



Walk 11. Parracombe to Lynton via the Heddon Valley.

- 9.5 miles, ascents of 830 metres and descents of 915 metres. 4 hours 15 minutes constant walking, allow at least 6 hours, more if visiting Woody Bay.

Terrain: Fields, uneven and well-surfaced paths. ! Cliff paths above steep drops: alternative route described in the text.

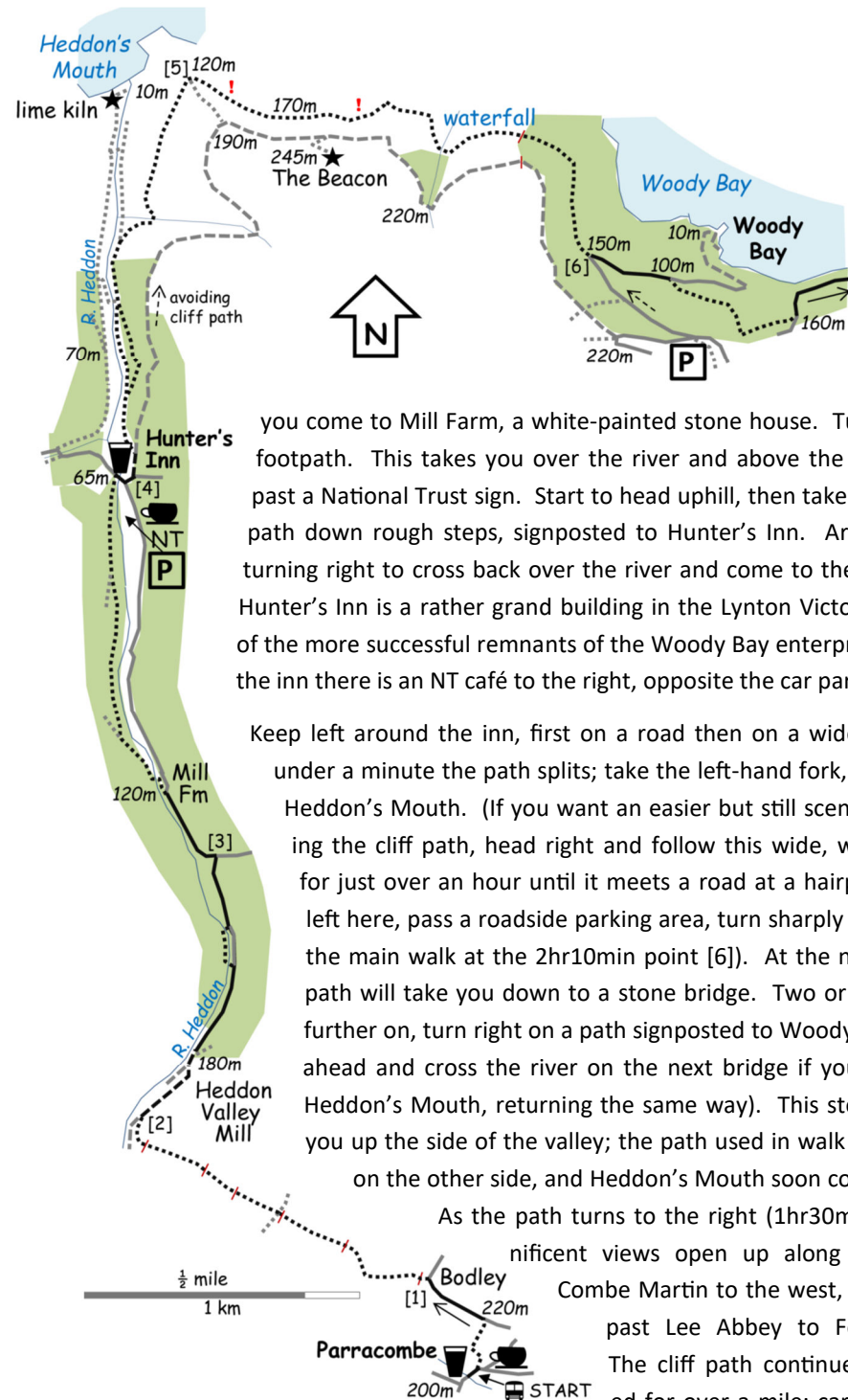
Access: Park in the main car park in Lynton, off Castle Hill (SS 721 493, near EX35 6JD, £) and take bus 310 to Parracombe (the bus stops at the entrance to the car park and in front of The Studio, almost opposite the path to the cliff railway). For the alternative walks, park at Hunter's Inn (SS 655 482, EX31 4PY). Bus 310 goes from Lynton to Barnstaple via Parracombe on weekdays and Saturdays.

Map: Croydecycle 54 Lynton Lynmouth with Hunters Inn, or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: In Parracombe, Hunter's Inn, seasonal tea garden at Lee Bay, and in Lynton.

THIS IS A WALK OF CONTRASTS, starting in the pretty medieval village of Parracombe, taking you across fields, along the River Heddon and into the increasingly steep Heddon Valley. After a fairly stiff climb the walk continues on a high cliff path to Woody Bay and on to Lee Bay. The final stretch heads through the Valley of the Rocks before finishing in the rather genteel little Victorian town of Lynton. Optional detours descend to Heddon's Mouth and to Woody Bay. Woody Bay was the site of some over-ambitious plans in late Victorian times to create a resort to rival Lynton and Lynmouth. They were never fully realised and the entrepreneur behind them, the former colonel and solicitor Benjamin Lake, finished bankrupt and jailed for fraud. Overall the walk is fairly strenuous, although the only long uphill stretch is the ascent out of the Heddon Valley. The reward is one of the most scenic stretches of coast in England.

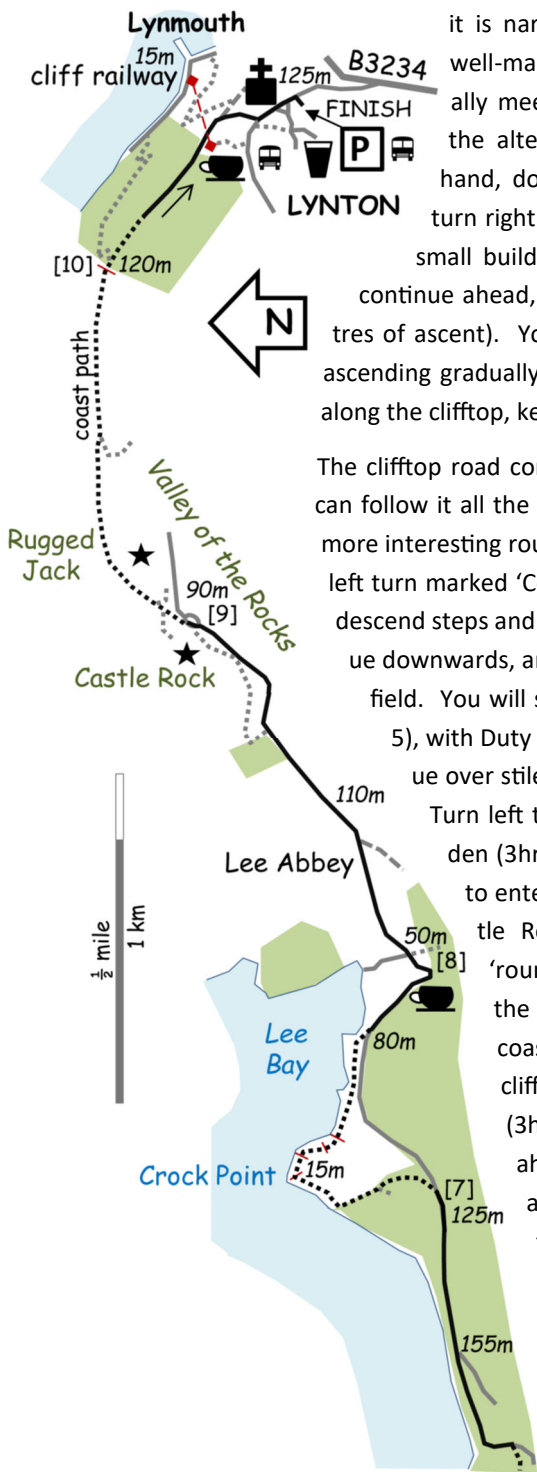
The bus from Lynton stops just before the Fox & Goose in Parracombe. Go over the bridge and approach the white house facing you, keeping to its left on a narrow alley signposted as a footpath to Bodley. Follow it left as it narrows. At the top turn left on a road, following it to a hamlet of stone-built houses (7mins, [1]). Bear left just past Bodley Cottage to take the footpath through the gate ahead. Follow this enclosed grassy (and possibly muddy) path down and up hill to its end, then go through a gate marked by a yellow-topped post. Keep along the left-hand side of the field, passing through three more gates; at a fourth join a stony track heading downwards alongside the River Heddon. Keep right at a wider track (25mins, [2]), and again at a surfaced driveway. Follow this alongside the river until you are directed to the left over a footbridge. The path soon crosses back again, next to a high metal gate; continue along the drive until it meets a road (40mins, [3]). Turn left here, keeping to the road until



you come to Mill Farm, a white-painted stone house. Turn left on to a footpath. This takes you over the river and above the opposite bank past a National Trust sign. Start to head uphill, then take the right-hand path down rough steps, signposted to Hunter's Inn. Arrive at a road, turning right to cross back over the river and come to the inn (1hr, [4]). Hunter's Inn is a rather grand building in the Lynton Victorian style, one of the more successful remnants of the Woody Bay enterprise. As well as the inn there is an NT café to the right, opposite the car park.

Keep left around the inn, first on a road then on a wide footpath. In under a minute the path splits; take the left-hand fork, a bridleway to Heddon's Mouth. (If you want an easier but still scenic route avoiding the cliff path, head right and follow this wide, well-made path for just over an hour until it meets a road at a hairpin bend; keep left here, pass a roadside parking area, turn sharply left, and rejoin the main walk at the 2hr10min point [6]). At the next fork either path will take you down to a stone bridge. Two or three minutes further on, turn right on a path signposted to Woody Bay (continue ahead and cross the river on the next bridge if you want to visit Heddon's Mouth, returning the same way). This steep path takes you up the side of the valley; the path used in walk 9 runs high up on the other side, and Heddon's Mouth soon comes into view.

As the path turns to the right (1hr30mins, [5]), magnificent views open up along the coast: to Combe Martin to the west, and eastwards past Lee Abbey to Foreland Point. The cliff path continues uninterrupted for over a mile; care is needed as



it is narrow and sometimes uneven, though always well-made. After passing a waterfall you will eventually meet a road at a hairpin bend (2hr10mins, [6]); the alternative route comes in here. Take the left-hand, downhill fork, but after three or four minutes turn right for Lynton (and New Zealand) on a path by a small building. (For an optional detour to Woody Bay continue ahead, and return to the same point; adds 100 metres of ascent). Your path rounds the head of a combe before ascending gradually to a narrow road: turn left here to follow it along the clifftop, keeping an eye out for the occasional car.

The clifftop road continues for over half a mile. If you wish you can follow it all the way back to the car park in Lynton, but for a more interesting route, soon after it leaves the cliffs look out for a left turn marked 'Coast Path' (2hr40mins, [7]). Take this path to descend steps and head through woods, pass a cowshed, continue downwards, and then bear right to follow the path around a field. You will soon have views over Lee Bay (visited in walk 5), with Duty Point Tower and Lee Abbey opposite. Continue over stiles and head uphill partly up steps to the road. Turn left to round a bend and pass a seasonal tea garden (3hr10mins, [8]), then walk uphill past Lee Abbey to enter the Valley of the Rocks. A massive tor, Castle Rock, looms above you to the left; at the 'roundabout' (3hr35mins, [9]) take a grass path to the left of the second tor, Rugged Jack, to join the coast path. This well-made path heads along the cliff edge and eventually comes to a gate (3hr55mins, [10]). Go through and continue ahead (a narrow zigzag path on the left immediately after the gate descends to the far end of the sea front at Lynmouth). The path widens then becomes a road passing hotels and guest-houses. Cross over the Cliff Railway, keep right, and then come to a T-junction in Lynton: the car park and bus stop are on the left just beyond the church.

See walk 12 for a circular route between Hunter's Inn and Woody Bay, walk 13 for Woody Bay and Lee Bay and walk 32 for a short route around Parracombe.



Heddon's Mouth

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