

Itinerary

Day 1: Travel to Padstow where your first nights accommodation has been booked.

Day 2: Padstow to Porthcothan. 13 miles (21km)

From Padstow's busy harbour quay, the path follows the shores of the picturesque Camel Estuary to Stepper Point, marked by the Daymark Tower. The point provides marvellous views of the notorious Doom Bar, a sand bar responsible for the loss of more than 300 vessels, including no less than 3 lifeboats. The path continues along the coast, with distant views of the Merope Rocks to Trevone Bay and then follows the coast around to Harlyn. At Trevoise Head, which provides exceptional views stretching along the coast to St Ives, the path turns south and crosses the sands of Constantine Bay to the hamlet of Tryarnon. From Tryarnon the path meanders around a succession of tiny coves then descends to Porthcothan Bay.

Day 3: Porthcothan to Newquay. 11 miles (17.5km)

From Porthcothan Bay the path climbs up to Park head, which provides wonderful views of Bedruthan Steps, a series of rock stacks. The rock formations include Queen Bess Rock, who lost her head a few years ago, and Samaritan Island, the site of the wreck of the Samaritan, which indeed gave succour to the local population. Approaching Newquay, the path arrives at Trevelgue Head and the extensive remains of the most heavily defended Iron Age cliff castle in Cornwall. Continuing over Barrowfields, with its three Bronze Age barrows, the path descends to Newquay. Overlooking fine golden sands and Atlantic rollers, the former fishing port and silver and lead mining centre of Newquay is now Britain's surfing capital.

Day 4: Newquay to Perranporth. 11 ½ miles (18.5km)

Leaving the harbour, the path climbs up Towan Head past the whitewashed Huer's Hut, where lookouts would shout the arrival of the pilchard shoals to waiting fishermen, and then follows the cliffs around Pentire Point to the ferry across the Gannel River. After crossing the river the path winds around headlands and coves to Kelsey Head, the site of an Iron Age promontory fort, and then descends to the village of Holywell, which boasts a 'healing well' and ancient inn. From here the path goes around Ligga Head and then follows the golden sands of Perran Beach, past the ruin of tiny St Piran's Oratory, to the village of Perranporth.

Day 5: Perranporth to Portreath. 12 ½ miles (20km)

From Perranporth the coast path follows the cliffs around Cligga Head past the remains of buddles and other processing works at the Cligga Wolfram and Tin Mine, with dramatic views of the mine buildings and chimneys dotting the landscape around St Agnes. St Agnes is a pleasant little village with terraces of miners' cottages and an interesting little museum in an old chapel. Continuing around St Agnes Head, where kittiwake, guillemot and razorbill nest, the path descends past the evocative ruin of Wheal Coates Mine to the sandy inlet of Chapel Porth. Returning to the cliff tops, the path goes past the Wheal Charlotte Mine, drops down to the beach at Porthtowan, and then follows the cliff top path to the harbour at Portreath, which once served the mines at Cambourne and Redruth.

Day 6: Portreath to Hayle. 12½ miles (20km)

Leaving Portreath, the path climbs Western Hill, which provides good views of Portreath and its difficult harbour, and then continues high above the sea along Reskajeage Downs. After the sensational chasm of Hell's Mouth, the coast path goes around Navax Point, where seals are often seen. Godrevy Point provides sensational views of the lighthouse perched on

Godrevy Island, the inspiration for Virginia Woolf's 'To the lighthouse'. The lighthouse marks the landward end of a treacherous line of reefs, The Stones, which have claimed many wrecks. After descending to the sleepy little village of Gwithian with its pretty thatched cottages and interesting old churchyard packed with the graves of shipwreck victims, the path meanders through the sand dunes of Upton Towans to the busy port of Hayle.

Day 7: Hayle to St Ives. 5 ½ miles (9km)

Skirting Hayle Estuary, which is noted for its seabirds and waders, the path passes along the dunes above Porth Kidney Sands to reach the beautiful town of St Ives. St Ives dates back to AD460, when the missionary St. Ia, daughter of an Irish chieftain, landed here and gave her name to the settlement. Protected from the ravages of Atlantic storms by its east-facing pier, St Ives was once the most important fishing port in Cornwall. So productive were the offshore waters that sixteen and a half million fish were caught in one net in a single day in 1868. At the time it was reported that the smell of fish was so great at times as to stop the church clock! By the beginning of the 20th century, the fish stocks became depleted, the fishing fleet largely disappeared and the town became famous for its vibrant artists' colony. Today their work can be seen in the St Ives Tate Gallery, the Barbara Hepworth Museum and the Beranard Leach Gallery.

Day 8: Depart from St Ives after breakfast.