

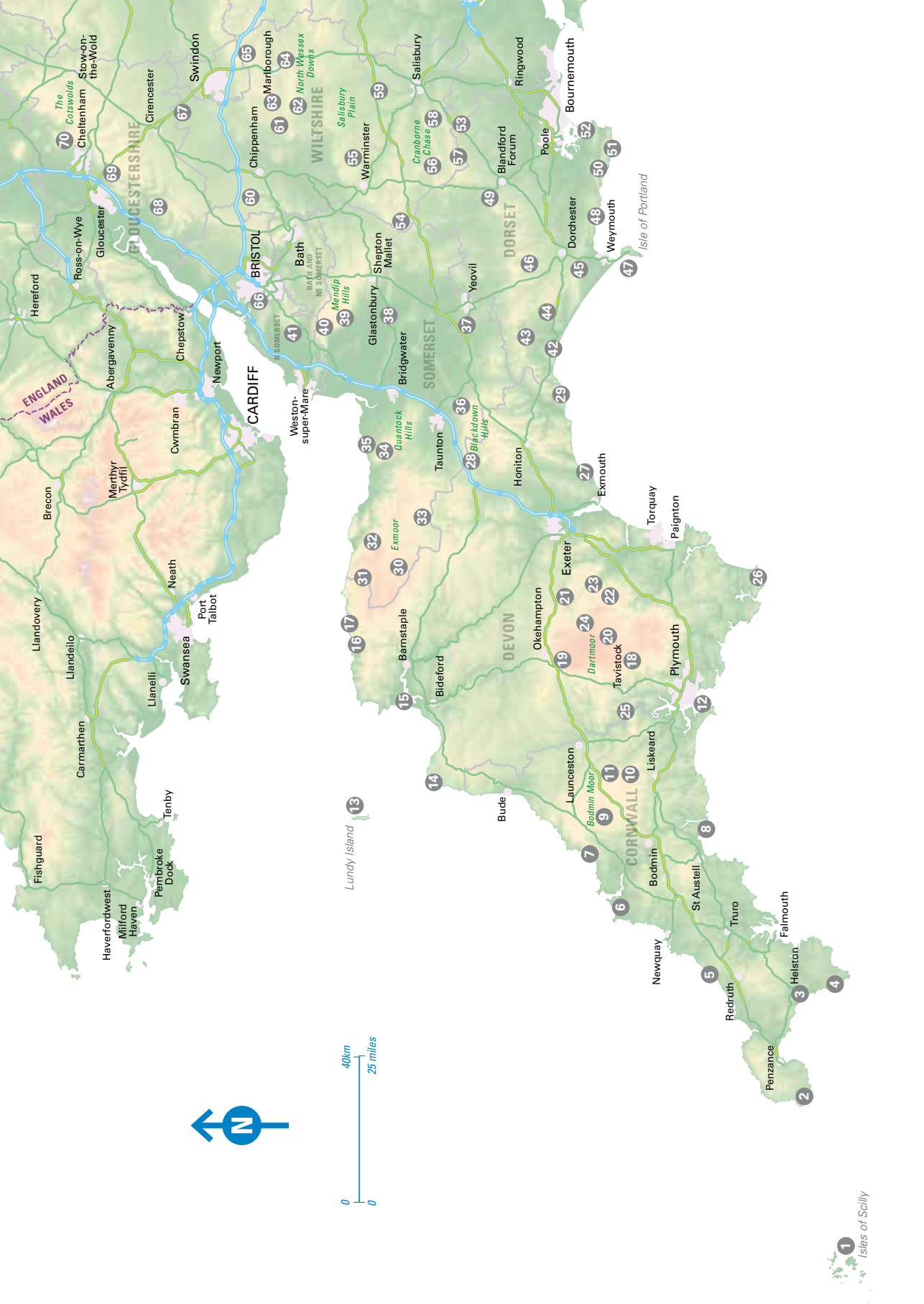
SOUTH WEST **TRAIL RUNNING**

Mark Rainsley



70 GREAT RUNS





South West Trail Running



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Ceunant

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Gwynedd

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Printed and bound in ?????

Introduction

With thanks to Susie Allison

'And nearly every time – especially when I was really rather surprised to have survived at all – I ended up looking back on the experience with wonder and warmth, feeling happier and more alive than I did before I set out.'

Richard Askwith, Running Free

This book is about running for fun in beautiful places. Each route has been selected for its inspirational landscapes and runnable terrain. The range of routes is deliberately diverse – these runs follow rivers and coastlines, go up hills and along ridges, weave through leafy woodlands, cross barren moors and heathland. The selected routes include many of South West England's most enjoyable trails, but this is not a definitive collection! Hopefully these routes will encourage and inspire further personal exploration of South West England's trails.



Hunter's Tor (Route 23)
Photo: Claire Pinder

Contents

INTRODUCTION 3

About the Author	6
Why Trail Running?	7
How to Use This Book	9
Getting Started	13
Skills Development	18
Outdoor Access	21
Enjoy	22

WEST CORNWALL 23

1 The Isles of Scilly	25
2 Land's End	29
3 The Loe	33
4 The Lizard	37
5 St Agnes Beacon	41
6 Trevoze Head	45

EAST CORNWALL 49

7 Tintagel	51
8 Gribbin Head	57
9 Brown Willy	61
10 The Hurlers	65
11 Hawk's Tor	69
12 Mount Edgcumbe Country Park	73

NORTH DEVON 77

13 Lundy Island	79
14 Hartland Point	83
15 Braunton Burrows	87
16 Great Hangman	91
17 Heddon's Mouth	95

DARTMOOR 99

18 Princetown and Burrator Reservoir	105
19 Yes Tor	109
20 The Dartmoor Crossing	107
21 Castle Drogo	113
22 Hound Tor and Haytor	117
23 Lustleigh Cleave	121
24 The Perambulation of 1240	125

SOUTH AND EAST DEVON 129

25 The Tamar Trails	131
26 Prawle Point	135
27 Ladram Bay and the River Otter	139
28 Culmstock Beacon	143
29 The Undercliffs	147

WEST SOMERSET 151

30 The River Barle	153
31 Doone Valley	157
32 Dunkery Beacon	161
33 Wimbleball Lake	165
34 The Quantocks	169
35 The Quantock Coast	173

NORTH AND EAST SOMERSET 177

36 The Herepath Trail	179
37 Ham Hill and Montacute House	183
38 Glastonbury Tor	187
39 Wells to Cheddar	191
40 Cheddar Gorge	195
41 Goblin Combe	199

WEST DORSET 203

42 Golden Cap	205
43 Lewesdon Hill	209
44 Eggardon Hill	213
45 The Hardy Monument	217
46 The Cerne Abbas Giant	221
47 The Isle of Portland	225

EAST DOREST 229

48 Durdle Door	231
49 Blandford Forest and Hambledon Hill	235
50 Corfe Castle	239
51 St Alban's Head	243
52 Studland Beach	247
53 Pentridge Hill	251



SOUTH WILTSHIRE 255

54 Stourhead	257
55 The Imber Range Perimeter Path	261
56 The Wardour Castles	265
57 Win Green	269
58 The Fovant Badges	273
59 Stonehenge	277

NORTH WILTSHIRE 281

60 Castle Combe	283
61 Cherhill Down	287
62 The Pewsey Downs	291
63 Avebury	295
64 Savernake Forest	299
65 The Aldbourne Circular Route	303

BRISTOL AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE 307

66 Leigh Woods	309
67 Cotswold Water Park	313
68 Coaley Peak	317
69 Painswick Beacon and Crickley Hill	321
70 Cleeve Hill	325

APPENDICES

Resources	329
Mapping	329
Access	330
Running Clubs	330
Racing	331
Training, Coaching and Guiding	331
New Route Ideas	332
Acknowledgements	332
Index	333

About the Author

Mark Rainsley

Mark Rainsley lives and works in Dorset. As a keen trail runner (and also kayaker, surfer and mountain biker), he has explored every corner of the wild and wonderful South West, in all its moods and seasons. He has been known to survive the occasional ultra-marathon, but largely he runs sensible distances, purely for the joy of exploring the landscape.

Mark took on the challenge of researching the South West's trail running potential as a means of recovering physically and mentally from major surgery to correct a genetic heart defect. He hopes that this book demonstrates that these wonderful places are accessible to all runners, and that this book offers useful information and maybe even a bit of inspiration.



Why Trail Running?

Moving fast and light through and engaging with the landscape is what trail running is all about. All that is required is just you and a pair of running shoes! Trail runners leave roads and traffic behind in search of the quieter and wilder, sometimes hidden, paths and tracks that criss-cross the outdoors. Leafy woodland, meandering river banks, winding ridges, dramatic sea cliffs, remote moorland; South West England has all of these in abundance and all are fantastic places to run.

Trails are everywhere

The beauty of trail running is that it combines the speed and ease of running on roads with fresh air and wide-open spaces. Trails enable runners to move quickly over ground that might otherwise be too rough or boggy for a speedy passage. Trails enable runners to explore all over South West England; from the inner reaches of suburban woodlands to remote high moorland.

Trails are for everyone

Trail running is a simple activity which is accessible to everyone wishing to give it a go. Great off-road running trails are found anywhere and everywhere; in cities and towns as well as in the countryside. Anyone can take up trail running. Many trails are easily tackled by the most novice of runners and just as many trails will delight experienced runners seeking new challenges. Trail running is an activity that fits and grows with the experience and skill of the individual runner.

Definition of a running trail

A trail is simply a path or a track. Some are boggy or muddy, some are stony or sun-baked ... but all are easier on the joints and (in this author's humble opinion!) far more interesting and enjoyable than running on tarmac or concrete. The routes in this book all have public access. Most follow footpaths or bridleways. Many utilise unsurfaced roads such as farm access tracks. Some are on Access Land, where you may roam freely. A number of routes follow beaches; a fantastic surface to run on, as long as it is firm wet sand rather than pebbles! Tarmac paths and roads do inevitably feature from time to time, but only when there is no alternative way to approach or complete a great trail run.

Guidebook scope and purpose

This guidebook sets out to describe trail runs all over South West England, including several islands; all are enjoyable, many are sublime! The routes presented here are selected to showcase the available spectrum of trail running experiences to be found in each of the South West's diverse regions, and to present physical challenges ranging from mild to superhuman. Inevitably, the choice of routes reflects the author's prejudices; for example, I love coastal running, I love running across open heath or moor, I love running through landscapes which tell a story of geology, history or prehistory and I especially love running along Southern England's incredible chalk ridgetops.

Why Trail Running?



Many of the routes are easily accessible trails close to towns, cities and popular holiday destinations. These runs range from short, straightforward circuits to longer, half-day outings. The remaining routes strike out into more remote terrain taking runners into the heart of South West England's wildest landscapes. Some routes require a little road running and at the other end of the spectrum some routes have short unrunnable sections, usually where extreme gradient is involved. Likewise, some routes follow waymarked trails, others require map and compass to stay on track. The routes in this book have been selected to cover a wide range of running experiences so that runners can develop their ability in whichever direction they want: to run further, to climb higher, tackle trickier ground or navigate more complex terrain. Developing these skills opens up a whole new world of opportunities for exploring the rich and varied landscapes of South West England.

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information supplied is accurate. However, mistakes happen and trails are frequently subject to change. The author welcomes updates and corrections.

As with any activity, trail runners must accept responsibility for their own actions, stay within their own limits and avoid harming other people or property. The author, publisher and distributor of this book do not recognise any liability for any injury or damage to person or property arising from the use of this guidebook.

How to Use This Book

This book is for reading in the armchair at home or for storing in the car glovebox. It has been designed so that the turn-by-turn route description and map can be photocopied and taken on the run. Each route is laid out in the same format.

Quick reference

This section lists the length of the route in kilometres and miles as well as the cumulative ascent (height gain) in metres and feet. Distances are given to the nearest 0.5km for routes under 10km and to the nearest kilometre for routes over 10km. Ascent is given to the nearest 25m. A mixture of computer, GPS and paper mapping has been used to calculate distance and ascent. Although every effort has been made to supply accurate information it is inevitable that there will be inconsistencies with readers' own plots and GPS tracks. Ascent calculations are liable to vary much more than distance, especially along coasts. Relevant maps are listed along with the start (and end) point(s) of the route with grid references and postcodes. The grid reference gives the precise location of the start of the route. The postcode is approximate and is provided to help Sat Nav users reach the right general area; rural postcodes cover a much larger area than urban postcodes. Each route is rated to indicate the level of navigation required, the roughness of the terrain underfoot and the likelihood of getting wet feet.



Tintagel mud (Route 7)

How to Use This Book

Rating system

Three aspects of the route are rated to set appropriate expectations. The rating is based on the section of the route which requires the highest level of navigation, has the roughest terrain and the highest probability of wet or muddy feet.

Navigation ●●●	These routes are relatively easy to follow, usually with full or partial waymarking or signposts.
Navigation ●●●	Some care is needed to stay on the described route as there are multiple junctions without waymarkers or signs. Some routes are graded ●●● if they are technically easy to navigate but in a remote area where the consequences of getting lost could be serious. Map and compass are advisable.
Navigation ●●●	These routes cross remote regions where the consequences of getting lost are serious. A map, compass and the ability to use both are required in addition to the route description. The route may not always follow obvious land features. The path may not always be obvious on the ground and may depend upon the season and weather conditions.
Terrain ●●●	Smooth paths or tracks which are easy to run. There may be a few short rougher patches.
Terrain ●●●	Fairly easy to run but stones, tree roots or uneven path sections merit care at times.
Terrain ●●●	These routes are almost entirely runnable provided sufficient attention is paid to foot placement. They may be rocky, boggy or generally uneven. A few routes have sections where walking is unavoidable. This grading also encompasses routes where there are repeated very steep climbs.
Wet Feet ●●●	On a dry day, wet or muddy feet are unlikely. There may be occasional and avoidable muddy puddles or patches of shallow mud.
Wet Feet ●●●	Damp or muddy feet are likely, particularly in autumn and winter. During drier spells, puddles and muddy patches can often be avoided. In normal conditions streams can be crossed by jumping or on stepping stones.
Wet Feet ●●●	Wet or muddy feet are inevitable due to unjumpable stream or river crossings and/or boggy areas.

Map

The route maps are based on Ordnance Survey mapping with the scale varied in order to fit the whole route onto the page. They are intended to be complementary to, not substitutes for, Ordnance Survey or other published maps.

Route description

The route description is divided into two parts; a scene-setting preamble followed by functional, turn-by-turn instructions. The numbering in the description matches the numbers on the route maps.

Compass directions given in the route directions are intended to be used as a *rough indication* alongside the map, not for precise navigation!

Types of trail

All of the routes in this book have legal access. However, it is important to understand the distinctions between the different kinds of trails used. In the route descriptions, the following language is used:

Path: if the word 'path' is used alone, it describes a trail which is not a footpath, bridleway or byway (see below).

Footpath: this word is used to describe a trail marked on Ordnance Survey maps as footpath, i.e. a public right of way. These are marked by a line of short dashes – red on 1:50K Landranger maps, Green on 1:25K Explorer maps. In practice, footpaths can range from a narrow trail to a wide track.

Bridleway: this word is used to describe a trail marked on Ordnance Survey maps as a bridleway, i.e. a public right of way. These are marked by a line of long dashes – red on Landranger maps, green on Explorer maps. In practice, bridleways can range from a narrow trail to a wide track. If the route description says, 'bridleway path', this simply indicates that the bridleway is narrow, if it says 'bridleway track' it simply indicates that the bridleway is wide.

Byways: this word is used to describe a trail marked on Ordnance Survey maps as a byway, i.e. a public right of way. These are marked by a line of red crosses on Landranger maps and a line of green crosses on Explorer maps. Byways are (in theory) driveable, so tend to be relatively wide. Many have firm or tarmac surfaces. Unsurfaced byways are often heavily rutted and liable to flooding. Some byways are marked on maps by a line of 'T' dashes: these are Restricted Byways, where motor vehicles are not allowed.

Permissive: if a footpath, bridleway or byway is described as 'permissive', this means that the landowner has 'allowed' access and that it could potentially be withdrawn.

Access Land: if an area is described as 'Access Land', this means that you are allowed to run freely within it, without restriction (see page 21).

Lane/Road: the word 'lane' is used to describe a tarmac public highway where cars may be encountered, but traffic is usually light. The word 'road' is used to describe busier highways.

Trip planning

This section outlines the logistics involved in running this route. Driving directions and parking information may be supplied. Where public transport is important in shuttling a route, details will be provided. Conveniently located shops, pubs or cafés may be mentioned. Any particular local conditions requiring consideration will also be mentioned in this section.

Useful websites for trip planning are listed in the resources section at the back of the book.

How to Use This Book



Other routes

Every runner is different, so this section aims to help those looking for longer, shorter or just plain different routes as well as runners staying in the area for more than one day.

Events

The Events section is a non-comprehensive list of trail races held on the route or in the local area. Distances for events can be given in either kilometres or miles, depending upon whatever the organiser uses.

More detailed event listings can also be found at websites such as www.tra-uk.org, www.runnersworld.co.uk, www.therunningbug.co.uk, www.southernrunningguide.com, www.100marathonclub.org.uk, www.fellrunner.org.uk and www.sleepmonsters.com

GPX files

GPX route files are popular with many runners, who upload them onto their GPS devices to assist with navigation. The route descriptions in this book are written to enable runners to complete the route using map and compass, without the need for a GPX file. However, GPX files for all of the routes are available for download from the Pesda Press website www.pesdapress.com. The GPX files should be used using common sense and appropriate caution! Always first navigate based on what you see on the ground ahead.

Getting Started

Running is one of the simplest and most satisfying activities in the world: just head out of the door and put one foot in front of the other. There are just a few things it may be helpful to think about first.

Why run?

People run for all sorts of reasons. Some view running as just a means to an unexciting end: becoming fitter, losing weight, achieving performance targets. Trail runners soon come to understand that the activity is greater than the sum of its parts. Your experiences along the trails will help you in maintaining mental wellbeing. They will help you to achieve a sense of mindfulness. You will have fun. You will share adventures and bond with your buddies. You will immerse yourself in beautiful and engaging landscapes and learn how to 'read' the story they tell of geology, prehistory and history. You will become more resilient and now when the photocopier breaks at work, it won't be an apocalyptic scenario. You will become a happier person*.

If all of this is accompanied by side-effects such as stronger muscles, improved cardiovascular fitness and speedier performance, then that's just great.



First steps

Those who have tried road running and found it uncomfortable (or developed injuries) will be pleased to hear that trail running – even in the driest conditions, when the ground is baked hard – is much less stressful on joints and muscles than road running.

All of the routes in this book are just as well walked as jogged or run (or walk-jog-run, the author's preferred style), so there is no fitness barrier to getting started. Just get out there and give them a go! Start off by only running the downhills. Even the world's best runners walk steep uphill sections. As with any activity it is sensible to start small and gradually increase the effort required. Check the suitability of a route by looking at the distance, ascent (height gain) and profile chart (steep or gradual climbs?) given in the route description.

Steady progress

Increase activity levels gradually to give both your muscles and brain time to adapt to the demands of running on trails. Running on uneven trails engages a wider range of muscles than running on smooth roads and pavement. On slippery or rocky trails, the brain needs to work quickly to pick the most secure foot placements. There is also an abundance of information on running-specific training and technique available from medical professionals and running coaches as well as from books and magazines.

** Possibly via some truly miserable and masochistic moments!*

Getting Started



Footwear

Well-fitting shoes suitable for the terrain are essential for enjoyable and injury-free running. The fundamentals of choosing the right footwear are comfort and grip. Comfort depends on the way the shoe fits, stabilises, supports and cushions the runner's foot. The right shoe is a very individual decision. Shoe manufacturers use differently shaped lasts and have different ideas about the ideal amount of stability, support and cushioning. Specialist running shops can analyse your running gait, advise on these differences and suggest appropriate footwear.

Road shoes usually have the most stability, support and cushioning. They have a smoother sole which will give adequate grip in dry conditions for well-constructed paths and tracks. On uneven terrain this can make it more difficult to place feet accurately.

Fell shoes have comparatively little cushioning and an exaggerated knobbly sole which helps runners stay secure on steep wet grass. They can be an uncomfortable choice on anything harder than earth or grass paths, particularly during longer runs.

Further still along the 'little cushioning' spectrum are so-called 'barefoot' running shoes. Their minimalist soles are controversially claimed to reduce injury supposedly caused by padded soles. These are definitely an acquired taste.

Unsurprisingly, trail shoes are usually the best compromise for trail running. These have a rugged sole giving better grip making each step much more secure, particularly on wet days. Many models have waterproof and breathable Gore-Tex membranes, expensive but well worth considering if you will be tackling muddy or boggy conditions.

Clothing

There is plenty of technical clothing available from specialist running shops. Synthetic materials are recommended as cotton takes a long time to dry and can rub badly when wet. Multiple thin layers are more flexible for regulating temperature than one thick layer. Zip-neck tops are good for the same reason. Ankle socks are better at preventing stones and dirt from entering shoes than low cut trainer liners. Well-fitting underwear is essential for both men and women: for women this means a high impact-level sports bra.

Weather in the upland and coastal areas which feature heavily in this guidebook can be fickle. Hence, lightweight and breathable waterproofs are an important element of the runner's wardrobe. Hats and gloves should be carried in colder weather. Runners must wear enough to stay warm. It can be tempting to wear less clothing on the assumption that running will help keep the body warm. However, in wet, cold conditions thinly clad runners are prone to developing hypothermia, particularly when they tire.

High-visibility reflective clothing is a must, even if (as with the routes in this guidebook), road time will be a small proportion of your run. Those worried about fashion sensibilities may be interested to know that a number of manufacturers now utilise modern materials which reflect light extremely efficiently despite being conventionally coloured (i.e. not Day-Glo).

What to carry?

For short routes there is little need to carry anything at all. For longer routes, especially those in remote areas, food, water and additional clothing are the basic extras. It is most comfortable to carry these in a lightweight rucksack or bumbag designed especially for runners and sold in specialist running or outdoor shops.

It is important to stay well-fed and hydrated. While out on routes lasting several hours, runners should aim to eat a small amount regularly. What to eat is a matter of personal preference. Muesli bars, sandwiches, jelly babies, malt loaf and gloopy energy gels are just some of the foods popular with experienced runners. Drink when thirsty. The amount of fluid needed varies between individual runners and also depends upon the conditions. Water, squash or energy drink can be carried in either a bottle or a bladder and hose.

Map, compass and the ability to use both are essential for some of the routes. A mobile phone is recommended for safety reasons although coverage is limited in many areas. A basic first aid kit containing at least a crepe bandage, wound dressing and a few sticking plasters is recommended, as are a lightweight survival bag and whistle. Head torches weigh very little and prove their worth more often than anticipated. Use common sense when packing for a run. Running with a week's supply of muesli bars, three litres of water and five spare tops will not be much fun. On the other hand, omitting waterproofs and a spare warm layer could lead to a wet, cold and exhausting epic. Go fast and light ... and well-prepared.

Getting Started

Suggested kit list

	WEAR (CONDITIONS DEPENDENT)	CARRY (CONDITIONS DEPENDENT)
SHORT RUNS	SHOES	(ROUTE DESCRIPTION)
	SOCKS	(MAP AND COMPASS)
	SHORTS OR LEGGINGS	(MOBILE PHONE)
	SUPPORTIVE UNDERWEAR	(MONEY)
	SHORT- OR LONG-SLEEVED TOP	(FOOD)
	(CAP)	(WATER)
	(WARM LAYER)	
	(WIND OR WATERPROOF TOP)	
	(HAT, NECK BUFF AND GLOVES)	
	(SUNSCREEN)	
LONGER RUNS	SHOES	LIGHTWEIGHT RUCKSACK OR BUMBAG
	SOCKS	ROUTE DESCRIPTION
	SHORTS OR LEGGINGS	MAP AND COMPASS
	SUPPORTIVE UNDERWEAR	MOBILE PHONE
	SHORT- OR LONG-SLEEVED TOP	MONEY
	(CAP)	FOOD
	(WARM LAYER)	WATER
	(WIND OR WATERPROOF TOP)	(EXTRA WARM LAYERS)
	(HAT, NECK BUFF AND GLOVES)	(WATERPROOF BOTTOMS)
	(SUNSCREEN)	FIRST AID KIT
		WHISTLES
		SURVIVAL BAG
OVERNIGHT CAMPING RUNS		HEAD TORCH
		(SUNSCREEN)
	SHOES	LIGHTWEIGHT RUCKSACK (25L IS GOOD)
	SOCKS	ROUTE DESCRIPTION
	SHORTS OR LEGGINGS	MAP AND COMPASS
	SUPPORTIVE UNDERWEAR	MOBILE PHONE
	SHORT- OR LONG-SLEEVED TOP	MONEY
	(CAP)	FOOD
	(WARM LAYER)	WATER
	(WIND OR WATERPROOF TOP)	EXTRA WARM LAYERS INCLUDING FULL LENGTH LEGGINGS
	(HAT, NECK BUFF AND GLOVES)	WATERPROOF TOP AND BOTTOMS
	(SUNSCREEN)	FIRST AID KIT
		WHISTLES
		SURVIVAL BAG
		HEAD TORCH
		(SUNSCREEN)
		TENT OR BIVVY BAG
		STOVE, PAN, FUEL AND LIGHTER/ MATCHES
		GROUND INSULATION E.G. CLOSED CELL MAT
		SLEEPING BAG
		(TOTAL WEIGHT 4-7 KG)



Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a serious medical condition which occurs when a person's core body temperature drops abnormally low. Look out for stumbles, mumbles and fumbles – key signs of the onset of hypothermia – and make sure these are addressed immediately by putting on more clothes and heading for home.

Ticks

Ticks are a serious danger to trail runners. Ticks can carry Lyme Disease, a life-threatening condition. Even wearing long sleeves and leggings, ticks are liable to sneak in and find a spot to bite. Always do a full-body check as soon as possible after running in potentially tick-infested areas such as heathland, moor or forest where deer graze. Unfortunately, all of the South West is assessed as 'High Risk' according to Bristol University's 'Big Tick Project'. See their risk map for more details: www.bigtickproject.co.uk.

The NHS-recommended removal method is to grab the tick as close to the skin as possible using tweezers, then extract by pulling straight up gently. See a GP immediately if a target-shaped rash or flu-like symptoms develop.

Skills Development

Trail running technique

There is a real joy and satisfaction to running fast over uneven ground. This is a skill that can be learnt through conscious thought and experience. Running on trails requires concentration and can be mentally tiring. It is important to adapt speed to the terrain and to stay within personal limits. Looking ahead and 'reading the trail' to choose the best foot placement is the key to moving swiftly. There may be uneven ground, tree roots, muddy puddles, soft boggy areas, patches of gravel or larger rocks. The skill lies in selecting the clear area among gravel, varying stride length between tree roots, pushing off firm earth rather than soft bog, and landing a footstep precisely on top of a rock instead of slipping awkwardly off its side.

Navigation

The routes in this book range from city centre parks to remote wilderness areas. They cover the whole spectrum from runs where going off-route is no problem at all, to those where getting lost could be very serious. Confident navigation is essential for progressing to the more remote routes included in this guidebook. Each route is graded to indicate the level of navigation required. Confident navigation comes through practice and the ratings system is intended to help development of the required skills.

The route descriptions should be read and used in conjunction with maps. Basic map reading starts by relating the hills, valleys and features such as rivers, buildings and boundaries seen on the ground to the contour lines and symbols marked on the map. Orientate your map to the direction of travel so that the features line up with those on the ground. Whilst moving, keep a mental tick list of features on the map which must be passed in order to reach the next key point on the route. Get into the habit of memorising your tick list and consulting the map only at key points. It helps enormously to know where one is all of the time, rather than spending time figuring out the location from scratch at every stop.

The level of navigation required often changes dramatically with weather conditions. A straightforward trot over moorland to a trig point may require counting paces and following a compass bearing when the cloud rolls in.

Navigators must constantly challenge their own assumptions. Look for features that disprove an identified location. It's all too easy to make features fit with the map and inadvertently 'confirm' an incorrect location. Estimate the width and height of a feature as well as the distance to it before consulting the map. Map measurements should corroborate the estimations. If not, alarm bells should ring!

Developing an awareness of distance and timing is very useful. Try identifying features at varying distances – say 100m, 500m and 1km – and timing how long it takes to run to each of them. Try timing the same distances on rougher terrain.

No times are given for the routes in this book as running time varies so much from person to person. Keep a record of how long each route takes and work out a personalised version of Naismith's rule. This rule of thumb is used by hillwalkers to calculate the length of time a route will take, based on its distance and total ascent. The standard Naismith's rule allows one hour for every 5km plus one minute for each 10m of height gained. For runners, a good starting point is to assume one hour for every 10km plus one minute



for each 10m height gain. Rougher terrain will increase the time taken, often very significantly.

Almost all of the routes in this book use paths and tracks that are clear and easy to follow independent of the weather conditions. Some follow fainter paths and need a higher level of navigation. Path recognition is key to finding the way on less distinct routes. Developing an eye for traces of previous usage is helpful. Look out for clues such as slightly polished rocks, aligned patches of bare earth, broken, stunted or different types of vegetation. Paths often disappear into boggy or stony areas and reappear on the far side. Humans tend to follow fence lines and head to obvious features. In summertime, even usually clear paths may become overgrown and tricky to identify.

Basic navigational techniques such as orientating (also known as setting) the map, pacing, timing, and following a compass bearing can be taught through courses and by studying books (e.g. *Mountain and Moorland Navigation*, Kevin Walker, Pesda Press 2016, ISBN 978 1906095567). A theoretical knowledge of navigation is not enough. Good navigation only comes through practice. One excellent way of learning and improving navigation skills is the sport of orienteering.

Measuring distance and height

Grid squares are always 1km

OS Landranger 1:50,000 2cm = 1km, 10m contour interval

OS Explorer 1:25,000 4cm = 1km, 10m contour interval

Harvey Superwalker 1:25,000 4cm = 1km, 15m contour interval

Conversion to imperial units

10km is approximately 6 miles

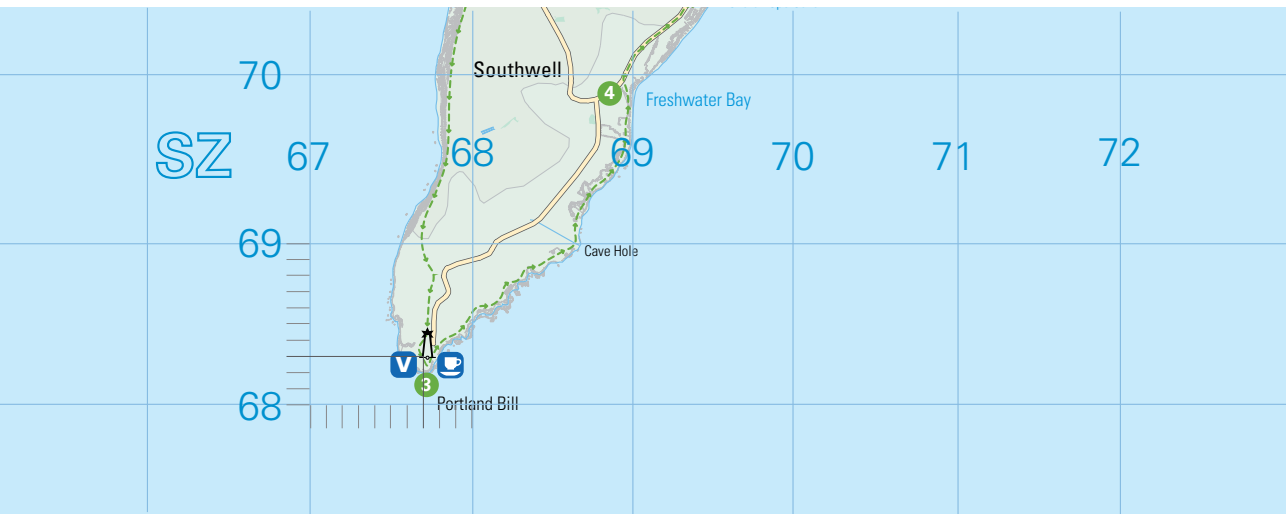
10m is approximately 33ft

Naismith's rule



For runners a good starting point is to assume one hour for every 10km plus one minute for each 10m height gain.

EXAMPLE:
approx. 40km run = 4 hours
three climbs total 750m = +75 mins
total estimate = 5 hours 15 mins



Six figure grid references

On an OS map each 1km square has a four figure reference (look for the blue grid numbers). Divide each square into ten units. Count along then up the square to find your location to within 100m².

EXAMPLE:
Portland Bill's lighthouse is in the grid square 6768;
dividing that square into tenths the lighthouse is seven tenths along and three tenths up
so the grid reference is SZ 677 683

Outdoor Access

Rights and responsibilities

The routes in this book follow trails, commons, heaths and moors where you are legally entitled to run. However, your right to enjoy these outdoor places comes with responsibilities. Adopt a minimum impact approach and leave these trails as it would be good to find them. This definitely means not dumping your gel wrappers on the trail and it may well mean carrying out other people's litter! Mesh rucksack side-pockets are particularly handy for this.

The Countryside Code

The Countryside Code is worth repeating here, as it sums up the approach that mindful and environmentally sensitive trail runners should be taking:

Respect - Protect - Enjoy

Respect other people:

consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors

leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available

Protect the natural environment:

leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home

keep dogs under effective control

Enjoy the outdoors:

plan ahead and be prepared

follow advice and local signs

The full version with advice on each section is of course available online.

Access Land

Access Land is a splendid thing, created in 2000 by the CRoW (Countryside and Rights of Way) Act. On Access Land, you have a right of access on foot for various forms of open air recreation, including trail running. Note that camping is not included. Access Land can be identified using Ordnance Survey Explorer maps, where it is coloured pale yellow and marked AL. Up-to-date maps can also be found on the Natural England website. If you find yourself unsure (or in dispute) about Access Land, call the Open Access Call Centre on 0845 100 3298.

Large tracts of Access Land can be found in Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, on Bodmin Moor and generally anywhere where there is unenclosed heath or common.

Most enclosed fields and farmyard areas will not be Access Land. The CRoW Act exempts the following areas from becoming Access Land: land ploughed or drilled within the previous year, land within 20 metres of a dwelling, parks, gardens and golf courses.



Enjoy

Have fun! Above all, this book is intended to encourage runners get out and explore the South West's amazing and diverse landscapes and trails. There are a great many hours of trail running contained within these pages. Some are easy, some are tough. Sometimes the weather will cooperate and sometimes it will hurl horizontal rain. Sunny day trail runs make the world feel a better place, but a hard run through foul weather can paradoxically be even more satisfying. Going running is always the right decision: there is no such thing as a bad run.

West Cornwall

Here at England's westernmost fringes, the sea is impossible to ignore or avoid. The land reaches out into, resists and is shaped by the booming Atlantic waves. Every route in this section includes some coast, but the diversity of scenery, culture and running experience is surprising. The Scilly archipelago offers days of running among sublime beaches and coastal heath. Land's End and The Lizard are justly famous headlands with very different geology, whilst in between them The Loe is characterised by sheltered woodlands and shingle beach. Running around St Agnes Beacon immerses you in a landscape of historic mining, preserved as a World Heritage Site. Finally, the Trevoze Head route takes in the astonishing north coast, with the potential for a multi-day adventure.



Gunver Head (Route 6)





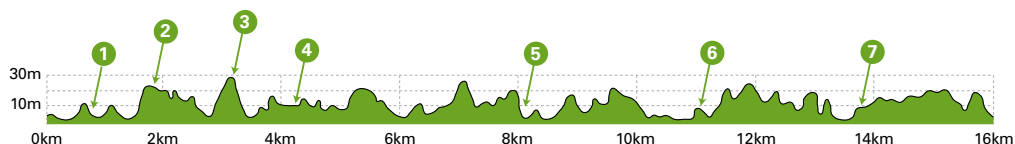
Bant's Carn burial chamber

1 The Isles of Scilly

Distance	16km (10 miles)	Ascent	375m (1230ft)
Map	OS Landranger 203 OS Explorer 101		
Navigation	•••	Easy to follow coast path	
Terrain	•••	A variety of surfaces and gradients, mostly grassy heathland	
Wet Feet	•••	It's usually dry on Scilly!	
Start/Finish	Hugh Town quay TR21 0HY/SV 901 107		

Rugged and varied coastal trails in the 'Fortunate Isles'

The Isles of Scilly are a tiny archipelago of low-lying islands, located 40km off Land's End. They are indisputably one of the most beautiful places in Britain. Whilst many are drawn by the blinding white beaches, sub-tropical climate and regular sunshine, few are aware that the isles are a wonderful spot in which to enjoy several days of mild trail running. Outlined here is a run exploring the largest island, St Mary's. It starts directly from the quayside in Hugh Town where you disembark the ferry, and takes in prehistoric tombs, granite cliffs sculpted into outrageous shapes by the wind, and the walls of The Garrison, an extensive set of coastal defences stemming from the sixteenth century. Following this up with runs around the nearby quieter and smaller islands is highly recommended.



Route Description

START Follow the seafront E along the beach – stay on the road and ignore the lifeboat station track, it's a dead end. **1** At the second beach (Porth Mellon), take a track off to the left, leading through the hamlet of Porthello. **2** When the road turns sharp right whilst climbing a hill, follow the path off to the left. Follow this past Carn Morval Point (option to take higher or lower path) to a junction just past a telegraph mast. **3** Turn left and follow the path downhill and along the beach, before turning left again to reach Bar Point (northern tip of island). **4** Many paths follow the E side of the island, keep choosing the nearest to the sea! **5** Continue around Porth Hellick Bay – check the traffic lights before crossing the end of the airport runway! Continue around Old Town Bay, turning left off Old Town road onto the coastal track past the Old Church to Peninnis Head Lighthouse. **6** Follow the craggy coast N from the lighthouse into Hugh Town and along Porth Cressa's seafront. **7** Turn left to follow the walls all the way around The Garrison. There is a 300m break in the walls from Steval Point (westernmost point), just follow the coast. The walls are rejoined, then follow a short road back to the quay.



St Martin's old quay

Trip Planning

This run starts from the quay in Hugh Town, Scilly's biggest (only) town. Getting to this spot requires a 2 hours 45 minute ferry crossing on the Scillonian III from Penzance. The expensive alternative is a short flight from Land's End Airport, followed by a 2km walk/taxi ride. Both are booked through Isles of Scilly Travel.

Hugh Town has all shops and amenities. Otherwise, the only refreshment on this route is a café at Old Town Bay.

Although it is possible to complete this route as an adventurous day trip from West Cornwall, it's highly recommended to stay longer and explore the other islands; they offer great trail runs around their shores and in any case, Scilly is just wonderful. Further information and accommodation options from the Isles of Scilly Tourist Office.

Other Routes

Having made it to the Isles of Scilly, it would be rude not to run the coastal trails around the other inhabited isles! All bar Samson can easily be accessed by inter-island ferries from Hugh Town.





Events

The Isles of Scilly Triathlon takes place on Tresco, and there is also a demanding run-swim event organised by Otillo which encompasses all of the main islands.

The other Isles of Scilly

St Martin's: The coast of St Martin's is about 10km long and is notable for the high hedges surrounding flower gardens. At low tide there is a possible extension to adjacent White Island.

Tresco: Tresco is also a 10km run, with craggy heathland at the northern end, and breathtaking sandy beaches around the southern half. Wear sunglasses, the sand is blinding!

Bryher: A favourite of the author's. The complex and indented coast of Bryher is about 8km in length, with amazing views over the jagged Norrard Rocks to the west.

St Agnes and Gugh: St Agnes' coast is longer than it looks (7km), with craggy interludes and a (low tide) crossing of the sand spit to explore adjacent Gugh.

Samson: If you can get a boat (from Bryher or Tresco) to uninhabited Samson, do it! The trails over Samson's two hills are short in distance and restricted in scope (note signage about nesting birds) but the experience of running among abandoned cottages on a desert island is priceless.



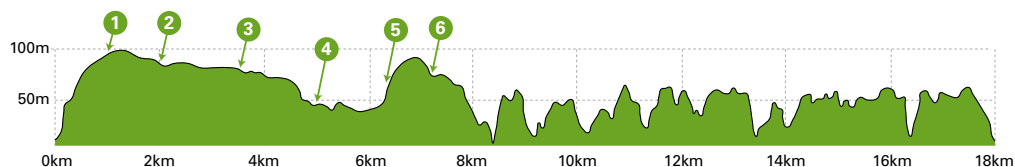
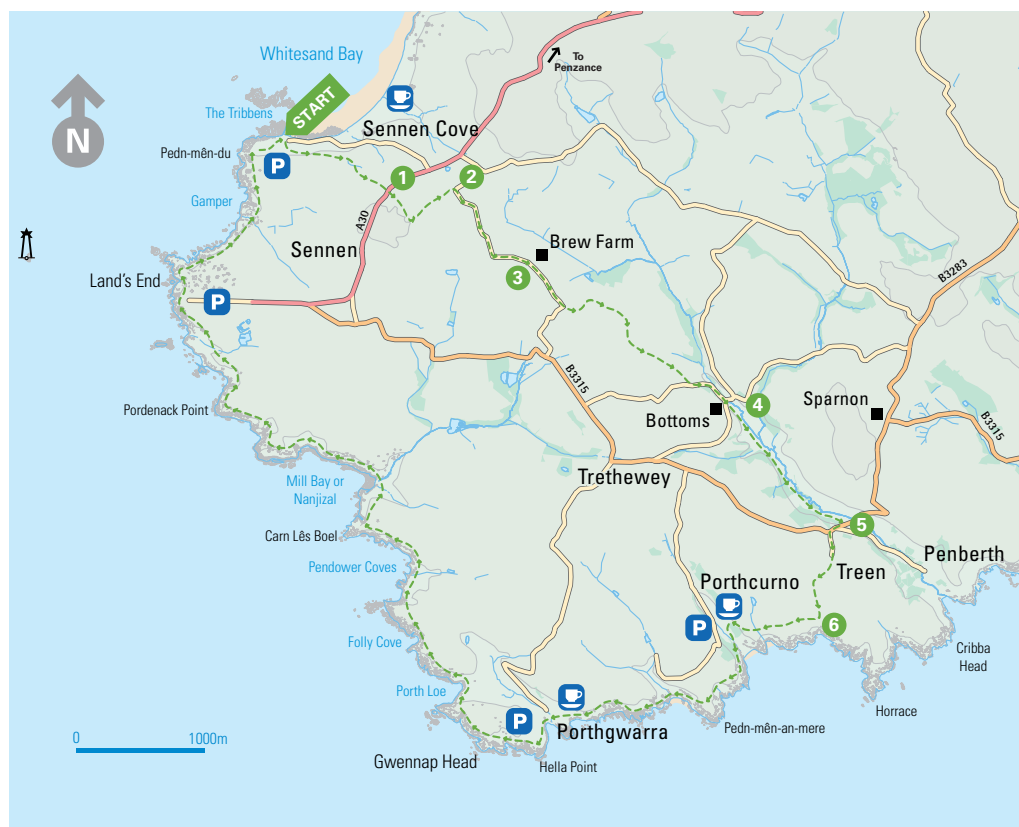
2 Land's End

Distance	18km (11 miles)	Ascent	625m (2050ft)
Map	OS Landranger 203 OS Explorer 102		
Navigation ●●●	Easy on the South West Coast Path (SWCP), care needed on the inland section		
Terrain ●●●	Rocky footpaths, steep descents and ascents		
Wet Feet ●●●	A few squelchy farmland sections		
Start/Finish	Sennen Cove Harbour car park TR19 7DB/SW 350 263		

Heathland trails over granite cliffs, at the edge of the world!

Land's End completely lives up to its evocative name, offering an exhilarating run among breath-taking environs. Above heaving seas, gulls wheel around castellated towers of golden granite sparkling with quartz, feldspar and mica. Running atop these cliffs as the sun sinks into the Atlantic is a numinous experience. This route starts by bridging the peninsula inland, through fairly fast and direct rural trails. Once the sea is reached at Porth Curno Bay, it is all highlights; glassy seas and golden sands at Porth Curno, the headland of Gwennap Head topped by a Coastwatch lookout station, glorious Nanjizal Bay with its distinctive vertical cave running through the cliffs, the twin sea stacks of Enys Dodnan (pierced by a vast arch) and the Armed Knight, the Longships Lighthouse blinking offshore and the backdrop of Whitesand Bay and Cape Cornwall as you descend into Sennen Cove.

Sadly, Land's End itself is occupied by a theme park: keep your eyes out to sea as you pass this gaudy dump.



Route Description

START Leave the harbour car park past the circular wooden capstan building, and turn right (uphill) along Stone Chair Lane. Continue ahead (E) for 400m following footpath signs to reach Maria's Lane. Cross the lane to the footpath opposite and follow this for 500m to the A30. **1** Cross and follow the track ahead to pass through a gate marked 'Mayon Farmhouse B&B'. Follow the footpath leading out of this yard (SE) for 200m and then turn left (NE) onto another footpath, which crosses two fields to reach a lane after 400m. **2** Turn right onto the lane and follow it for 1.4km to a sharp right bend beside a radar installation. **3** Take the bridleway on the left and follow it for 1.4km through Trengothal Farm to a lane. Turn left onto the lane and follow it 300m downhill to a junction. **4** Take the footpath directly opposite, across the junction. Follow it along the Penberth Valley for 1.4km until you reach the B3315. Turn right (steep uphill) to follow the B3315 for 120m to a lane signposted 'Logan Rock/Treen' (second turning on the left). **5** Follow this lane through the village of Treen and keep going until it becomes a track taking you past campsite buildings to the SWCP. **6** Turn right (W) and follow the SWCP for 11km back to Sennen Cove.

Trip Planning

The car park at Sennen Cove is pay and display, reached at the very end of the road past the harbour buildings. It is also possible to start from the car parks at Porthcurno TR19 6JY/SW 384 225 or Porthgwarra TR19 6JR/SW 370 217 (or even at Land's End itself, predictably exorbitant). Sennen Cove has the pleasant Little Bo Café and also a chip shop. There is a shop and post office uphill in Sennen village. Should you require refreshment en route, there are cafés at Porthcurno and Porthgwarra; you could experiment to test the effects of ice cream on your performance.

As cliff-top runs go, this is relatively safe; the heathland atop the cliffs is crisscrossed with numerous alternative paths and in windy conditions, there is usually an option which keeps you safely away from the edge.

If you just want to run the coast path, a 30-minute bus ride can shuttle you between Treen or Porthcurno and Sennen Cove, also calling at Land's End. This is the 1A service, a fitting number for the 'first' bus service in England.

Other Routes

Perhaps predictably, all of the South West Coast Path around the Penwith peninsula (St Ives to Penzance) offers fantastic trail running. The path east from Treen to Mousehole is less spectacular than that around Land's End but constantly interesting and challenging, with boulder scrambles at places like Lamorna Cove and Boskenna. The section leading north to Cape Cornwall traverses some steep-sided slopes above beaches and reefs; don't miss Ballowall Barrow just after Porth Nanven, an amazingly preserved prehistoric tomb.

The SWCP between Cape Cornwall and St Ives (CC2STI) is just incredible; it was a difficult choice whether to include this or Land's End in this book. Both make for outstanding runs, but Land's End was finally chosen on account of its unique granite cliffs and spires. CC2STI is much more challenging, stretching nearly 30km with some seriously rugged paths and soul-sucking bogs, through a landscape of ruined mines perched atop basalt cliffs. Penwith is also stunning, inland. The moorland above CC2STI is accessible through various short footpaths.



This author expended considerable energy trying to locate the Holy Grail: a circular route which would link up the best of the cliff path and the high moor behind. All he found was deep gorse and bogs; if you do better, please tell me!

A short and accessible run with huge views can be enjoyed by ascending and exploring Carn Brea, England's westernmost hill. Park at TR19 6JD/SW 388 283.



Events

A number of fairly extreme races take in Land's End. Votwo's 3-day 127km Atlantic Challenge starts at Padstow and ends at Land's End. Endurance Life's Classic Quarter is 44 miles from The Lizard to Land's End, with solo and team categories. Rat Race's macho-named Man vs Coast is 20 miles long including some coasteering (jumping into the sea).

The South West Coast Path National Trail

The South West Coast Path is Britain's longest* National Trail, stretching from Minehead in Somerset to Poole in Dorset, via Land's End at its westernmost extremity. The SWCP is unquestionably the jewel in the crown of trail running in the South West, and it is no hyperbole at all to suggest that it ranks among the very best trail running experiences in the world. A continuous 1014km/630-mile path with simple access and good transport links, following ever-changing but regularly breath-taking cliffs and beaches along the Atlantic-facing shores of the South West peninsula ... there is simply nothing like it.

Planning [South West Trail Running](#), there was a strong temptation to simply divide the 1014km into 70 discrete routes and fill the whole book! For sure, there are few sections of the SWCP that would not justify inclusion. However, the following approach has been taken; sections of the SWCP are utilised in many of this book's routes, but those selected are included here because they specifically showcase a particular (and usually unique) highlight of the National Trail. In most cases, a 'loop' route is suggested. The routes which are simply 'A to B' sections of the SWCP are included because the author deems them unmissable, because public transport offers a way to shuttle back to the start and because in his opinion the inland part of a 'loop' route wouldn't be of justifiable quality compared to the coastal part.

At time of writing (2018), the record for completing the entire 1014km and 35,000 metres ascent of the SWCP is 10 days, 15 hours and 18 minutes, achieved by Damien Hall in 2016. Julie Gardener set the women's record of 14 days, 14 hours and 44 minutes in 2013. Typically, I'd throw in a joke or mildly amusing comment at this point ... but I simply have no words.

* The England Coast Path, expected to be completed in 2020, will of course be much longer. See page 176

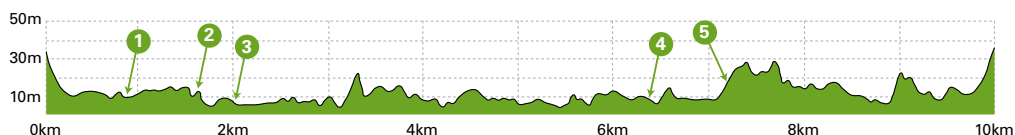


3 The Loe

Distance	10km (6 miles)	Ascent	200m (660ft)
Map	OS Landranger 203 OS Explorer 103		
Navigation	● ● ●	Just keep the lake on your right ...	
Terrain	● ● ●	Tarmac, followed by stony estate tracks, footpaths, grassy fields and soft gritty sand	
Wet Feet	● ● ●	Gets pretty muddy on the east shore, good chance of sandy shoes too	
Start/Finish	Penrose Hill National Trust car park TR13 ORE/SW 638 258		

A variety of trail surfaces circumnavigating Cornwall’s largest natural lake

The Loe is Cornwall's largest freshwater lake, formed from a ria (drowned river valley) which became cut off from the sea by a shingle bar. Estimates of its age range from 700 to several thousand years old. Today, it is part of the Penrose Estate, administered by the National Trust. The lake is surrounded by marsh, farmland and woodland, threaded with trails which make for great running on a variety of surfaces. Running through the sand and shingle atop Loe Bar is heavy-going, just concentrate on the sea views and the crashing waves and try to keep going! For company you will have the wildfowl and maybe the occasional deer. Although Penrose is popular with tourists, you will have no problem finding peace and quiet once you get past the surfaced sections.



Route Description

START Follow the path leading from the downhill end of the car park and descend steps to a tarmac road. Turn right and follow this downhill to the lakeside. **1** Pass through gates and past a building. Follow the track NE past the end of the lake. **2** Turn right onto the first footpath signposted off the track. Cross the bridges and ascend steps to a track beside an engine house. **3** Turn right onto the track and follow it S along the lakeshore; this alternately changes from a path to a track. Turn right at all junctions! **4** When you reach the beach, ascend the sand bar and cross between the sea and lake, aiming for the crumbling concrete path at the far end. **5** Ascend the path to a junction beside a house where you turn right (inland) away from the sea. Follow this estate track paralleling the W shore of the lake until you rejoin your original route, follow it uphill to the car park.



Loe Bar

Trip Planning

The car park at Penrose Hill (signposted off a bend on the B3304) asks for donations. Similar NT car parks are found at Degibna TR12 7PR/SW 653 250 and Chyvaloe TR12 7PY/SW 651 236, and it is also possible to park outside the estate at Helston TR13 0RA/SW 654 270 or Porthleven TR13 9ES/SW 635 249 to access this route. The Stables Café serves local cakes and ice cream and is passed near the start of this run, a good place to refuel and recuperate afterwards. Only open weekends in the winter months.

The Penrose Estate supposedly closes at dusk, although this author encountered no problems with running past sunset. More information about the estate (including a detailed map) can be downloaded from the National Trust website.

In times of strong winds and stormy seas, Loe Bar may be a dangerous place to be. Use your judgement.



Loe Bar sunset



Other Routes

Starting from Helston or Porthleven will extend your run by about 2km. There are numerous other paths within the estate, see the NT's downloadable map.

The South West Coast Path leads 5km south-east from Loe Bar to Poldhu Cove, from where it is only another 13km (Route 4) to the very bottom of Britain...

Events

A 5km 'parkrun' is held every Saturday on the tarmac sections of the estate. Freedom Racing organise a 10K trail race from Poldhu Cove along the SWCP to the edge of the Penrose Estate, and back.

Distance (km)	Ascent (m)	Route No.	Route Name	Page
5.5	100	56	The Wardour Castles	265
7	150	70	Cleeve Hill	325
8	175	10	The Hurlers	65
8	275	11	Hawk's Tor	69
8.5	300	25	Tamar Trails	131
8.5	425	32	Dunkery Beacon	161
8.5	275	66	Leigh Woods	309
9	225	38	Glastonbury Tor	187
9.5	275	60	Castle Combe	283
10	200	3	The Loe	33
10	250	12	Mount Edgcumbe Country Park	73
10	525	14	Hartland Point	83
10	475	17	Heddon's Mouth	95
10	225	28	Culmstock Beacon	143
10	300	37	Ham Hill and Montacute House	183
10	325	44	Eggardon Hill	213
10	175	53	Pentridge Hill	251
11	425	5	St Agnes Beacon	41
11	500	8	Gribbin Head	57
11	300	13	Lundy Island	79
11	350	29	The Undercliffs	147
11	450	40	Cheddar Gorge	195
11	250	61	Cherhill Down	287
12	100	15	Braunton Burrows	87
12	375	41	Goblin Combe	199
12	400	43	Lewesdon Hill	209
12	225	46	The Cerne Abbas Giant	221
12	125	64	Savernake Forest	299
12	375	68	Coaley Peak	317
13	550	4	The Lizard	37
13	425	21	Castle Drogo	113
13	550	22	Hound Tor and Haytor	117
13	550	23	Lustleigh Cleave	121
13	325	31	Doone Valley	157
13	600	42	Golden Cap	205

Distance (km)	Ascent (m)	Route No.	Route Name	Page
13	425	48	Durdle Door	231
13	425	51	St Alban's Head	243
13	150	52	Studland Beach	247
13	300	62	The Pewsey Downs	291
13	225	65	The Aldbourne Circular Route	303
14	300	27	Ladram Bay and the River Otter	139
14	350	47	The Isle of Portland	225
15	425	9	Brown Willy	61
15	500	19	Yes Tor	105
15	350	35	The Quantock coast	173
15	375	45	The Hardy Monument	217
15	25	67	Cotswold Water Park	313
16	375	1	The Isles of Scilly	25
16	450	49	Blandford Forest and Hambledon Hill	235
17	850	16	Great Hangman	91
17	575	34	The Quantocks	169
17	525	39	Wells to Cheddar	191
17	350	57	Win Green	269
17	500	69	Painswick Beacon and Crickley Hill	321
18	625	2	Land's End	29
18	625	26	Prawle Point	135
19	225	59	Stonehenge	277
20	400	54	Stourhead	257
20	230	63	Avebury	295
21	600	6	Trevose Head	45
21	300	18	Princetown and Burrator Reservoir	101
22	525	33	Wimbleball Lake	165
22	500	36	The Herepath Trail	179
24	675	50	Corfe Castle	239
28	450	58	The Fovant Badges	273
35	925	30	The River Barle	153
36	1850	7	Tintagel	51
48	800	55	The Imber Range Perimeter Path	261
52	1200	20	The Dartmoor crossing	109
76	2225	24	The Perambulation of 1240	125

SOUTH WEST **TRAIL RUNNING**

70 routes for the off-road runner: these tried and tested paths and tracks cover the south-west of England, including the Isles of Scilly.

Trail running is a great way to explore the South West and to immerse yourself in its incredible landscapes. This guide is intended to inspire runners of all abilities to develop the skills and confidence to seek out new trails in their local areas as well as further afield. They are all great runs; selected for their runnability, landscape and scenery. The selection is deliberately diverse and is chosen to highlight the incredible range of trail running adventures that the South West can offer. The runs are graded to help progressive development of the skills and confidence needed to tackle more challenging routes.

**TRAIL RUNNING FOR EVERYONE
CLOSE TO TOWN & FAR AFIELD.**

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Front cover – Durdle Door
Back cover – Porthcothan Bay