

Read North East Coastal Trail



A short walk along the Coastal Path between Seaton Sluice and St Mary's Island

Take your wellies, waterproofs, a notebook, and see how much you can spot along the coastal path! You'll definitely see birds, rocks and wind turbines, and you might even spy seals, crabs and sparrowhawks.

Starting north at Seaton Sluice it's about a 2-mile walk south to St Mary's Lighthouse, with car parking and stops for ice cream or fish and chips along the way.



Head south in the direction of the lighthouse from Seaton Sluice and you'll pass Collywell Bay, with its dark bump of sandstone rock called Charley's Garden. A long time ago a local villager Charles Dockwray, used to transform the top of it into a garden until the sea eroded the rocks between it and the mainland.



Look to your left and see how many giant wind turbines you can count! The Blyth offshore wind farm is amongst the most powerful of its type in the UK.

Warning
Dangerous Cliffs
Ahead

Unstable Cliff Edges

The England Coast Path follows the marked path

Please do NOT stray off the path



Past Collywell Bay you'll walk around Crag Point with the fields to your right, and the unfenced cliff edges to your left – just like Charley's Garden, the cliffs are unstable so make sure you keep safely to the marked path! Here you can try to spot the different types of grassland, from Submarine to Dunes and Marshes.



Where the path diverges towards the lighthouse and causeway, take a short detour to your right in the direction of the St Mary's holiday park and you'll discover a couple of hides in the Wetland Reserve. Here you can watch for moorhens, skylarks and butterflies.

As you approach St Mary's Island you might spot some Exmoor Ponies in the Nature Reserve; their grazing helps to maintain the diversity of wildflowers and encourages birds, butterflies, and insects to settle. In the summer you might see Red Admiral or Painted Lady butterflies!





Back on the path towards the causeway, you can start to look out for the grey seals on the rocks ahead; every year they travel south from Lindisfarne and the Farne Islands after they've had their pups. But you really need to walk across the causeway when the tide is out, up to the safe viewing areas around the lighthouse to get a proper look all around. They're easily disturbed so this is the best place to watch without bothering them. Once you've spotted one grey seal resting on a rock, you'll realise there are lots more!



See how many birds you can spot too – in the summer you might see terns, swifts, and swallows. In winter there might be redshanks, curlews, oystercatchers and various species of plovers and gulls. Even redwings and geese can sometimes be glimpsed as they fly inland from Scandinavia and Russia in winter, toward the more sheltered farmlands and freshwater ponds.





If you're wearing wellies, have a poke about in the rock pools around the lighthouse when the tide is out. You'll see tiny crabs and other shellfish but don't take them away; they're essential food for the birdlife that visits the area, including the endangered curlew.

Local volunteers recorded 'Curlew 28' on a repeat visit to St. Mary's Island in December 2022 from Estonia, 1,062 miles from the Nature Reserve. But their future in the UK is threatened as 65% of the breeding population has disappeared since the 1970s, and any kind of human disturbance can impact their chances of survival.



You've come to the end of the trail! Walk back from the lighthouse and causeway past the car-park and you can either continue along the coastal path towards Whitley Bay or down the steps onto the beach if the tide is out.

If you took any photos or made any notes along your trail we'd love to see them!
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