

The River Parrett Trail

from Source to Sea



Enjoy the beauty of the walking trail at your pace in bite-size sections. Take a section a day, savour over a few days or conquer the 50 miles over a longer holiday.

Download FREE section maps & walking route information

To access and download FREE route section descriptions, useful visitor information and inspiration to help make the most of your visit, please go to our website www.visitsouthsomerset.com and explore The River Parrett Trail page.

Staff at the South Somerset Visitor Information Centre & Gift Shop also offer a wealth of local knowledge and friendly advice, as do the local information centres who provide wonderful insights and experiences.

Useful information

South Somerset Visitor Information Centre & Gift Shop, Cartgate Picnic Site, A303/A3088, Stoke sub Hamdon TA14 6RA.

Tel: **01935 829333**

Email: VisitSS@Somerset.gov.uk

visitsouthsomerset.com

The Countryside Code

Your guide to enjoying parks and waterways, coast and countryside

- RESPECT EVERYONE
- PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT
- ENJOY THE OUTDOORS



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Bridgwater was a major port in the Middle Ages when Somerset was surprisingly industrialised.



© Bridgwater Blake Museum



Burrow Mump – the impressive chapel ruins, dedicated to St Michael, have a mythical quality and offer great views of the surrounding countryside.



A river of some import

The worth of the Parrett was appreciated by the Romans – with ports at Comwich and Crandon Bridge. Being tidal for 12 miles inland, it could carry ships laden with goods and passengers to and from Langport.

Exports included cloth and imports mainly wine and fish. The Parrett's deposits of clay were used for scouring bricks and later for house bricks and tiles. The Levels, drained at one time by the Glastonbury monks, produced flax and hemp for sails and rope. Other well-known local products are gloves, cider, elvers and withy baskets. Fittingly, as it rises in Dorset and flows out of Somerset, the Parrett saw a famous victory at its mouth in 845 when men of the two counties defeated the Vikings who were finally repelled by Alfred the Great from his base on the Levels.



James Thurtle Photography



The richness of the sandy soil at the source and the peat on the Levels is matched by that of the salty mudflats at the mouth – a nursery for fish and haven for wildfowl.



Where salt meets fresh

Whether you choose to start from the source in the chalky Dorset Downs or at the mouth on the Severn Estuary (or somewhere in between), The River Parrett Trail is a celebration of water in its many guises and the wealth it brings.

Today the wealth is more a feeling of wellbeing. As befits a 'retired' river, the Parrett travels at a gentle pace, allowing you to savour its magical surroundings. Many believe the meaning of the word 'Somerset' is 'land of the Summer People'. Once tamed, the land's true worth was realised as ideal for horticulture, pasture and crops.

Bridgwater to Stert Point

The Parrett's mouth opens into Bridgwater Bay, part of the Severn Estuary. Look out for Combwich and Dunball wharfs on your way.



6

Doc Welford

Langport to Bridgwater Docks

Leaving one of the smallest towns in England, walk through lush green fields with the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal to guide you as you approach the docks.



5

Bridgwater Bible Museum

RSPB GREYLAKE – vast flocks of winter ducks and waders. Watch lapwing, redshank and snipe nesting in the spring or marsh harrier hunting over the reed beds.



WESTONZOYLAND
Site of the Battle of Sedgemoor and home to one of the many pumping stations on the Parrett, with a museum open to visit (limited times).

Westonzoyland Pumping Station Museum

Ham Hill to Langport

This section is noted for its villages, churches, mills and bridges. There is the chance to divert to Muchelney.



4

Paul Hoskins



LANGPORT – historic market town with attractive riverside walk and thriving high street full of independent shops and cafes.

ALLER – where King Alfred baptised the Viking leader. Aller Moor is a good place to spot Britain's tallest bird, the common crane.



Merriott to Ham Hill

Easy walking through fields and 'chocolate box' villages leads you to a steep climb up the hill but the views are more than worth it.



2

HAM HILL COUNTRY PARK – site of the huge Iron Age Hamdon Hillfort



National Trust



BARRINGTON COURT (NT)
An atmospheric fragment of old Somerset: an empty Tudor manor house, beautifully restored in the 1920s, with farm buildings, abundant flowers and orchards.

STEART MARSHES – one of the UK's largest new wetland reserves where avocets and oystercatchers can regularly be spotted.



BRIDGWATER – once a bustling port and important commercial centre, evident in the many fine architectural buildings, well known today for the spectacular annual Bridgwater carnival.



Bede/Coxterill

Taunton

Memories made to last

You will make your own memories walking the Parrett. Here are some of our suggestions to inspire you:

- Spot the bridges including one by Brunel and one with the longest span in Somerset.
- Spare a thought for the rebels tried by Judge Jeffreys after the Battle of Sedgemoor.
- Stare in wonder at the 'tidal bore' that travels upriver from the sea.
- Speculate on the wealth of the 19th century merchants when 3,600 ships a year came into Bridgwater.
- Scale Burrow Mump for spectacular views of the countryside, listen to the skylarks.
- Sample local cider, smoked eel, Cheddar cheese and cream teas.
- Stand amid the mediaeval ruins of Muchelney Abbey and visit the Priest's House.
- Step back in time to 1880 when a £10 ticket from Langport would take you to America.

While you are here

As you follow the path chosen by the Parrett through Dorset and Somerset, it can be tempting to wonder what can be discovered just over the horizon.

Well, be tempted! Whether you are interested in geology, history, horticulture, ecology, wildlife, adventure or food and drink, there is much to satisfy your curiosity within a few miles of the trail.



MONTACUTE HOUSE (NT) – a grand Elizabethan mansion with house, gardens, and extensive parkland open to explore. Loved by film makers and features in many famous films and dramas.



3

East Lambrook Manor Gardens

Merriott to Langport via Western Link

Using this route, you can take in the beautiful village of East Lambrook and a cottage garden closely associated with the famous gardener, Margery Fish.

CREWKERNE – historic market town now bustling with cafes and independent shops



Terry Dawson

Chedington to Merriott

Our river bubbles to life in the Thorney Mills springs of Chedington – a golden hamstone village set in chalk hills with commanding views over the countryside.



1

Wynyard Gap Inn

Bridgwater was a major port in the Middle Ages when Somerset was surprisingly industrialised.



© Bridgwater Block Museum

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James Thurtle Photography

Wetlands and wildlife

For around a third of its length, the River Parrett is within the largest area of lowland wet grassland and associated habitat remaining in Britain.

Much of the land is only a few metres above sea level and drained through ditches, known locally as rhynes, and rivers. This makes it notable for breeding waders, eel, willow and rare aquatic plants and insects. Listen for the soaring song of a skylark and the haunting tones of a curlew; look for the giveaway bubbles of an otter and the azure flash of a kingfisher and smell the almond hints of meadowsweet. Sometime, somewhere along the trail you could encounter a water vole, hare, lapwing, peregrine, and evidence of freshwater mussels. As the Parrett makes its way to the National Nature Reserve, Bridgwater Bay, you might be lucky enough to see a murmuration of dunlin disturbed by a hunting bird of prey.



James Thurtle Photography

Cranes – these beautiful wetland icons have been recently reintroduced to the Somerset Levels. Listen out for their trumpeting calls around Aller.