

Coastal Walk – 7 miles

The Lizard, South Cornish Coast

This walk around the Lizard Peninsula, the southerly tip of mainland Britain, takes in dramatic cliff scenery, rare wild flowers and an interesting coastal history. Kynance Cove has a sandy beach and islands of serpentine stone. The bay attracted visitors in Victorian times and still captivates people today.

Getting there and facilities

Lizard village is 11 miles from Helston on the A3083. There is a regular bus service throughout the year. WCs at Kynance and the Lizard car parks. Refreshments available from the 'eco' café on Kynance beach and at Lizard Point.

Start point: Kynance Cove – OS Landranger 203 map – grid ref SW 703125.

Points of interest

- **Flora:** lots of colourful wildflowers bloom along the coast in spring and summer like the quirkily named dropwort, bloody crane's-bill, ladies bedstraw, milkwort and self-heal. The exotic looking pink and yellow flowers of the hottentot fig can be seen near to the lighthouse. Although it looks pretty it is actually a botanical bully and can smother our native flora. Cornish heath is a rare plant which grows here but nowhere else in Britain.
- **Geology:** look out for the strikingly beautiful serpentine stone in the cliffs around the Lizard. With veins of red, white and green, and was formed by the extreme pressure of rocks being thrust up to the Earth's surface from under the crust millions of years ago.
- **Birds:** Buzzard, peregrine, raven and stonechat may be seen at any time of the year along the cliffs. Spot gannet, shearwater and guillemot offshore.
- **Kynance Cove:** a favourite spot for day-trippers since Victorian times, many of the caves around Kynance have names from that era like the Ladies' Bathing Pool, the Parlour and the Drawing Room. Today the café at the cove is full of eco-friendly features including solar panels, a turf roof, wool insulation and compost toilets.
- **Lizard Wireless Station:** two black huts have stood on the headland of Pen Olver for more than a century. They are one of the sites that Guglielmo Marconi used for his pioneering radio experiments. In January 1901 he received a message here that had travelled 186 miles to the Isle of Wight - a new distance record. The station was restored by the National Trust in 2000. Call 01326 290384 for opening times.



Tennyson described the twin towers of Lizard Lighthouse as "the southern eyes of England". Built in 1752, thousands of ships safely pass through these rock-filled waters thanks to its 26-mile beam.

© NTPL/David Noton



One of the richest botanical areas in the UK, in spring, the cliffs are a colourful picture, carpeted in the blue, white and pink of wildflowers like squill, campion and thrift (shown here).

© NTPL/Martin Trelawny



Wild choughs are also once again breeding on the Lizard coast. This acrobatic red-billed crow, with a distinctive 'chiaow' call, can be seen throughout the year feeding on insects in short coastal turf.

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"Catch Kynance at low tide for a fantastic beach with caves and beautiful serpentine rocks worn smooth by the waves."

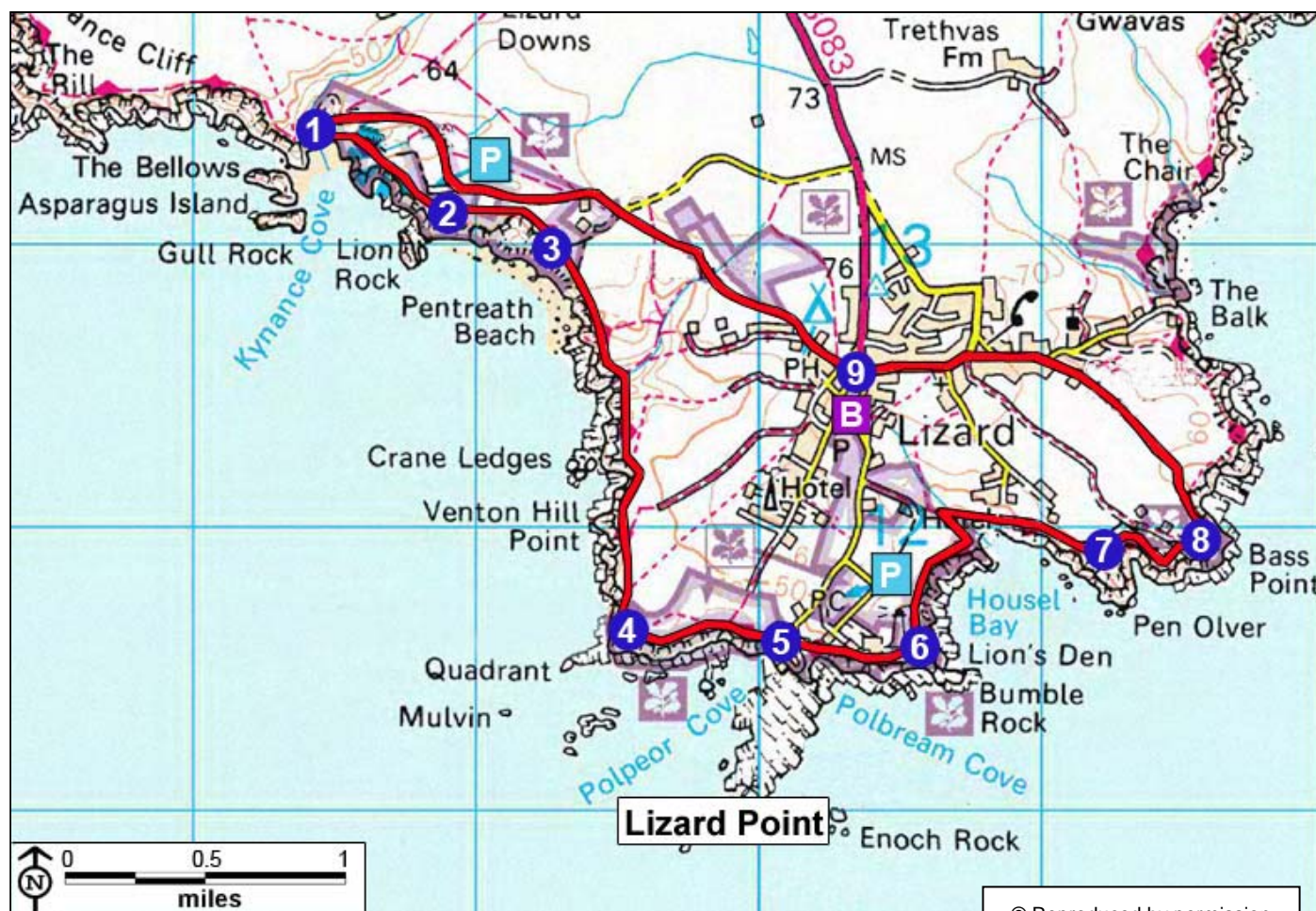
Rachel Holder, National Trust Warden

Route and directions

1. Set out from Kynance Cove heading towards Lizard Point. Look for the Devil's Letterbox on the north side of Asparagus Island – a cave crack with powerful suction caused by the pull of air from the waves below.
2. Steps lead to a headland from the eastern end of Kynance beach. Walk through the car park and rejoin the cliff path.
3. Follow the cliff path, passing above Pentreath Beach. Seals and basking sharks are commonly spotted on this route. Basking sharks can be up to nine metres long but cruise these warm waters feeding on nothing more than tiny plankton. In summer 2007 over 40 were spotted in one day!
4. Look down towards the disused Victorian lifeboat station at Polpeor Cove.
5. The Lizard Lighthouse is just round the headland from Lizard Point. An electric foghorn kicks in when humidity levels rise above a certain point. Make sure you cover your ears! The blast is so thunderous (about thirty times louder than a pneumatic drill), you will feel the vibrations if passing close by.
6. Lion's Den is a 12m hole in the cliff created when a cave collapsed one night in the mid-1800s.
7. With stunning views, Pen Olver is the perfect spot for a picnic. Please take your rubbish home.
8. From Bass Point Old Signal Station, head left inland to Lizard village.
9. Pass the village green taking a path towards Kynance Cove.

Distance, terrain and accessibility

Roughly 7 miles (11km) along sandy beaches and stony cliff top paths. Some slopes and steps: height gain of 220m.



NT places nearby

Glendurgan Garden, St Michael's Mount and the Godolphin Estate

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