Start Point Lighthouse
(Start Point, South Devon)

History

Start Point is one of the most exposed peninsulas on the English Coast, running sharply almost a mile into the sea on the South side of Start Bay near Dartmouth. The Lighthouse, sited at the very end of the headland, has guided vessels in passage along the English Channel for over 150 years.

James Walker designed Start Point Lighthouse in 1836 and it owes much to the "gothic" movement in architecture of the time, with its battlemented parapet. Two white lights were originally exhibited, one revolving and one fixed to mark the Skerries Bank. A fixed red subsidiary light still marks this hazard. The optic used was the first of its kind in the Trinity House Service, being an approved form of Dioptric apparatus designed by Alan Stevenson, whose major work was the optic at the Skerryvore Lighthouse of 1844. Even so, the light was found to be inadequate in fog, and a bell was installed in the 1860s. The machinery was housed in a small building on the cliff face and operated
by a weight which fell in a tube running down the sheer cliff. A siren replaced the bell after only fifteen years. In 1871, the intermediate floors of the tower of 1836 were removed and extra accommodation provided in common with all Trinity House Stations. An insight into the Lighthouse and the life of its keepers in the nineteenth century is given in a travelogue by Walter White:-

A substantial house, connected with the tall circular tower, in a walled enclosure, all nicely whitened, is the residence of the light-keepers. The buildings stand within a few yards of the verge of the cliff, the wall serving as a parapet, from which you look down on the craggy slope outside and the jutting rocks beyond - the outermost point. You may descend by the narrow path, protected also by a low white wall, and stride and scramble from rock to rock with but little risk of slipping, so rough are the surfaces with minute shells. A rude steep stair, chipped in the rock, leads down still lower to a little cove and a narrow strip of beach at the foot of the cliffs. It is the landing place for the lighthouse keepers when they go fishing, but can only be used in calm weather.

In recent years the ground under the fog signal house has become insecure finally resulting in the collapse of the building in December 1989. Since then the site has been leveled, a new retaining wall built and a free standing fog signal stack put in place.

Work began on the automation of Start Point Lighthouse in August 1992; this was carried out by LEC Marine at a cost of £82,754 and was completed in early 1993. The station is now monitored and controlled from the Trinity House Operations and Planning Centre at Harwich in Essex via a telemetry link.

**Specifications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Established</td>
<td>1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height Of Tower</td>
<td>28 Metres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height Of Light Above Mean High Water</td>
<td>62 Metres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automated</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrified</td>
<td>1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamp</td>
<td>1 Kw Mbi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optic</td>
<td>3rd Order Catadioptric Lens</td>
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**Character**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>White Group Flashing 3 Times Every 10 Seconds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intensity</td>
<td>200,000 Candela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range Of Light</td>
<td>25 nautical miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fog Signal Character</td>
<td>Sounds Once Every 60 Seconds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Location**

Start Point is signposted from the village of Stokenham which is located on the A379 from Kingsbridge.

**Visitor Centre**

The striking Start Point Lighthouse is situated on one of the most exposed peninsulas on the English Coast, running sharply almost a mile into the sea on the south side of Start Bay between Kingsbridge and Dartmouth.

Each tour takes approximately 45 minutes. Tours run continuously from opening time to closing time at 17.00. We accept visitors up to 17.00. You may also wish to visit the souvenir shop in the lighthouse offering a selection of Lighthouse gifts, toys and postcards.

Opening subject to weather conditions and Trinity House's operational requirements. Temporary shoes are provided if visitors arrive in unsuitable footwear for climbing the stairs.
We are happy to provide private tours for groups and school parties but they can be only arranged outside opening hours and by prior arrangement. We will aim to tailor the tour to any specific interests you may have. Please call 01803 771802 to enquire.

Prompt arrival at the Visitor Centre is essential. If you arrive late we regret we cannot guarantee entry and your visit may be cancelled.

Parking

There is a car park at the top of the approach road to the lighthouse, charges apply from Easter to the end of September. Please call 01803 771803 for further details.

Contact Details

📞 +44(0)1803 771 802
📧 enquiries@thls.org
START POINT
South Devon

Start Point Lighthouse has illuminated the South Devon coastline for 175 years. Come for a guided tour and see how it works... watch the flow of the tidal race, see passing ships, stunning coastline and wildlife; Climb the tower to hear stories of storms, shipwrecks and Lighthouse living.

Tour duration: approx 45 minutes
Visits to the Lighthouse are organised by the Blackpool and Start Estate, under licence from Trinity House.
Tel: 01803 771802  Email: info@startpointdevon.co.uk

Location: Start Point is signposted from the village of Stokenham which is located on the A379 Kingsbridge to Dartmouth Road.

Position: 50° 13.30 N, 03° 38.47 W (WGS 84 datum)
Holiday cottages are available at this site.
Holiday Cottages

Start Point lighthouse lies on a dramatic headland above Start Bay in the South Hams between Dartmouth and Salcombe. Two holiday cottages are available, *Landward* with accommodation for 5 guests and *Beacon* with accommodation for 6 guests. Start Point lies 4 miles from the main road via narrow country lanes. The final stretch is a half mile private, walled, tarmac drive which runs along the side of the headland. The drive is shared with walkers, forming part of the South West Coast Path.

Guests can use the path to enjoy breathtaking cliff top walks in both directions. For sandy beaches, East Portlemouth, Slapton and Blackpool Sands are within a 20-minute drive.

**Book This Cottage**

Bookings are handled by Rural Retreats
Tel: +44 (0) 1386 701 177
www.ruralretreats.co.uk