



Walk 19. Countisbury to County Gate via the Coast Path.

●/● 4.7 miles, ascents of 530 metres and descents of 470 metres. 2 hours 30 minutes constant walking, allow at least 3 hours.

Terrain: Mostly on paths, often narrow and uneven. ! There are a few several narrow sections above steep hillsides.

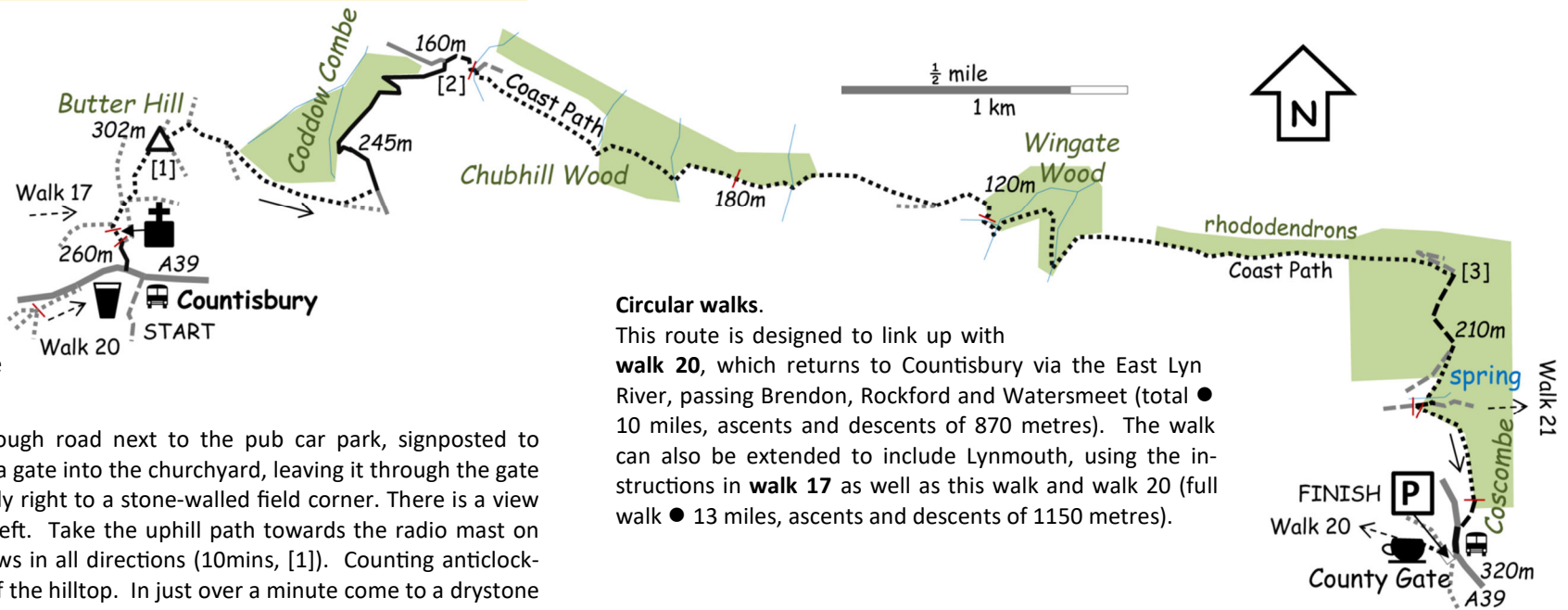
Access: The walk starts from Countisbury (SS 747 496, near EX35 6NE), but the car park belongs to the Blue Ball inn: only park there if you are using the inn. An alternative place to leave a car is the Barna Barrow car park less than half a mile eastwards along the A39 (SS 793 496). Another option is to park in the County Gate car park (SS 793 486, near to EX35 6NQ), and either do the circular walk (19 & 20, see the end of the walk description) or take the bus back to the start at Countisbury. The Exmoor Coaster bus between Minehead or Watchet and Lynmouth stops at County Gate and Countisbury.

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

Refreshments: Pub at Countisbury, tea room at County Gate, more options in Lynmouth.

AFTER THE VIEWS FROM BUTTER HILL and on the descent towards Foreland Point, this wooded section of Coast Path contrasts with the largely treeless stretches to the west. You will be following a path through Atlantic rainforest within sound if not always sight of the sea, undulating in and out of the combes made by streams on their way to cascade over the cliff edge. The walk links with walk 20 to form a varied if somewhat strenuous 10-mile circuit, returning along the East Lyn.

Starting at Countisbury, find a no through road next to the pub car park, signposted to Countisbury Church. Continue through a gate into the churchyard, leaving it through the gate behind the church. Now head diagonally right to a stone-walled field corner. There is a view to Lynton and Lynmouth down to the left. Take the uphill path towards the radio mast on Butter Hill: at the top you will have views in all directions (10mins, [1]). Counting anticlockwise, take the second, narrower path off the hilltop. In just over a minute come to a drystone wall with a stone trough in front of it. Turn right and walk alongside the wall for a minute or two, then bear slightly right to follow a well-defined path ahead. When the path forks head left. Soon arrive at a narrow tarmac road and turn left.



(Starting from the Barna Barrow car park, walk through the parking area and fork right on a rough path. Stay on it as it curves around to the right; a track soon comes in from the left. Turn left when you meet a narrow tarmac road.)

The lane snakes steeply downhill towards the Foreland Point lighthouse. After the third sharp bend there is a wide oxbow (35mins, [2]). Turn right here on a broad track (signposted with an acorn on a short, not very conspicuous post), soon arriving at a view eastwards along the coast. Cross over a stile and turn right on to the Coast Path, which soon swings back left and heads high above the coast through a mixture of Atlantic rainforest and rhododendron clumps. There is little navigation to do for the next two and a half miles: take care above the steep drops, and admire the occasional sea views. Eventually the path meets a vehicle track coming up from Glenthorne. Turn right here (1hr55mins, [3]). Pass a cottage and come to a pair of stone gateposts, surmounted by wild boar heads. Turn left here to continue on the Coast Path. Arriving at a spring marked by a stone cross (the Sisters' Fountain), go up some steps and turn right on a broad track (the Coast Path continues to the left, meeting up with walk 21). Within a minute, turn sharp left through a gate signposted to County Gate. A steep uphill path leads to another gate: go through, and arrive at the A39. Turn left for 'Somerset', the car park, café and bus stop.

Alternative start from Lynmouth. Follow walk 17 as far as its 1hr10min point ([2]), joining this walk to continue to Butter Hill and on to County Gate (● 6.2 miles, ascents of 830 metres and descents of 530 metres).

Circular walks.

This route is designed to link up with walk 20, which returns to Countisbury via the East Lyn River, passing Brendon, Rockford and Watersmeet (total ● 10 miles, ascents and descents of 870 metres). The walk can also be extended to include Lynmouth, using the instructions in walk 17 as well as this walk and walk 20 (full walk ● 13 miles, ascents and descents of 1150 metres).

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