



## Stage 9: Tavistock to Shaugh Bridge

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Start</b>               | SX 4825 7430 St John's Avenue on Whitchurch Road (Abbey Bridge), Tavistock |
| <b>Finish</b>              | SX 5333 6364 Car park at Shaugh Bridge, near Shaugh Prior                  |
| <b>Distance</b>            | 11.75 miles / 18.5 km  |
| <b>Total ascent</b>        | 1,400 ft / 427 m   |
| <b>Refreshments</b>        | Tavistock, Yelverton, Shaugh Prior (off route)                             |
| <b>Public toilets</b>      | Tavistock, Yelverton   |
| <b>Tourist information</b> | Tavistock  |

*Note that parts of Stage 9 share the route with National Cycle Route 27 - look out for speedy cyclists!*

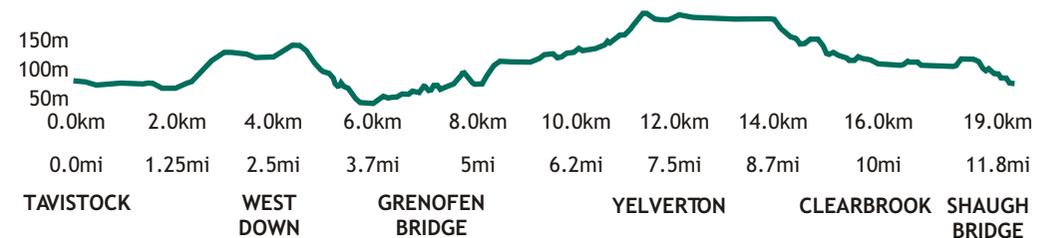
Please refer also to the Stage 9 map.

**S** Head down St John's Avenue, a broad tarmac way that parallels the beautiful River Tavy under trees. Pass a car park and go through a wall gap into Benson Meadow. At its end turn right to cross the river into the park; turn left. Pass the children's playground and take the second path right to cross the park and pass under the A386.

A few paces on turn right up a short flight of steps, then right again, then left to meet the Tavistock Canal. Turn left along it, paralleling the cycle path.

Where a path drops left to join the cycle path keep ahead, passing the back of college buildings. On reaching a bridge bear left off the canalside path and continue on the cycle path (tarmac way). The path bears left to reach a T-junction; bear right and cross the road ahead. Continue along a tarmac way, passing between sports fields and over the River Tavy.

### Elevation Profile



*On West Down*

**1** On reaching the road cross over and turn right, passing the West Devon Business Park. Cross a stream (Tiddybrook) and head up the lane, passing Valley View Farm camping. You're now out in the countryside, with lovely views opening up across the Tavy valley. The lane ascends steadily, then levels at a lane junction; keep straight on. At the next junction keep straight on, signed to Walreddon and West Down (dead end sign). Eventually reach a parking area on the edge of West Down, with beautiful views.

Follow the descending track (bridleway) into the valley of the River Walkham.



*By the River Walkham*

**2** At a bridleway junction (Double Waters, where the Walkham meets the Tavy, is down the right fork) head left, still on a decent track. At its end, by a house, continue downhill towards the river, which is then followed upstream. It is so beautiful here! Pass beneath a huge tor, then by the remnants of industrial buildings and an old mine chimney. Pass a bridleway junction and soon bear away from the river, skirting buildings at Lower Grenofen, to meet a lane by the entrance to the property.

#### ALTERNATIVE ROUTE

Turn right downhill to cross Grenofen Bridge, then turn left to pick up the riverside path. Be aware that this may not be passable after heavy rainfall. Eventually pass under the Gem Bridge and turn right up a steeply ascending zigzag path to reach the main route at the southern end of the bridge.

**3** Cross the lane and go through a gate onto a narrow surfaced path (an old cycle route). The path soon passes through a gate and heads uphill into woodland, turning right at a T-junction and ascending to meet Cycle Route 27 at a gate. Turn right, soon meeting the impressive Gem Bridge which soars above the Walkham valley. The original railway viaduct was 52ft higher still - you can see the earth and stone abutments by the path.

The impressive **Gem Bridge** soars high above the valley of the River Walkham, its light and open appearance enabling it to easily blend into the surrounding woodland. Opened in 2012, it forms part of Sustrans NCN27 cycle route from Ilfracombe in North Devon to Plymouth. Before the bridge was built, the trail had to cross the river at Grenofen Bridge and then steeply ascend the valley side to reach open common land near Buckland Monachorum, before heading on to Yelverton.



Cross the bridge and continue through a gate at a cattle grid. A notice about grazing animals indicates that you are now on the common land of Roborough Down: you are very likely to come across Dartmoor hill ponies.



*On Roborough Down*

Follow the path on, soon passing under a bridge and crossing another viaduct. Go through a gate by houses (site of the old Horrbridge station) and follow Station Road to its end. Cross over and follow the surfaced path ahead, soon ascending steadily and entering open country. Two more gates gain the road by The Dartmoor Bakery. Cross over; follow the path alongside the car park, bearing left at the end, then right to meet the A386. Keep ahead along the pavement to reach the roundabout in the centre of Yelverton.

You may notice odd embankments and concrete standings as you cross this part of Roborough Down. In 1941 an airfield opened at Yelverton - RAF Harrowbeer - which officially closed in July 1945. Yelverton's shops were reduced to a single storey to accommodate take-offs and landings, and the roundabout and approach roads built. Abigail's at The Knightstone Tearooms is situated in the former control tower. Today the history of the airfield is kept alive by the RAF Harrowbeer Interest Group.

**4** Immediately past the roundabout cross both carriageways of the A386 Plymouth road (take care), then turn right. Turn left at the next road, then right towards the long stay car park. Keep straight on (still on Cycle Route 27), parallel to the A386, soon walking alongside the dry Devonport Leat which bears away at the entrance to the cricket club. Pass an access track and go through a pair of gates, then bear right to cross the leat again. On meeting a tarmac drive turn left to recross the leat, then bear right and head along the tarmac way, with the leat on the right again.

**5** At the next path junction bear left off the cycle track on the footpath to Hoo Meavy, descending a rough drive to pass houses and go through a gate. Descend into the Meavy valley, passing fields and joining a drive. Where the drive bears away left turn right on a footpath. The track bears left, downhill, to pass under the old railway line; immediately turn right through a kissing gate. Follow the narrow path, passing through a kissing gate and then another gate by houses. Follow the track ahead to meet a lane by the bridge over the Meavy at Hoo Meavy.



*Meadows by the River Meavy at Clearbrook*

Cross a stile by the bridge into a riverside meadow on a footpath to Goodameavy. Pass through a kissing gate into the next field and keep alongside the river. At the end pop over a stream and stile and follow the path up a rooty bank and through pretty woodland. Emerge over a stile into a field and head up the middle; cross a stile onto the lane and turn left to cross Goodameavy Bridge.

**6** Turn right over a stile by the gate into Goodameavy (National Trust). Head along the track, soon passing an extant section of railway line, intended to link quarries in Dewerstone Wood with the main railway but never completed. The track passes through a substantial cutting, and then a gate, before passing Dewerstone Cottage.

**7** Immediately past the cottage bear right on a path that descends to the river. It's rocky and rooty and very beautiful; follow the Meavy all the way to its confluence with the River Plym. Where Shaugh Bridge comes into view bear left to cross the bridge over the Plym to reach the car park. **F**

The White Thorn Inn in the village of Shaugh Prior is ½ mile up the lane to the left.



**Shaugh Bridge** spans the Rivers Plym and Meavy where they meet amid ancient oakwoods and mossy boulders. The Dewerstone Rocks, which have some of the highest granite faces on Dartmoor, are a short walk up the Plym from the bridge. These beautiful woods, apparently so natural, owe their present appearance to man's past activity in the area. Ruined walls and other remains, including a 19th-century iron mine, brick kiln and evidence of charcoal burners' activities, can be spotted among the trees.