

# Exploring the Coast and Countryside of Watcombe and Maidencombe

4 miles (6 km) | Circular route | Grades 2 to 6

moderate difficulty along the Coastal Footpath and across undulating countryside. Unsuitable for wheelchair users.

**Starting Point:** Watcombe car park, situated off the B3199 Torquay to Teignmouth road.

This walk provides panoramic vistas over Babbacombe Bay and Lyme Bay with a chance to view the unspoiled countryside that bounds Torquay with its associated, picturesque village of Maidencombe, nestling within earshot of the sea.

On leaving the car park, the path winds its way across the Watcombe valley, known as the Valley of the Rocks, through woodland where once clay was excavated for the Torquay terracotta industry. Where a choice is provided, take the Coastal Path which will lead you down into Maidencombe. The surrounding countryside was given to the Local Authority in 1935 and today is managed by Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust as a conservation area. Only traditional farming techniques are used and this has already encouraged the on-going presence of the rare Cirl Bunting within the area.

An attractive cove is accessible from the coast path at Maidencombe or refreshment can be obtained from the local thatched hostelry, if the time is right, before continuing along the coastal path. One's imagination is easily stimulated to the days of smugglers and 'the gentleman's trade' that was once so common in and around these parts. The coast path burrows its way through a natural arbour of vegetation and wild flowers with intervening vistas of sea, sky and red sandstone cliffs for the best part of a mile before reaching the Torbay boundary with Teignbridge, indicated by a stile. Here the route strikes off inland, at right angles to the coast path, and climbs up over meadow to provide an inspiring and elevated view over Lyme Bay to be enjoyed for the return inland walk to Maidencombe.

Once back in the village, the route includes a view of the old 14th century Court with its associated dovecot and Judas tree, all set opposite the village orchard. Red sandstone and thatch continue to provide the warmth and tradition that was the character of many a South Devon village or farmstead.

A short but steep climb up out of Maidencombe brings the route



onto a section of country track that then joins once again with the coastal path to take the walker back over the Valley of the Rocks and thus to the starting point. The great sandstone cliff-face that bears down over the path adjacent to the car park is known as Giant Rock. This was a considerable attraction in Victorian times and would have been even more dramatic as the trees are a much later addition to the landscape.

