



Walk 2. Croyde, Saunton Down and Baggy Point.

- 8.5 miles, ascents and descents of 400 metres. 3 hours 25 minutes continuous walking, allow 4½ hours.

Terrain: Roads, tracks, paths and sand. Some of the short road sections are narrow and busy: care is needed. Paths can be muddy, not deep with mud but slippery. ! After Baggy Point the path runs above a steep drop into the sea, but if needed it can easily be avoided.

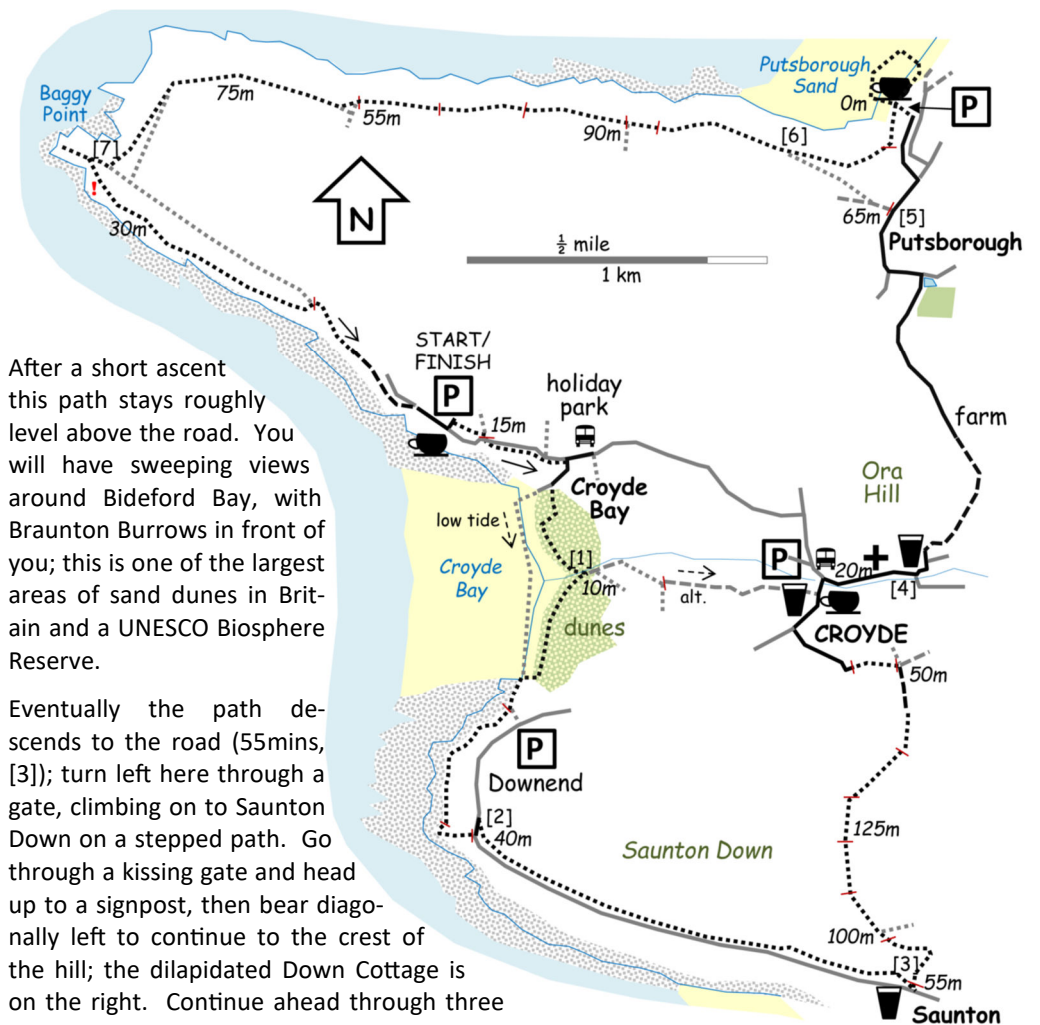
Access: Start from the National Trust car park for Baggy Point (£, members free) on Moor Lane, signposted from the centre of Croyde (SS 432 397, near EX33 1PA). There are several alternative car parks on the route, including one in the centre of Croyde. Bus 21C runs from Barnstaple to Croyde daily at roughly hourly intervals, stopping in the centre of the village and at the holiday park close to the walk start.

Map: Croydecycle 08 Croyde or OS Explorer 139 Bideford, Barnstaple and Ilfracombe.

Refreshments: National Trust tea room or kiosk (depending on time of year) at the start of the walk; other options in Croyde, at Saunton just off the route and at Putsborough Sand.

THE COAST AROUND CROYDE may not have quite the same drama as the towering cliffs further north, but there are some fine beaches, an extensive area of sand dunes, and Baggy Point is as rugged as anything on the Exmoor coast. Croyde itself was a quiet and remote farming village until the Barnstaple to Ilfracombe railway opened in 1874, bringing visitors and the beginning of the development seen today. This moderately hilly walk explores Croyde beach and village and the two promontories of Saunton Down and Baggy Point.

Start from the National Trust Baggy Point car park. Walk through the car park past a long stone building and turn right at its end on to the road. Cross diagonally left and join a path running parallel with the road. Rejoin the road on a pavement then turn right (signposted 'beach toilets' and on a smaller sign 'coast path'). Unless it is high tide you can continue down to the beach and turn left; alternatively take the signposted path on the left after the beach café and head up into the dunes. Either way you are making for a prominent white house on the next headland. There are many small paths running through the dunes, so pick your way along the top to keep roughly parallel with the beach. Halfway across the bay a stream discharges into the sea; there is a bridge towards the landward side of the dunes (10mins, [1]), or it is normally passable further out on the beach. Continue along the beach or on the top of the dunes, making your way down to the beach at the end. Look for a path heading gently upwards to the right over the rocks (*not* the steps on the left). Continue around the foreshore, then head up some steps and turn right through a kissing gate where there are seats overlooking Croyde Bay. Follow the path around the coast then go through a gate. The coast stretches around Bideford Bay to Hartland Point. Now turn inland towards a modern white turret-house (an older and smaller lookout is next to it; 30mins, [2]). Turn left (with care) on to the road, then in less than a minute turn right on the signposted Coast Path.



After a short ascent this path stays roughly level above the road. You will have sweeping views around Bideford Bay, with Braunton Burrows in front of you; this is one of the largest areas of sand dunes in Britain and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Eventually the path descends to the road (55mins, [3]); turn left here through a gate, climbing on to Saunton Down on a stepped path. Go through a kissing gate and head up to a signpost, then bear diagonally left to continue to the crest of the hill; the dilapidated Down Cottage is on the right. Continue ahead through three more gates, the last a double kissing-gate, then follow the path alongside a wire fence. Another kissing gate will bring you on to an enclosed stony path which descends fairly steeply. At the bottom there is a junction; turn left over a stile and follow the path until it meets a small residential road. This will bring you to a T-junction; turn right through the centre of Croyde, following the road around to the right. Pass a small church, then after the inn bear left in to a residential cul-de-sac (1hr30mins, [4]). Follow it around to the left, then continue on to a track ('unsuitable for motor vehicles'). This almost immediately turns right then gradually widens out to become a lane, gaining a tarmac surface as it passes a camp site. Ignore farm tracks to the left. Come to a junction at a pond, with Putsborough Manor ahead of you. Turn left, then follow the road around to the right. At the crest of the hill the Coast Path leads off to the left at a gate (1hr55mins, [5]); if you don't want to descend to the beach, turn left here on a wide track then at a signpost bear right across the path to continue on the Coast Path. Otherwise continue ahead on a path parallel with the road, rejoining the road briefly before turning left to head down to

Putsborough Sand and car park, at the southern end of Morte Bay. Steps take you down to the beach. There is a café here and plenty of room for a picnic. Woolacombe, Morteheo (up the hill) and Morte Point (walks 3/4) are ahead.

To return to the Coast Path, first head back towards the road then branch off left for the toilet block. Take a path to its left which leads uphill and through a gate. Continue uphill and slightly right, passing between two small concrete buildings (the right-hand one is a dummy pillbox used for preparation for the 1944 Normandy landings). Bear right on to a path that tracks along the edge of the scrub above the coast. This soon rejoins the official Coast Path (2hr15mins, [6]). Continue ahead high above the sea, through several gates and ignoring any turns to the right. The island of Lundy (see AW3) is ahead of you. Eventually the path starts turning around the headland; head for a white coastguard pole (with explanatory board). Keep heading away from the fence, soon dropping down to a T-junction (2hr55mins, [7]). Turn right here.* The Coast Path soon turns sharply left, but first detour to Baggy Point, a short there-and-back walk; so far the headland has lacked any real drama, but its tip is spectacularly rugged. The scenic Coast Path now heads along the more rocky southern side of the headland, past an area ravaged by fire in 2022. Go through a gate and pass a pond, then soon afterwards the path joins a hard road at some houses. This brings you back to the car park and tea room.

Shorter walk: Croyde and Baggy Point (● 6 miles, ascents and descents of 250 metres).

Follow the start of the main walk to cross the bridge (the 10-minute point, [1]) and follow a path inland on the south side of the stream. Enter a field and cross it diagonally to the left; a double pedestrian/vehicle gate leads on to a lane. This will bring you into the centre of Croyde; turn left on to the road, follow it around to the right and pass the church, rejoining the main walk at the inn (the 1hr30min point, [4]).



Baggy Point

* The path is well-made and wide, but it is fairly exposed above a steep drop into the sea. Anyone who suffers from severe vertigo might prefer to turn left here and follow the inland path, which rejoins the Coast Path shortly before the pond.

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