

Beautiful Walks from the Blue Ball Inn

Walk No. 3

ARNOLD'S LINHAY WALK

Countisbury, Lynmouth, Myrtleberry Cleave, Watersmeet and Chisel Combe.

4.5 miles approx.

Walking time 3 to 3 ½ hours approx. (not including breaks)

OS 1:25,000 Sheet 64/74 Lynton and Lynmouth.

General information

This walk is on either defined rights of way or Permissive paths. The majority of the route is on land belonging to the National Trust and it is all within the Exmoor National Park. This is a walk that really exercises the leg muscles, not to mention the knees, as it includes steep descents and even steeper ascents! The start of the walk is the same route as that of walks no. 1 and 2 but it shortly turns steeply downhill to the edge of the East Lyn River and continues along the valley bottom to Lynmouth. This takes approximately one hour. From Lynmouth the next part of the walk zigzags steeply up the opposite side of the valley and continues along the top of Myrtleberry Cleave (dropping down the cleave and up again on the way) to above Watersmeet and then descends to the rivers edge at Watersmeet House. This part takes approx. one to one and a half hours. The final part of the walk starts along the river bank and then rises, more gently this time, back up to Countisbury again. The path surfaces are good but sturdy footwear is recommended to prevent slipping on the steep gradients.

The route:

Starting as for walks no 1 and no 2 leave The Blue Ball Inn (Grid reference 747496) and turn left down the road towards Lynmouth. Turn left again shortly after passing the National Trust Exmoor Base Camp through a gate with the Watersmeet estate sign on it. Take the right hand path the other side of the gate signed – (Lynmouth 1 ½ miles) and continue ahead on a grassy track around the base of the Iron Age fort on Wind Hill. Pass through a hunting gate and continue ahead, with steep woodland on the left hand side, until a division in the path is met beside a wooden bench. Turn left here and go downhill towards the East Lyn River below. This is Arnold's Linhay path.

A "Linhay" is the Devon term for an open fronted stock shelter usually with storage for hay above. A series of stone walled terraces in the wood above this path, Wester Wood, is where someone called Arnold is reputed to have kept Donkeys in the late 19th century.

Continue on down this path until it joins the path running alongside the East Lyn River. Turn right here and follow the route to Lynmouth passing the bottom of the Sparrows walk and Woodside Bridge. Continue ahead on the right bank of the river, passing a row of cottages and houses with attractive gardens on the right.

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Walk No. 3 Continued...

On the opposite side of the river is the site of several cottages that were destroyed by the 1952 Lynmouth flood.

Turn left and take the footbridge over the river, turning right on the other side to continue along the path into the first turning on the left in front of the Bonnicott Hotel.

Walking time to this point approx. one hour.

On this side of Lynmouth there are shops for buying food and drink and there are also loos in the main car park.

Turn left up this narrow lane by the Bonnicott following the sign on the lamppost above-“Public footpath to summerhouse hill over the Cleaves”. Notice also the stone at the side of the path making the beginning/ end of the long distance path the Two Moors Way which links crosses Exmoor and Dartmoor and was opened in May 1976.

Follow the lane as it rises steeply between cottages until the point where the tarmac ends and it becomes a track. Continue ahead here (not through the 5 bar gate on the left!) as the path narrows and runs close beside a high wall on the right. Continue steeply uphill to a sign-post; follow the route to “Hillsford Bridge”, climbing steadily up this ancient track as it twists its way up the wooded side of the valley between old stone walls. As the route continues to rise so the view behind increases. On turning one of the sharp bends the route re-enters the National Trust Watersmeet estate and within yards the NT have provided a welcome bench to rest on!

Coming through this old woodland there can be seen the remains of “coppicing” a method of management of wood by cutting tress down to base “stools” every few years and utilising the poles so created for hurdles, fences etc.

Continue on uphill and as the path emerges from the trees there can be seen, on the opposite side of the valley, Beacon Tor with the grass covered top of Wind Hill behind. The outcrop of rock above and ahead is Oxen Tor. Continue up the path until it reaches this outcrop where there is another sign-post; follow the sign to “Hillsford Bridge and Watersmeet”. There is a last steep pull up to meet the path running along the top of the cleave. Here there is a three way signpost, take the route to the left following the “Watersmeet 1 ¾” sign, and walk along the top of the valley enjoying a stretch of level path and some lovely views!

The luxury of level walking does not last for long on this route and soon the path descends steeply down to the bottom of a combe, crosses a stream and climbs steadily back up to the other side to the top again. When nearly at the top of the climb, where there is a signpost-“footpath” look back across the valley to see Countisbury framed in a divide in the hills. It almost makes the climb worthwhile!

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Walk No. 3 Continued...

Continue ahead along the path and pass through a hunting gate to cross the top of Myrtleberry cleave and, shortly, pass through a second hunting gate on the other side. There is a signpost here-continue to follow the directions to "Watersmeet and Hillsford Bridge". The path runs level for a time, still following the top of the valley steep drops on the left to the river below and spectacular views back down the valley to Lynmouth.

Just after passing the top of a deeply wooded combe on the left the path divides and there a signpost. Turn left following the sign to "Watersmeet". (Grid reference 740485). The route goes down a flight of steps, crosses the remains of an iron age fort and then continues down a steep path through the trees to join the main road just above Watersmeet. Go across the road with care into a small lay-by opposite and take the signed path from there down to Watersmeet and Watersmeet house.

Walking time from Countisbury- two to two and a half hours.

Watersmeet house, which belongs to the National Trust makes a good break point on this walk. Here refreshments can be obtained in season, there is a small gift shop and, around the back of the house are the loos of very high standard- including baby changing facilities in the men's! This very attractive house was built in the 1830's as the hunting and fishing lodge of the Glenthorne estate. In the lawned area in front of the building is a very large and old Monterey pine; the other rare pine trees were planted by the Halliday family, who owned the estate, in the "Pinetum" on the coast below county gate.

The route continues downstream keeping on the right hand bank and following the National Trust sign to Lynmouth. Do not cross over the curved stone bridge to the other side of the river but continue ahead along the path signposted to "Countisbury"

Continue ahead until the path draws level with another attractive house, Myrtleberry Cottage, on the other side of the river. Here there is a sign on the right hand side pointing uphill-"footpath to Countisbury" (grid reference 743491) follow this sign and climb steadily up this combe which is called Chisel Combe. Continue climbing up the wide grassy path until meeting the gate by the roadside at the top of the combe; the same gate that was the starting point for this walk. Go through the gate turn right and return thankfully to The Blue Ball Inn

Walking time from Watersmeet- half to three quarters of an hour.

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