PUBS WORTH THE WALK

The Thatch, Croyde

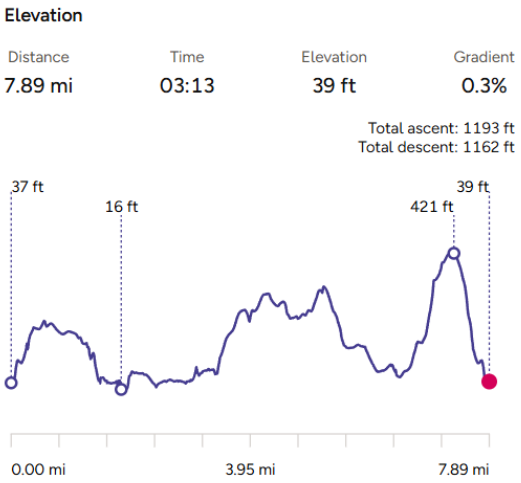
From Saunton Sands to Baggy Point & back via Saunton Down

OVERVIEW

There are circuits in North Devon that feel like they were designed by someone who wanted to give you everything at once — beach, dune, headland, coast path, open down — and this is one of them.

Eight miles from Saunton Sands, around Baggy Point and back over the top of Saunton Down, with 1,200 feet of climbing and views that earn every one of them.

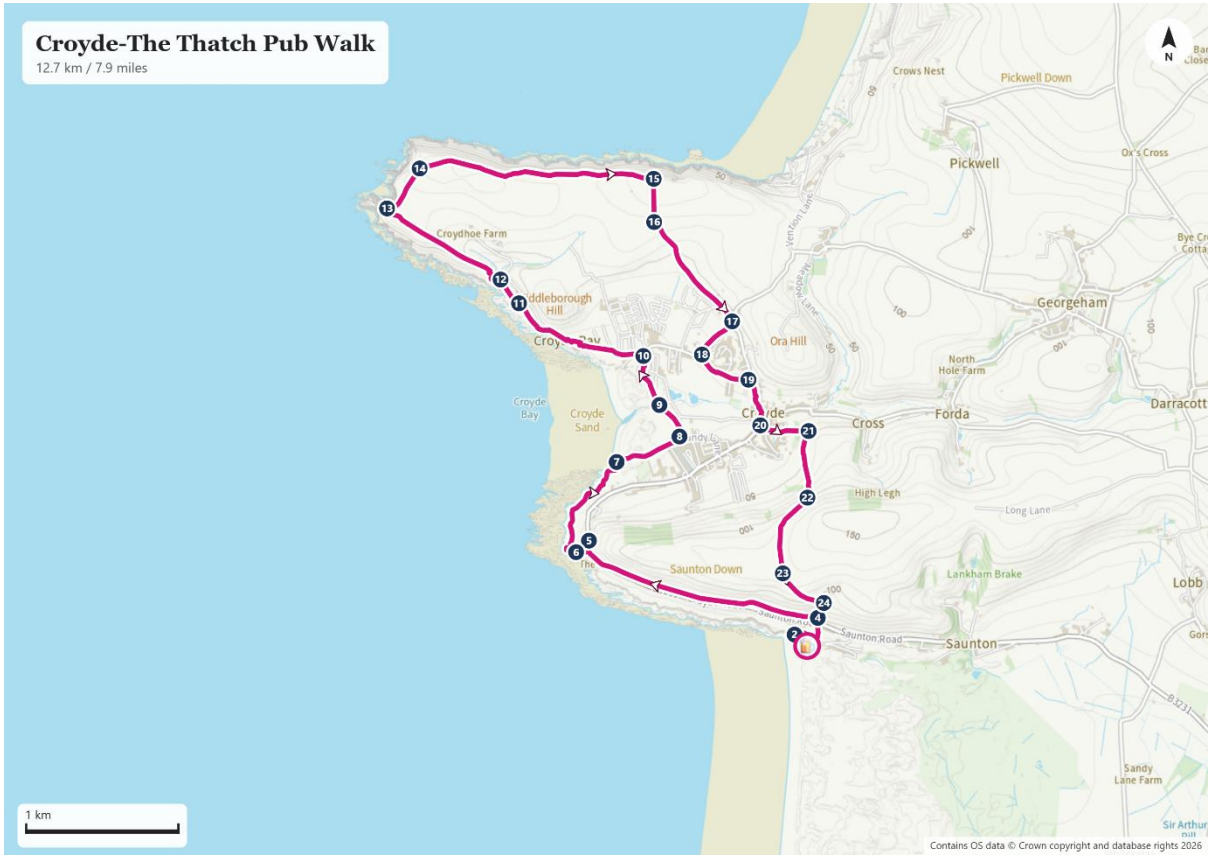
The Thatch allows you to gather your strength before that final ascent of Saunton Down.



This provides one of the best views of the entire walk: Saunton Sands stretching south, Braunton Burrows beyond, and the whole arc of the bay laid out behind you.

Start/Finish	**Saunton Sands Beach Car Park, off the Braunton to Croyde Road.**
Parking	Plenty of parking at the Saunton Sands Beach Car Park. Number plate recognition on entry, pay on exit.
Grid Reference	SS 447 378
What3Words	///rooting.conforms.driver
Distance	7.9 miles / 12.6 km **Time** 3.5 hrs **Ascent** 1193 ft / 370 m
Paths/Terrain	A real mixture! Some sandy sections, wooden walkways, lanes, pavements, grassy cliff top tracks, narrow stony paths, farm tracks. Steep, steady climb out of Croyde up to Saunton Down to end.
Difficulty	Moderate
Public Transport	Buses run between Braunton and Croyde, passing the Saunton Sands Beach entrance.
Toilets	At the beach car park, and numerous options in Croyde.
Other Pubs Nearby	Many pubs between Braunton and Woolacombe cater for holidaying families and the surfing crowd. **The Manor House Inn** is a family friendly pub in Croyde. **The Rock Inn** & **The Kings Arms** at Georgeham are good.

DIRECTIONS



1. From the car park, look for the toilets below the Grill. The coast path runs uphill to the left of the toiles, uphill towards the Saunton Sands Hotel. In front of the hotel, follow the path around the children's play area and tennis court, up to the main road. It's busy, so take care as you cross.
2. Through the gate on the opposite side, go immediately left. (We'll be coming down the hill in straight ahead on the return journey). The path here felt like it might become overgrown, but this is a busy South West Coast Path route so should be maintained.
3. The path here starts uphill, but soon levels off and widens, running parallel and above the main coast road. Eventually a footpath marker points uphill to Croyde. It looks like a new section designed to avoid a short, tricky SWCP route along the main road. We're taking the original Coast Path route.
4. At the marker, continue straight ahead instead. You'll see that the road below curves to the right around a bend, with an interesting circular house built looking out to sea. Make note of this – the path we'll be aiming for when we join the main road runs to the coast to the right-hand side of that house.
5. The path also curves around to the right, and then drops towards the road. TAKE CARE. You need to cross over and make your way BACK UP HILL towards the

bend, 50m ahead. The footpath runs to the right-hand side of the circular house in front of you.

6. The path off the main road runs down steps to the coast path to make its way to Croyde. The signposts point towards Baggy Point, the headline you see across the other side of Croyde Beach.
7. The path soon drops down towards the beach. If the tide is out, follow the Coast Path route across to the other side of the beach, leaving past the café & toilets. However, if the tide is in, or coming in, the alternative route is signposted into the dunes within 50m of joining the beach from the cliff.
8. The path up the dunes from the beach is hard work! But levels off for easier walking soon. Continue on a sandy track, then passing an entrance into a holiday park on the right. Keep straight ahead. As the path emerges onto a lane, head towards a wooden gate to the left into a field.
9. Follow the path diagonally across the field (perhaps this is a car park in high season times). As you leave the field, turn right over a footbridge towards a playing field on a gravel path. It runs into a holiday park. Continue through the park, a meandering drive that leads to the entrance/exit onto the main road.
10. Turn left to pass the access to the beach (toilets are 25m towards the beach). Continue straight ahead, signposted Baggy Point.
11. This is a popular walking route for visitors to Croyde. The level path, initially along a lane with a few refreshment break options, is busy. The main aim from here is the summit above Baggy Point. Continue along the lane until you pass the last of the sea-facing houses, then soon after proceed through a wooden gate. Many people will continue along the level path but take the route uphill.
12. Continue to follow the path uphill around the headland, eventually passing the Baggy Point Coastguard Pole. The path begins to level out soon afterwards, and continues now with superb views of Putsborough Sands and Woolacombe.
13. Continue through a number of wooden gates, and 1 mile from Baggy Point you'll see the first footpath junction sign on this generally level route. The signpost is named 'Baggy' and indicates Croyde 1 mile. Take this grassy track up the slope, following ahead with the hedge on your right.
14. Proceed through a kissing gate into the next field, and straight ahead to a gate onto a farm track. Turn left on the track, which soon bends to the right as it continues downhill.
15. Eventually passing Cherry Tree Farm, look for a footpath sign to the right down a narrow path. It emerges into a residential area, past the 'Old Coastguards' house. At the main road, turn left, then right at the junction to drop down into the heart of the village. Continue past the car garage & village Hall, and turn right to head up towards The Thatch.
16. To begin the return to Saunton, take Cloutman's Lane across the road from The Thatch. Continue past Rowan Cottage, up the lane marked by a No Through Road

sign. The concrete drive heads uphill. Follow the drive on a bend round to the right, then within 20m continue straight ahead to a gate to the right onto a wooded path. This is called Down Lane.

17. This path can be steep, and a little unrelenting, but worth it! Down Lane continues up to the Saunton Down, initially leaving the wooded section and opens out into a gorse & fern area with views down over Croyde, and then through a pair of kiss gates into sheep fields.
18. Follow markers to cross fields with superb views of Saunton Sands and Braunton Burrows as you crest Saunton Down. The grassy path starts diagonally downhill, and eventually enter woodland, down steep steps.
19. This path takes you back to the point where you crossed the road near to the Saunton Sands hotel. It's a narrow path, already starting to become overgrown in mid-June.
20. Take care crossing the road. Retrace your steps back to the beach car park.