



Tamar Valley
National
Landscape

Walks in the
Tamar Valley

**Bere Alston
Station to
Bere Ferrers**

Along the Tamar Valley Discovery Trail

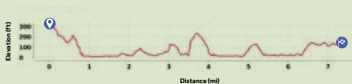
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Elevation Profile



Bere Alston Station to Bere Ferrers

Start/finish

Bere Alston Station

SX 440674, PL20 7ES

Distance

7½ miles (12.1km)

Time

4 hours

Terrain

Steep ascent/descent over
South Hooe peninsula

Toilets

None on route

Difficulty Rating

Strenuous

Public Transport

Rail services Tamar Valley Line
to/from Gunnislake and Plymouth;
bus services to/from Bere Alston
and Tavistock

Dogs

Under control at all times (livestock in fields); non-dog-friendly stiles; on leads in fields near Bere Alston Station and at South Ward Farm

Map

OS Explorer 108 Lower Tamar Valley & Plymouth; OS Landranger 201 Plymouth & Launceston

Note

Parking at the station is reserved for rail users. If arriving by car and intending to take the train back to Bere Alston after your walk, park sensibly where Station Road widens (above the 30mph sign), c. ½ mile uphill from the station.

A wonderful walk downriver along the Tamar Valley Discovery Trail, via sweeping pasture fields, woodland and quiet lanes, enjoying glorious views along the Tamar at every turn.

The Tamar Valley Discovery Trail (TVDT) is a 31-mile waymarked walking route that forms part of the Tamara Coast to Coast Way (TCCW), an 87-mile route linking Cremyll on the south coast of Cornwall to Marsland Mouth on the north, following the Devon border as closely as possible. This beautiful walk heads downriver, passing under the impressive viaduct at Calstock then following the west side of the peaceful Bere peninsula, enjoying glorious views. Use the picturesque Tamar Valley Line to access the start, then hop on the train again at the end of your walk!

The Route

Bere Alston station (SX 440 674).

Bere Alston Station opened in 1890, and was important for the onward transport of local market garden produce in the early 20th century. Head down the access drive, then turn right to pass under two railway bridges (the line to Plymouth, and then to Gunnislake). Pass a house, then turn left through a kissing gate into a field.

Bear half-right, downhill: Kit Hill can be seen in the distance ahead. Cross a stream and pass a footpath post to find a kissing gate leading onto a narrow woodland path. Fenced-off shafts below are a reminder of the peninsula's industrial past, when it was extensively mined for silver and lead; two parallel mineral lodes run north-south along its length. The mines – many dating back to medieval times – were some of the most prized in England, and originally owned by the king.

Pass a path junction and keep ahead to pass below Buttspill; descend steeply through beautiful beech woodland to reach a footpath post.

2. Bottom of Buttspill Woods (SX 435 683).

Turn right for about 50 yards to reach another footpath junction and bear left, downhill, to descend steps and then follow the path along the riverside embankment, built in the 19th century to create agricultural land.

Ahead is the impressive Calstock Viaduct, constructed 1904–7 to connect the railway at Bere Alston with the East Cornwall Mineral Railway (now the Tamar Valley Line as far as Gunnislake); on the opposite bank sits the delightful Cornish village of Calstock.

3. Ferry Farm (SX 434 685).

Reach a path junction near Ferry Farm, which functioned as the Passage Inn during the 19th century. Keep straight on, following a permissive path along the embankment, to pass under the viaduct.

Danescombe Valley House, built in the 1850s, stands on the opposite bank at a big river bend. For much of the 20th century it was run as a small hotel for visitors arriving by boat. The river sweeps south beyond the Danescombe valley, alongside reedbeds; Cotehele Quay come into view on the west bank.

4. North Ward Farm (SX 426 685).

At the end of the embankment cross a stile and turn right, soon passing a ruined building. Pass through a gate (a footpath comes in sharp left) and head along the right edge of a big pasture field.

At field end the footpath continues through beech woodland, opposite Cotehele Quay. Pass a slipway opposite the quay; at a footpath post bear left, uphill.

Go through a gate and pass picnic tables at Ward Mine (there's no visible evidence of the mine, which operated in the 13th and 19th centuries); go through another gate to pass directly in front of Ward Mine Farm to reach a track junction.

5. Ward Mine Farm (SX 426 677).

Bear right down the drive to South Ward Farm. At the end (farmhouse right) bear slightly left through a gate and follow the right of way along an embanked path and then the edge of a field, to reach a gate.

Follow a narrow path through woodland: in the 19th century these slopes produced flowers for export to Plymouth and London markets. Keep along the right edge of the next field, turning left at the end and ascending steeply. Turn right to negotiate a combe and reach a path junction. Keep along the left hedge in the next two fields, descending in the second: downriver spot Pentillie Castle, built in 1698 and largely rebuilt in 1810. Look out for a white building at Halton Quay on the Cornish bank: St Indract's Chapel, formerly the quay office and consecrated in 1959.

Towards the end of the second field turn left through a small gate, descend steps and cross a boardwalk through reedbeds, to meet a path junction.

6. Path junction near Braunder (SX 428 662).

Turn right on an ascending path and through a gate into a field (in the woods nearby are the ruins of North Hooe mine buildings); pass a footpath

post, then descend into trees, soon crossing a boardwalk. Ascend steps, then climb very steeply up the left edge of two fields; the gradient eases in the third.

Reach a lane; turn left for a few steps, then turn right into a field and follow the left hedge. A V-stile leads into woodland; keep ahead at a path junction, descending steeply to reach the lane at Holes Hole.

7. Hole's Hole (SX 430 653).

Turn right. The house on the lane is the former Tamar Hotel, hosting guests arriving by boat. The quay here, along with many others up and down the river, was built to service the peninsula's lead and silver mines (and later – before the coming of the railway – the needs of local market gardeners). Look back to spot a prominent white building, on the Devon side of the river: South Hooe (with North Hooe) was the richest silver mine in the area in the 19th century. The restored engine house is concealed by trees.

Follow the lane downriver, looking out for a limekiln in a garden, and then a lane to Cotts (there's a VR postbox on corner). Pass Weir Quay Boatyard (The Yard Café: not open every day), site of an 18th-century quay and, in the 19th century, the Tamar Smelting Works, servicing the South Hooe mines. Pass another limekiln (left), and a wooden installation on the right, carved with representations of local wildlife; opposite a track leads to the South Tamar Mine. In the 19th century, the advent of steam pumping enabled mining to extend under the river; in 1856 (fortunately on a Sunday, so no lives were lost) water burst into mine, stopping profitable extraction in its tracks.

The lane curves inland at Clamoak – leaving the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site – and climbs away from the river, then descends into a small combe.

8. Tuckham Bridge (SX 444 644).

Just before the lane bends right, turn right over a bridge and follow the enclosed path ahead, then along the edge of a field, by a wonderful line of hornbeam. Cross a stile and follow a narrow path to reach Liphill Quay; smuggling activity was once linked with this tucked-away spot.

9. Liphill Quay (SX 444 639).

Turn right towards the water, then left to cross the slipway and boardwalk, and pass below a garden. Keep along the edge of two fields; boardwalks carry the right of way across damp ground. On old maps 'Egypt' denotes a farm settlement nearby; the creek at Liphill is sometimes referred to as 'Egypt Bay' (because of its supposed similarity to the Nile delta!).

Cross a V-stile and turn right towards the saltmarsh, then turn left along the lower edge of a huge sloping field, passing beautiful oak trees.

10. Thorn Point (SX 441631).

Reach the end of the field (a stile in the corner gives 'there-and-back' access to Thorn Point, across marshy ground). In medieval times Cargeen, on the opposite shore, traded in cured Tamar salmon. From the 19th and into the 20th century the village was linked by ferry to Thorn Point. Market garden produce was ferried over for onward transport to London or Plymouth by train from Bere Ferrers. Turn left, uphill; at the top make sure to turn around look at across the river to Cargreen and upstream to Weir Quay and beyond. There is extensive saltmarsh on the Devon shore: the estuaries of the Tamar and its tributaries – the Lynher (Cornish side) and Tavy (Devon side) – host more than 30% of Devon and Cornwall's saltmarsh. Downstream is the mid-20th-century Tamar Bridge, spanning the river between Plymouth and Saltash alongside Isambard Kingdom Brunel's railway bridge (1859).

Keep along the right edge of the next field; head straight across the next one, picking up a hedge on the left. Continue down a track to pass under the railway bridge. The track becomes tarmacked between houses, and reaches a T-junction.

11. Station Road (SX 453 634).

Turn left along Station Road, to find Bere Ferrers Station (on the main line between Plymouth and London Waterloo from 1890 until the 1960s – the branch line to Gunnislake was retained as the Tamar Valley Line) on the left.



Tamar Valley Discovery Trail waymark



Calstock Viaduct towers over the river



Danescombe Valley House, with the Danescombe valley to its left



Cotehele Quay: 'The Edgcumbe'



**Glorious view downriver towards
Halton Quay from a field full of
common chicory**



**Broad sweep of the River Tamar
at Holes Hole**



Pretty cottages at Weir Quay



Tamar Valley Line bridge on the way back to Bere Ferrers Station



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If you find any problems with this walk please contact us at e:

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Route description and photos by
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