



From Lynmouth to Combe Martin

COMPILED by
Bryan Cath at Combe Walks

FACTFILE

- Highlights:** Lynmouth Cliff Railway, Valley of Rocks, Woody Bay, Hollow Brook waterfall, Wringapeak rock arch, Heddon's Mouth, restored lime kiln, the highest point on the SW Coast Path (Great Hangman), buzzards, and peregrine falcons.
- Start Grid ref:** SS 722 496
- Distance:** 13.7 miles, linear
- Height gained/lost:** 1,372 metres. Starts easy, becomes strenuous, ends easy.
- High Point:** 318 metres
- Low Point:** 8 metres
- Toilets:** Valley of Rocks picnic area (off route); Lee Bay; Hunter's Inn car park (off route); Combe Martin car park.
- Eating places:** Valley of Rocks, by car park; Lee Bay tea rooms; Hunter's Inn (off route); Combe Martin, various.
- Time required:** 7 to 8 hours including stops
- Public transport:** Bus 300 (Barnstaple to Minehead). Traveline 0870 608 2 608 www.travelinesw.com

ROUTE DESCRIPTION

This section of the Coast Path has some of the most impressive scenery to be found on the beautiful, rugged coastline of North Devon. You will walk from sea level to over 300 metres, crossing grand valleys, small combes and over large hills with their own cairns. You will also pass a waterfall, overlook a rock arch, see a coastal limekiln (for more on limekilns see pp71-73) and some of the highest cliffs in the British Isles. There is a 1.5-mile stretch of the South West Coast Path west of Heddon Valley that may cause problems for those who suffer from vertigo.

DIRECTIONS TO START

There are various public car parks in Lynmouth (which is on the A39). Walk to the Rhenish Tower overlooking the harbour. Take the cliff railway to Lynton. From the top follow the path to the High Street and turn left to reach the Valley of Rocks Hotel. Turn left down North Walk between the hotel and church, to cross over the top railway bridge. If you would rather walk to Lynton, go up Mars Hill by the Rising Sun and follow the path as it rises quickly. You will zigzag uphill over railway bridges. At the top bear right to follow North Walk over the top bridge.

ROUTE DIRECTIONS

1: SS 720 494

Follow North Walk as it becomes a path which emerges as a cliff walk beside the Valley of Rocks. After a while ignore the path bearing up to the left, continuing along this spectacular path until it bears left into the centre of the Valley of Rocks at the small roundabout.

2: SS 705 497, 1.2 miles

Now follow the road ahead and at the signpost for the White Lady, stop and look at the hole in the rock formation at the top of the cliffs ahead. It forms the shape

of a lady. Continue past the gate house and Lee Abbey, with lovely views over Lee Bay opening up on your right. Follow the road down passing the toll house and tea rooms, rounding the hairpin bend and gently climbing this narrow road, watching out for cars.

3: SS 692 491, 2.2 miles

After a short while, take the path that bears down to your right signposted to Crock Pits and the Coast Path. Keep on this path through the edge of the woods, down the steps, over the stile and around the right-hand edge of the field to go over the next stile. Lovely views now open up behind you. Skirt around the spring (boggy area) to the next stile and keep along the fenced path. Woody Bay is now ahead of you. Cross over the next stile into the woods and follow this path as it winds through this woodland, up various steps until eventually bearing left to return to the small road.

4: SS 686 489, 3.0 miles

On reaching the road, turn hard right along it, again being aware of cars. Ignore the road that shortly bears off to the left to Slattenslade and continue along the now level road.

5: SS 679 487, 3.4 miles

Follow the left-hand bend and then take the path to the right through the woodland. Keep on this attractive path and when it meets up with another track and houses bear left to follow this track uphill. After passing some houses the track comes to a hairpin bend to the left.

6: SS 672 489, 4.0 miles

At this point continue ahead through the bridle gate and follow the sign to Hunter's Inn, up through the woods, with views on your right (leaves permitting) of Lee Abbey and the Valley of Rocks, with Foreland Point lighthouse in the distance. Carry on and over the stile, being wary of the drop that soon opens up on your right! Soon you come to a high waterfall in a lovely valley. Carry on out to the point where a pause to look at the rock arch and surrounding scenery is most rewarding. Continue up between the heather, around the next rocky point to more spectacular cliff scenery. Carry on around the next two rocky points and down into the Heddon Valley.

7: SS 654 490, 5.7 miles

When you reach the Heddon Valley path, we recommend you visit the limekiln. To

do so turn hard right and walk down by the river to Heddon's Mouth, crossing the bridge by the picnic area. Alternatively you can turn left to follow the Coast Path, shortly turning right over the bridge to reach the path on the other side of the valley.

8: SS 654 494, 6.0 miles

If you have visited the limekiln, return to the picnic area by the bridge and continue through it, keeping the river on your left. In a while ignore the path going down on your left. Go through the gate and continue for 100 metres or so to the signpost to Combe Martin.

9: SS 654 487, 6.7 miles

Follow this path up to the right. Go through the gate – there are seats on the way! Continue up the path and various steps. On reaching the few steps near the top, carry round to your right, where the path levels out. More lovely views of the Heddon Valley open up.

10: SS 652 494, 7.3 miles

Carry on round the headland called Peter Rock where you may come across strong winds. Walk along the Coast Path until you start heading inland and bear right by the stone wall, with the Coast Path sign up to your left.

11: SS 641 485, 8.4 miles

On reaching the landslip, go through the bridle gate and then keep right along the grass path to the stile. Carefully cross this stile and continue along the Coast Path to the next gate by the ravine. Follow the Coast Path which is signposted diagonally across the field to the far corner.

12: SS 632 482, 9.0 miles

Having crossed the field go through the gate/stile, continue to the sign and follow the path bearing right. Continue along this path until you come to a wide track.

13: SS 624 479, 9.6 miles

Bear right and follow the track around Holdstone Hill. On passing through the battered stone wall, ignore the path crossing the track and continue on between the stunted trees. Follow the track round to the left by the stone wall, before it turns right through the wall at the top.

14: SS 612 474, 10.8 miles

Follow the next two Coast Path signposts. You will now be going down into the steep-sided Sherrycombe. Cross over the stile by the Great Hangman National Trust

sign. Go carefully down to the stream, over the bridge and follow the zigzag path up ahead of you. Follow the Coast Path signpost along by the stone wall, towards Great Hangman. At the next signpost continue up the hill on the Coast Path and enjoy the reward of excellent views at the top.

15: SS 601 480, 11.7 miles

At the cairn (318m), Ilfracombe is in the distance ahead of you, with Lundy Island beyond that and Combe Martin in the valley below. Follow the Coast Path ahead, which you'll be glad to know is now virtually downhill all the way to Combe Martin. Cross over the stile and on to the kissing-gate towards Little Hangman. When the wall goes to the left, continue straight ahead and not down by the wall. Shortly you have the view of Combe Martin. Follow the Coast Path all the way down to where it becomes grassland, ignoring the stile in the left-hand corner and the gate. Bear right to go through the next gate, ignoring the path off to West Challacombe.

16: SS 577 475, 13.4 miles

Have a break or pass the shelter to where the path splits. To follow the Coast Path, take the left-hand fork. We would recommend you take the right-hand fork for the excellent views. On reaching the open grass keep to the left-hand edge down to the main car park. Go to the car park entrance. The Tourist Information Centre is on the left and the town and shops are in either direction.

17: SS 577 472, 13.7 miles

The end of today's walk. I hope you enjoyed it.

Lynton to Lynmouth Cliff Railway, by Shirley Turner, courtesy SWCP Team. Facing page: Looking across Wringapeak and Woody Bay by Mike Watson (www.mike-watson.co.uk).

