags/culture/\)](#) [Autumn \(/walksdb/tags/autumn/\)](#)

[Dog Friendly Walks \(/walksdb/tags/dogfriendlywalks/\)](#)

🌙 Sleep

Lundy House, Morte Point >

Lundy House B&B sits between Morte Point and Woolacombe on the North Devon coast. Surrounded by National Trust land. Great breakfasts. Dogs and dirty boots welcome.

01271 870377



Lee Meadow Farm Camping, near Lee >

A traditional campsite set in the lovely countryside besides the South West Coast Path-visit the farm animals-free hot showers-farm shop and ea rooms on site-large pitch -Ehup available.

01271 870875



The Smugglers Rest, Morte Point >

Newly renovated, The Smugglers Rest offers 8 spacious ensuite rooms with breakfast included. We are dog and child friendly and have a new cafe open to the public.

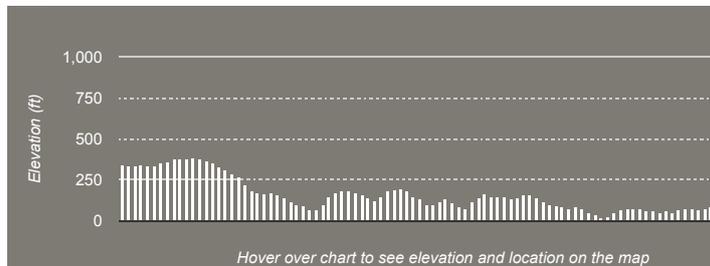
01271 870891 / 07788537 867





- ✓ Easy walks
- ✓ Moderate walks
- ✓ Challenging walks
- ✓ Eat & Drink
- ✓ Sleep
- ✓ Do
- ✓ Bus stop
- ✓ Photographs
- ✓ Car park
- ✓ Toilet
- ✓ Place of interest
- ✓ Route change

Interactive Elevation



Route Description

- 1 From the main entrance to the car park beside the Heritage Centre, in Morte Point village, turn left and walk a few metres to take North Morte Road, opposite, by the Post Office. Walk to the end of the road, to the gate signed for Bull Point Lighthouse.
- 2 Carry on along the drive towards the lighthouse for about half a mile, until you come to a footpath on the right towards Bennett's Mouth.
- 3 Turn right onto this footpath and follow it down the steps through the woods to where the path forks. Turn left and then bear right, to follow the stream along the valley to Bennett's Mouth.

The rocks here are Morte Slates, part of a band of rock running roughly east to west, through Devon to Somerset. The fingers of rock leading out to sea are evidence of dramatic upheavals that occurred in the Earth's crust some 300 million years ago, during the Carboniferous period.

Half a mile to the east is Lee, a small cove whose remoteness made it the perfect landing place for smugglers' contraband. According to one historian, a customs officer carrying out a raid in an outhouse here in June 1786 seized hampers containing 66 bottles of gin, 13 gallons of Portuguese red wine, 250lbs of salt and a box containing 73 packs of playing cards, all missing the ace of spades. (In the eighteenth century a stamp duty was imposed upon playing cards, and the ace of spades had to be stamped with the printer's insignia to show that the tax had been paid, so removing this card covered the smugglers' tracks).

- 4 Reaching the South West Coast Path above the tiny rocky beach, turn left and follow it steeply uphill and across the open heathland to the lighthouse at Bull Point.

[Print OS \(Ordnance Survey\) M](#)

[Dogs on the coastpath >](#)

[Report a problem >](#)

[Safety advice >](#)

Share this page:

Local maps and publications

[A-Z 1:25,000 map book: North Devon & Somerset](#)
(<http://shop.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/p/405.htm>)

Nearby Walks

This whole area is a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its coastal heathland and it supports numerous insects and butterflies, with wild orchids under the banks of vivid yellow and purple gorse and heather. Seals are often seen on the rocks at low tide, and sometimes in the summer dolphins, porpoises and basking sharks swim astonishingly close to the beaches.

The jagged rocks offshore extend way out to sea underwater, and in the past many a ship blundered onto them, mistaking the bay for the safe haven of Ilfracombe. According to local legend, some of the less scrupulous members of the population capitalised on this, using lights to lure hapless sailors onto the rocks so that they could plunder their cargoes. This led to complaints from 'clergy, ship owners, merchants and landowners' that the 'barbarous conduct of lawless wreckers caused much loss of life and property'.

In 1879, the Trinity House Brethren responded by building the Bull Point Lighthouse. It operated without undue incident for 93 years, but on 18th September, 1972, the Principal Keeper reported ground movement in the area of the engine room and the passage leading to the lighthouse, and that 5 centimetre fissures were opening up. In the early hours of Sunday morning, 24th September, 15 metres of the cliff face crashed into the sea and a further 15 metres subsided steeply causing deep fissures to open up inside the boundary wall. Walls cracked and the engine/fog signal station partly collapsed, leaving it in a dangerous condition and putting the fog signal out of action.

As a temporary arrangement, an old Trinity House light tower, given to the Nature Conservancy at Braunton Sands was borrowed back. This tower was used for nearly two years. A make-shift hut was constructed for the fog signals. In 1974 the new lighthouse was built at a cost of £71,000. It was designed and built so that all the equipment from the old lighthouse could still be used. The tower is 11 metres high, 54 metres above the sea at high water. Its white light flashes three times every 10 seconds and can be seen for 20 nautical miles. The lighthouse is now fully automatic with equipment operating at pre-set times. The fog signal was discontinued in 1988.

- 5 *For the shortest stroll, turn left at the lighthouse and follow the tarmac drive back to North Morte Road; but otherwise cross the tarmac on the Coast Path, dropping downhill to walk above the beach at Rockham.*

The sharp rocks in Rockham Bay have wrecked many ships and claimed a lot of lives. In the early hours of New Year's Day in 1861, a number of ships went down as violent gales raged around the coasts of England and northern France. The Spanish ship, 'Dulce Nombre de Jesus', carrying a cargo of sugar from Havana, went down at Rockham. The ship was destroyed and four men lost.

One of the first steamships to carry mail to Australia was wrecked here half a century later, in 1914. Fortunately the crew of the SS Collier were rescued, along with the ship's dog and cat. The steamer's propeller, boiler and donkey engine can still be seen on Rockham Beach at low tide.

- 6 *A footpath leaves the Coast Path to the left after the steps up from Rockham, providing another route back to North Morte Road; but for the longer walk carry on along the Coast Path as it heads out to Morte Point. The heathland*

Easy walks (6 wal

Moderate walks (5 wal

Challenging walks (1 wa

Current Conditions

19°

Overcast skies
Wind 23 mph S



Tomorrow

14° - 19°

Overcast skies
Wind 23 mph S



Next day

12° - 15°

Patchy rain possible
Wind 24 mph WSW



here is criss-crossed with a network of small paths: follow any of these inland to return to Mortehoe village without visiting the point itself.

The rocks and currents around Morte Point are especially deadly, and in one year alone (1852), five ships went down here. According to the 'Shipwreck Index of the British Isles', published by the Lloyds Registry of Shipping in 1995, in the nineteenth century no fewer than 47 ships were claimed along the coast between Baggy Point and Mortehoe. More than half of these were wrecked on the rocks off Morte Point.

Looking back along the rocky spine along the ridge of Morte Point you can see the landward extension of the 'devil's teeth' rocks which made the headland such a disaster zone for shipping. On the tip of the point is the dreaded Morte Stone, a sunken reef of jagged outcrops tilted almost vertically. The Normans dubbed it the 'Death Stone', and claimed that 'Morte is the place which heaven made last and the devil will take first.'

Many of the rocks on this part of the coast are seamed with veins of glistening white quartz. These formed as later earth movements caused molten minerals like silica to rise to the surface, forcing their way through cracks in the slate.

7 *Carrying on around the point, stay with the Coast Path as it follows the shoreline back towards the Esplanade.*

The shallow sloping beach at Barricane, hidden away between Mortehoe and Woolacombe, is exposed to frequent Atlantic storms, which create thundering breakers. This makes it popular with local surfers, who aim to catch the rip currents feeding into the long waves that roll onto Woolacombe Beach (but surfers who are not familiar with the currents and rocks should approach it with extreme caution, as it can be very dangerous).

The rocks at the bottom of the steps down to Barricane from the Esplanade are riddled with fossils, including brachiopods and bivalves. These rocks, too, are part of the Morte Slates formation.

Barricane is also prized for its rich diversity of seashells. The storms bring in exotic shells that are not found anywhere else in the country, carried to this part of the Atlantic on the Gulf Stream. As many as 40 different species have been found on the beach, including cowries, scallops and whelks, as well as rarities with delightful names, such as ark shells, blue-rayed limpets, tellins, buckies, tusk shells, topshells and wentletraps.

8 *Approaching the houses, fork left uphill to follow the path towards Mortehoe, coming out on the road heading up into the village. Turn left to make your way back to the car park at the start of the walk.*

Nearby refreshments

Mortehoe - pubs, refreshments. Lee Bay - pub, shop, hotel/bar.

During the walk in nearby Woolacombe the Red Barn and The Fortescue are recommended by users of www.doggiepubs.org.uk (<http://www.doggiepubs.org.uk>) as serving good food and being dog-friendly.

Public transport

Mortehoe has a summer bus service to and from Ilfracombe and Barnstaple. In addition, Lee Bay has buses to and from Ilfracombe. For timetable information, zoom in on the interactive map and click on the bus stops, visit Traveline (<http://www.travelinesw.com/>) or phone 0871 200 22 33.

Parking

Mortehoe Village (Postcode for Sat Navs: EX34 7DT).


 Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs
 The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Europe investing in rural areas.
[\(https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/)


 Coastal Communities Fund
<http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/ccf>


 SOUTH WEST WATER
<http://www.southwestwater.co.uk/>


 INTERNATIONAL APPALACHIAN TRAIL IAT
[\(/about-coast-path/international-appalachian-trail/\)](/about-coast-path/international-appalachian-trail/)


 NATIONAL TRAIL
[\(/other-national-trails/\)](/other-national-trails/)

© The South West Coast Path 2016
[Terms & conditions \(/terms-and-conditions,](/terms-and-conditions/)
[Contact us \(/love-the-coast-path/about-us/contact-us,](/love-the-coast-path/about-us/contact-us/)
 <http://www.facebook.com/southwestcoastpath>
 <http://twitter.com/swcoastpat>

 (<http://www.pinterest.com/swcoastpathtean>)

 (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/southwestcoastpath/collections/721576255966637>)