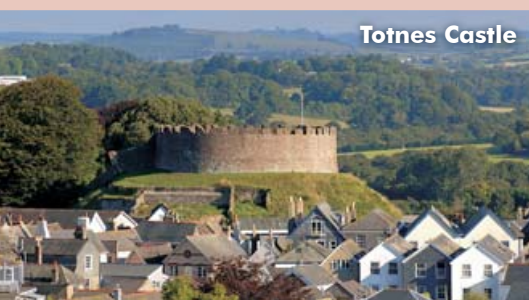




Vire Island

Totnes has a wealth of history, character and charm with its long narrow main street framed by Georgian, Jacobean and Elizabethan architecture. It is a thriving town with an eclectic mix of shops, homely coffee houses and an excellent outdoor market on a Friday and Saturday.

There is plenty to see in Totnes. The castle which overlooks the town is a fine example of a Norman motte and bailey castle and was built in the 11th century by Judhael of Totnes. The castle guards the river most effectively and the steep climb to the battlements is rewarded with the view that the occupants would have had. There is still a perfect example of a circular keep and the grounds are beautifully kept.



Totnes Castle

At the very top of town is the oldest inn in Totnes, the Kingsbridge Inn, with a lane leading to the leechwells. The three stone troughs are filled with water from a spring which was once thought to have medicinal properties; however it is much more likely that this was the public washing place.

The parish Church of St Mary's is an impressive building, rebuilt between 1432 and 1460. It is built in the perpendicular style with a massive tower of 120ft. Inside is a beautiful rood screen built of beer stone and an octagonal font with its ancient iron locking staple and cover. This is a reminder that all fonts used to be locked to prevent witches stealing the holy water! Check for any signs of bats as you pass the pews, there is bound to be some staining and droppings from the bats that roost in the church. Outside the church in the summer months the swifts can be seen and heard as they reel around in the sky.



Totnes Bridge

At the bottom of town is, Totnes Bridge, which spans the River Dart and leads to Bridgetown - once a borough of its own but now part of Totnes. Access to 'Vire Island' can be gained from the bridge; this riverside area is a place to enjoy a picnic and watch the river. Here you may even be lucky enough to see a seal; it is not uncommon for them to swim up the river in search of a meal. There is plenty of birdlife – mallard, mute swan, moorhen and coot are all easily seen but sit and wait and you may be rewarded with grey wagtail, oystercatcher or even the blue flash of a kingfisher.

Dartington Hall is 2 miles from Totnes and its existence can be traced back to the 9th century. The present buildings however are from the late 14th century. The beautiful gardens are open to visitors and the view from the

estate over the River Dart it is definitely worth taking in.

The gardens have something to see all year round with a wonderful array of shrubs, trees and lawn.

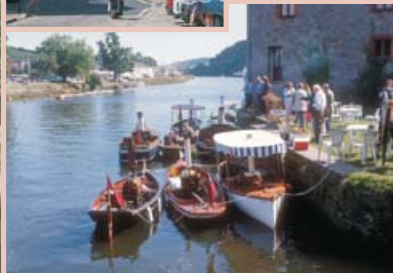


Dartington Hall

A footpath runs along the riverside from Totnes to Dartington, with plenty to see all year round, the birdlife includes the previously mentioned water birds as well as the greater spotted woodpecker, nuthatch, great tit, blue tit and many more woodland species to be seen in the trees that line the river. At the bridges have a good look at the water and watch the mullet feeding on the bottom of the riverbed, you may be lucky to see salmon and trout as well as eels.



Top and left - Totnes Fore Street; Below and below left - River Dart



If you would like to explore more of Totnes then visit the AONB's website: www.southdevonaonb.org.uk and download their walks and trails or alternatively pick them up from the Local Tourist Information Centre.