

## Walk No. 5 - Devon's Little Switzerland

This walk is based on the scenic little town of Lynmouth, on Devon's Exmoor coast. A walk of contrasts, its outward leg follows the valley of the East Lyn River while the return, on the route of the Two Moors Way and Tarka Trail, is a high, airy walk along the valley top.

### Fact File

Lynmouth is accessible by bus. Services run from Barnstaple, Ilfracombe, Minehead or Taunton. For up-to-date travel information simply call the Traveline on 0870 608 2 608 or visit [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)

Walk Length: 8km / 5 miles  
One long steady climb of 100m / 330ft  
One short sharp climb of 60m / 200ft

OS Maps: Explorer (1:25000) no OL 9 Exmoor  
Landranger (1:50000) no 180 Barnstaple and Ilfracombe

Refreshments: Lynmouth (all facilities); Watersmeet (café and toilets - seasonal, April - October).

### The Walk

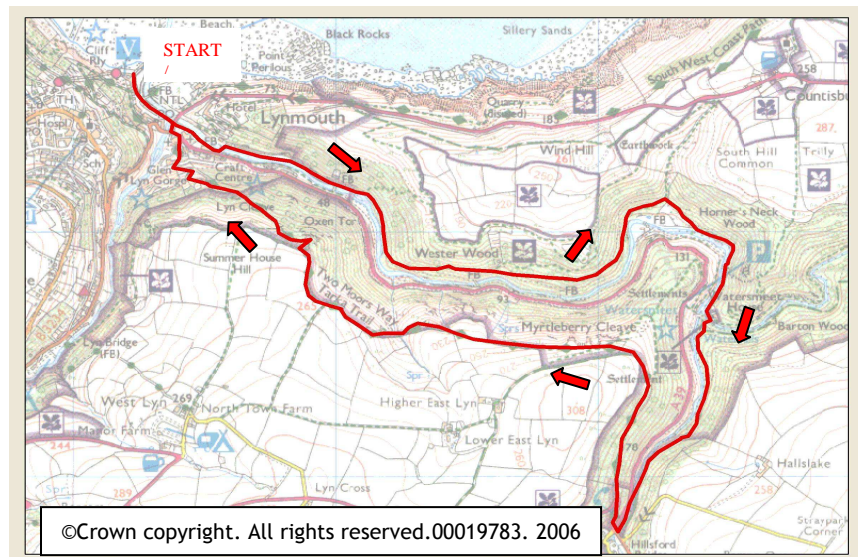
From the little tower at Lynmouth Harbour walk inland, alongside the harbour.

Lynmouth was "discovered" as a scenic and romantic location in the early 19th century. The poet Southey and the Shelleys were among the early visitors who praised the area, calling it

"England's Little Switzerland". The tower at the harbour, known as the Rhenish Tower, was built at this time in imitation of similar towers on the Rhine. It was rebuilt after the flood disaster of 1952. The steep hill on the right, next to the pub, was the original main road into Lynmouth, giving some idea how isolated it was then.

Continue walking inland, past the footbridge, alongside the rocky River Lyn.

At the bridge at the road junction cross the road and walk along the path alongside the river.



Note the commemorative plaque on the bridge. At this point the East and West Lyn rivers meet. The route now follows the valley of the East Lyn, a deep and wooded valley, or “cleave”.

**Cross the next footbridge over the river, at the end of the car park, then turn right along the lane and continue alongside the river. At the end of the lane continue on the footpath ahead into East Lyn Cleave.**

**At the next footbridge keep to the riverside path, signposted to Watersmeet.**

The cleave is important as an area of ancient oak woodland, one of the largest remaining areas of semi-natural ancient woodland in the South West.

**Continue following the signs to Watersmeet, re-crossing the river at another footbridge.**

Further along the path notice the scree slopes on the other side of the river. The scree is said to date to the last Ice Age, when glaciers halted here; it is the most southerly ice-formed scree in England.

**Shortly after the scree slopes, the National Trust seasonal café at Watersmeet comes into view. Keep on the path to climb, then descend to two footbridges.**

There are two rivers which meet here, to give the location its name. The second of the two footbridges crosses the East Lyn, while the first crosses its tributary, the Hoar Oak Water.

The Watersmeet café and shop, open April - October, was built in the 19th century as a fishing lodge when the area was becoming fashionable.

**The route now follows the Hoar Oak Water. Take the steps which climb on the right immediately after the first footbridge, signed to Hillsford Bridge, then continue ahead parallel to this fast - flowing river.**

A little way along the path a short diversion on the right goes to a waterfall viewpoint.

These valley bottom paths are characterised by the sound of running water and birdsong. Keep an eye open on the river for dippers on stones or the river bed.

**The path continues to climb steadily until it reaches Hillsford Bridge, where the road from the Simonsbath direction crosses the Hoar Oak Water.**

**Go through the gate and turn right over the bridge.**

At the road junction ahead the walk joins the route of the Two Moors Way and the Tarka Trail, two of Devon’s network of long - distance walking routes. The Two Moors

Way is the major north-south route, crossing Dartmoor and Exmoor and the quiet country between, while the Tarka Trail follows the wanderings of Tarka the Otter in the book of that name.

**After the bridge cross the main road ahead to the grass verge with the “steep hill” and “road bend” signs; walk up this to the sharp bend at the top. At the top follow the path ahead signed to Lynmouth, with a MW symbol on the post (the symbol of the Two Moors Way).**

The path climbs through woodland to emerge at Myrtleberry, an Iron Age settlement site. It is one of a number in the area, chosen for their defensive strength and views of potential attackers.

From here on there are spectacular views over the East Lyn Cleave, other side cleaves, the moorland fringe and the sea ahead.

**Keep following the MW marked path, signed to Lynmouth.**

Very soon the distinctive wooded dome of Hollerday Hill comes into view ahead with the town of Lynton sheltering below. Then Lynmouth and its harbour become visible, at the foot of the hill below. The twists and turns of the East Lyn are clearly laid out below. Even at this height, the sound of running water can be heard from the valley.

**The path follows a series of steep zigzags down to cross a stream, then another series back up again, even higher.**

Views into the East Lyn Cleave, river and road, are superb from here.

**As the sea gets closer, look out for the signpost indicating Lynmouth and MW on the slightly fainter path to the right. Go down here.**

Superb views over Lynton and Lynmouth open out from this path.

**Keep to the path as it descends, sometimes quite steeply, and with the aid of some more zigzags. It eventually enters Lynmouth on a narrow enclosed path. After a gate the tarmac path is steep and often very slippery - take special care here.**

At the road at the bottom, notice the stone erected for the Two Moors Way opening in 1976.

**For the town centre and harbour turn left at the road, then right and immediately left at the road junction.**

### Further Information

Information on the Tarka Trail, the Two Moors Way and other walking routes in Devon are available from [www.discoverdevon.com](http://www.discoverdevon.com) and the Discover Devon Holiday Line 0870 608 5531.

Please quote:

DP311 - Discover Devon Walking - A complete guide to walking trails in Devon (free)

DP34 - Two Moors Way Information Leaflet (free)

DP15 - Two Moors Way Guide Book (£6.45 inc. p and p)

DP101 - Tarka Trail Information Leaflet (free)

DP102 - Tarka Trail Walkers' Guide Book (£3.50 inc. p and p)

Publications can also be ordered from Discover Devon Information Service, Westacott Rd, Barnstaple, EX32 8AW quoting references above.