

Summer Days Out - Looe by train

Looe is a great place for a day trip in the summer but it can be very busy to go by car so why not take the train. There are hourly connecting trains from Saltash to Looe, the journey takes just over an hour and there's a lot to look at on the way. You can park all day for free at Saltash either at the station or down at the waterfront.

The mainline journey from Saltash to Liskeard only takes 17 minutes but shows off Brunel's engineering at his best. I never tire of watching the big trains coming slowly across the single track Tamar bridge into Saltash station. Between Saltash and Liskeard there are at least six Brunel viaducts to admire as the train shows lovely views of the Lynher and Tiddy. The remainder of the journey passes along embankments with panoramas of South East Cornwall – what a contrast to the A38!



At Liskeard, platform 3 is the Looe line. This line nearly got axed by Richard Beeching but with 2 weeks to spare Barbara Castle stepped in and reprieved it. A train shuttles between Liskeard and Looe throughout the day taking about 30 mins. At Liskeard there is a nice little exhibition on the platform (including the old cardboard ticket rack that I remember from my childhood). There is also a free Looe Valley Line app which is worth downloading – this uses your location to highlight relevant history, things to see and trivia as the train makes its way to Looe. Initially the train was freight only so passengers paid to transport their hat! I loved the token hut at Liskeard which contains a metal key that the guard uses to operate the points at Coombe junction (explained on the app). There are request stops on the line and the app suggests walks from these.

The train wends its way down the valley between the river and the remnants of the canal mostly out of sight of any road. Where roads cross the line, the train stops and hoots. As you approach Looe the estuary opens up with mudflats, birds and then boats before stopping at Looe station 5 mins walk from the town centre. A really magical journey.

Once in Looe, there's lots to do: plenty of places to eat and shop as well as all the attractions of the beach, crabbing, boat trips and the Lifeboat station. Fish is landed in Looe and can be bought daily from Pengelly's and there is nothing like locally caught fish and chips. Looe also boasts its own icecream.

I caught the 10:55 from Saltash arriving in Looe at 12:05. I walked up through West Looe, had a nice lunch at the Sardine Factory and saw the bronze statue to the seal at the harbour entrance before taking the foot ferry across to East Looe and the beach and shops.



The off peak return fare for the train is £6.70 for adult, £3.35 for child, cheaper with a railcard. There is no ticket office or machine at Saltash, you just get on the train and the ticket collector on either the mainline train or Looe Valley Line sells you a ticket. The ferry across the river in Looe costs £1.