

COMBE MARTIN BEACH

LOCATION:
OS GRID REFERENCE:
SS 5755 4745

POSTCODE:
EX34 0DJ APPROX

Combe Martin beach lies at the foot of Combe Martin village which is on the eastern edge of the North Devon Coast AONB. The beach is about 110 metres wide and is made up of shingle and pebbles with sand at low tide, the River UMBER flows through on the west side and divides the two sides of the beach and is usually shallow enough to wade across.

The beach is safe for swimming and other activities include kayaking and stand up paddle boarding.

AMENITIES:

There is a selection of shops, cafes and pubs within short walking distance from the beach. There may be restricted opening times in winter. Public toilets are available in the car park above the beach.

PARKING & ACCESS:

There is a large car park above the beach with public toilets and a smaller car park by Newberry Beach. From the large car park there is a ramp onto the beach which can be accessed by rugged pushchairs and wheelchairs. There is also a slipway onto the beach which can be accessed from the roadside.



TOP THREE SPECIES:



CORAL WEED
(*Corallina officinalis*)

A calcareous red seaweed which grows on rocks in rock pools and grows up to 120mm long. It is pink in colour and can be found in the rockpools around the middle shore and lower shore and is abundant along the rims of the deep pools below the cliffs.



MONTAGU'S CRAB
(*Xantho hydrophilus*)

Named after the Victorian naturalist George Montagu. They are up to 7cm across with large black tipped claws, also referred to as a furrowed crab due to the furrows on its shell. They can be found on the lower shore under rocks and in rockpools.



STRAWBERRY ANEMONE
(*Actinia fragacea*)

Dark red in colour with a broad base up to 10cm across, easily distinguished by its strawberry like green/yellow spots. They are larger than the beadlet anemone and can be found hanging on the rocks along the lower shore. They use their stinging tentacles to feed on plankton and small animals.

TOP THREE HABITATS:



CLIFFS

The coast around Combe Martin has some of the highest sea cliffs in England formed from sandstone during the Devonian period. There are nesting seabirds on the cliff faces such as fulmar and kittiwake and you may also hear the call of peregrine falcons and see them fly by as they hunt along the coast.



ROCKY SHORE

There are rocks on either side of the beach up to and past the breakwater with many rockpools which are especially good for seeing sponges and volcano barnacles. There is a diverse range of species such as periwinkles, topshells, seaweeds and various species of starfish which can be found in the summer months.



STRANDLINE

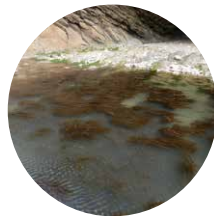
This is the area above the high tide mark where rough seas can throw up lots of different types of seaweed including kelp which has become detached. Look for seaglass especially on Newberry Beach. Large barrel jellyfish can also be seen washed up during the summer along with smaller ones such as moon jellyfish.

INTERESTING FEATURES:



BREAKWATER

This is the ridge of stones protecting the inner harbour. Combe Martin harbour used to have horse and carts and pack ponies to carry goods from ships beached in the harbour into the village. Shipbuilding occurred on Newberry beach in the 1830's.



DEEP POOLS

The concrete walk way covers a sewerage pipe, unfortunately parts have been damaged by storms but it may still be possible to negotiate a pushchair or small wheelchair along it. There are deep rockpools to the right beneath the cliffs and ridges of rocks leading down to the sea on the left at low tide.



SECRET PASSAGEWAYS

The eastern side has a walkway which ends near a man-made cave entrance to a disused silver mine. Look right when facing the sea you will see folded rock formations under which are large overhanging caverns which are made up of Combe Martin slates and Holey limestone.

The westward side has several rock walls to explore at low tide, there is also a gully in the rocks with ancient steps leading from one cove to the next known as the Phoenician steps. Whether they were actually built by Phoenicians or not is unknown, but children and sure footed adults enjoy negotiating them with care.

This guide was written for the North Devon Coast AONB Coastal Creatures project by members of Coastwise North Devon in 2018.

Photos by AONB team, Neville Stanikk, Muriel Lindsay and Graham Hockley.

