

Trip Report: South West Coastal Path

Date: 7th-21st May 2014

Group: Jim G (leader) Mike H & Jeff

Route: St.Ives to Plymouth

Total Distance: 190 miles

Total Ascent: 38000 ft

Weather: Pretty dam good

Background

As Members of the Bunbury Mountaineers we decided that, as none of us are getting any younger, we should undertake at least one major challenge each year, while we still can! Previous challenges include: Not The West Highland Way and Not The Cumbria Way.

This is the longest of Britain's 19 National Trails, a staggering 1014km (630 miles) and is based on paths trodden around cliffs and coves by generations of Coastguards. The trail begins at Minehead on the Somerset coast, goes along the whole of the Devon coast, along the entire coast of Cornwall and then along the coast of Dorset to the finish at South Haven Point on Poole Harbour.

Our Route

We spent a long time trying to decide which part of the path to do, how long we should take, how to make use trains for our trip and what would be a suitable challenge in terms of distance and difficulty. In the end we decided that the coast of Cornwall had to be included, that two weeks was not unreasonable (apologies to Gillian, Delia and Lynne) and that somewhere close to 200 miles would be a big enough challenge. We made use of a travel company to pre-book all our accommodation and a luggage transfer service to move our bags from B&B meaning that we could carry just day packs on the trail.

The Trip

We started from Crewe station on 7th May with an epic train journey of exactly 7 hours to St. Ives (our start point). This involved changes at Birmingham, Plymouth and St Erth.

The first stage of the walk was from St. Ives to Pendeen Watch, we were accompanied for half of this leg by Lesley and Mike A. This was the single toughest day of the whole trip with rain and gale force winds. We overnighted in Pendeen village where we were entertained by the Landlord and Landlady of the local hostelry, the Trewellard Arms, with

tales of a 'smugglin and a 'wreckin that they assured us were the local means of employment before, during and after the closure of all the Tin Mines that scar this part of the Cornish coast.

This part of Britain's coastline more than lived up to expectations with mile after mile of unspoilt beauty, millions of Bluebells, hidden coves and beaches (many accessible only on foot). The going underfoot is tough in places and the daily ascents and descents were a challenge in themselves. What followed was a hugely enjoyable trip that lasted a further 12 days, 13 days in total, we covered a total of 190 miles and completed over 38000 feet of ascent. Who thought the coast would be flat! We started in St. Ives and finished in Plymouth with overnight stays in Pendeen, Porthcurno, Penzance, The Lizard, Porthallow, Falmouth, Portloe, Mevagissey, Par, Polperro, Portwrinkle and Plymouth.

We had a warm Cornish welcome from everyone we met, well nearly everyone! Their attitude when things go wrong is "It's Cornwall". We sampled the finest Cornish beers (Cornish Chough brewed in Lizard was the best). We managed to avoid any Cornish Cream Teas (although we did sample the double clotted cream a few times) only consumed 1 Cornish Pasty (Jeff, far too dry as a snack on it's own), had one Cornish Crab sandwich (each), drank very few pints of scrumpy although we were assured that the Badger's Arse was the one to try! We stayed in some chocolate box Cornish fishing villages, sampling the local catch of fresh fish, scallops & lobster. The weather was very kind to us, other than the first and last days, we even came back home with a Cornish sun tan! I wonder what we can do next year????

Jim