

Discover *England's*
South West
Coast Path



The Wilderness Coast

Porlock Bay Oysters and the vast moorland of Exmoor National Park

MORNING



Pack a picnic and say goodbye to the bustle of daily life as you set out from Minehead and into Exmoor National Park, a vast, protected landscape covering 267 square miles (692 square km) of moorland, forest and rocky coastal terrain. Drive (or book the Moor Rover service, or a taxi) for the 2.4-mile (3.9km) journey to Burgundy Chapel Combe car park and set out on the breathtaking 6.9-mile (11.2km) Brockholes circular walk. This adventurous trail skips along the coast with sweeping views across gorse and heather-covered slopes to Porlock in the valley below. This route reaches a high point at Selworthy Beacon - a good spot for a lunch stop - before linking back to the starting point.



AFTERNOON



Drop back down to sea level at Porlock Weir, a pretty seaside village surrounded by high hills (and 9.3 miles/15km westward by car or taxi). Grab a drink, then sit on the quayside and take in the scenery. Porlock and Porlock Weir have a range of accommodation options to rest your weary legs. While staying in the area, don't miss the chance to sample Porlock Bay Oysters, which have recently been reintroduced to the bay. Considered by connoisseurs to be among the best in the world, you can sample the oysters at pubs and restaurants in and around Porlock.



Photographers from top: John Lacey,
Julia Amies-Green and Bob Small

See, Hear and Taste some of England's best on the South West Coast Path

Poetry, literature and bandits among England's highest coastal hills

MORNING

Eat a hearty breakfast and pack a lunch for a challenging walk - the 7.3-mile (11.7km) Robbers Bridge route (10.6 miles/17km from Minehead by car, taxi or Moor Rover). Named after real-life bandits who inspired characters in RD Blackmore's novel, *Lorna Doone*, this trail climbs and descends deep wooded 'combes' amid England's highest coastal hills. This area has other strong literary connections because Ash Farm, also on the trail, is where Samuel Taylor Coleridge famously conceived the lines of his epic poem, *Kubla Khan*. The romantic poet was a keen hill walker, who was known to tramp for miles while working on his poetry. His influence here gives name to the Coleridge Way, a long-distance footpath which cuts across Exmoor and the Quantock Hills from Nether Stowey (where the poet lived for several years) to Lynton.



AFTERNOON



If you have energy left after the morning's trek, there's a short walk up Dunkery Beacon - Exmoor's highest hill at 519 metres (1,703 feet). Stroll 0.6 miles (1km) uphill from one of the parking spots on the road above Webbers Post. You'll soon be on open moorland with panoramic views of hills, forest, coast and the Bristol Channel. Look out for the remnants of Bronze Age settlements which line the ridge to the top. Stop for dinner in one of the ancient village pubs, before retiring to your accommodation in Porlock for a much-needed rest.



Photographers from top: Steve Keast,
Andreas Byrne and Malcolm Stone

See, Hear and Taste some of England's best on the South West Coast Path

Lynmouth's funicular railway and the exposed ridges of Foreland Point

MORNING



There are many shorter, less challenging walks in Exmoor National Park than this. But if you have the time and energy, it's worth tackling the longer treks for diversity of terrain and rewarding vistas. One such trail is the 5.1-mile (8.2km) Foreland Point Adventurous Walk. This circular route, which starts 1.6 miles (2.6km) east of Lynmouth, passes through a landscape of steep, tree-covered hills rising from the sea in what is the longest stretch of coastal woodland in England and Wales. At Foreland Point Lighthouse you're rewarded with unrestricted views across the Bristol Channel to Wales. This is not for the faint-hearted, as it features steep climbs and exposed ridges, although there are gentler shortcuts if required.

AFTERNOON

Make your way back down to Lynmouth, a picture-postcard fishing village at the mouth of the river Lyn. As you'd expect, there are fantastic fish and chips to be enjoyed here, but there is also a string of pubs, cafés and tea rooms for a hearty lunch stop. After lunch, take the Lynton & Lynmouth Cliff Railway to Lynton. This water-powered funicular railway, established in 1888, chugs up the short, but near-vertical, track to the top, revealing wider views of the coast as it climbs. As one of Exmoor's key tourism destinations, you'll find plenty of hotels, guest houses and places to eat in this picturesque village.



Photographers from top: Jaap Gaasenbeek,
Shirley Turner and Bella Griffiths

See, Hear and Taste some of England's best on the South West Coast Path

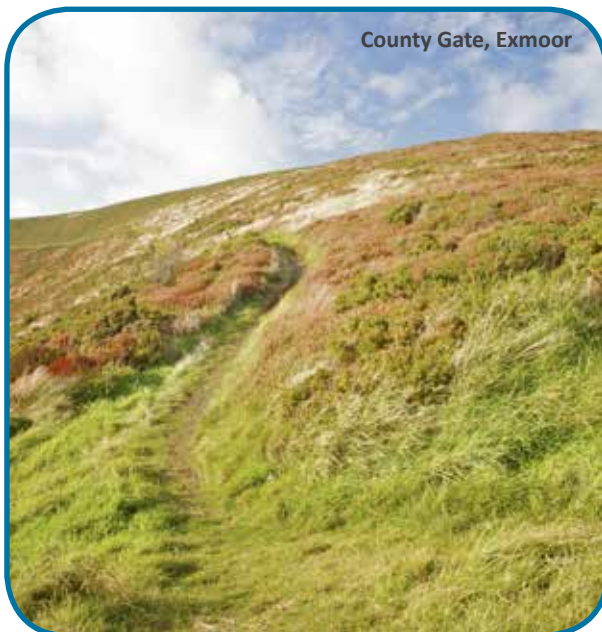
Kestrels and red deer around Simonsbath and Exford

MORNING

This day out offers a chance to rest your legs and explore Exmoor National Park. Drive, if you have a car. Otherwise, arrange a few journeys to key destinations with the Moor Rover. Take the steep road (9.5 miles/15.2km) from Lynton to Simonsbath, a small village on the River Barle at the heart of Exmoor. Even from the road, the landscape here is nothing short of spectacular. Watch out for local wildlife including moorland ponies, foxes, hares and birds of prey including kestrels, buzzards and kites.



AFTERNOON



When it comes to wildlife, Exmoor is best known for its large population of red deer. The best way to see these animals in the wild is to join a red deer safari. You can see deer all year round, but the most dramatic time to visit is in the autumn. This is the rutting season when majestic stags with huge antlers go head-to-head in battle. After your encounter with wildlife, continue to other noteworthy villages such as Exford, Wheddon Cross and Winsford, all of which have traditional moorland pubs and hotels serving great food and beers. While here, be sure to sample the excellent Exmoor Ales.



Photographers from top: Johnathan Combe
and Chris Bookholt

See, Hear and Taste some of England's best on the South West Coast Path

Lynton and the Valley of Rocks

MORNING



Lace up your boots and prepare for one of the highlights of coastal Exmoor. Today's walk is the 2.7-mile (4.3 km) Lynton and the Valley of Rocks route (starting from Lynton, 12.8 miles/20.6km east of Combe Martin). Here the cliffs rise into craggy outcrops and rock towers, forming a 'dry' valley between the coast and the rounded hulks of the moors. Continue through this valley, passing the Ragged Jack and Castle Rock formations. Test your head for heights by climbing to the top for jaw-dropping views along the coast, before returning to Lynton on this most scenic of trails.

AFTERNOON

Grab a sandwich at one of the cafés or tea rooms in Lynton, then walk or catch the railway down to Lynmouth. From here take an easy 2.5-mile (4km) stroll to Watersmeet. This wooded valley walk follows the babbling East Lyn river to its confluence with Hoar Oak Water. Sip a cup of tea or coffee from the café here and take time to soak up the atmosphere of this tranquil setting. As an alternative, take a boat trip from the harbour to explore the towering cliffs from the sea; spot wildlife and learn about the history of this remote harbour.



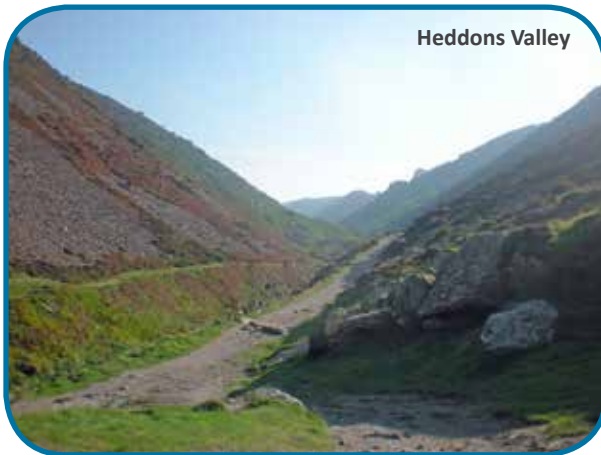
Photographers from top: Shirley Turner,
Shirley Farrar and Jaap Gaasenbeek



See, Hear and Taste some of England's best on the South West Coast Path

Heddon's Mouth and coasteering

MORNING



Head to Heddon Valley (5.7 miles/9.2km east of Combe Martin) for a gentle stroll along the trails of this deep-cut valley. Emerge from the deep green woodland beside the river on to steep, scree-covered slopes leading to Heddon's Mouth on this 2.1-mile (3.4km) trail. Admire the coast from the pebble beach sandwiched between imposing cliffs. From here you can carry on a coastal walk to Woody Bay or return upstream for lunch at the historic Hunters Inn.

AFTERNOON

Exmoor is an adventurer's paradise, with all manner of activities available for outdoor types. One local activity to try while you're here is coasteering. This thrilling activity involves scrambling over rocks, jumping off ledges and swimming through caves, while admiring the coastal scenery and marine wildlife. Popular coasteering spots in Exmoor include Lee Bay and Lynmouth, or further afield at Hele Bay near Ilfracombe, but activities need to be arranged in advance with local activity providers.



Photographers from top: Emma Barrett,
Ian Killick and Audrey Rowlatt

See, Hear and Taste some of England's best on the South West Coast Path

Combe Martin and the highest sea cliff in England and Wales

MORNING

From the seaside village of Combe Martin, take the thigh-burning walk up the Coast Path towards Little Hangman on the 4.7-mile (7.5km) Hangman Hills walk. Views along the coast reveal themselves as you gain elevation towards the Great Hangman, which, at 244 metres (800 feet) is the highest sea cliff in England and Wales. Take a few minutes to catch your breath, then continue along the loop back to Combe Martin.



Lester Point and Little Hangman



Great Hangman

AFTERNOON



Combe Martin

Relax with a cream tea in Combe Martin. You've earned it. Combe Martin is a popular holiday destination with no shortage of places to eat, drink and shop. But the beach and coastal scenery is the biggest draw. A great way to experience this is to hire a kayak or stand up paddle board at the beach or take a guided kayak tour to see the soaring sea cliffs from the water.



Photographers from top: Andrew Wheatley, Stephen Coombes and Jaap Gaasenbeek

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Local Knowledge

Accommodation: Accommodation is easier to find in the major villages and towns along the coast, such as Minehead, Porlock, Lynton & Lynmouth and Combe Martin, where there is a wide choice of hotels, guest houses and bed & breakfasts.

Food & drink: Fresh local produce is in abundance on Exmoor, including Porlock Oysters, freshly caught trout and venison. Local farm shops and delis are useful for picking up fresh produce and treats. There are many fine restaurants, gastro pubs and fish and chip shops throughout Exmoor. For beer drinkers there are some tasty local ales.

Transport: It really pays to have a car here. Getting to and from walks, villages and local attractions will be difficult and time-consuming without your own transport. There are limited bus services here, however, it is possible to pre-book a lift with the Moor Rover minibus or with local taxi services. For more travel information around Exmoor visit the Exmoor National Park Enjoying Travel website.

For more information visit

www.visit-exmoor.co.uk

www.visitdevon.co.uk

Membership

You are sure to fall in love with the South West Coast Path when you walk it, you may even be hooked while planning your adventure. If you'd like to support the South West Coast Path Association and protect and promote this beautiful trail, we have an Overseas Membership for just £29 that gives you masses more information about the Path including the Complete Guide to the South West Coast Path in your language. Please join us! **Find more information at southwestcoastpath.org.uk**



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