

GWITHIAN TOWANS

A part of St. Ives Bay and the wonderful golden sandy beach that stretches from the [Hayle Towans](#) and the Hayle Estuary in the west and curving around to [Godrevy Cove](#) in the north, a distance of over 5.5kms. Gwithian Beach is 1.7kms long and backed by sand dunes which in Cornish are called 'Towans'. It abuts Godrevy Cove and Towans at the Red River (which crosses the beach) and to the west the beach below [Upton Towans](#). It is owned and managed by Cornwall Council.



The northerly part of Gwithian Beach looking towards Godrevy

Gwithian Towans is divided into two distinctively different areas separated by a collection of chalets which have their origins in the 1920's and the pre-Planning era. The north-easterly section of dunes was once a large sand extraction area but is now a Local Nature Reserve and accessible to the public. The westerly section is an unusual area of mature dunes on top of a low 10m cliff and again accessible to the public and joins [Upton Towans](#) a larger area of dunes that is a Site of Special scientific Interest and fully accessible. Until the 1980's the Red River, which flows from the mining area around Pool, coloured the sea a distinctive red and deposited small quantities of tin on the beach which until the 1950's was scrapped off the sand and collected for processing.



TR27 5BT - From the A30 at Hayle take the B3301 coast road to [Portreath](#) which is signposted to Gwithian. After 3kms, just before reaching the village of Gwithian there is a turning on the left which immediately leads to two small parking areas, one either side of the road (capacity in total of some 45 cars). These parking areas are mainly for those who are using the Towans as they are over 650m from the



Path from the main car park



Steps down to the beach

the beach and facilities. The main car park (capacity 350 cars) is reached by continuing along the road (off the B3301) for about 750m and is on the left at the edge of the cliffs above the beach. There is no roadside parking due to restrictions but there is a small lay-by (for about 10 cars) at the turning from the B3301. There is also lay-by parking (about 10 cars) which serves the northerly end of the beach and the Local nature Reserve which can be reached by going through the village and is some 500m on the left past the church. Many people, especially surfers, use the [Godrevy Cove](#) car park to access the northerly end of Gwithian Beach.



From the small parking areas on the entrance road to the Towans there are a number of paths through the dunes that link up with the Coast Path and access to the beach or else continue along the road to other access points. From the main car park the main access path (200m) leads to steps down to the beach next to rocks and 'Sheep's Pool'. By continuing along the path there are further access points from the dunes. At the lay-by by the Nature Reserve there is a path (650m) which leads to the beach. From the Godrevy car park there is a path



Looking west along the Bay to the Hayle Estuary



Sheep's Pool amongst Strap Rocks

which leads to a bridge over the Red River to the northerly end of Gwithian Beach.



The centre of the beach at the main access point is a rocky area known as Strap Rocks and contains a number of deep pools, the most well known being Sheep's Pool which can be quite deep depending on beach sand levels. Above Sheep's Pool there is a popular area of sand which is covered at high water and plenty of sand at low water below the pool. To the west of the rocks the sandy beach is bounded by low cliffs with stunning views along the beach to Hayle. On the north-easterly side of the rocks the beach extends to the Red River and is backed in part by low cliffs which turn to dunes. At high water the beach is mostly stone and shingle but this turns to sand as the tide recedes. The beach can be fairly exposed but the rocks can provide a degree of shelter. Sand levels can change enormously, especially after winter storms.



There are a number of safety equipment points at strategic locations. RNLI Lifeguards have a base and lookout on the cliffs above Strap Rocks which affords good views over the whole beach and operate from Easter until the end of September then weekends in October and the last full week in October. There is a designated bathing area and when busy a surfing area. A further RNLI lookout is based close to St. Peter's Point which operates from the beginning of July until the beginning of September. It is only safe to swim at low water or an



A popular beach for surfing..... and kite boarding at low water

ebbing tide when the lifeguards are on duty and then in the designated area due to strong rip currents. When swell and surf permit it can be relatively safe to swim on a rising high tide. It is a great surfing beach which is popular in part through its easy access and good view of conditions from the car park. Surf is usually better at the northerly end of the beach producing long rides at all stages of the tide and is often described as hollow, fast powerful and fun for all types of surfers. Surfing tuition is found next to the Red River back from the beach adjacent to a bar/restaurant.



It is not really a snorkelling beach but numerous wonderful pools around Strap Rocks.



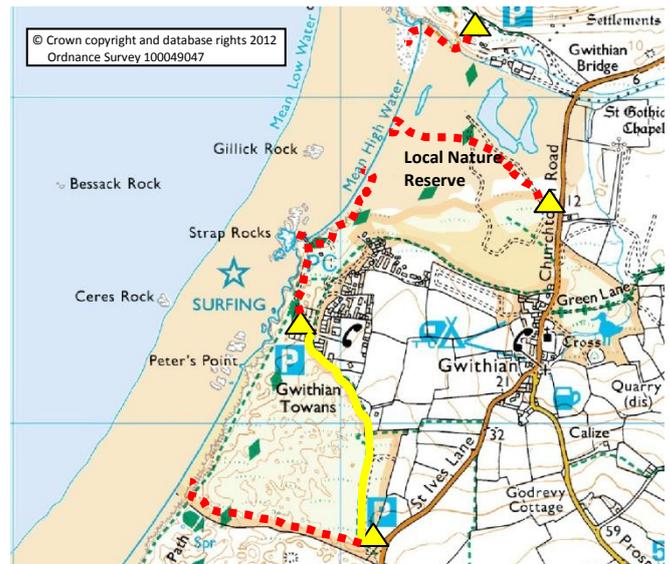
Strap Rocks and RNLI Lookout



Sheep's Pool



Dogs are not permitted from the beginning of May until the end of September 8.00hrs to 19.00hrs. Toilets are located in the dunes above the main access point. There are cafes and beach shops that hire surfing equipment close to the car park, a pub in Gwithian village and a restaurant by the Nature Reserve and the Red River.



Location – Part of OS Explorer Map 102



Water quality is very good. The beach is relatively clean. It is a very good family beach but negotiating the steps with pushchairs is not easy.