



## Walk 59. Withypool and Tarr Steps.

- 7.3 miles, ascents and descents of 350 metres. 3 hours constant walking, allow 4 hours.

Terrain: Mainly paths and tracks, some uneven walking on rocks and over tree roots; a mile and a half on a narrow but usually quiet road. The riverside stretch is prone to flooding after prolonged rain, when footpaths may be closed; very occasionally floodwater can also damage the bridge. Check the Exmoor National Park web site for details.

Access: Park in Withypool. There is a small car park over the bridge from the village centre (SS 844 354, TA24 7RA).

Map: Croydecycle 56 Dulverton and Tarr Steps or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: Pub and seasonal tea room in Withypool, inn and seasonal kiosk at Tarr Steps.

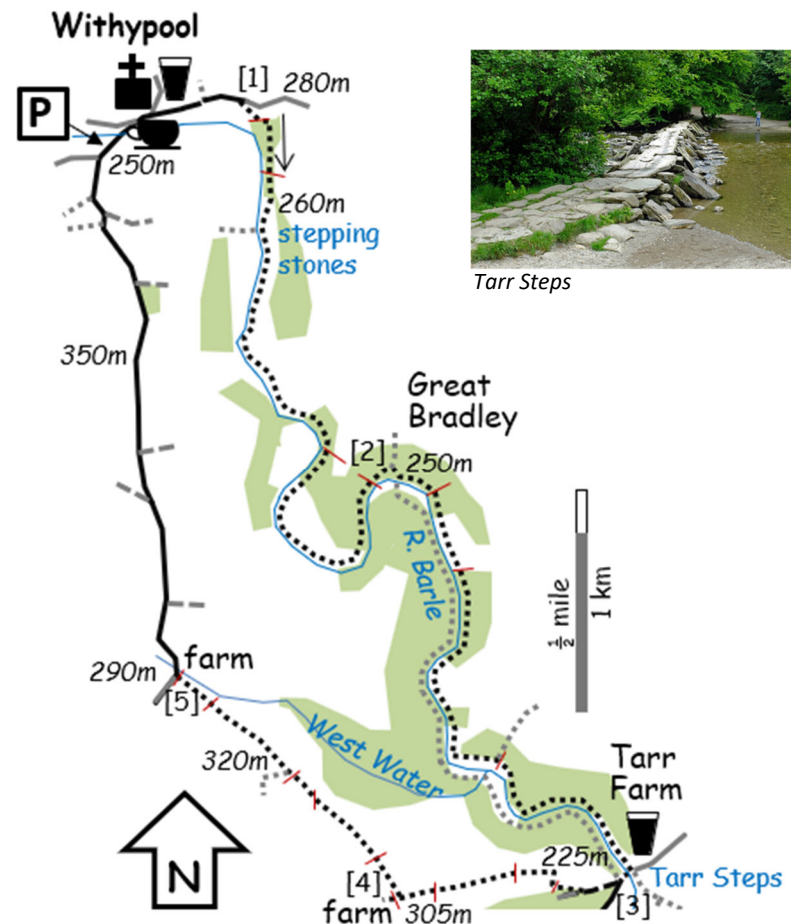
THIS WALK EXPLORES THE MIDDLE REACHES OF THE RIVER BARLE and connects the village of Withypool with the ever-popular Tarr Steps. The outward route meanders along the river then crosses Tarr Steps to return via farmland and a quiet lane. The 'steps' form a clapper bridge with simple slabs of rock spanning stone piers. The bridge was probably constructed in the thirteenth century, although there has been a river crossing here since Celtic and possibly prehistoric times; the word 'tarr' may derive from the Celtic *tochar*, a ford.

From the car park in Withypool cross the bridge and walk through the village, passing the tea room, shop, church and Royal Oak inn. Five minutes or so uphill past the inn turn right on to a narrow footpath signposted to Tarr Steps (10mins, [1]). This path now continues alongside or above the River Barle as far as Tarr Steps. The first part of the walk is fairly easy strolling. Note the stepping-stones in the river, no guarantee of a dry crossing even in the summer. In about 45 minutes from the road come to a T-junction and turn right (55mins, [2]).\* The path is now intermittently uneven with tree roots and rocks, and prone to flooding; in places there is a choice of route, beside the river (more difficult and likely to flood) or higher up. Cross two side-streams, then about twelve minutes after the second a footbridge crosses the river; ignore it, unless Tarr Steps have been breached, when it can be used to walk along the opposite bank. Arriving at Tarr Steps (1hr35mins, [3]), the pub is to the left; the walk continues to the right over the clapper bridge.

\* Soon after this point the route will change in 2024 with the construction of a new bridge to replace the ford at Great Bradley. The new route also misses out the often flooded section of path. When the bridge is completed, cross it and turn left to continue along the western bank of the river. You can now cross back at the next bridge, or continue to Tarr Steps on the west bank.

Head upwards on a surfaced track straight ahead, signposted as the Two Moors Way (M over W) towards Parsonage and Westwater Farms. Soon bear right and uphill on an enclosed bridleway. Go through a gate and follow the track right, then left at the field corner. The path becomes less steep and goes through a gate. Cross the next two fields, then turn right at a signpost in front of Parsonage Farm (2hrs, [4]). Go through a gate and follow the path ahead: the next gate is on the left, then keep right and go through another gate and straight on at a path junction. The path eventually brings you to a road at a small bridge over a stream (2hr25mins, [5]). Turn right and follow the road for a mile and a half back to Withypool.

Tarr Steps can also be reached from Winsford (walk 61) and Dulverton (walk 63).



© Stan Lester 2018-21. Last recce 1/2021. Please email editor@exmoorwalker.uk with any updates or comments.

This route description is provided freely and in good faith. You are welcome to use, copy and distribute it for personal and non-profit purposes (attribution—non-commercial—no derivatives). No responsibility is taken for any errors or omissions, or for your navigation or safety on the walk. Introductory and safety information at [exmoorwalker.uk](http://exmoorwalker.uk).