

# DRAKE'S TRAIL – YELVERTON TO PLYMOUTH



## FOOT FILE

**LENGTH:** Yelverton to Plymouth 13 miles (21 km); Yelverton to Plymbridge 9 miles (14.5 km)

**TIME:** Depends on ages of family members and route chosen, but allow at least 4 hours and longer if walking

**START/FINISH:** Drake's Trail Pay & Display car park SX518679

**TERRAIN:** Surfaced cycle route with some short road sections

**MAPS:** OS Explorer OL28 Dartmoor

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT:** There are regular bus services from Plymouth and Tavistock. Please note that these do not carry bikes

**PARKING:** Drake's Trail Car Park, Yelverton. Pay and display – up to 4 hours £1.50; 4 hours + £2.50

**REFRESHMENTS:** There are a number of shops, cafes/restaurants and pubs in Yelverton, a seasonal refreshment van at Plymbridge and a café at Saltram House.

**T**he Trail takes its name from numerous connections with the famous Elizabethan seafarer Sir Francis Drake and forms part of (NCN) Route 27, the 'Devon Coast to Coast'. This is a 102 mile route between Ilfracombe in North Devon and Plymouth. Much of this route is off-road on former railway lines including the Tarka Trail and Granite Way and Devon County Council is working to increase the amount of off-road sections.

The Yelverton to Plymouth section of the Drake's Trail is now a great family route thanks to improvements near Clearbrook. As part of the Granite and Gears Project the steep, rough descent

from Roborough Down to the railway path has been replaced by a gentle tarmaced ramp that is safe and easily cycled by most members of the family. If you're towing a trailer or a tag-along, rest assured that you can now cycle the whole of this route. There are great views, several viaducts and even the chance to see nesting peregrine falcons between mid-March and mid-July. From the Drake's Trail Car Park in Yelverton follow Route 27 south towards Plymouth, taking care at the main road crossing close to the roundabout. Continue to follow the surfaced route across Roborough Down. Some parts of this

section are also access roads to houses so keep a look out for vehicles. Look out also for the old granite sleepers of the original railway. The last part of this section follows part of the 18 mile (29 km) Drake's Leat until you reach the minor road to Clearbrook. Turn left down the road and cycle past the terraced houses. Near the last buildings you'll see a Route 27 sign. Turn right and follow the surfaced access road for a short distance before turning right again onto the new improved section of the route. From here a smooth surfaced route takes you gradually down to join the old railway route south of Clearbrook. Anyone who remembers the old rough stony route with the steep zig-zag descent will be in for a surprise. This whole section is now accessible for everyone whether you're towing a trailer or tag-along. Even younger children cycling on their own bikes will be able to tackle the gentle gradients. Continue south along the railway route passing through Shaugh Tunnel. The tunnel does have lighting but keep to the left as it can be difficult to see other walkers and cyclists. If you have your own lights, switch them on. Continue south along the route towards Plymouth passing over two viaducts to reach Plymbridge Woods. On the second viaduct you may get the chance to view nesting peregrine falcons through the telescopes at the National Trust's Plym Peregrine Project. At Plymbridge there is a car park, picnic meadow and sometimes a refreshment van. Plymbridge is also the furthest point from Plymouth of the Plym Valley Railway. Plymbridge makes a good mid



point if you wish to do a slightly shorter route – an approximately 18 miles (29km) round trip. If so, turn round here and retrace the route back to Yelverton. For those wishing to continue, follow Route 27 south passing alongside and then over the railway to reach the edge of Plymouth. For Saltram House, turn left and follow the signs carefully along this road section to reach the cycleway under the A38 at Marsh Mills. From here a surfaced cycleway leads you to the National Trust property.

To return to Yelverton retrace the route following the Route 27 waymarkers.



PHOTOGRAPHS © JOHN BAKER

## Please remember ...

Drake's Trail is a shared-use path which can be enjoyed by cyclists as well as walkers; those in wheelchairs, youngsters in pushchairs and prams, and those walking dogs. Please respect all users by following a few simple guidelines:

- Be polite and considerate to other users.
- Travel at a speed that is appropriate to the conditions, e.g. when the path is busy.
- Bikes are quiet so let people know you are coming - ring your bell, or a friendly "Hello!" often works wonders.
- Be prepared to slow or stop - there may be people who don't know you are there or dogs may be off their leads.
- Take care when passing others, especially children and older or disabled people, and allow them plenty of room.
- If you are cycling with children, take up a position behind them. If there are two adults in your group, it is a good idea to have one at the back and one in front of the children.

**Further Information**  
[www.drakestrail.co.uk](http://www.drakestrail.co.uk)

## Plym Peregrine Project

The National Trust Plym Peregrine Project has been running since 2001 and is staffed by a team of volunteers who have a passion for the natural world and the wildlife in the Plym Valley. It is thought that peregrines have nested at Cann Quarry for over fifty years. The Project was set up following an attempted poisoning of the nesting peregrines in 1999. Every year over 15,000 people visit the viaduct.

**Further Information**  
[www.plymperegrines.org.uk](http://www.plymperegrines.org.uk)

## Plym Valley Railway

The Plym Valley Railway was founded in 1980 with an aim of restoring part of the ex-Great Western branch line from Plymouth to Tavistock that was closed in 1962. On December 30th 2012 Plym Bridge Platform was opened to the public. This marked 50 years and a day since the line was closed, and also the completion of the laying of 1.5 miles of track. Marsh Mills is a heritage railway centre where steam and diesel locomotives, carriages, wagons and other historic railway artefacts are preserved to recreate the atmosphere of a bygone age. Trains run on Sundays during the summer months.

**Further Information**  
[www.plymrail.co.uk](http://www.plymrail.co.uk)

## Saltram House

A magnificent Georgian mansion and tranquil garden lie at the heart of this historic parkland overlooking the River Plym. Saltram was home to the Parker family from 1743, when an earlier mansion was remodelled to reflect the family's increasingly prominent position. It's magnificently decorated, with original contents including Chinese wallpapers and an exceptional collection of paintings (several by Sir Joshua Reynolds). It also has a superb country house library and Robert Adam's Neo-classical Saloon.

The garden is mostly 19th century, with a working 18th-century orangery and follies, beautiful shrubberies and imposing specimen trees providing year-round interest.

There are toilets, a café and a gift shop.

**Further Information**  
[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/saltram](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/saltram)