



Walk 17. Lynmouth, Countisbury and Watersmeet.

● 5 miles, ascents and descents of 450 metres. 2 hours 25 minutes continuous walking, allow at least 3 hours. Starting from Barna Barrow adds ¾ mile and 50m of ascent.

Terrain: Paths and tracks, sometimes uneven. The route includes several steep, uneven sections and unprotected paths above cliffs and steep hillsides.

Access: Parking at either end of Lynmouth (SS 724 494, EX35 6ES or SS 719 497, EX35 6HJ, both £; car park charges are expensive, and from April to October on-street parking is limited to two hours all year). Alternatively park in the free Barna Barrow car park just east of Countisbury on the north side of the A39. Lynmouth can also be reached by bus 309/310 from Barnstaple and on the 'Coaster' bus from Minehead and Ilfracombe (which also stops by request at Countisbury).

Map: Croydecycle 04 Lynton, Lynmouth & Doone Valley or Coast Path Map 1 Exmoor, or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

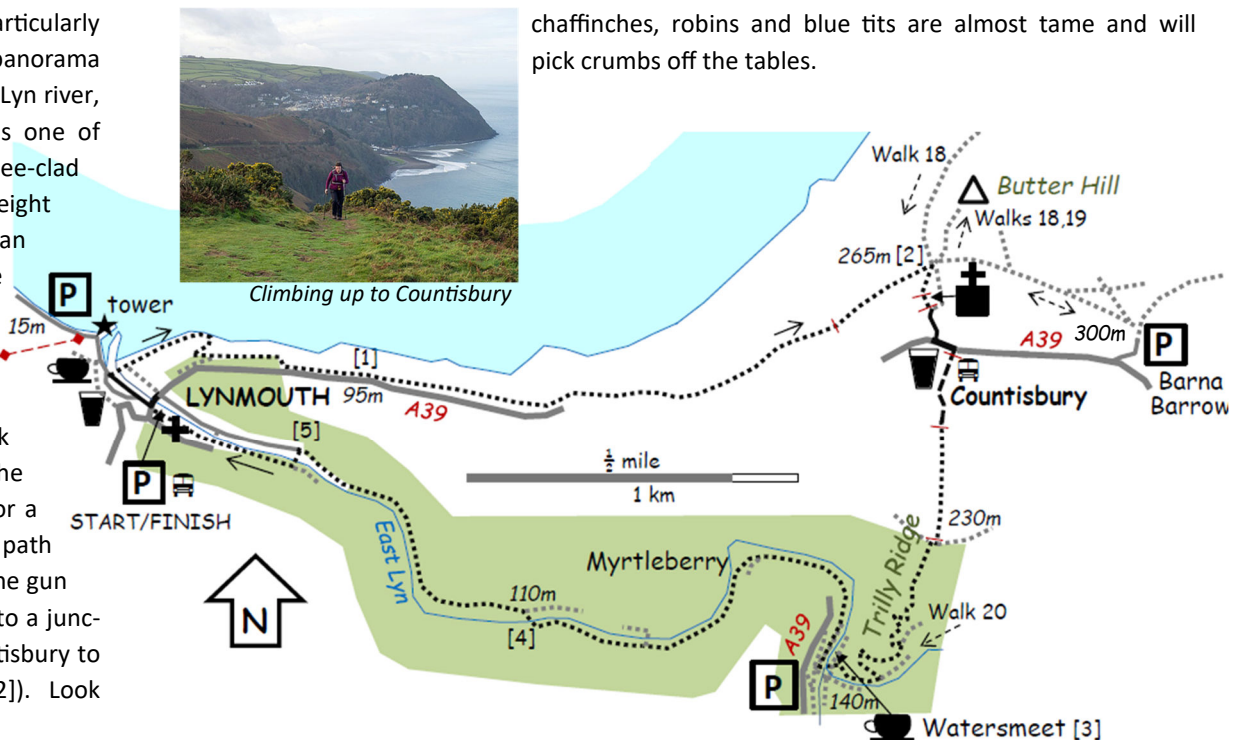
Refreshments: Several options in Lynmouth, pub at Countisbury, seasonal tea room at Watersmeet.

THIS IS AN EXCEPTIONAL SHORT WALK EVEN BY THE STANDARDS OF THE EXMOOR COAST, particularly on a clear, sunny day. The outward stretch provides a constantly changing coastal panorama between Lynton and Countisbury. The route then heads inland high above the East Lyn river, descending into the gorge to picturesque Watersmeet. The last section follows one of Devon's best-loved river valleys back into Lynmouth, far below the towering tree-clad hillsides. It can easily be combined with walk 18 to form an eight-mile figure-of-eight route including Foreland Point. Motorists who don't want to park in Lynmouth can start from Barna Barrow, benefitting from free parking and far-reaching views; the downside is that the walk will end with the long climb back up from Lynmouth.

Start in Lynmouth. From the A39 head towards the Rhenish Tower on the coast, but cross over the footbridge to the Rock House inn. Walk past a small kiosk and along a promenade. The promenade ends at a small beach; turn right and walk alongside a stone wall, then left to go up some steps. Turn left at a T-junction. The path zigzags steeply upwards to come to a useful seat before following the A39 for a while. Join the road briefly at a layby, leaving it at the far end (25mins, [1]). The path ascends steadily (ignore two paths coming in from the right, and note a small wartime gun emplacement), then levels off and goes through a gate. A short ascent brings you to a junction by a wall. Turn left here. Keep alongside the wall, then after a view over Countisbury to the left bear slightly right on a grassy path to come to a seat ('GJP', 1hr10mins, [2]). Look back for views over Lynmouth and Lynton.

If you are combining this walk with walk 18 or 19, take the path to the left, behind the seat, making for the radio mast on Butter Hill (to return to Barna Barrow continue ahead with the stone wall on your right). Otherwise turn right towards the church, go through the churchyard, then walk down a lane to the A39 to the left of the Blue Ball inn. Turn left on the road, then right on the footpath marked to Watersmeet via Trilly Ridge. (To start from Barna Barrow car park, walk away from the main road and follow the path around to the left, staying next to the stone wall or bank. After seven minutes or so come to a seat with views over Lynton and Lynmouth. Turn left again, still alongside the wall. Soon bear right on to a driveway at a house and follow the lane back to the A39 as described above. Turn left, then right on to the Watersmeet path).

The path is initially a small lane. After the second, pedestrian, gate, it becomes indistinct; head for a large farm in the distance, slightly to the right of the field wall. This will bring you to a wide path that descends through gorse bushes to a gate. Go straight ahead here, following a ridge which takes you into woodland. This is Trilly Ridge, above a wide loop in the East Lyn river. At the end of the ridge the path zigzags downhill: ignore smaller paths to the left. Arriving at a T-junction, turn right and stroll down to Watersmeet House, a former fishing lodge and now a (seasonal) National Trust tea room (1hr35mins, [3]). Even if you are not in need of refreshments pause for a moment at this delightful spot; you are in a deep bowl surrounded by steep, tree-clad hillsides, with the ever-present sound of the East Lyn river. The chaffinches, robins and blue tits are almost tame and will pick crumbs off the tables.



There are several ways back to Lynmouth, but the route followed here stays closest to the river. Cross the bridge in front of Watersmeet House, then a second bridge, and turn right to ascend slightly then descend back to the water's edge. Pass a bridge carrying an access road, then follow the path along the south bank of the river; whenever there is a choice take the right-hand fork to avoid ascending to the A39. Soon you will pass Myrtleberry, a large house hidden at first by a high fence. Keep right, coming to the site of the old Lynrock Fountain mineral water works followed by a footbridge. A second footbridge (2hrs, [4]) gives you no option but to cross over, so carry on with the river now on your left. Just before the path joins a road cross back over the river on a footbridge and turn right (2hr15mins, [5]). This will bring you past Middleham Gardens, the only remnants of some houses destroyed in the 1952 flood. Continue along the river bank, through a car park and back into Lynmouth.

Shorter walk: Lynmouth, Watersmeet and the leat path (● 4 miles, ascents and descents of 300m): Follow the path from Lynmouth along the north bank of the river (the opposite side to the car and coach park) to Watersmeet. When the road runs out, continue on a footpath. Take the left fork ('woodland path') when indicated, and follow the signs back down to Watersmeet; don't at first descend to the river. To return, cross both bridges at Watersmeet, then keep right to drop down to the river bank as for the main walk. Pass Myrtleberry and the Lynrock works; continue beyond the footbridge, but when the path next splits head left up to the A39. Follow the road carefully for around five minutes. Look out for a small rectangular parking area on the right, just before a waterfall. Take a small, unsignposted path that descends from its right-hand corner, rejoining the riverside path and soon continuing alongside the remains of a leat. Keep left when the path forks. This brings you to Middleham Gardens. Exit the gardens down the steps and continue along the river bank, through the car park and back into Lynmouth.

Lynmouth, Foreland Point and Watersmeet (● 8 miles, ascents and descents of 720 metres). This walk can be combined with **walk 18**, starting either at Lynmouth or Barna Barrow. The linking instructions are in the descriptions for both walks.

Lynmouth and County Gate circular (full walk ● 13 miles, ascents and descents of 1150 metres). Follow the main walk to the 1hr10min point ([2]). Now join **walk 19** along the coast to County Gate. To return, either use the bus or follow **walk 20** along the river as far as Watersmeet, picking up this walk again at its 1hr35min point ([3]).