

Beesands and Hallsands

All of maritime life is here - Start Bay's great sweep of sea and land, traditional fishing communities, and the mysterious and tragic lost village of Hallsands. The walk wends its way home again along green lanes and footpaths.

Start:	Seafront car park, Beesands
Distance:	3.75 miles
Circular Walk:	Yes
Grade:	Moderate
Terrain:	Coast path with one long flight of steps; surfaced roads; field footpath; tracks and green lanes.
Obstacles & Steep Gradients:	1 stile; 2 flights of steps; 1 steep ascent.
Public transport:	Coleridge Community Bus from Beesands and North Hallsands to Kingsbrige Fridays only 01548 580215. For information on public transport in South Hams please call Traveline on 0870 6082608 www.traveline.org.uk .
Refreshment stops:	The Cricket Inn, Beesands; lunches, seafood specialities, cream teas 01548 580215.
Toilets:	Public toilets by car park in Beesands
Parking:	Seafront car park at Beesands. Free.
Accommodation:	Please contact Dartmouth Tourist Information Centre on 01803 834224 or www.discoverdartmouth.com
Other facilities:	There is a public payphone
OS map:	Explorer 0L20
Grid Ref:	SX819405



Directions

1. As you face the sea, turn right along the seafront. At the end of the road, bear right by a house called Seathatch up the coast path.
2. Follow coast path along the cliffs until you drop down to Hallsands.
3. Walk along the back of the beach, and bear right and then left up a long flight of steps. By Prospect House apartments at South Hallsands, bear right down the road.
4. After 150m, turn right opposite Trout's car park over a stile onto public footpath. The path follows the fence line through the fields and enters a green lane.
5. Turn right at the road. Go through the hamlet of Bickerton. On a left hand bend by a house called Tolcott, bear right onto greenlane signed Bridgeway Lane.
6. At the road turn left. After 200m, turn right by a small stream onto a track leading onto a green lane.
7. By the farm, bear right up green lane following red waymarker.
8. When you meet the surfaced road, turn right. After 120m, turn right again following green waymarker for 'Beesands'.
9. At the bottom of the last field as you drop towards the sea, turn left following the waymarker.
10. When you meet the coast path, turn left and retrace your steps down to Beesands.



Heritage

The first record of a house at Beesands appears in 1588. Even at this time, however, most people would have lived a short distance inland at the village of Beeson, which offered more refuge from seafaring raiders. Beesands developed as a close knit fishing community. Crabs and lobsters were caught in willow 'pots' woven on the shore by the fishermen and dropped to the seabed from small boats in the bay.



The lost village of Hallsands was once a thriving settlement. In the 1800s it was home to 128 people in 37 homes, and boasted a pub, grocery, post office, and allotments. Every able bodied person in the village, young and old would help to haul the seine nets, which were drawn around shoals of fish and pulled in to the shore.

In the 1890s, the Admiralty decided to extend the naval dockyard in Plymouth. 650,000 tons of shingle was dredged from the bay

at Hallsands for the purpose. It was hoped that nature would replenish the shingle, but it did not. Instead, the beach which protected Hallsands from the sea dropped by up to 20 feet, and the village was left exposed. Storms in 1903-4 breached the sea walls, and in 1917 the village was entirely destroyed by the waves during a violent storm.

Landscape

The beach at Beesands has been formed from shingle thrown up by the sea in only the last 2000 years, as sea levels rose. A large static caravan park was at one time sited just behind the beach, until the land was reclaimed as a village green and the caravans were removed.

Wildlife

The cliffs at Hallsands are home to a breeding colony of several hundred Kittiwakes. These attractive gulls have yellow bills, black tips to their wings, and a 'kitti-wake!' call from which comes their name. Kittiwakes build mud nests on the cliff faces, and perform elaborate greeting ceremonies with one another involving nodding heads and rubbing necks. They spend the winters away from land, far out on the ocean.

The Guillemot, a sleek brown and white diving bird, can sometimes be seen sitting on the sea just offshore, as can Razorbills. These striking birds have a black head with a slender white stripe by the eye and a thick bill. Both species catch fish on deep dives from the surface.



Kestrels are often to be seen hovering above the rough grassland on the cliffs. They have rich reddish-brown upper wings with dark tips, and fan their tails distinctively as they hover on the wind whilst hunting. Kestrels prey on voles and other small animals.

There are reed beds both behind the beach at Hallsands, and to the right of the green lane leading to Middlecombe. The common reed is Britain's tallest grass, growing to over two metres, and unlike most plants it can grow in both fresh and salt water. Reed beds are rare and important habitats, especially for birds and insects. They are also difficult and expensive to maintain, as they naturally tend to dry out.

