



South Devon

Greenway to Kingswear

This isn't so much a walk, more a day out. At least it is if you go for the full-monty, but if you really want to ignore the boat and train rides you could still enjoy the most superb of riverside strolls.

I was on a mission to visit the newly opened National Trust gardens at Greenway - Agatha Christie's old home on the River Dart - and the property-manager implored me to try what is known as the Round Robin service which includes steam train, ferry, another ferry and eventually a mini-bus. Skipping the last of those links I discovered this fantastic hike but, let me assure you, the rides are all great fun and an integral part of the Dart experience.

The National Trust is very conscious of the traffic situation in the narrow lanes around Greenway, hence the multifarious and exciting ways of getting there. I did the grand tour - catching the steam train at Paignton which took me over to Kingswear where I took a ferry across to Dartmouth to change boats so that I could enjoy a wonderful cruise up the Dart. Eventually you are dropped at the old quay below Greenway, and from there you can walk up to Agatha Christie's old home.

You could simply park at Dartmouth and catch the boat, or stop in Dittisham opposite the river and take the little ferry across (be warned, there's not much room in the village in summer). Or you could catch the 'hoppa' bus from Paignton direct to the property. (See details of options in panel). Anyway, the basis of this walk is simply a stroll back down the river to Kingswear. What you get are four or five of the most scenic riverside miles in the Westcountry. First though, I recommend a turn around the remarkable gardens at Greenway.

After that the route follows a section of the 16-mile Dart Valley Trail. Continue up Greenway Road and then, at the junction, follow the lane right towards Maypool Youth Hostel. Halfway along the trail heads left, up a track through fields over Oakham Hill. At the crest you are treated to fantastic panoramas of South Devon and the River Dart.

The great bend north of Dittisham is particularly in evidence, but you are high enough to see across the ridge it surrounds, and on up the river, past Bow Creek to the outskirts of Totnes.



Basic Hike: From Greenway on the eastern bank of the Dart, south along Dart Trail to Kingswear.

Recommended Map: Ordnance Survey Outdoor Leisure 20 (South Devon).

Distance and going: five miles, can be muddy.

Useful numbers: National Trust at Greenway - 01803 842382. Round Robin (River Link, Paignton and Dartmouth Steam Railway, and Stagecoach) travel information hotlines: 01803 834488 and 01803 664500. The ways and means of gaining access to this walk are many.

Following a long thin wood (on our left) we cross the hill and are immediately treated to another series of views. Essentially these take in the main thrust of the river as it heads towards the sea. At the end of the great sheet of water, there's Kingswear clinging to its promontory. Now the route is easy as, not only is it sign-posted, but there's very little in the way of alternative thoroughfare to confuse the hiker. At this point we are at a hamlet called Higher Greenway, and we simply follow the path south, up a gentle hill, and into the wood.

This is aptly named Long Wood that runs alongside the river for a mile or so. The ancient wood, semi-natural oak woods cover 100 acres - largely owned by the National Trust.

Don't be shocked if you hear a steam whistle. The path weaves through the wood at a point not far from the place where the Greenway railway tunnel issues out into the trees. The sudden appearance of a massive steam locomotive is a both frightening and wonderful thing to behold. It's simply a matter of following the path through the woods towards Kingswear. You get visual snippets of the river through the trees all the way and latterly you look down upon a large boat yard and marina.

Around this we walk to be introduced to the road, where it's simply a case of taking your life in your hands and crossing to the lane opposite. This leads past back gardens down towards Kingswear. You can either take a right, halfway along and descend to the Upper Ferry, or continue south to meet the railway, which you follow to its terminus.

From there you are spoiled for choice as far as transport is concerned - and that, in a way, is a theme of this riverside walk. Steam, cruise, bus - whichever mode you choose - you'll be glad you took Shank's Pony to complete the five beautiful riverside miles of this walk.