



BEACH & EXPLORERS GUIDE

# The Solway Cumbrian Coast

A guide for families  
and adventurers



Just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, the perfect beach depends on your needs and interests. Fortunately, the Solway Cumbrian coast has lots to offer, ensuring that you will find a beach ideally suited to you.

The sandy bathing beaches with shallow water are what most people seek for a summer family outing, but if you are searching for something different, you do not have to look far. Remote bays or vast stretches of intertidal sand and mud or saltmarsh all have something to offer the adventurous explorer.

The Solway Coast is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB, which means that it is recognised as one of the UK's finest landscapes. Covering 110km of coastline between Rockcliffe and St Bees, the Solway Coast is celebrated for its huge beaches, coastal habitats, rich wildlife, and ancient farming landscape.

This guide is a great starting point to help plan your visit, but there are more sources of information out there including books, websites, Ordnance Survey maps, tourist information offices and, of course, local knowledge.

**A PERFECT BEACH**





Enjoy your visit to the coast but remember to be careful.



Cumbrian weather can be unpredictable. Check weather forecasts and take appropriate clothing and footwear.



Tell a family member or friend where you are going and when you expect to be back.



The Solway Coast has one of the biggest tidal ranges in the world. Remember to check tide times to avoid being stranded.



The coast is bursting with life so try to avoid disturbing wildlife, particularly shore-nesting birds in spring.



The coast is beautiful and to keep it that way, take your litter home with you.



## TAKE CARE



### KEY



AONB



Shop



Family Rating



Cafe



Toilets



Adventurers Rating



Parking



Walking

Solway Coast

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Solway Firth



Partnership



The coast at Burgh by Sands, consisting of saltmarsh rather than beach, is a great place to visit and has an adventurer's tale. King Edward I died on the edge of the Solway in 1307 on his journey north to battle with the Scots. The spot is now marked by a monument. He is said to have been the greatest English king although his nickname, Hammer of the Scots, might have some locals north of the border thinking otherwise.

A layby just north of Burgh by Sands is the starting point for a short walk onto the saltmarsh to the monument.

### Did you know?

King Edward I suffered from dysentery in the months leading up to his death at Burgh Marshes.



1

BURGH MARSH

OS grid Ref:  
NY325610



93



Port Carlisle was originally known as Fishers Cross. It was developed as a port in 1819 to send goods by the ship canal, built in 1823, to Carlisle. Remnants of the port and canal can still be seen from the shore path. The layby at Port Carlisle gives great views across the muddy estuary of the Solway Firth to Scotland. It is a good bird watching site especially at high tide or you can walk along the path in front of the village, following the route of Hadrian's Wall.

### Did you know?

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In the 1830s the two steamboats, 'The Newcastle' and 'The City of Carlisle' transported passengers from Liverpool to Annan Waterfoot and across to Port Carlisle, the closest port to Carlisle city at that time. Some people even emigrated to America, Canada or Australia from Port Carlisle.



93



OS grid Ref:  
NY239623



PORT CARLISLE

2



Bowness sands are great for walking and bird watching and there are also sand dunes, salt marsh, shingle beds, and peat mosses along the coast for exploring. The car park on the western side of Bowness on Solway gives access to the shore and the saltmarsh, which are popular with families and great for bird watching as you are on the edge of RSPB Campfield Marsh Nature Reserve. Head a mile further west along the coast road and you can visit the reserve HQ and the Solway Wetlands Centre with its family friendly trails, displays, accessible parking, and toilets.

Just along the coast road you will also find Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Bowness-on-Solway reserve, a small site with a surprising diversity of habitats to explore. The remains of the Solway Junction Railway viaduct, carrying trains across the Solway Firth from England to Scotland between 1869 and 1926, is still visible in the channel between Bowness and Annan.

### Did you know?

Hadrian's Wall Path starts at Bowness on Solway and ends at Wallsend, Newcastle, 73 miles away.



3

**BOWNESS-ON-SOLWAY**

OS grid Ref:  
NY219626



93,  
93A



There are miles of unspoilt sandy beach along this stretch of coast, ideal for walking and bird watching.

The raised shingle beach at Grune Point lies at the north end of Skinburness. This shore was the ideal place for landing smuggled goods in the 1600s, particularly whisky from Scotland. Now it is a good place to spot interesting plants only found on coastal shingle or migrating birds brought in on the high tides. The name 'Skinburness' is thought to mean the headland of the demon haunted castle!

### Did you know?

Remnants of the Green Knight's Castle (from the tale of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight) are said to lie at Grune Point.



400,  
60,60E



OS grid Ref:  
NY123559



**SKINBURNESS & GRUNE POINT**

**4**



Silloth not only has a long stretch of beach to walk along and explore but also has a large open area of parkland called The Green. It hosts a variety of events including fun fairs, a vintage car rally and various festivals over the summer.

Silloth was very popular with the Victorians and is still well known today for its fabulous views across to Scotland and amazing sunsets, captured by artists such as Turner and Lowry.

### Did you know?

The flour to make the biscuits at the Carrs (McVities) factory in Carlisle still arrives by boat into Silloth port.

Icon of two people, 5 stars, magnifying glass icon, 4 stars, 1 empty star.

5

SILLOTH

OS grid Ref:  
NY107538



Bus icon 400, 60, 60E



There are miles of sandy beach to explore at Blitterlees, with sand dunes providing shelter. Access to the sand dunes and beach at Blitterlees is from the main road south of Sillloth, on the footpath through the golf course.

This remote location overlooking the Solway Firth, far away from prying eyes, was used for live firing of secret weapons during the First World War. The shells were recovered at low tide for analysis and recycling. One of the reinforced concrete bunkers that served as the weapons store is still buried in the sand.

### Did you know?

Apparently, the King of Afghanistan visited Blitterlees on a shopping trip for weapons just before the First World War.



60,  
60E



OS grid Ref:  
NY101524



**BLITTERLEES**

**6**



Beckfoot has long sandy beaches and stunning views across to Dumfries and Galloway and lies within the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

During Roman times a series of milefortlets were constructed around Beckfoot to guard the coast beyond the western end of Hadrian's Wall. This stretch of coast was particularly open and exposed to attack from the neighbouring Scots! The remains of milefortlets 14 and 15 can still be seen.

### Did you know?

A Quaker meeting house was built in Beckfoot in the year 1745, exactly 100 years before the parish church at Holme St. Cuthbert was built.



7

BECKFOOT

OS grid Ref:  
NY092497



60,  
60E



Mawbray (meaning 'maiden's castle or stronghold') is made up of miles of sand and shingle beaches and uninterrupted views across the estuary to Dumfries and Galloway. Some of the finest sand dunes in the Solway Coast AONB are found here and form part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest. These dunes are unique habitats and home to rare animals like the natterjack toad.

The extensive sands are ideal for dog walking and bird watching.

## Did you know?

The Romans used the 'bank' at Mawbray as a cemetery. During funerals of military personnel, bodies were cremated on pyres and their ashes buried in pots.



60,  
60E



OS grid Ref:  
NY082469



**MAWBRAY BANKS**

**8**



The beach at Allonby is mostly shingle and pebble but at low tide a vast expanse of sand is exposed. This bay is designated as a Marine Conservation Zone due to the large areas of important living reefs, formed by the honeycomb worm and blue mussel beds.

In 1903 the boat 'Hougoumont' ran aground at Allonby. The story is told that the cargo from the boat contained tins of salmon, peaches and pears which were unlabelled. Villagers could only tell the fruit from the fish by shaking them!

### Did you know?

In the late 1800s, Allonby had ten pubs, all for a population of only around 400 people.



9

ALLONBY

OS grid Ref:  
NY079426



60,  
60E



Crosscanonby beach, within the southern end of Allonby Bay, is a five mile stretch of sand and shingle. This long expanse of beach is popular with families but also for windsurfers and other water sports.

There's lots to explore nearby with the Roman Milefortlet 21 and the Crosscanonby Carr Nature Reserve, the first within the Solway Coast AONB.

### Did you know?

In Anglo-Saxon times, salt production was the country's third most important industry behind agriculture and fishing. The best preserved examples of salt pans on the Solway Coast are at Crosscanonby.



60,  
60E



OS grid Ref:  
NY064397



ALLONBY SOUTH (CROSSCANONBY)

10



Maryport has a long sand and shingle beach which runs from the harbour mouth and backs onto the marina. It is best at low tide when the sand is exposed and there are great views across the Solway. There is also a small sheltered sandy beach next to the town which is perfect for families and young children.

The town has a history dating back to Roman times when it was named Alauna. The name was only changed to Maryport in the 17th Century when the Lord of the Manor, Humphrey Senhouse, initiated an Act of Parliament to have the town named after his wife, Mary.

### Did you know?

Thomas Ismay, founder of the White Star Line, the company who built the Titanic, was born in Maryport. He gave charitable donations to the town throughout his life.



11

MARYPORT

OS grid Ref:  
NY036372



30, 31,  
60, 60E



Although Flimby Beach has an industrial backdrop it is a popular spot for sea angling and is a good bird watching spot as waders gather to feed here. The beach is a big expanse of sand and shingle popular for dog walking and has great views across the sea to the Scottish coast. Flimby Beach is a good winter fishing spot especially on stormy nights when codling and whiting can be caught with bait such as lugworm.

The beach can be accessed from Flimby Station by taking a footbridge across the railway line.

### Did you know?

Flimby Wind Farm, sited behind the town, is expected to generate enough clean electricity to power over 3,300 homes.



FLIMBY

12



The beach at Siddick is a wide expanse of sand and shingle with rocky cliffs at each end. It is ideal for fishing but is also popular for dog walking, bird watching and exploring the rocks and pools. The south end of Siddick shore (Oldside) is a unique environment for flora with very rare plants growing among the remains of an ancient ironworks and slag deposits. In early summer you can spot butterflies including the small blue flitting over a mass of flowers.

The nearby wildlife reserve, Siddick Ponds Nature Reserve, is of particular interest to bird watchers. Birds regularly spotted include little egret, water rail, and kingfisher.

### Did you know?

Siddick Ponds is the best place in Cumbria to see bittern and otters.



13

SIDDICK

OS grid Ref:  
NY000317



30, 31,  
60



Workington beach, south of the port, consists of shingle, with a long sandy stretch of sand exposed at low tide. Accessible by car, there is ample parking space next to the watchtower that once guarded entry to the port. The beach is popular for recreational sea angling and a good place to bird watch. There is also a small beach near the mouth of the river and the dock area.

### Did you know?

According to legend, the monks of Lindisfarne sought to escape from Norse raiders with St Cuthbert's body by taking a ship to Ireland from Workington in around 880AD. A storm blew them back to port but the 'Holy Book of St Cuthbert' was lost overboard and later found miraculously washed up on the shore. The Lindisfarne Gospels in the British Museum show signs of immersion in seawater.



OS grid Ref:  
NY020338



PORT OF WORKINGTON

14



Harrington was a planned town and harbour developed around 1800 by the Curwen Lords of Workington and originally called Bellaport after John Christian Curwen's wife, Isabella.

There is a small sandy beach beside the harbour which is great for family outings. This beach was apparently artificially created in the early 19th century for loading small vessels when the harbour was full.

Harrington once had 5 railway stations at its peak of manufacturing but now only has one.

### Did you know?

During the Second World War a secret 'Magnesite' plant was set up in Harrington to extract magnesium from seawater, for use in aircraft parts and bombs.



15

HARRINGTON

OS grid Ref:  
NY000317



30, 31,  
46



The beach at Parton, just north of Whitehaven, consists of mostly pebbles and rocks although at low tide sand becomes exposed. The beach can be accessed through a tunnel under the railway. This is a great spot for fossil hunting. The mix of shale and limestone material on the beach contains a variety of Carboniferous fossils such as plant remains, fish scales, and corals. You might be lucky enough to find a fossil on the beach. It is an ideal location for families, being safe and easy to access. There has been a port at Parton since Roman times due to the sheltered bay. Remnants of a Roman fort can still be seen above the beach.

### Did you know?

During the town's industrial heyday, glass bottles made in Parton were exported from the harbour as far south as London. Look out for sea-polished glass on the beach from the old factory.



OS grid Ref:  
NX979207



PARTON

16



Whitehaven has a small stretch of sandy / pebble beach to the north of the harbour and marina. It is easily accessible and is popular with sea anglers, dog walkers, and fossil hunters. The beach leads to the town waterfront with a busy harbour and marina. From the southern end of the harbour you can take a footpath up to the Wellington Pit chimney, past old colliery workings and onto the cliff tops to St Bees Head and beyond.

The Georgian town of Whitehaven developed from a small fishing village and grew due to coal mining. By the 1730s it had the deepest mines in the world and the first under-sea coalmine, with seams as far out as 5 miles under the Irish Sea.

### Did you know?

The last military invasion of Cumbria was made in 1778 by John Paul Jones, a commander in the American Navy who was born in Arbigland, across the Solway. Legend has it, many of his crew were from the Solway shore and when they landed in Whitehaven, among old friends, they enjoyed a drink together and forgot about attacking the ships!

17

WHITEHAVEN



OS grid Ref:  
NX972190



Fleswick Bay is only accessible by foot or boat, a real adventurer's beach. It is just over one mile from St Bees along the coastal path to Whitehaven and can be reached by a footpath down a gorge through the cliff. Alternatively, you can park at Tarnflatt Hall Farm for a small fee and take the short walk to the lighthouse and cliff top.

The red sandstone cliffs stand above the shingle beach which is scattered with more red sandstone bedrock. Explore the caves in the cliffs which are big enough to have hidden smugglers goods. Look out for the 19th century graffiti on the cave walls.

The cliffs along to St Bees Head are a great place to see seabirds. This is the best site in the area to see guillemots but also look out for kittiwakes, razorbills, fulmar, and herring gulls. If you're lucky you might also spot puffin or nesting black guillemot.

### Did you know?

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You can search among the shingle for semi-precious stones such as jasper, agate and garnet.



OS grid Ref:  
NX945132



FLESWICK BAY

18



The shingle bay at St Bees (Seacote Beach) stretches for at least a mile so there's plenty of space to walk and relax. The shingle runs down to a large area of sandy beach with rock pools which are accessible at low tide. This is a popular beach with a hotel, large car park, holiday park, and golf course backing onto the bay. St Bees is the start of the 192 mile Wainwright Coast to Coast long distance walk. You can experience a little of the route by taking a short walk up the red sandstone cliffs to St Bees Head, the lighthouse, and RSPB nature reserve. St Bees sandstone has been used for building locally for centuries. It has also been sent all over the world, to the USA, Germany and the Czech Republic, to be used in building.

### Did you know?

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An archaeological excavation in the early 1980s at the nearby St Bees Priory uncovered a body from a lead coffin. Although the body was over six hundred years old, bizarrely the skin, nails, and even the contents of the stomach, were found to be almost perfectly preserved. The medieval knight became known as St Bees Man.



19

ST BEES

OS grid Ref:  
NX959116



20,  
X6



Allerdale Borough Council works alongside two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Hadrians Wall and the Lake District National Park, in addition to the Solway Coast AONB. [www.visitallerdale.co.uk](http://www.visitallerdale.co.uk)



The Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) stretches from Rockcliffe in the north to Maryport in the south, covering about 115 square kilometres of the Solway Plain. [www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk](http://www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk)



Copeland Borough Council area has a unique stretch of the Solway Coast that includes St Bees Heritage Coast and Cumbria Coast Marine Conservation Zone. [www.colourfulcoast.org.uk](http://www.colourfulcoast.org.uk)



Solway Firth Partnership works to support a sustainable local economy while respecting, protecting and celebrating the distinctive character, heritage and natural features of the Solway. [www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk](http://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk)



The LOVEmyBEACH campaign was created in 2013 by Keep Britain Tidy as a way of working with the community to keep local beaches and bathing waters clean. [www.lovemybeach.org](http://www.lovemybeach.org)



## ABOUT US

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All information correct at time of printing. PHOTO CREDITS: Front Cover – Allonby, John Scanlon; Page 2 – Bird Watcher near Port Carlisle, Solway Firth Partnership (SFP); Page 3 – Fleswick Bay, Copeland Borough Council (CBC); Page 4 – Edward 1 Monument, Burgh Marsh, Fiona Stoddart; Page 5 – Port Carlisle, SFP; Page 6 – Bowness on Solway, SFP; Page 7 – Skinburness, SFP; Page 8 – Silloth, SFP; Page 9 – Blitterlees, SFP; Page 10 – Beckfoot, SFP; Page 11 – Mawbray Banks, Naomi Hewitt; Page 12 – Allonby, Ann Lackie; Page 13 – Allonby south, SFP; Page 14 – Maryport from the outer harbour, SFP; Page 15 – Flimby, SFP; Page 16 – Siddick, SFP; Page 17 – Workington Beach, SFP; Page 18 – Harrington, SFP; Page 19 – Parton, SFP; Page 20 – Whitehaven Harbour, photoeverywhere; Page 21 – Fleswick Bay, CBC; Page 22 – St Bees Beach, Keep Britain Tidy; Page 23 – Solway Sunset Whitehaven, CBC.

