

Torquay Harbour to Daddyhole Plain

2 miles (4 km) | Circular route | Grades 1 to 3

includes considerable number of steps having left harbour area

Starting Point: Pavilion Shopping Centre, Torquay Harbour

This walk provides the contrasting colourful activity associated with Torquay harbour, once the heart of the Victorian town, and the more tranquil splendour of the regal bay as viewed from a fascinating section of the coastal footpath.

The Pavilion started life as an elegant theatre and assembly room during Edwardian times. Together with the entire area of the Princess Gardens, it was built on land reclaimed from the sea during the late 19th century. A choice of routes from the Pavilion lead to the new Millennium bridge which spans the entrance to the inner harbour. From the origins as

a natural inlet, the late Georgian and Victorian development of Torquay surrounds the harbour of today on three sides. At its head, where once a sandy beach was to be found, is situated 'The Strand' with hidden streams at either end, one named 'The Fleet', now under Fleet Street. Queen Victoria provided the stamp of approval to Torquay's place in society as a superior resort and watering place by her visits, originally as a princess, when she was welcomed ashore at Victoria Parade.

The route leaves the harbour up Beacon Hill, passing Beacon Terrace where Torquay's original bathing saloon was once situated. Opposite the Royal Torbay Yacht Club is Beacon Cove. Until 1903 this area was reserved as the ladies' (only) bathing beach, complete with bathing machines. This was a popular venue for Agatha Miller (later to be known as Agatha Christie) to swim from as a young girl.

The route now turns right, as part

of the Coastal Footpath, past the entrance to the Imperial Hotel, first opened in 1866. The footpath begins to wend its way along the cliff line. Before climbing the first flight of steps take advantage of a viewing point immediately ahead. From here you are provided with a wonderfully panoramic view of the bay and immediately below, the naturally sculpted arch known as 'London Bridge'.

This section burrows its way through clumps of Holme Oak as it snakes its way up to Daddyhole Plain, 200ft above sea level. This natural plateau provides another marvellous vantage point over the bay. 'Daddy' is an old Devonian term referring to the devil who locals thought used to reside in a cave at the base of the cliff. From Daddyhole, the return to the harbour is a relatively direct route by road, along which a number of residences and hotels beautifully illustrate the past elegance of Victorian Torquay and its affluent Italianate style villas.

