

## Beach Profile



### Instow Beach

Ordnance Survey map reference  
SS 472303 to 474321

This is a seaside village beach with a quiet promenade, level sands, grassy dunes and sheltered water. It is well used but never crowded. In summer it is a splendid place for children to play on the dunes or on the beach. In winter it is a regular walking place for dogs and their owners.

The beach faces west onto the Taw/ Torrridge estuary, opposite its passage to the sea. It is a very sheltered location, with level soft sands shelving shallowly. There are some areas of rock and stone to the north. Some dunes lie beyond the esplanade. There are lovely views across the estuary to the fishing village of Appledore.



The beach is particularly easy to reach - ten metres from a bus stop. Bus access is excellent with a bus every ten minutes on the Barnstaple/Appledore/Westward Ho! service. The beach is also virtually on the "Tarka Trail" walk/cycle route so that access by footpath and cycle path is superb. Access by car is also easy with street parking available on Marine Parade which backs part of the beach ( time-limited parking in the summer). Longer term parking is provided off street at the cricket club. Less mobile people can have easy access to the sands via the slip at the south end of the beach.

At the south end of the beach, near the village, is a large expanse of soft level sand facing the village of Appledore on the other side of the Torridge. Further north the sands are backed by dunes. The shore then changes to rock and stone backed by the rough grazing of the Instow Barton Marsh.

The slope of the beach is very shallow and the distance from low to high water ranges from 200 metres to 600 metres.

Being within the Taw /Torridge estuary ( albeit opposite its entrance) the beach is protected from the Atlantic waves by the Bideford Bar. The estuary almost dries out at low tide and the salinity varies with the mix of river and sea water. Cross currents are strong.

### **Flora and Fauna**

Some 80% of the shore is shallowly-shelving sandy beach. There are sporadic tufts of gutweed and lugworms present in the sand. At extreme low water (say 500m below high water mark) there is an extensive strip of gutweed with sandy pools containing immature fish and sand mason worms.

Some 10% of the shore is rocky with shallow pools. These are accessible even for young children since the rock is fairly level and little scrambling is necessary. Brown seaweeds are common here, as are barnacles where the rock is solid. Small beds of mussels are frequent.

The dunes cover the remaining 10% of the beach.

In the dunes yellow evening primrose dominates along with red valerian. The dunes are covered in marram grass.



Meadow pipits are plentiful in the dunes but the degree of disturbance makes breeding unlikely. On the shore gulls, oystercatchers, curlew, herons and shell duck are common.

### **Man's Impacts**

At the southern end of the beach is a small stone jetty beyond which a muddy stream enters the estuary. At the north end is a relatively modern concrete jetty, still used for the deliveries of oil to a nearby depot.

The area is not designated for the use of motor boats for water skiing etc. The water is sheltered and there is little windsurfing activity.

The beach is within the Taw/Torridge Site of Special Scientific Interest - a recognition of the importance of the estuaries to nature conservation. It is also in the buffer zone to North Devon's Unesco Biosphere reserve

The north end of the beach is used by the Royal Marines for training. MOD activity leaves tyre tracks but these are washed out by the next high tide. It is limited to a small area at the north of the beach and has a low impact overall.



At the south end near the quay are some moored boats all year round. The village has pubs, restaurants, a well stocked grocers shop, an art gallery and ice cream vans in the summer. These make no impact on the beach but can be very welcome to the beachgoer.

Dogs are banned from the southern end of the beach from May to September. At other times the beach is particularly popular with dog walkers. Cattle occasionally graze Instow Barton Marsh.

Liz and Malcolm Roberts  
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## SWOT Analysis

<p><b><u>Strengths</u></b>          Attractive and varied views          Sheltered Water          Variety - sand, dunes, rocky shore          Easy access by bus, cycle, walk          Easy access by less mobile people          Well used but never crowded</p>	<p><b><u>Weaknesses</u></b>          Estuary water less clean than open sea          High disturbance of wildlife prevents breeding by birds etc.          Only a modest range of marine species or habitat for them.          Public WCs available but few in number.</p>
<p><b><u>Opportunities</u></b>          Part of dunes could be fenced off to facilitate breeding birds</p>	<p><b><u>Threats</u></b>          Dune erosion, either from human disturbance or climate change.          Spills of oil or other toxic material.</p>

<b><u>Species</u></b>	
<b><u>On Dunes</u></b>	
Marram Grass.	Abundant
Yellow Evening Primrose	Abundant
Red Valerian	Common
Sea Spurge	Present
Sea Rocket	Present
Buddleia	Occasional
<b><u>On Sandy Shore</u></b>	
Gutweed	Occasional on middle shore, Abundant near low water
Lugworms	Frequent
Sand Mason Worms	Common on lower shores in pools
Cockles	Frequent in shallow pools

Mussels	Frequent in shallow pools
Barnacles	Present on mussels
<b><u>On Rocky Shore</u></b>	
Bladder Wrack	Common
Twisted Wrack	Common
Serrated Wrack	Common
Purple laver	Occasional
Barnacles	Abundant (50% on suitable rock)
Toothed Top Shell	Frequent
Purple Top Shell	Occasional
Edible Periwinkle	Occasional
Rough Periwinkle	Occasional
Shore Crab	Frequent
Common Prawn	Frequent
Mussel	Common
Limpet	Occasional
Cockle	Occasional