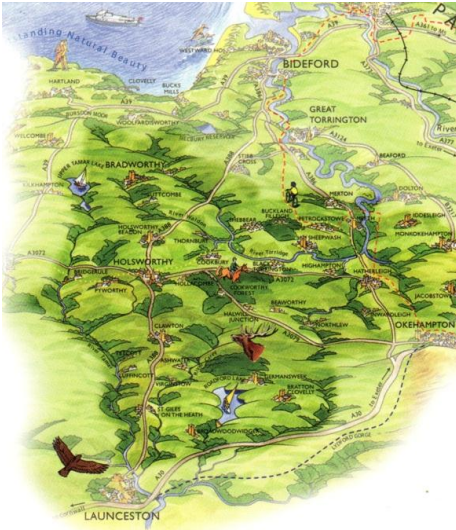


Ruby Country; the beating heart of rural Devon



Where is Ruby Country?



Enclosed by Dartmoor, Exmoor, Bodmin Moor and the coastline of north Devon and North Devon, Ruby Country is part of rural Devon with a rich agricultural history. Ruby Country really is the "Land Between the Moors".

Covering an area of about 70,500 hectares with an estimated population of 18,000, Ruby Country is a particularly rural area, typified by small, widespread communities.

Centred on the small market towns of Holsworthy and Hatherleigh, the boundary of Ruby Country encompasses 45 parish communities and a larger number of hamlets and isolated farmsteads. Ruby Country covers part of Torrridge District and West Devon Borough. Ruby Country is quiet, unspoilt, undiscovered and rich in opportunities whether resident or

visitor.

What is Ruby Country?

Ruby Country is a geographic area in rural North West Devon. It is also a series of projects that have run since 2002, used to show how the environment can be protected and enhanced whilst improving the economy of the area.

In 2001 the area now known as Ruby Country was all but cut-off by Foot and Mouth Disease resulting in economic and social difficulties for all. The traditional livestock markets in Holsworthy and Hatherleigh, along with most farms and other businesses were closed down to prevent the unnecessary spread of the disease. Farmers in particular were affected but there were negative impacts for all.



Once free of Foot and Mouth Disease and with restrictions lifted, it was decided that to safeguard against future social and economic deprivation and isolation, businesses should work closer together and become more resilient, creating a stronger self-supporting local economy. With backing from a wide range of organisations in Torrridge and West Devon, including Devon County Council and Devon Wildlife Trust, the Ruby Country Initiative was set up.



Based around distinctive local natural and cultural characteristics Ruby Country was developed as a brand, to help regenerate the local economy, develop the capacity of businesses, add value to commercial activity and to more effectively market the area, based around the distinctive characteristics.

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Why Ruby?



In order to effectively relay messages, the project needed a talisman around which to build and develop. It was decided to name the area and project after the county's Ruby Red Cattle and a symbol was developed to represent how important farming and economic activity is to the area. It was also decided that to maximise benefits, the project should be community led, with local business and communities at the heart of its work.

Why is Ruby Country important?

The Ruby Country vision is of a thriving, sustainable rural economy which contributes to the quality of life of local people and offers a secure future for the natural and cultural assets of the area. A key aspect of this vision is to promote sustainable tourism, whereby visitors are invited to value the fact that their ecological footprint is light whilst enjoying the Ruby Country experience and helping sustain it for the future.



Ruby Country's natural and cultural environment has the potential to be its economic salvation. But why – what makes it so special?

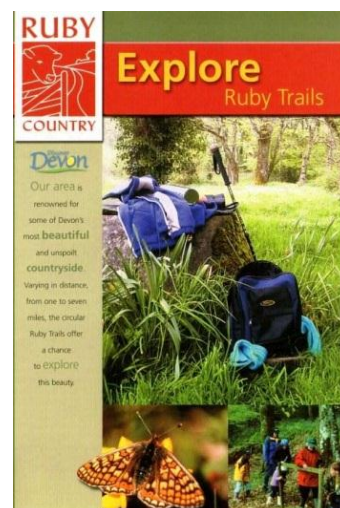
Ruby Country really does offer a unique experience to its visitors.

- Its defining habitat – Culm grassland – is internationally significant, and Devon has over 80% of the resource found in England. Behind the possibly unexciting label "Culm grassland" lie spectacular landscapes of unspoilt, flower-filled pastures and wetlands, a paradise for a staggering variety of wildlife.
- Its settlement patterns, its Devon banks and hedgerows, its vernacular architecture and, at the broader level, its landscape, evoke a gentle, traditional lifestyle which is quintessentially English countryside.
- It is the only area in Devon (and one of very few in England) where the absence of light pollution allows a truly clear view of the night sky.

Ruby Country to now

The environment of Ruby Country is its unique selling point and the Ruby Country Initiative developed a number of projects to reflect this until its conclusion in 2009. Key amongst its successes was the establishment of 8, way marked Ruby Trails, significant events including the Ruby Food Safari and Ruby Art Expo. Each of these emphasised that the values and aspirations of Ruby Country are rooted in the environmental quality and local distinctiveness of the area.

At the conclusion of the Ruby Country Initiative, a new organisation was set up to continue this work. In 2009 Ruby Country Partnership was born from an allegiance of local businessmen from Holsworthy and Hatherleigh, to operate as a not for profit community focus business.



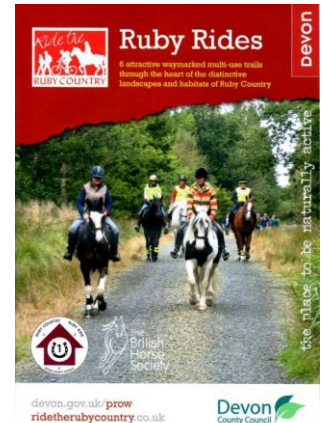
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Ride the Ruby Country

At about this time it was confirmed the Partnership had been successful in gaining funding to deliver the project "Ride the Ruby Country". This project started in 2010 has continued to develop the work started by Ruby Country Initiative but is in particular allied to the development of the Pegasus Way and associated trails, enabled under the Equestrian section of Devon County Councils Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Ruby Country Partnership through the work of Ride the Ruby Country has continued to deliver important business and social opportunities linked to sustainable tourism, activities, environmental quality and local distinctiveness of the area.



Working with businesses and local communities



Ruby Country Partnership continues to provide local people with the skills to build their businesses, or social opportunities. Training courses and workshops are run on a regular basis. Many have used this opportunity to develop strategies to make their enterprises more effective in an increasingly competitive market place.

Businesses are encouraged to manage their affairs in a manner considering the environment and are motivated to incorporate sustainable principles when developing their products. All are expected to publicise others and to extol the virtues of the Ruby Country environment, landscape, culture and history in the promotion of the area and its distinctive products.

Ride the Ruby Country has linked in businesses to the new Ruby Rides developed in conjunction with Devon County Council. Car free recreation is encouraged and actively promoted, as are visits to local attractions, towns, villages and markets.

Ruby Country Partnership has also invested in a new website developed in conjunction with North Devon+ linking in to the area tourism website www.northdevon.com. This alliance will no doubt bring economic benefits to the area as more people become aware of Ruby Country as a destination through additional exposure and promotion.

Ruby Country Partnership has also developed a new leaflet for Ruby Country which is being distributed widely across the region. Gradually as time goes by, more and more people are getting to know that Ruby Country exists as a high quality destination, linked to environmental and cultural distinctiveness where it is possible to spend more time without having to drive too far. Ruby Country is a fine compliment for the nearby coastal resorts, National Parks and Cornwall.



Why not visit Ruby Country and find out what makes our heart beat?