



Lynmouth circular via Watersmeet and Countisbury

Walking trail

This is an interesting and varied walk that takes in some of the best scenery this part of Exmoor has to offer. The picturesque harbour town of Lynmouth provides an opportunity to explore the Glen Lyn Gorge and also learn about the devastating floods that ravaged the town in 1952.

In partnership with



Lynmouth, North Devon

Challenging

2 hours 30 mins

5.5 miles (8.8 km)

Landranger 180; Explorer OL9

Start: Lynmouth public car park, Countisbury Hill, grid ref: SS 723 494

- 1 Walk out of the car park at the top left corner towards the white metal bridge that crosses the river just ahead of you, keeping the East Lyn River on your left. Cross the bridge and turn immediately right. Continue walking upstream, with the river now on your right. Please be careful crossing the road - it's a public highway. Follow the public footpath upstream towards Watersmeet.

Lynmouth

Looking at this picturesque harbour village now it is hard to imagine the devastation wrecked by the 1952 flood. After being rebuilt over the years it is now the location of many beautiful private homes as well as businesses that serve the area's thriving tourism industry. Before you leave the car park, look at Lynmouth Church to your right. Dating from 1870, the church houses an exhibition of photographs, donated to the church by us, taken after the 1952 flood. It hosts a memorial flower festival each August.

- 2 Follow the green public footpath signed: Watersmeet 1¼ miles. Keep an eye out for dippers, they can be seen on the rocks in the centre of the river. Across the water you can see Middleham Memorial Gardens. Where the path forks there's a fingerpost signed 'Watersmeet Riverside Walk' to the right and 'Watersmeet Woodland Walk' to the left. Turn left and follow the path as it meanders its way along the side of the valley following the signs for 'Watersmeet.'

Dog friendly



Sunlight through the trees along the wooded valley of the East Lynn River | National Trust Images / Joe Cornish

Terrain

This circular walk follows a well-signposted route across varied terrain, along a shady river valley, up through woodland and out onto the South West Coast Path. Part of the route is on an exposed path on the side of a high cliff. There are steps in places.

Some parts of the path are uneven and may be slippery when wet or when covered with leaves in the autumn. Suitable footwear and clothing is advised as coastal weather can be changeable.

Please keep your dog on a lead where there is stock grazing or evidence of deer or wild ponies.

Contact us

Telephone: 01598 753348

Email: watersmeet@nationaltrust.org.uk
[mailto:watersmeet@nationaltrust.org.uk]

Website: <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/watersmeet/>
[http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/watersmeet/]

How to get here

Address:
Lynmouth, North Devon

By train:
Barnstaple, 18 miles (29km) from Lynmouth.

By road:
A39 signed Lynton/Lynmouth. Turn off down B3234 to Lynmouth. Postcode for Sat Nav: EX35 6ES.

By foot:
Access via the South West Coast Path.

By bus:
Minehead to Lynmouth, Service 300 with connections to Combe Martin and Ilfracombe.

Facilities and access

- National Trust tea-room, toilets and garden at Watersmeet House
- Keep dogs on leads, particularly in spring on farmed land and on moorland
- Free parking at Barna Barrow, Combe Park, Brendon and Countisbury

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3 When you arrive at Watersmeet House cross the two bridges to the right of the house and take a look at the waterfalls just above the convergence of the East Lyn River and the Hoar Oak Water - a place of great beauty no matter the weather or the season. Before continuing your walk you can rest a while on the banks of the East Lyn, or in the spring and summer our tea garden is open, where you can taste what is reputedly one of the best cream teas in Devon, as well as a selection of delicious cakes. Just before you arrive at the house you'll pass an information board about Glenthorne Fisheries, showing the permitted fishing pools and contact information. Information about fishing and canoeing on the East Lyn can also be found on our homepage.

Watersmeet House

Watersmeet House was built in 1832 as a fishing lodge by the Reverend W.S. Halliday, son of a rich businessman. Stone for the house was quarried at Watersmeet, above the East Lyn River. A tea garden since 1901, it buzzes with activity, especially in summer.

4 Keeping Watersmeet House to your left and the East Lyn River to your right follow the footpath out behind the house signed 'Footpath, Fisherman's Path Rockford / Brendon'. At the next fingerpost turn left up a steep zig zag path through the woods, signed Countisbury. In the spring and the summer these woods are filled with birdsong.

5 Follow the path up through the woods and as it levels out around the side of the valley look for where the path splits - turn sharp left here. There is no signpost. Follow the path up towards Trilly Ridge. The view will open out to your left giving you the opportunity to look out over to the Iron Age hill forts of Wind Hill and North Myrtleberry.

6 At the four-finger signpost where there is a dry stone wall and a gate in front of you, turn left and follow 'Winston's Path' round the side of the hill towards Countisbury. At the head of Chiselcombe - a steep-sided valley that falls away to your left - you will come to a fingerpost that is signposted right to Countisbury. Follow this path through the gate and across the field towards the buildings ahead of you - this is Exmoor Bunkhouse. Go through the gate at the end of the field on the left and down onto the road - please be careful of traffic.

7 Turn right and walk along the road past Exmoor Bunkhouse to the Blue Ball pub. Cross the road here and walk up the lane to the right of the small car park to Countisbury Church. Go through the gate and follow the path through the churchyard and out through the gate behind the church onto the grassy cliffs.

8 Turn left and walk along the grassy path until you come to a three-finger signpost set into a dry stone wall to your left - you will also see a small cairn. Turn right here following the South West Coast Path - the symbol for the path is an acorn. It will seem you are walking off the edge of the cliff but as you stay on the path round to your left you will see the path as it follows the cliffside all the way down to Lynmouth. There are stunning views from here down into Lynmouth and on a clear day you will also be able to see across to Wales.

- 9 Follow the path as it skirts along the cliffs, pass through a gate and carry on straight. At times you may see roe deer on this part of the path. A little way along you will come to a bench - just before this, at knee-height, is a small information board that tells you about Countisbury Castle, the ramparts of which form a part of the linear defence for Windhill Fort on the hill up above you on the other side of the road.

Windhill Iron Age Fort

This walk skirts around the remains of one of the most impressive Iron Age forts in Devon, built 2,500 years ago. Often called Countisbury Castle, this fortified hill is thought to be the site of the AD878 Battle of Cynuit where the Saxon army was besieged by the Vikings. Although outnumbered the Saxons overcame the enemy, changing the course of English history. It's well worth taking the footpath off the main A39 road to see the ramparts at close quarters - this can be accessed a little further along the South West Coast Path from where you are now.

- 10 Keep on following the signs for 'coast path' along the cliff towards Lynmouth to where it reaches the main A39 Lynmouth-Minehead road. Please be careful of traffic here. On the opposite side of the road to you at this point is a signpost showing 'Public Bridleway Windhill 2/3 mile.' You can make a short detour here if you wish up onto the ramparts of Windhill Iron Age Fort, as mentioned earlier on in this walk. Turn right into the layby and walk to the end where there is South West Coast Path signpost. Walk along the path as it traverses the top of the bank, keeping you up and away from the traffic. Please make sure you have your dogs on a lead.

Magnificent views

As you walk, do take the time to pause a while and take in the magnificent views. Also take a look behind you out towards the majestic sweep of Foreland Point.

- 11 At the next three-finger post follow the acorn symbol and the sign, 'Public Footpath Lynmouth'. Stay on this path, following the signs, as it zig zags its way down the hill to sea level.

Rumsens

In early spring you might notice the powerful aroma of wild garlic in the air coming from the bright green plants with white flowers by the path known locally as Rumsens.

- 12 Where the path meets the tarmac drive at the bottom of the hill, turn left and follow this along until you come into the gardens on the banks of the East Lyn River in Lynmouth. To your left, from the bridge, you will be able to see the car park where you started this walk.

Can you help us?

We hope that you enjoyed this walk. We look after some of the most spectacular areas of coastline for the enjoyment of all. We need your support to help us continue our work to cherish the countryside and provide access to our beautiful landscapes. To find out more about how you can help our work as a volunteer, member or donor please visit our homepage.

End: Lynmouth public car park, Countisbury Hill, grid ref: SS724124