**Explore the Tarka Trail from Barnstaple station**

The Tarka Trail is a beautiful traffic free cycle and walking route that stretches for 32 miles.

The route is split into sections and if you take the train from Exeter to Barnstaple, you can pick up the trail from Barnstaple station.

You can either walk or cycle the route and if you want to cycle, you can hire bikes at the station from Tarka Bikes.

As the route is level, it is perfect for cyclists of all abilities and families.

The section from Barnstaple to Bideford was once the railway line and takes you along the estuaries of the Torridge and Taw. It is 9 miles in total and there are plenty of places to stop along the way.

First up is Fremington and the lovely Fremington Quay café, three miles from Barnstaple.

The café serves delicious homemade hearty food and is a great place to stop for a break and enjoy a drink before you head off again.

The location is perfect for spotting wildlife as it is right by the river.

3 ½ miles on down the trail and you will arrive in Instow, 6 ½ miles from Barnstaple.

Instow is a pretty riverside town which has a nice sandy beach, perfect for building sandcastles and flying kites for little ones, or simply for sitting down and relaxing.

By now you may be feeling a bit peckish and Instow has plenty of places to sit, enjoy the view of the estuary and have a lovely lunch.

A particularly nice spot for lunch is John’s of Instow.

This lovely café and delicatessen are located on Marine Parade, overlooking the estuary.

The café specialises in local produce and serves everything from breakfasts and brunches to lunch and afternoon tea and the deli has lots of tempting treats to take away.

In the summer months a ferry service runs from Instow over to Appledore, on the opposite bank.

If you’ve walked the trail, you may prefer to catch the 21 bus back to Barnstaple. It goes straight to the station.

Alternatively, if you are still keen to discover more of this area, you could continue on the Tarka Trail or catch the 21 bus to the town of Bideford.

Bideford used to be a busy port and although not a working port today, it still has a picturesque harbour area.

For some retail therapy, head to the historic Pannier Market and its range of artisan studios’ complex.

See local craftspeople at work in the studios or browse the eclectic stalls in the market itself.

The Pannier Market is located up a steep hill on Grenville Street but if you don’t fancy the walk (it’s not far, but it is steep), on the busiest days, Tuesdays and Saturdays, there is a free shuttle bus from Victoria Park in the centre of town.

Other parts of the town have a range of independent shops to explore too. Mill Street, off the main High Street, is one and well worth a look.

Following a good wander around the town, its market and shops, it is probably time to catch the bus back to Barnstaple station.

The journey takes roughly 45 minutes so do allow plenty of time to catch your train home.