

CICERONE

WALKING THE DARTMOOR WAY

109-mile hike around Dartmoor National Park



Sue Viccars

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**109-MILE HIKE AROUND DARTMOOR
NATIONAL PARK**

by Sue Viccars

CICERONE

JUNIPER HOUSE, MURLEY MOSS,
OXENHOLME ROAD, KENDAL, CUMBRIA LA9 7RL
www.cicerone.co.uk

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For my boys

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Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to those who keep me company on my explorations: Brenda, Emma and Stuart. A special thank you to Michael Owen, Dartmoor Way project officer; he and I have tramped back and forth along parts of the route innumerable times! Thanks too to the Dartmoor Way Steering Group and especially George Coles who, with Michael, has been responsible for getting the route 'up and running' again.

Front cover: Lambs Down (Stage 2) is famed for its spread of bluebells in May

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ROUTE SUMMARY TABLE

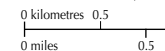
Stage	Start	Finish	Time	Distance	Ascent	Page
1	Ivybridge (SX 636 562)	Shipley Bridge (SX 680 628)	5hr	10 miles (16km)	2445ft (620m)	30
2	Shipley Bridge (SX 680 628)	Ashburton (SX 756 698)	6hr	10½ miles (16.75km)	1765ft (450m)	40
3	Ashburton (SX 756 698)	Bovey Tracey (SX 814 782)	6½hr	12¼ miles (19.75km)	2765ft (700m)	53
4	Bovey Tracey (SX 814 782)	Moretonhampstead (SX 753 860)	5½hr	10½ miles (16.75km)	2355ft (600m)	65
5	Moretonhampstead (SX 753 860)	Chagford (SX 700 875)	4½hr	8 miles (12.75km)	1825ft (465m)	76
6	Chagford (SX 700 875)	Okehampton (SX 588 950)	6½hr	12¼ miles (19.75km)	2095ft (640m)	86
7	Okehampton (SX 588 950)	Lydford (SX 509 847)	5hr	9¾ miles (15.75km)	1395ft (425m)	101
8	Lydford (SX 509 847)	Tavistock (SX 482 743)	6hr	12¾ miles (20.5km)	1010ft (480m)	114
9	Tavistock (SX 482 743)	Shaugh Bridge (SX 533 636)	6hr	11¾ miles (18.5km)	1395ft (425m)	129
10	Shaugh Bridge (SX 533 636)	Ivybridge (SX 636 562)	6½hr	12 miles (19.25km)	1685ft (515m)	140
Total (Stage 1–10)			57½hr	109¾ miles (175.75km)	18,735 (5320m)	-
High Moor Link 1	Buckfastleigh (SX 743 666)	Hexworthy (SX 651 726)	5½hr	10½ miles (16.75km)	2575ft (785m)	154
High Moor Link 2	Hexworthy (SX 651 726)	Tavistock (SX 482 743)	6hr	12¾ miles (20.5km)	1395ft (425m)	167
Total (High Moor Link)			11½hr	23¼ miles (37.25km)	3,970ft (1210m)	-

Route symbols on OS map extracts




(for OS legend see printed OS maps)

-  route
-  alternative route
-  start point
-  finish point
-  route direction

SCALE: 1:50,000

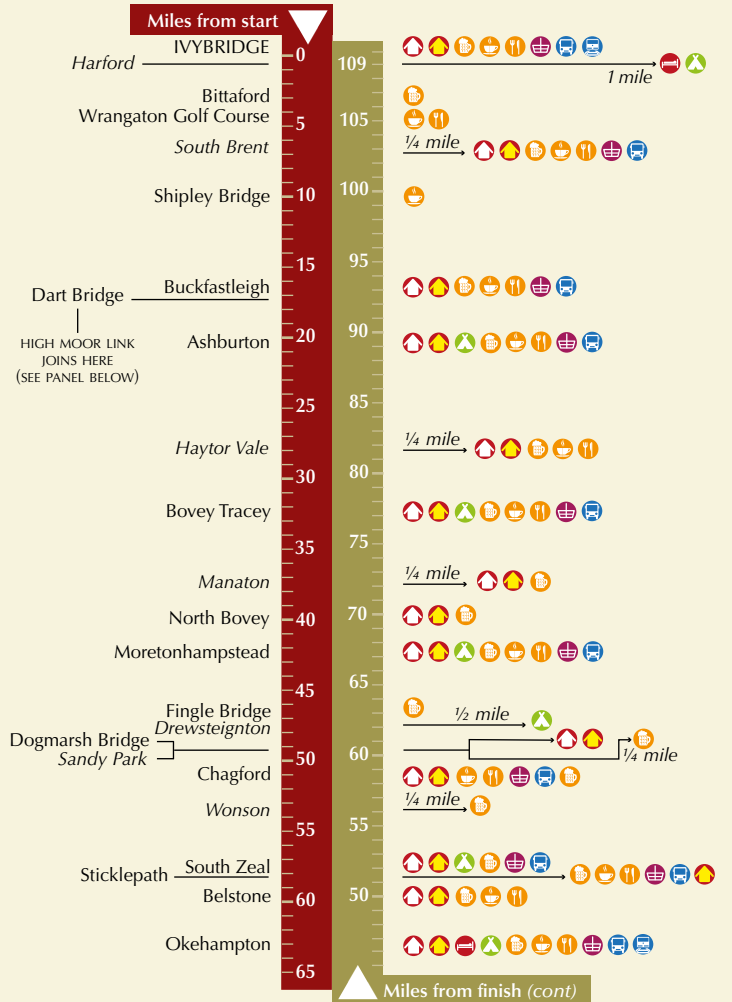


Features on the overview map

-  Urban area
-  National Park
eg **DARTMOOR**
-  Forested area

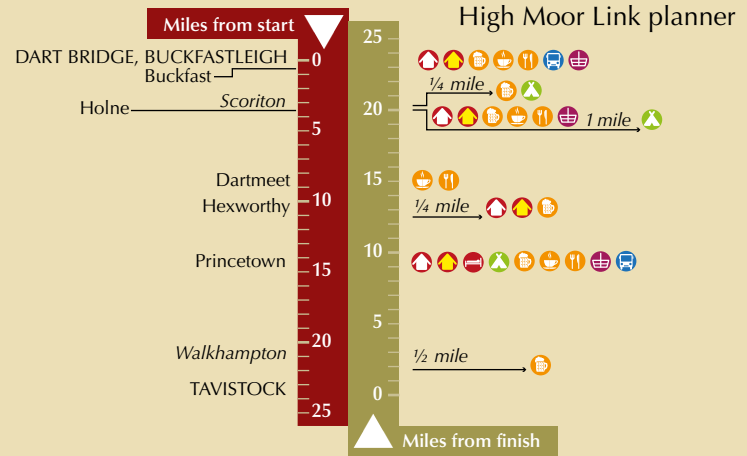
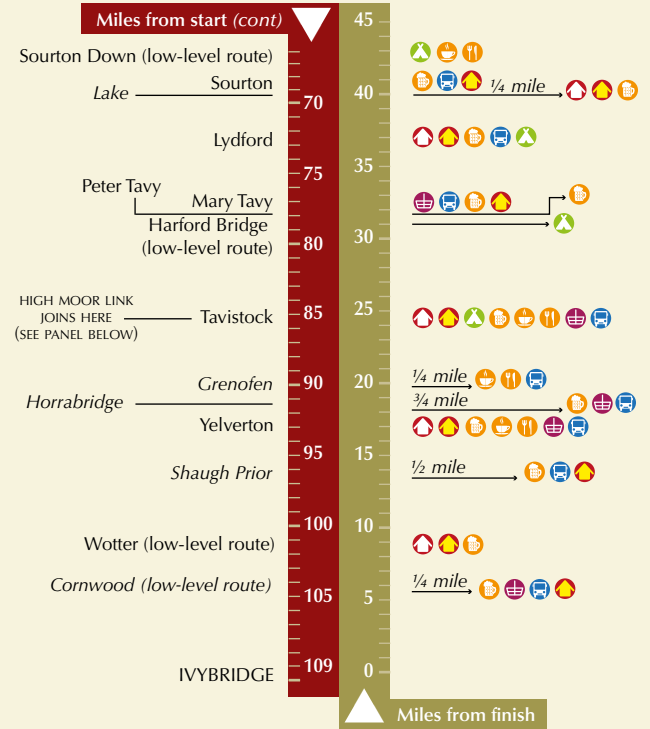
GPX files for all routes can
be downloaded free at
www.cicerone.co.uk/1115/GPX.

Dartmoor Way planner



- Hotel
- Other accommodation
- Hostel/Bunkhouse
- Camping
- Shop
- Pub/Inn
- Café/tea room
- Restaurant
- Railway station
- Bus

NOTE: Bus services are very limited and/or irregular, and may not operate on Sundays. Places in italics are the specified distance off the main route.



High Moor Link planner



Burchetts Wood (High Moor Link 1)

INTRODUCTION



The northeast face of Cosdon Hill; note the stone-walled enclosures on the lower slopes (Stage 6)

Dartmoor, the southwest peninsula's largest and most magnificent moorland, rises loftily above the verdant hills and fields of Devon. A place (in popular imagination) of impenetrable mists, driving rain, bottomless mires and countless myths and legends, many bringing innocent visitors to an untimely end; renowned too for its semi-wild ponies and early 19th-century prison fortress at Princetown.

Generations of writers – Arthur Conan Doyle with his tales of the fearsome Hound of the Baskervilles being perhaps the best known – have done their best to promote and maintain the idea that Dartmoor is an inhospitable, untamed wilderness.

Inhospitable it can be; wilderness it is not. Man has had a hand in shaping the moor since the early Neolithic era, and it is home to the greatest concentration of Bronze Age sites in the country. In the Middle Ages the

moor provided summer pasture for livestock from the surrounding lowlands. Evidence of centuries of tin mining remains in the form of gullies and ruined huts; a network of leats – man-made water channels – was built to carry water from moorland streams to farms and tinworks. And since the early 1800s, parts of Dartmoor have been used for military training; a permanent army camp was established just south of Okehampton at the end of the 19th century. Tin mining may be a thing of the past, but traditional hill farming carries on: the moor is very much a working landscape.

In 1951 Dartmoor became a National Park, covering an area of 368 square miles (953 sq km). Since then the population of the United Kingdom has risen by over 17 million; balancing the need to conserve the wildlife and cultural heritage of Dartmoor, in the face of demands for access

WALKING THE DARTMOOR WAY

from an increasingly diverse range of users, is a complex task. And whereas exploring the moor on foot may be the least intrusive of leisure activities, it presents certain challenges: walkers need to be well prepared for whatever the weather may throw at them, and competent with map and compass.

But Dartmoor walking isn't all about tramping across the high moor. Move away from the unenclosed commons towards the National Park boundary and you enter a different, less demanding landscape: the granite gives way to the softer 'country rocks' of the hinterland. Here will be found steep-sided wooded valleys carved out by fast-flowing rivers; clusters of small stone-walled fields and ancient farmsteads; hedged byways and a network of narrow, twisting lanes leading to picturesque villages, usually centred on the parish church. This peaceful moorland-edge landscape is best experienced on foot – and the Dartmoor Way provides the perfect opportunity to do just that.

HISTORY OF THE ROUTE

The backstory to the Dartmoor Way has run in tandem with that of the Dartmoor Way cycling route since 1999, when the Dartmoor Towns initiative looked at ways of bringing sustainable tourism to towns and villages around the moorland edge. The steering group was made up of representatives from settlements on the proposed route (which did not include the

supposedly less scenic southern half of the moor). By 2002 the cycle route had been waymarked; a map (based on the OS 1:25,000 map) and guidebook covering both walking and cycling options were produced. Thereafter the support network gradually disintegrated and the initiative fizzled out.

Then, in 2010, George Coles (Chair, Moorland Ramblers) and Michael Owen (member, Dartmoor Towns steering group) began looking into the feasibility of reviving both routes and incorporating the southern moor. Funding was secured for the cycle route project, which was overseen by Sustrans; the waymaking was refreshed and the revised route launched in 2013. The circular route is 90 miles (145km) long; the High Moor Link between Tavistock and Buckfast (part of the original Dartmoor Way) 27 miles (43.5km). Route directions and 1:50,000 map sections can be downloaded from a website created at that time.

The pair then turned their attention to the walking route, under the umbrella of a Dartmoor National Park Authority/Ramblers partnership. The Dartmoor Way Community Interest Company (CIC) was formed in late 2018, and funding secured from a number of sources, primarily Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust, Totnes Ramblers Franklin Legacy, the National Lottery Community Fund and the Pennon Environmental Fund.

The route was surveyed and waymarked – members of local Ramblers



Dartmoor Way project officer Michael Owen signing the route near Yelverton (Stage 9)

and walking groups installed the signage – through 2019; the southern part of the moor, bringing in Shaugh Bridge, Cornwood, Ivybridge and Shipley Bridge, was incorporated. The arrival of Covid-19 in early 2020 led to a halt in proceedings, but as lockdowns came and went walkers started to use the route, and the website pages for the walking route – with 1:50,000 map sections, and full downloadable route descriptions and GPX files (www.dartmoorway.co.uk/www/gpx.php) – went live in autumn 2020. The Dartmoor Way walking route was officially launched in late April 2022.

GEOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE

Devon does pretty well when it comes to landscape accolades. The county has five Areas of Outstanding

Natural Beauty, a UNESCO biosphere reserve and a significant part of the Jurassic coast, England's only natural World Heritage Site. It also boasts two National Parks: Exmoor (one third in north Devon, the remainder in Somerset) was designated in 1954; Dartmoor, further south, a 'founding member' of the English National Park family, was designated in 1951.

Dartmoor is a raised granite plateau, rising to 2037ft (621m) at its highest point, High Willhays, in the northwest corner. The moor is in effect a thickened 'boss' on a vast granite batholith that stretches to the west, outcropping at Kit Hill, Bodmin Moor and the West Penwith moors in Cornwall, and then the Isles of Scilly, 28 miles (45km) west-southwest of Land's End. In simple terms, the formation of Dartmoor's granite took

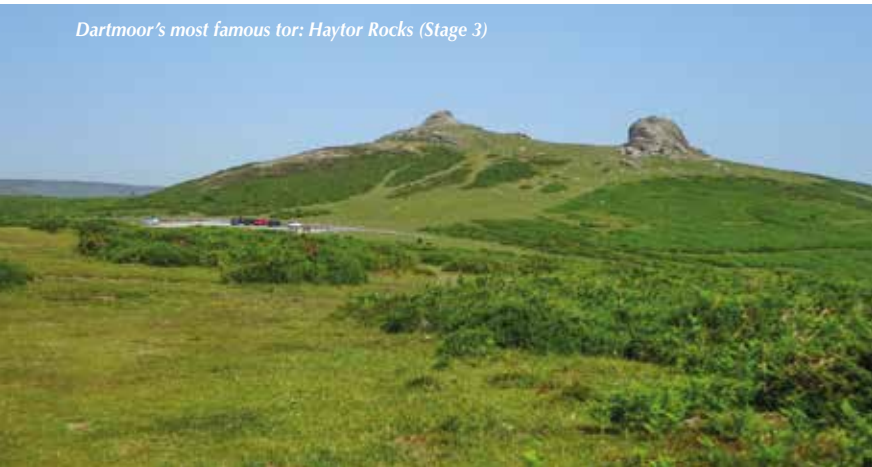
place around 280 million years ago, when molten rock welled up from deep within the earth, pushed through the overlying sedimentary Devonian rocks, cooled and solidified. As it cooled cracks became infilled with minerals crystallised from hot fluids: tin, copper, arsenic and silver, among others. Where the granite has been exposed a combination of chemical (depending on the precise composition of the rock) and mechanical (water, frost, freezing and heat) weathering has produced dramatic features known as tors. Further erosion of the granite has produced clutter, areas of small granite boulders, that litter the slopes below some of the tors.

Millions of years ago the granite plateau was tilted; the highest land is found on the north and west and as a result the majority of Dartmoor's rivers

flow south, emerging from areas of blanket bog as small, sparkling moorland streams. Where these streams meet the less resistant rocks encircling the granite they have carved deep, steep-sided valleys, now clothed in beautiful sessile oak woodland.

Walkers will have views of Dartmoor's unenclosed moorland all along the route. This land is privately owned, but local farmers – commoners – have the right to graze certain numbers of livestock, depending on the size of their farm. Cattle and sheep (and ponies) graze on the commons; livestock will also be seen downslope in the 'newtakes', a patchwork of small stone-walled fields, many enclosed by Dartmoor farmers generations ago. Lower down again come the more sheltered in-bye fields, surrounding ancient farmsteads.

Dartmoor's most famous tor: Haytor Rocks (Stage 3)



WILDLIFE

Plants and flowers

Walkers will be relieved to learn that the route does not encounter any of Dartmoor's renowned upland mires. Much of the high moor is covered with blanket bog, supporting sundew, sphagnum moss, golden-yellow bog asphodel and fluffy white cotton grass. The Dartmoor Way does cross some damp patches on the moorland sections and passes some valley mires, but walkers are more likely to spot low-growing yellow tormentil and delicate blue milkwort beneath their feet. There are some extensive areas of ling and bell heather – around Haytor on Stage 3, for example – but many of the commons are now overwhelmed by purple moor grass (*Molinia*), largely as a result of government policy leading to reduced stocking levels. *Molinia* is loathed by many for its invasive nature and the fact that it is palatable only for a couple of months in high summer; the moor 'greens up' long after the surrounding countryside has burst into life. Decaying *Molinia* is what makes the moor appear almost white in the winter months.

Dartmoor's moorland-edge pastures and valley woodlands support a huge variety of flowering plants. In places preceded by displays of wild daffodils, carpets of bluebells flood the woodland floor in May, blooming in glorious profusion before the leaf canopy blocks out too much light. Bluebells appear on moorland

slopes a week or so later, and crown Dartmoor's hedgebanks. These earth banks, usually faced with granite, host a mass of wildflowers: in February snowdrops; then celandines, primroses and dog violets; bluebells, red campion, buttercups and greater stitchwort. Navelwort, stoncrop and devil's bit scabious anchor in rock crevices. Some woodland paths pass between banks of pungent wild garlic, with patches of wood sorrel and wood anemone; look out for early purple orchids, the earliest species to flower, identified by its chunky spotted leaves. In late spring the prolific white blossoms of scattered and stunted hawthorn trees decorate the moorland slopes.

Dartmoor's wooded valleys are dominated by sessile oak trees, glowing pinky-green in early spring, and providing some of the richest wildlife habitat in the National Park. A wide variety of lichens flourish in the moist, mild and unpolluted air; the easiest to identify is pale grey-green string-of-sausages lichen, festooning the branches of hawthorn and blackthorn. Three patches of protected upland English oak woodland survive on the higher moor: the most northerly, Black-a-Tor Copse, sits by the West Okement river below Black Tor (seen at a distance on Stage 7).

In places such as the Bovey valley and the Teign valley around Fingle Bridge (Stages 4 and 5), early 20th-century commercial coniferous plantations are being thinned and



Clockwise from top left: Western gorse and bell heather; mountain ash (rowan); wild garlic (ramsons); dog violets; wood sorrel; early purple orchids; stonecrop

removed to encourage the regeneration of native species.

Autumn brings rich colour to both woodland and moor. Shorter hours of daylight and falling night-time temperatures bring about a reduction in chlorophyll and a predominance of red and yellow compounds in the leaves. Bracken on moorland slopes turns a rich brown as the branches of mountain ash bow under the weight of clusters of bright red-orange berries.

Birds and animals

The moorland edge is richer than the commons when it comes to birds. The number of sightings on the moor have dropped considerably over recent years; species such as ring ouzel have virtually disappeared due to predation and loss of habitat. However, mire restoration projects aim to improve conditions for species such as dunlin (Dartmoor holds the last breeding population in southern England) and also curlew; early results are proving positive.

Dartmoor Way walkers will hear the 'cronk cronk' of ravens on the moorland stretches, and see buzzards soaring high above the woodlands. The joyful song of the skylark will fill the air from early March; the iconic call of the cuckoo will be heard in April and May. Dartmoor is a stronghold for this species (numbers have declined by 70 per cent across the UK over the last 20 years). The valley woodlands are home to great spotted woodpecker, tree pipit, redstart and

pied flycatcher; look out for dippers on the rocks in fast-flowing rivers. There are good populations of roe deer; red and fallow deer numbers are on the increase. And finally there's the otter, now recorded on every river in Devon. Dartmoor's rivers have always been a particular stronghold, although you're only likely to come across evidence of otters' presence in the form of spraint (dung) or footprints on riverbanks.

Since the mid-19th century the predominant sheep breed on the commons has been the Scottish Blackface, although strenuous efforts are being made to secure the future of traditional Dartmoor breeds such as the Whiteface and Greyface Dartmoor. Cattle will be seen all along the route: black Galloways, humbug-striped Belted Galloways, native chestnut-coloured South Devons (more likely to be seen on the southern half, in the summer months) and deep red-brown Red Ruby Devon (the North Devon).

Dartmoor's semi-wild ponies are justifiably famous and endorsed by the National Park Authority, who chose a pony for their logo in 1951. In response to market conditions, numbers of ponies on the moor have reduced from a peak of 30,000 in the 1950s to around 1500 today. Several stages of the Dartmoor Way cross commons to which herds are leared (see 'Encounters with livestock' below). Most will be traditional Dartmoor Hill Ponies, a small and hardy type that has evolved over

STAGE 1

Ivybridge to Shipley Bridge

Start	Ivy Bridge on Harford Road, Ivybridge (SX 636 562)
Finish	Shipley Bridge (SX 680 628)
Distance	10 miles (16km)
Total ascent	2445ft (620m)
Time	5hr
Terrain	Steady ascent to Harford Moor; two sections of unsigned moorland; quiet lanes, field paths; one rocky descent towards end
Refreshments	Cafés and pubs in Ivybridge; Horse & Groom pub, Bittaford; Clubhouse at Wrangaton Golf Course; pubs and café in South Brent (off route); refreshments van, Shipley Bridge (seasonal)
Public toilets	Ivybridge (Glanvilles Mill car park), Bittaford (viaduct), Shipley Bridge (car park)
Public transport	For Ivybridge: mainline railway (London Paddington to Penzance) and bus services to Ashburton, Buckfastleigh, Exeter, Plymouth, Totnes; none available at Shipley Bridge
Parking	Ivybridge (pay & display) or roadside on Station Road near start, roadside on Cole Lane near Stowford Bridge (½ mile from start), Shipley Bridge (pay & display)
Accommodation	Ivybridge, Wrangaton, South Brent
Note	There is no public access to Wrangaton Golf Course from the route below Western Beacon, necessitating a detour via the B3213 (pavement) and Bittaford

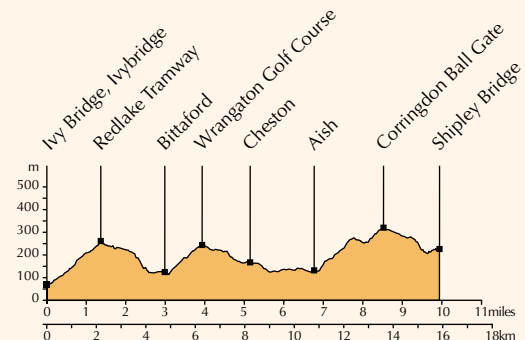
The first stage of the Dartmoor Way runs from Ivybridge (the largest town on the route) to Shipley Bridge on the River Avon below the Avon Dam Reservoir. Stage 1 is a great introduction, incorporating a typical mix of what the walker can expect to experience along the whole route as they circumnavigate the moor: open moorland with far-reaching views, quiet lanes running between ancient hedgebanks, gentle field paths and steep-sided wooded valleys. The official start is at the picturesque Ivy Bridge, a single-span granite bridge located on the corner of four ancient parishes:

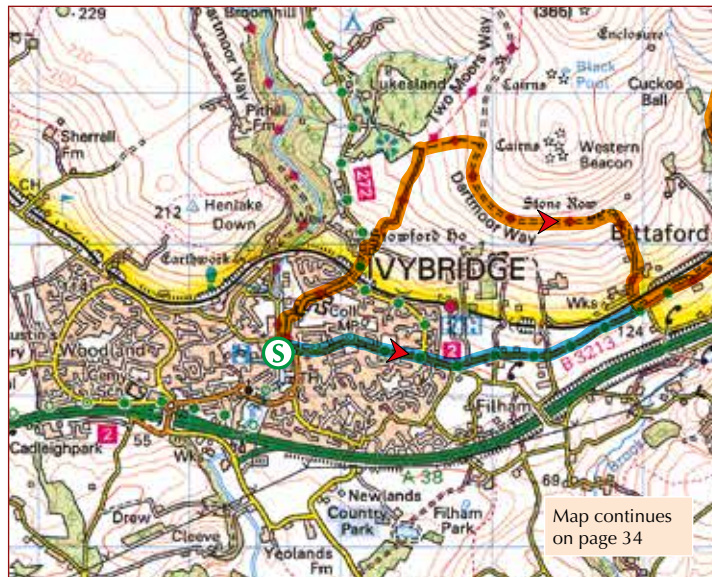
Ermington, Ugborough, Cornwood and Harford. Walkers get a taste of Dartmoor 'proper' within the first couple of miles, as the route rounds the southern slopes of Western Beacon (1095ft/334m) and again towards the end of the stage as Aish Ridge and the southern slopes of Brent Fore Hill are crossed. Both these moorland stretches can be avoided if the cloud is down: alternatives for poor visibility are described below.

A short there-and-back detour about two thirds through can be made to the attractive village of South Brent.

IVYBRIDGE

The original hamlet developed at a crossing point of the River Erme – once spanned by a 13th-century clapper bridge – which rises high on Dartmoor and enters the English Channel at Bigbury Bay. The settlement later became a staging post on the London to Plymouth road; the railway arrived in 1848. Ivybridge further developed as a mill town during the 19th century, utilising the fast-flowing waters of the Erme, and officially became a town in 1977, four years after the opening of the A38 bypass. The Watermark (local information) is down in the town below New Bridge, which was built in the early 19th century to carry the main Exeter to Plymouth road; the current Ivy Bridge dates from the 17th century. Ivybridge marks the start of the Two Moors Way long-distance walking route, which is followed for 102 miles (188km) across Devon – with a brief foray into Somerset – to Lymnouth on the north coast.





The official start of the Dartmoor Way is on Harford Road by the medieval Ivy Bridge, which crosses the River Erme and was immortalised by the landscape artist J M W Turner in 1813. Information on how to access the start of the route from Ivybridge train station is provided under ‘Getting there and getting away’ in the Introduction.

Poor visibility option

Turn right down Harford Road, bearing left to meet the roundabout. Turn left on Exeter Road (B3213) and follow it to **Bittaford** (pavement all the way); the main route is joined ½ mile before the railway viaduct is reached.

Main route

From the bridge head up Harford Road (the River Erme is on the left), passing the impressive buildings of the former Stowford Paper Mills; the first paper mill here was built in 1787. The business closed in late 2013, and much



of the site is now converted for residential use. Ascend past Ivybridge Community College; at the top cross Cole Lane to reach Stowford Bridge Cross and enter Dartmoor National Park (note the Two Moors Way marker stone and Dartmoor National Park sign).

Cross the **railway line** via Stowford Bridge Cross and head up Harford Lane. Just past the entrance to Stowford Farm turn right on a track that soon bears left and ascends steadily to reach Harford Moor (information board) via Stowford Moor Gate. ▶

Various grassy ways stretch across the bracken-covered slopes ahead. The Two Moors Way takes the middle of three broad paths, but the Dartmoor Way bears half-right on a narrower path that ascends to meet the old Redlake Tramway.

The **Redlake Tramway** officially opened in 1911 and was built to carry workers and materials to china clay workings at Redlake and Leftlake Mires;

The lower slopes of Western Beacon, near the top of the Cantrell incline

The route is not waymarked from this point until it leaves the moor en route to the B3213.



clay was transported from the moorland workings to the processing plant by pipeline. The narrow-gauge line ran for 8¼ miles (13.5km) from the Cantrell Works to the Red Lake railhead, 1475ft (450m) above sea level; by the early 1930s supplies were exhausted and the track removed.

Turn right along the level trackbed, soon curving left around the southern slopes of **Western Beacon**, with lovely views across South Devon.

A long straight stretch (during which the chimney of the former Cantrell china clay processing works can be seen below) leads to a broad level grassy area, the former railway turntable. Granite revetments to the right mark the head of the steam-powered cable incline which was used to haul freight up to the railway.

About 100m further on bear right off the trackbed to find a gate onto a lane which descends very steeply, passes under the railway bridge and meets the **B3213**.

Cross over with care; turn left to reach the railway viaduct at **Bittaford**. Cross the B3213 and turn right, crossing two lanes, then turn left up Wrangaton Road, ascending steeply past the 19th-century Methodist Chapel. Turn first left on a dead-end lane, Hillside. On reaching a gate continue on a public footpath that ascends past buildings at **Moorhaven Village** (formerly Plymouth Borough Lunatic Asylum, built in 1885). The way is clearly signed up the access lane, soon passing Blackadon Farm (holiday cottages). Continue up an enclosed path to reach **Wrangaton Golf Course** (founded in 1895). It's good to be back within striking distance of the moor: Western Beacon is to the left, and Ugborough Beacon rises above the greens and fairways ahead.

▶ Turn right, soon bearing left to skirt a green and cross a leat – a man-made water channel – then pick up the lower boundary again. Cross a permissive brideway (red-topped posts); on meeting a surfaced path turn left. Pass the clubhouse; on reaching Wrangaton Moor Gate, then head down Golf Links Road to a staggered crossroads at Marwoods Cross.

A line of blue-topped poles marks the onward route along the lower edge of the golf course.

Turn left, towards South Brent. Pyramidal Brent Hill is in view ahead.

At **Shute Cross** bear left, towards Owley; in the little hamlet of **Cheston**, at Cheston Cross, keep straight on. At a fork keep right on a little-used and descending lane which deteriorates to a rough track. Pass Lady's Wood, cross single-arched Pennaton Bridge over the **Glaze Brook** and ascend to a T-junction.

A small, beautiful woodland, **Lady's Wood** is Devon Wildlife Trust's oldest nature reserve: the charity, established in 1962, now has nearly sixty reserves scattered across the county. The woodland has a wonderful display of bluebells in springtime, and is a stronghold for the hazel dormouse.

Turn right; the lane ascends gently, then starts to descend. Look out for a slotted granite gatepost by a huge oak tree on the left; here follow a footpath through a gate, and along the left edge of a field – the railway line comes into view. Cross a stile and a second field to find another stile onto a lane.

Turn left; pass **Great Aish Barn** (Great Aish Farm dates from at least the 11th century). Opposite a white cottage turn right through a gate on a footpath to Lydia Bridge. Head half-left across the field to cross a big stone stile; walk through three more fields, linked by stiles, to reach a lane. ◀



The River Avon at Lydia Bridge

For facilities in South Brent turn right; cross Lydia Bridge, then turn right and follow the River Avon downstream.



Lydia Mill, by Lydia Bridge, was once owned by the family of the renowned Dartmoor writer William Crossing (see Stage 9). The pretty little village of **South Brent** sits on the mainline railway (the station closed in 1964) below Brent Hill (Old English *brant* = steep). Before the 19th century and the coming of the turnpike roads most of the village's trade (largely wool) was transported by packhorse. The church of St Petroc – an early Celtic saint – largely dates from the 15th century and has a massive Norman tower. The church is said to be one of the finest in Devon.

South Brent's lovely church of St Petroc can be visited on a short detour

Turn left, ascending steeply, to reach cottages in the hamlet of **Aish**.

Poor visibility option

Stay on the lane, heading up the Avon valley, towards Shipley Bridge. The main route is joined less than ½ mile from the end of the stage (at the bottom of Diamond Lane).



Brent Hill seen from the slopes of Brent Fore Hill in early autumn

Nearby can be found the remains of a Neolithic chambered tomb (marked 'Long Barrow' on the OS 1:25,000 map), the only known chambered long barrow on Dartmoor.

Main route

Turn left up the tarmac way. It's a long and steady uphill haul, but at last the way bears right and reduces to a rough track. Pass through a gate onto the open ground of **Aish Ridge**.

Follow the grassy bridlepath left, with glorious views towards Ugborough Beacon half-left, with the gentle swell of Corringdon Ball (ball = rounded hill) ahead. Descend between stands of gorse to the boundary hedgebank, then bear right on a track that drops under trees. Pass through two gates; follow the now rocky path along the east side of **Corringdon Ball**, eventually dropping

through two more gates, the second flanked by monumental stone gateposts (**Corringdon Ball Gate**), to reach common land. ◀

Turn half-right across the common, following the bridlepath (signed Shipley Bridge) over rough ground – it's unclear in places. Head for a wall that curves in from the right, enclosing Merrifield Plantation, then keep straight on through a broad walled corridor, gently downhill. Drop to cross Badworthy Leat, then pass through a gate onto steep and rocky Diamond 'Lane', a wet and at times tricky descent, to reach a lane.

Diamond Lane was part of the ancient track followed by monks from Buckfast Abbey to Plympton Priory. Some say it is thus named because of the diamond-shaped engravings on some boulders, intended to make the way less slippery.

Turn left. Cross Zeal Bridge over **Bala Brook** then head uphill to cross a cattle grid. The car park at **Shipley Bridge** (see Stage 2) marks the end of Stage 1.

ROUTE IN REVERSE

With your back to the car park turn right down the lane. Cross a cattle grid and **Bala Brook** then turn right up a rocky bridlepath (Diamond Lane). Follow the bridlepath along the lower edge of Brent Fore Hill; on reaching a signpost by **Corringdon Ball Gate** turn left. The bridlepath heads south past Corringdon Ball, then bears left across **Aish Ridge**. Head down the access lane to reach a T-junction by cottages in **Aish**.

Turn right, downhill; where the lane bends sharp left turn right over a stile. Follow the footpath across four fields to reach a lane; turn left, then right to find a footpath that crosses two fields.

Reach a lane and turn right; take the first lane left ('Unsuitable for wide vehicles'). The lane deteriorates to a track; keep ahead at the junction to pass through the little hamlet of Cheston, signed to Wrangaton. At **Shute Cross** turn right; at Marwoods Cross turn right up Golf Links Road. Follow the signed footpath past the **golf course clubhouse**, then follow blue-topped poles along the lower edge of the course, crossing a bridlepath.

At the next path signpost turn left; follow the footpath past Blackadon Farm and **Moorhaven village**, then down Hillside. At the T-junction turn right and descend to meet the **B3213** by the railway viaduct in Bittaford. Turn right; cross the main road and turn right along the pavement. Look out for the first lane on the right; cross the B3213 and ascend steeply past the old Cantrell works. On reaching the moor bear left to join the old Redlake Tramway, and head west. Where the trackbed curves right around the slopes of Western Beacon and starts to head north, bear left towards a gate at the far end of the wall seen below, concealed by clumps of gorse. Pass through Stowford Moor Gate and head down the track; at the lane turn left to cross Harford Bridge and Cole Lane. Head down Harford Road (unsigned) opposite to reach the **Ivy Bridge**.



- 109-mile circular route, plus the 23-mile High Moor Link
- skirting Dartmoor, England's largest granite moorland
 - Haytor Rocks, the Teign Gorge and Castle Drogo

The Dartmoor Way is a 109-mile (175km) trail around the edge of southwest England's largest national park. From open moorland, wooded gorges and Devon's distinctive tors to picturesque villages and farmland, the fully waymarked route offers a taste of the county's wilder landscapes without venturing far from civilisation.

The trail is ideal for spring and autumn walking, when mild weather provides good conditions, and wild flowers or the rusty colours of foliage are at their best. Short climbs and descents occur on many stages, but the route is suitable for most walkers.

- described in 10 stages, which can be adjusted to give a one-week or more leisurely schedule
- packed with notes on where to eat and stay, getting around, and local history, ecology and geology
- includes 1:50,000 OS maps and low-level detours in case of bad weather
- 2-stage High Moor Link can be used to create shorter circular loops



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