



Devon's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

This leaflet is part of a series of themed trails in Devon's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); helping you get out there, enjoy, and learn more about the landscape around you.

Trail themes include

- Coast in Conflict,
- Man and the Landscape,
- Trade and Settlement and
- A Colourful Landscape.

Have a look at these websites for further leaflets in the series, and ideas for other ways of enjoying yourself out and about!

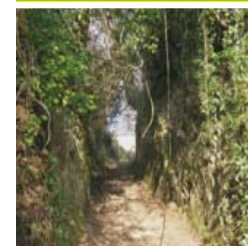
See www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk,
www.southdevonaonb.org.uk and
www.discoverdevon.com

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the Government's designation for Britain's finest landscapes; there are 40 in England and Wales. Together with Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, Devon's 5 AONBs cover 35% of the county. AONBs share a common commitment to secure sustainable living landscapes. Each AONB has been designated for special attention because of the quality of their flora, fauna, cultural and historical heritage, as well as beautiful scenery. Their care has been entrusted to local authorities, organisations, community groups, individuals who live and work in them and those who value them.

Please recycle this leaflet by passing it onto a friend when you have finished with it. Don't let Devon go to waste.

Combe Martin

- **Start/Finish:** Kiln Car Park, Combe Martin
- **Distance:** 4 miles (6.5 km)
- **Circular walk:** Yes
- **Grade:** Moderate
- **Terrain:** Green lanes, farm tracks, public footpaths, country lanes. Going fairly even underfoot
- **Obstacles and steep gradients:** 2 stiles; 1 steep ascent
- **Accessibility:** This route is not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs
- **Public transport:** Bus Service 3 to Combe Martin from Barnstaple & Ilfracombe. For further details contact Devon Traveline 0871 200 22 33 or www.traveline.info
- **Toilets:** Public toilets at Kiln Car Park, Combe Martin
- **Parking:** Kiln Car Park, Combe Martin. Pay and display
- **Other Facilities:** Public payphones at Kiln Car Park and at junction of Corner Lane and High Street. General store on High Street, Combe Martin
- **Accommodation:** Please contact Combe Martin Tourist Information Centre 01271 883319 www.visitcombemartin.co.uk or www.discoverdevon.com
- **OS map:** Explorer 139
- **Grid ref:** SS 578472
- **Countryside Code:** When walking in the AONB always follow the Countryside Code, which is dedicated to helping members of the public respect, protect and enjoy the countryside. Follow the link for more information www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk





Trade and Settlement

In the Early Stone Age Devon was sparsely populated by nomadic hunter-gatherers. Much has changed since then. The land has been permanently lived in through the later Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age; seen Roman invasion, Anglo-Saxon settlement, Viking raiders and Norman Conquest. These have all left their mark on the landscape, from Prehistoric barrows and Iron Age hillforts to Norman castles but the land has remained settled and farmed to the present day.

Through this succession of influence, and beyond, the Devon we see today has taken shape. Villages, hamlets and farms have evolved. Towns have grown up, and centres of trade and power have developed, faded, and shifted.

This rural county has always had agriculture at its heart. But other industries have made their mark.

Men have long burrowed deep into the Devon earth to extract valuable tin, copper, silver, lead, and arsenic. Boat building, lime burning, cloth making, and the woollen trade all helped bring affluence. And Devon's stream sides are dotted with the old mills that once ground grain, or made paper and textiles. Lastly, we cannot forget the contribution made by Devon's 'free traders', the smugglers of old.

Meanwhile, Devon's coast has always provided the county with a portal to the wide world. For centuries, galleons, schooners, clippers and cutters have plied their trades in and out of the county's ports. There is even persuasive evidence that tin was being traded with visiting Phoenician and Greek galleys in the Bronze Age.

Today's Devon, home to three quarters of a million people, has roots sunk deep into a long and fascinating history.



Directions

1. From bottom of car park **(1)** near Information Centre turn left along Cross Street.
2. Bear left at road junction along main street. Take the second turning on the left, signed Public Footpath (before the shop) and follow a narrow lane **(2)**.
3. Follow Rosea Bridge Lane for 120m. After the Old Forge turn right over stream signed 'Public Footpath to Hangman Hills'.



4. Cross straight over at road and up footpath signed 'Rocky Lane to Knap Down'.
 5. At the road bear left. Follow lane up long, steady climb **(3,4)**.
 6. After a mile, at the brow of the hill, turn right past Knappdown Farm sign to follow public footpath down wide track. After 100m fork right **(5)**. Follow green lane down hill **(6)**.
 7. Green lane finally becomes road into village. Go straight across at junction with High St **(7)**, and walk along Church St.
 8. Bear right along Bowling Green Lane, and then left over stream **(8)** and up through churchyard to left of church.
- By church entrance turn left through lych-gate and immediately right along Park Lane, signed 'Public Footpath'.
9. Park lane **(9)** becomes track. Near top of rise, beyond Westpark Farm sign at gate, bear right off track, following yellow waymarker arrow.
 10. Follow footpath over stile, across field **(10)** past old lime kiln **(11)**, through gate and down into woods.
 11. Turn right at edge of caravan site and follow zigzag path down through woods. Turn right along track at the bottom, then follow lane.
 12. Turn left at junction to follow main road down through village **(12)**.



13. After 300m fork right down Cross St, signed for Car Park and Tourist Information Centre. Car park is 100m on right.

Points of Interest

1. Isolated by land, Combe Martin always looked to the sea, and the beachfront which bustled with coastal vessels in the past. Old steps leading up from the beach are known as the Phoenician Steps, and it is even said that Phoenician galleys came here to trade 3000 years ago.

Laver used to be gathered on beaches here, to be sold and eaten. The name of this seaweed comes from the amount of washing, or 'laving', it needed before being consumed.

Kiln Car Park was formerly the site of a lime kiln, burning limestone and coal brought by ship from South Wales. The lime produced was used to 'sweeten' the acid Devon soils, and for lime wash and mortar. Combe Martin was known for its production of shoemaker's thread in the 17th century, and this area of the village used to be called Cobblers Park.

2. This long lane passes through a medieval strip field system. The long skinny enclosures can be clearly seen below to the right as you climb. This lower stretch of the road is called Shute Lane, a 'shute' being the area between strip fields where a team of oxen turned whilst ploughing.

Further up the lane, the beech hedge to the left is a telltale sign of the 19th moorland enclosures.



3. The village you look down upon from here began life as Marhuscombe, or 'Mary's Combe' (a 'combe' is the name for a small wooded valley in Devon). Whoever Mary was, she lost her naming rights after the Norman Conquest. The victorious William the Conqueror gave the village and land around it to Martin of Tours, and his name stuck.

Combe Martin's population has fluctuated over the centuries, following the fortunes of the area's mines. Numbers are said to have been swollen at various times by influxes of immigrant miners from Cumberland, Derbyshire, Wales, Portugal, and Spain.

4. The ivy clad chimney of the old pumping house is almost all that remains visible of Knap Down Silver Mine, which closed in 1873.

Silver mining has taken place in Combe Martin since at least 1292, although some think that the Romans, and maybe even the Phoenicians, were digging here much earlier. The entire local area is criss crossed with old mine shafts and drainage 'adits', some of which run right under the village itself.

5. Just over the bank to your left, around where a short length of concrete drain has been built into the middle of the track, another mine known as Harris's Shaft lies concealed in the tangle of undergrowth.

Close to this shaft is Faye's Mine, which was worked successfully during the 16th Century. A fine cup of silver from the mine was later melted down to create three tankards that are still held and used at Mansion House, seat of the Mayor of London.

6. Here the route crosses what is thought to be the longest village street in England. The street changes its name 5 times in the course of its two mile length.



Combe Martin developed from two settlements, one down by the beach (Seaside), and another clustered around the church (Cross). As it was always easier to build down in the valley bottom rather than excavate the slopes, so the village grew into the linear form it now takes.

7. The stream you pass over in front of the church is called the River UMBER. Its name derives from the iron

manganese ore of the same name, which was mined locally for use in paint making.

8. The distinctive white hotel across the field here is called the Pack o' Cards. Resembling a house of cards, it was built in 1690 by one George Ley to celebrate a big win at cards. With four floors to represent the suits, it has 13 doors on each floor, one for each card in the suit, and 13 fireplaces. The property was originally built with a window for each card in the pack, 52 in all, on a plot measuring 52ft by 52ft!

9. Many of the south facing fields across the valley were once given over to growing strawberries. Combe Martin's famous fruits were once exported throughout the Westcountry and beyond.

Hemp, renowned as the best in Devon, was also grown here. After harvesting, it had to be rotted in stagnant water for ten



days to soften the fibres, which was a pretty smelly business by all accounts. The hemp was then used to make rope and thread.

- This well preserved lime kiln was one of 18 such kilns in and around the village. Combe Martin was one of only a handful of places in Devon where limestone was found, which explains this extraordinarily high number of kilns. The quarrying and burning of limestone played an important part in the economic life of the village.
- Each year a 'hobby horse' parade spills down the street here to celebrate the 'Hunting of the Earl of Rone'. This festive event commemorates the capture of the son of the Irish Earl of Tyrone. He fled here from Ireland back in the reign of James I, and was apprehended in nearby Lady's Wood.

The annual hunting and general light hearted humiliation of the 'Earl' culminates in the unfortunate chap being 'shot' several times and thrown in the sea!

Refreshments

These establishments specialise in local food and/or are close to the route.

Ye Olde George and Dragon, Castle St, Combe Martin

01271 882282

Serves food lunchtime and evenings

Dolphin Inn, Seaside Hill, Combe Martin

01271 883424

Serves food lunchtime and evening. Local seafood specialities and morning breakfasts

Foc's'le Inn, Seaside, Combe Martin

01271 883354

Serves meals and snacks, including children's menu. Outdoor seating at back of beach

