



Walk 15. The East and West Lyn gorges.

- 6 miles, ascents and descents of 530 metres. 2 hours 50 minutes continuous walking, allow 3½-4 hours.

Terrain: Mainly on paths, with some steep and possibly slippery sections. ! Some parts of this walk are above steep drops, but the paths are well-made and provided you look where you are walking there is little actual danger other than in strong winds or icy conditions.

Access: Parking at either end of Lynmouth (SS 724 494, EX35 6ES or SS 719 497, EX35 6HJ, both £; or there is free on-street parking between November and Easter). Parking in Lynmouth is now very expensive outside of winter, and an alternative is to start from Hillsford Bridge where there is a National Trust car park ('Combe Park', SS 740 477, at point [3] of the walk). Lynton and Lynmouth can be reached by bus 309/310 from Barnstaple. The Exmoor Explorer bus also connects Lynmouth with Ilfracombe, Combe Martin, Porlock and Minehead.

Map: Croydecycle 04 or 54 Lynton & Lynmouth or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

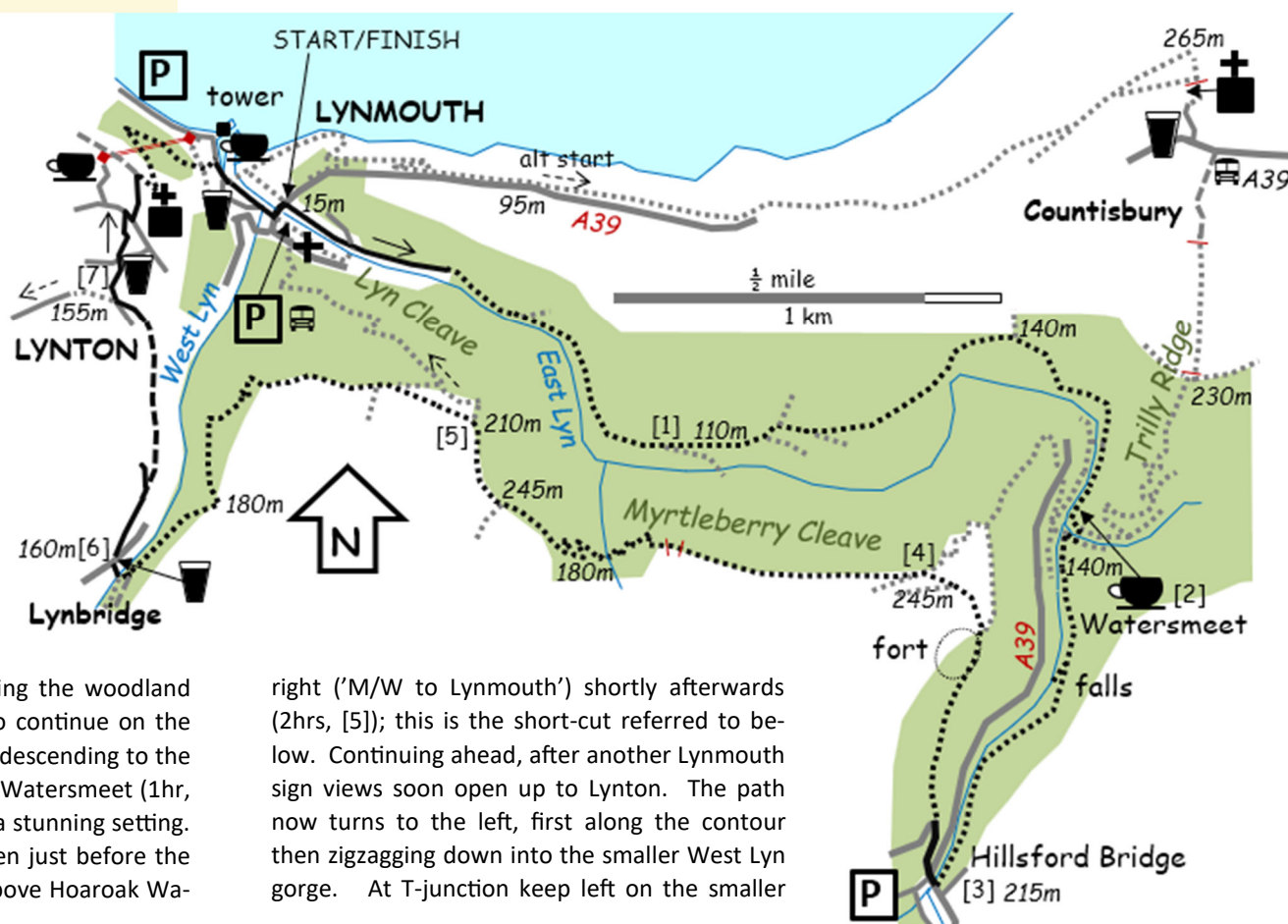
Refreshments: In Lynton and Lynmouth, pub in Lynbridge, seasonal cafés at Watersmeet and (for the extension) Lee Bay.

THE LYNTON AND LYNMOUTH AREA is one of the most spectacular corners not only of Exmoor, but of England. This superb if often steep walk explores the cascading East Lyn and its tributary Hoar Oak Water as far as Hillsford Bridge, returns along the top of the magnificent East Lyn gorge, then follows the gentler West Lyn to Lynbridge. The final section uses a 'back door' route into Lynton before descending back to Lynmouth. It can be extended by using all or part of walk 14 to provide a grand tour of the whole area; if you can only do one walk around Lynton and Lynmouth, this is the walk to do. Both versions have the option of returning to Lynmouth using the water-powered cliff railway (see **walk 14**).

Start in Lynmouth. From the A39 bridge, face away from the sea and head along the left-hand side of the East Lyn on Tors Road. Keep right to descend to the river. When the road runs out (10mins), continue on a footpath towards Watersmeet. Fork left at a signpost (25mins, [1]), taking the woodland route; keep right at Arnold's Linhay, then fork left at the next signpost to continue on the woodland route. Ignore another path to the left, to Countisbury, gradually descending to the river where you will come to a bridge. Three minutes further on arrive at Watersmeet (1hr, [2]), where there is an old fishing lodge, now a National Trust tea room, in a stunning setting. Turn right here to cross the first bridge, over the East Lyn. Turn right, then just before the next bridge turn left up a long flight of steps. These bring you to a path above Hoar Oak Wa-

ter; in less than five minutes take a short detour to the right to see the river tumbling over a waterfall. Continuing on the path, arrive at a road (the B3223; 1hr20mins, [3]). Turn right and cross the bridge. The alternative start, the National Trust Combe Park car park, is down the lane on the left then through the gateposts on the right.

To continue the walk (or start from Combe Park) join the left-hand, upward branch of the A39 towards Lynton and Barnstaple. Walk along a wide verge then when the road bends left follow the bridleway ahead towards East Lyn and Lynmouth. The path is steep at first; when it levels out at a grassy area ignore a right turn to Watersmeet. In less than two minutes there are views over the East Lyn valley on the right and Chiselcombe to the left. Keep right at a fork, soon meeting a second path coming up from Watersmeet (1hr35min, [4]). Continue ahead roughly along the contour at the top of the gorge. You will soon have views down to Lynmouth. Go through two gates in succession; soon afterwards the path zigzags down a steep side valley, crosses a stream, and returns up the other side, perhaps the most strenuous part of the walk. At the first signposted junction keep ahead towards Lynmouth; you will soon have views back up the gorge, with the A39 just visible in the bottom. A path turns off



right ('M/W to Lynmouth') shortly afterwards (2hrs, [5]); this is the short-cut referred to below. Continuing ahead, after another Lynmouth sign views soon open up to Lynton. The path now turns to the left, first along the contour then zigzagging down into the smaller West Lyn gorge. At T-junction keep left on the smaller

path, and left again. Pass a cascade and soon after turn right to cross the river on a stone bridge (2hr20mins, [6]). This is Lyn Bridge: walk around the inn, then cross the main road and head up Lynway opposite. After an initial ascent fork right on the Lynway footpath; the lane levels out, taking a straight but scenic route into Lynton. If you are not doing the extension (see below), at the end of the Lynway (2hr35mins, [7]) turn right and descend Sinai Hill. Pass the Crown Inn and join Queen Street. To take the funicular back to Lynmouth, turn left at the top then right on a wide path beneath the Cliff Railway sign. To walk down, turn right then left before the church, and zigzag down the hill as signposted.

Short-cut back to Lynmouth. At the 2hr point ([5]) take the Lynmouth path to the right. This first heads along a prominence (Oxen Tor), then bears left to start its descent of nearly 200 metres into Lynmouth. Keep to the main path, always downwards. Arriving at a wall, turn right on a (possibly slippery) tarmac section and descend to the A39; turn left to head back to the sea front (● 5 miles, 475 metres of ascent and descent).

Alternative start from Lynmouth using the Coast Path (adds 1 mile and 120m of ascent). Follow the instructions for **walk 17** to Watersmeet, joining the walk at the 1hr point ([2]).

Extensions to the Valley of the Rocks and Lee Bay. The walk can be extended to take in the area to the west of Lynton by linking it with **walk 14**. At the 2hr35min point ([7]) cross the road to join Alford Terrace, a footpath heading upwards. This soon widens into a lane. At a T-junction with a wider road turn right to head downwards. When the road bends sharply right, continue ahead on a road marked 'unsuitable for motor vehicles'. After a short climb turn right on a footpath to Lee Abbey and Bay, joining walk 5 at its 35 minute point. Now follow as much as walk 14 as you want; the combined distances are:

The full walk to Lee Bay: ● 10 miles, 970 metres of ascent and descent.

Valley of the Rocks (using the short-cut): ● 8.5 miles, 800 metres.

Walks 13, 14 and 15 can also be combined for a tough but spectacular full day walk of 15 miles and 1450 metres of ascent and descent. At the 2hr40min point of walk 14 you have three choices to return to Lynmouth: (a) descend the zigzag path on the left immediately after the gate, arriving at the far end of the sea front; (b) continue into Lynton as described in walk 14 and turn right on the road, then right beneath the ornamental iron sign to take the cliff railway; or (c) again continue ahead towards Lynton, but after passing the hotels turn left on to a wide path that zigzags down into Lynmouth.



Overlooking Lynmouth

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