



Walks



Map



News



Soci

Walk - Bull Point & Lee Bay

4.5 miles (7.2 km)

Lee Bay seafront - EX34 8LR → Lee Bay seafront

Moderate - This walk travels on paths, tracks and lanes that may be muddy or marshy, with many stretches of steep ascent and descent, including steps.

A rollercoaster walk, inland at first through ancient woodland and coastal farmland to a medieval barton. Passing prehistoric standing stones in the windswept fields high above the coast, the path drops to another small wooded valley and then emerges on a large exposed heath with tremendous views across the Bristol Channel, where Bull Point lighthouse was built to warn ships of the lethal reefs below. Lee Bay is renowned for the fuchsia hedges around its cottage gardens, and its secluded beach was the perfect place for smugglers to land their contraband.

Heritage (/walksdb/tags/heritage/) Culture (/walksdb/tags/culture/)

Wildlife (/walksdb/tags/wildlife/)

Eat & Drink

Lee Meadow Farm Shop, near Lee >

The home of Glampig home reared pork cuts,our own eggs, fresh baked bread and pastries, cream teas, lily bites



Sleep

Trimstone Manor, Woolacombe >

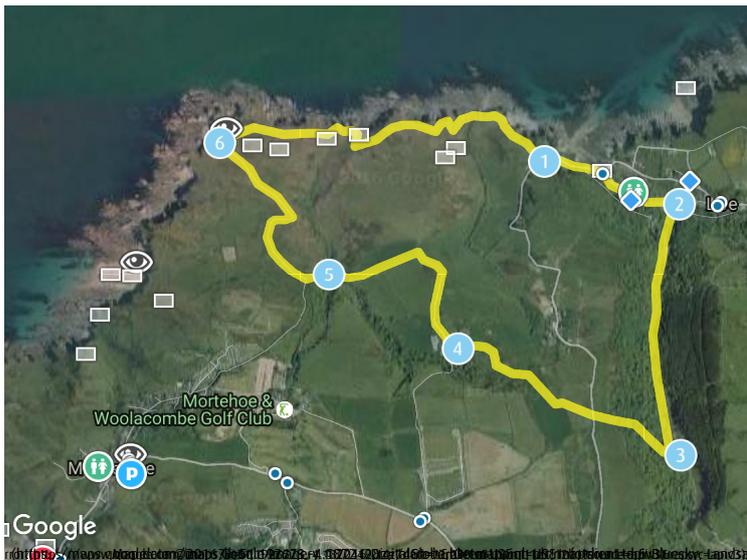
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✓ Easy walks

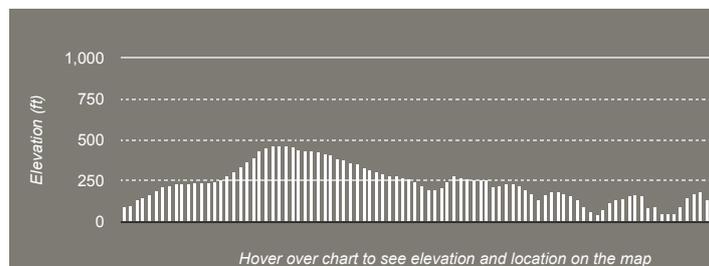
✓ Eat & Drink

✓ Moderate walks

✓ Sleep

Interactive Elevation

-  ✓ Challenging walks
-  ✓ Do
-  ✓ Bus stop
-  ✓ Photographs
-  ✓ Car park
-  ✓ Toilet
-  ✓ Place of interest
-  ✓ Route change



Route Description

- 1 *Starting from Lee seafront, take the lane signed 'Footpath to Lee Village' and follow it inland, past the car park and through two fields to a footpath on the right into Borough Wood.*

The handful of cottages clustered around the rocky plateau of Lee Bay beach were built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The dramatically towering cliffs provide good shelter from the prevailing winds. In the delightful cottage gardens, palms and figs grow between the traditional hollyhocks and hanging baskets. In the nineteenth century the walls of the Grange were planted with fuchsias, and in the mild climate these flourished to such an extent that over time they spread through the village and beyond. Today it is known worldwide as 'Fuchsia Valley'.

Samuel Palmer, a leading artist of the nineteenth-century Romantic movement, visited in 1835, during the tourist boom that followed the arrival of Ilfracombe's railway in 1827 (see the [Ilfracombe & The Torrs Walk \(/walksdb/118/\)](/walksdb/118/)). His painting, 'Scene from Lee' is considered to be his most beautiful and now hangs in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

The tiny St Matthew's Church was built in 1835, opposite a field known as Pixie Meadow, where the village fair is traditionally held. The woodwork in the Church, including the oak panel pulpit and carved choir gallery, is a lot older than the building itself. Most of it dates from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the squire is said to have gathered it together from cottages in the village.

On the beach, the rocks are plastered in seaweed and are brilliant for rockpooling (but they are also slippery, so take care). Oystercatchers and rock pipits scavenge along the shoreline, while gulls and fulmars nest on ledges on the cliffs above and wheel over the waves in search of fish. Anglers, too, have a good catch here: mackerel, bass, pollock and mullet, even conger eels and dogfish further offshore.

Boats from South Wales once landed coal and limestone on the beach. These were burnt in local lime kilns to make fertiliser for the fields.

Other cargoes were brought in at the dead of night and secreted away before the customs officers got wind of the trip. The National Maritime Museum quotes reports of goods that Clovelly Preventive Crew did find: 300 tubs (1500 gallons) of brandy and gin; a keg of spirit buried in the shingle; and in June 1786 a prize haul, found in an outhouse: 66 bottles of gin, 13 gallons of Portuguese red wine, 250lbs of salt and a

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(<http://shop.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/p/405.htm>)

Nearby Walks

[Easy walks](#) (6 wal

[Moderate walks](#) (4 wal

box containing 73 packs of playing cards - all missing the ace of spades. One of Lee's most famous residents was Hannibal Richards, originally a member of the the notorious Cruel Coppinger smuggler gang from Morwenstow, in North Cornwall.

- 2 *Taking this path, cross the bridge and follow the stream through the woods for about a mile.*

Borough Wood has survived as one of the last remnants of the ancient broadleaved woodland which once covered Britain, thanks to its position in a valley too steep to be cultivated. Its native species include alder, ash, holly, hazel and beech, with some oaks, though many were lost to two world wars. Non-native species include rhododendrons and sweet chestnuts. In the 1970s the Forestry Commission also planted sitka spruce and larches. The small stream flowing through it rises at Lincombe, between here and Ilfracombe, and it soon floods after heavy rain - 'after the rocks have been squeezed', according to local tradition.

- 3 *When a path crosses yours, signed to Damage Barton, turn right onto it, climbing steeply through the trees to cross the field beyond. Cross the lane, (Warcombe Lane), and carry on along the footpath, into the next field. Head for the sign behind the hedge at the far end and then for the right-hand corner. Bearing right to the gate, follow the waymarkers to another footpath. Bear left here and go through the gate to Damage Barton.*

Where the path arrives at Warcombe Lane, five large blocks of brownish quartz were arranged in a straight line in prehistoric times, presumably to mark the way up to the high ground above Bull Point, where there are standing stones from the same period.

Between Borough Wood and Bull Point, the current building at Damage Barton Farm is thought to date from around the same time as the cottages in Lee. It was constructed on the site of a medieval farm mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Book, whose stout walls were subsequently fortified against possible attacks.

- 4 *After passing the barton turn right on the lane, forking left a little further on. Coming to a stile on the left, cross it to follow the path along the edge of the field, descending through trees to the stream.*

Note the standing stone of brownish-white quartz in the field. This once stood elsewhere on the farm, but it was moved to here some 50 years ago to act as a rubbing stone for sheep.

- 5 *Crossing the stream, carry on along the footpath through the woods as it climbs steeply to the lighthouse track. Turn right and follow the track to Bull Point lighthouse.*

All around this part of the coastline the rocks in the narrow band of Morte Slates form deadly reefs like giant sharks' fins, and ships frequently blundered onto the rocks around Lee Bay, mistaking the small cove for the safe haven of Ilfracombe. According to some sources, unscrupulous locals helped this process along a little by shining lights on the rocks to lure sailors in, so that their ships could be plundered. This led to 'clergy, ship owners, merchants and landowners' to complain bitterly that the 'barbarous conduct of lawless wreckers caused much loss of life and property'.

The Trinity House Brethren built the Bull Point Lighthouse in 1879 in response to the

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



outcry. It operated without incident for 93 years, until 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.

- 6 *From the lighthouse take the South West Coast Path on the right, towards Bennetts Mouth and Lee Bay, dropping steeply downhill to the delightful valley at Bennetts Mouth. Carry on along the Coast Path as it rapidly regains height, pulling out onto another area of heathland above a small headland known as Damagehue Rock. From here the path plunges again to the road at Damage Hue. Turn left on the road to return to Lee Bay seafront.*

Nearby refreshments

Lee Bay's Grampus Inn is a CAMRA-listed pub which is dog-friendly and serves real ales and food throughout the year. Seasonal tea rooms can be found elsewhere around the village during the busier months.

Parking

Lee Bay car park in the village, near the start of the walk



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SOUTH WEST WATER



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