



CROYDE BEACH

LOCATION:
OS GRID REFERENCE:
SS 4355 3924

POSTCODE:
EX33 1NP APPROX

Croyde Beach, owned by Parkdean Estates, lies on the west facing coast of North Devon, between Saunton Sands and Putsborough Sands. It is about 5 miles from the large village of Braunton, with Barnstaple and Ilfracombe towns being about 10 miles away. It is part of an Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the South-West Coast Path runs along the beach close to the sand dunes. It is surrounded by interesting habitats with associated flora and fauna.

AMENITIES:

Croyde Village with pubs, cafes, surf shops, stores and a post office is approximately half a mile from the beach. Toilets and seasonal cafes are found close to the beach as is a Surf School.

PARKING & ACCESS:

To the south there is a large car park at Downend from where a pathway leads to concrete steps on to the beach. Parking to the north side is via Moor Lane at Ruda Holiday Park (off to the left) and this leads to the main pedestrian slipway via Beach Road. Further along Moor Lane is a National Trust car park from where a rough slipway opposite the Sandleigh café leads on to the rocks. There is a regular bus service from Barnstaple.



TOP THREE SPECIES:



HONEYCOMB REEF WORMS (*Sabellaria atraeolata*)

These tube building segmented annelid worms use fragments of sand to build their tubes. The worm itself is 2 or 3 cm long, but what are remarkable are the honeycomb tubes that are formed in extensive reefs on rocky surfaces on the lower shore. Care should be taken not to walk on them as they are very fragile.



SEA HARE (*Aplysia punctata*)

This can be found amongst brown algae feeding on the sea lettuce on rock pool margins at low tides. They are molluscs, though their shell is hidden within their body and they look more like slugs. The front pair of tentacles resembles ears, hence the name. They can be up to 20 cm long, but usually a lot less. They are hermaphrodites, but may mate in pairs or even chains. Their tangled eggs can be found on wireweed. They defend themselves by emitting a purple cloud of sulphuric acid.



GLAUCOUS PIMPLET ANEMONE (*Anthopleura thallia*)

This is an uncommon anemone, but found in the gravel between the rocky ridges on Croyde beach where there is strong wave action. It is difficult to spot as it buries itself in the gravel and is often covered with small pieces of gravel and debris. If you could see the column it is trumpet shaped and covered in adhesive warts which also have gravel sticking to them. It varies in colour being green, brown or greyish, though often pinkish at Croyde with a contrasting and distinctive chequerboard centre. When its many tentacles are exposed, they have chevron-shaped markings sometimes with white bars.

TOP THREE HABITATS:



ROCKY SHORES

Comprised of Pilton Beds slates and sandstones which lie in ridges to the north (next to Baggy point) and south (Downend) of the beach*. Between the ridges are sand-filled linear hollows with occasional cross-cuttings which form rock pools rich in marine life when the tide is out.



SAND DUNES

To the back of the beach lie 19 hectares of fluctuating sand dunes, which form a habitat for common lizards and adders. At times some of this area has to be fenced to avoid erosion by visitors, but on the whole erosion by the sea is soon replaced by sand blown in from the beach and marram grass helps to keep it stabilised. There are public footpaths across the dunes and public access to the beach alongside the stream.



SANDY BEACH

This extensive, horseshoe-shaped beach is roughly 700 metres wide. A small stream leading from the Croyde/ Crydd Brook enters at the centre of the beach.* There is a low gradient from the upper shore to the sea, which can be as much as 700m away on a low spring tide. There can be deep sandy hollows, which can come as a surprise to bathers*. Another hazard can be the hidden weever fish under the sand which will give a nasty sting if trodden on.

INTERESTING FEATURES:



PILL BOXES

The defence of Croyde in WW2 resulted in the building of two pill boxes. One was damaged by storms in 1989 and then dismantled, but the other is still visible on the south side of the beach set into the low cliff.

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



LIMEKILNS

Against the seawall to the north of the beach are the remains of two limekilns. Before land transportation was as good as it is today, lumps of limestone and coal would have been shipped in and burned together in the limekilns to produce quicklime, which was used locally in agriculture to make the soil less acidic and more fertile, for the mortar in stone buildings and for lime-wash.



THE SEA

The sea at Croyde attracts holiday makers and locals alike. Owing to its horseshoe shape and the large tidal range (which can be as much as 10 m vertically, because of the funnelling effect the Bristol Channel), there can be significant and sometimes dangerous rip currents. As a result, Lifeguards patrol the beach from the start of the Easter holidays until the end of the October half-term. It is a haven for bathers and surfers, but kite-boarding is not permitted.

Photos by AONB team, Neville Stanikk and Nicola Mello.

