

Location & Access:

Sandy Mouth Cove is located on the north Cornwall coast, just three miles north of the seaside resort of Bude. It is accessed via minor roads after leaving the A39 Atlantic highway at Kilkhampton.

There is a National Trust car park at Sandymouth Cove (SS 203 100).

A level but uneven surface connects the car park to the café and toilets, but access to the beach is only possible via an uneven path and some steep steps.



Waterfall at Sandymouth Cove —
photo: Paul Berry

Key Geography: Excellent examples of folding in the cliffs, waterfalls, sandy beach.

Description:

Sandy Mouth Cove is part of an SSSI that runs from Duckpool to Furzey Cove, and is owned by the National Trust.

This is the most northerly coastal location of Lower Carboniferous rocks in Cornwall, and in the cove, rocks of the Bude Formation – sandstone and thin interbeds of shale – have been contorted and folded into some magnificent shapes. On the National Trust web site Sandy Mouth Cove is described as: **“A popular but unspoilt beach of pebbles and sand backed by incredible twisted cliffs”**.

A juicy anticline is visible from the beach, and two waterfalls tumble from the cliff top to add to the scene, battling to erode a course to the beach but prevented from doing so by the rapid erosion rate of sea. Some of the sandstone beds are stained red from iron oxide present on the fracture surfaces.

Some of the upper cliff beds have collapsed onto the beach, and these do reveal some plant fossils in places. The sea bed slopes away sharply at Sandy Mouth, and a strong surf results here. The beach is a magnet for local surfers, and during the summer months, life guards are in attendance.

The folding of the sedimentary rocks here provide evidence of the amazing geological events of the Variscan Orogeny, a period of mountain building that took place in the late Carboniferous / early Permian periods, and lasted for around 100 million years. At this time, the Atlantic Ocean did not exist, and plate movements resulted in the northern land mass of Laurasia (containing Europe and North America) colliding with the southern continent of Gondwanaland (containing South
(continued overleaf)

Curiosity Questions:

The South West Coast Path runs through Sandymouth Cove. Where does this long distance footpath start and end?

Can you name the village close to Sandymouth Cove that has a crater on Mars named after it?

If you were to enjoy a traditional cream tea at Sandymouth Cove, what would you put on first - cream or jam?

Further information:

<https://devongeography.wordpress.com/2023/07/16/folding-at-sandy-mouth-cove-north-cornwall/>

Reviewer: Paul Berry B Ed (hons) M Sc FRGS

Former Assistant Vice Principal and Head of Geography at South Molton Community College with 35 years of classroom experience. Now an Iceland Field Studies Tutor with Rayburn Tours.

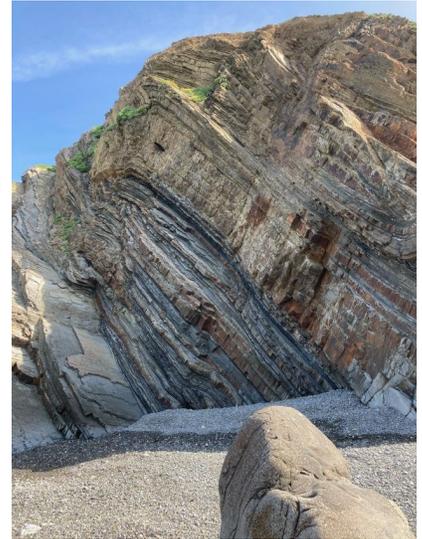
Blog: www.devongeography.wordpress.com Twitter: @unicorn4275

America, Africa, Antarctica, Australia and India). This closed the Rheic Ocean that was located between these two giant land masses, and buckled the sea bed up into mountain summits high above sea level while also creating the new super-continent of Pangea.

The mountains created have been eroded away over the years, leaving a landscape from around 145 million years ago dominated by the actions of the sea. In the Carboniferous period, 290 – 350 million years ago, and before the plate collision, erosion of the mountains to the south fed vast quantities of muddy sediment via rivers draining the northern slopes and a series of deltas into a basin containing a shallow, brackish sea. As flow velocity of these rivers decreased, heavier grains of sand settled out, followed by silts, and then finally muds. Some of these layers may have been deposited in just a matter of hours.

Although originally deposited over 300 million years ago as flat, horizontal layers, these turbidite beds have been lifted and twisted into majestic folded shapes, as seen in the cliffs at Sandy Mouth Cove.

A large National Trust car park is located just above the cove, along with a cafe and toilets. At low tide, it is possible to extend your visit with a two-mile walk along the South West Coast Path to Northcott Mouth to the south, or even continue further to Bude's Croocklets Beach.



Cliffs at Sandymouth Cove — photo: Paul Berry



Cliffs at Sandymouth Cove — photo: Paul Berry

Answers to Curiosity Questions:

The South West Coast Path runs through Sandymouth Cove. Where does this long distance footpath start and end?
(*Minehead in Somerset and Poole in Dorset*)

Can you name the village close to Sandymouth Cove that has a crater on Mars named after it? (*Kilkhampton*)

If you were to enjoy a traditional cream tea at Sandymouth Cove, what would you put on first - cream or jam? (*Jam - as you are in Cornwall! In Devon, it would be cream first*)