



Walk 7. Combe Martin, the Hangman Hills and Berryarbor.

- 8 miles, ascents and descents of 620 metres. 3 hours 35 minutes constant walking, allow 4½-5 hours.

Terrain: A mix of roads, tracks, paths and fields, with some potentially muddy and slippery sections. The first mile of the walk is an almost constant ascent of 200 metres. There are nearly two miles on roads near Berryarbor; take care particularly on bends. ! The Coast Path is quite safe, but don't stray off it: the hills fall away quickly to become steep cliffs.

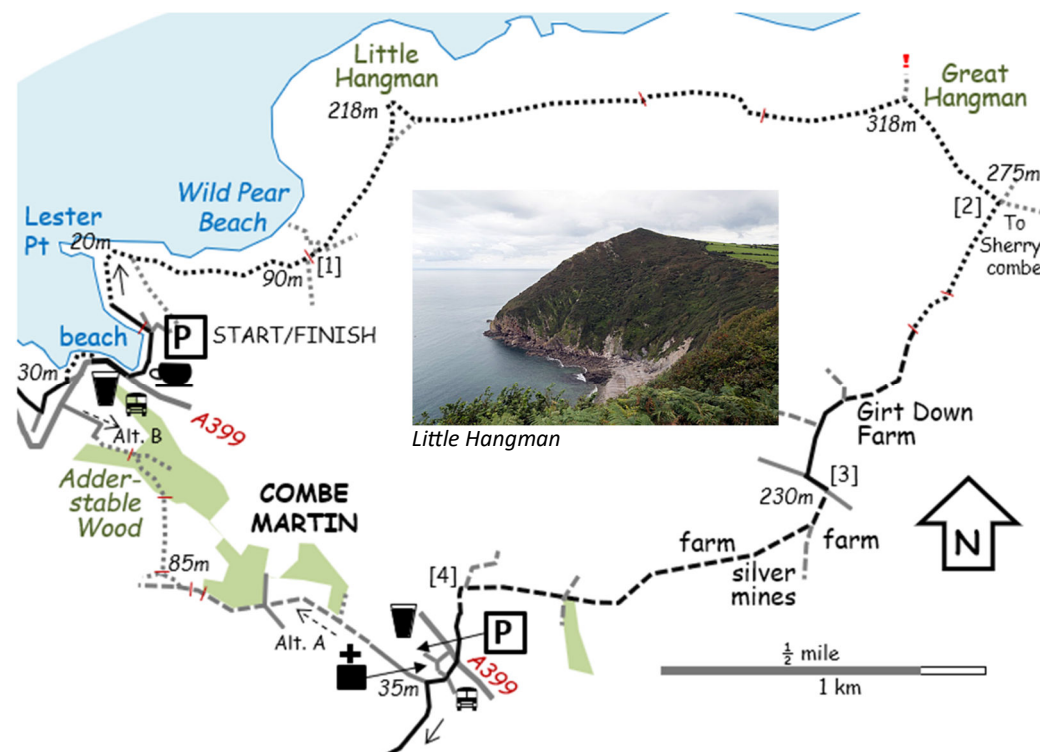
Access: Park in Combe Martin. There is a convenient car park near the sea front (SS 577 472, close to EX34 0DJ), but outside of the winter months it is cheaper to park in the Cormelles car park near the church (SS 586 464, EX35 OLG) and start the walk just after the 1hr45min point ([4]). A bus (301) runs from Ilfracombe and Barnstaple to Combe Martin. Alternatively, start from Berryarbor's free village car park (SS 562 466, near EX34 9SE).

Maps: Croydcycle 05 Combe Martin and Hunter's Inn and 06 Ilfracombe and Berryarbor, or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: Wide choice in Combe Martin (less in winter), pub and shop with take-away in Berryarbor.

THIS WALK AROUND THE FAR WESTERN PART OF EXMOOR traverses one of the highest and most spectacular stretches of coast in England. Great Hangman is, at 318m, the highest point on the South West Coast Path and the highest sea cliff on the English coast ('Hangman' probably comes from the Celtic *an maen*, a sloping headland or hill; there is no record of a gallows in this area, though there is a legend, probably fanciful, of a sheep thief getting caught up in a rope and hanging himself). Combe Martin itself is a linear village, now grown to the size of a small town, strung out along the valley of the River Umber. The walk starts at the seaside end, heading up on to the hills before returning to the contrasting old village and church. The second part of the walk uses lanes to head to the pretty village of Berryarbor, already explored in walk 6, and back to Combe Martin above the coast.

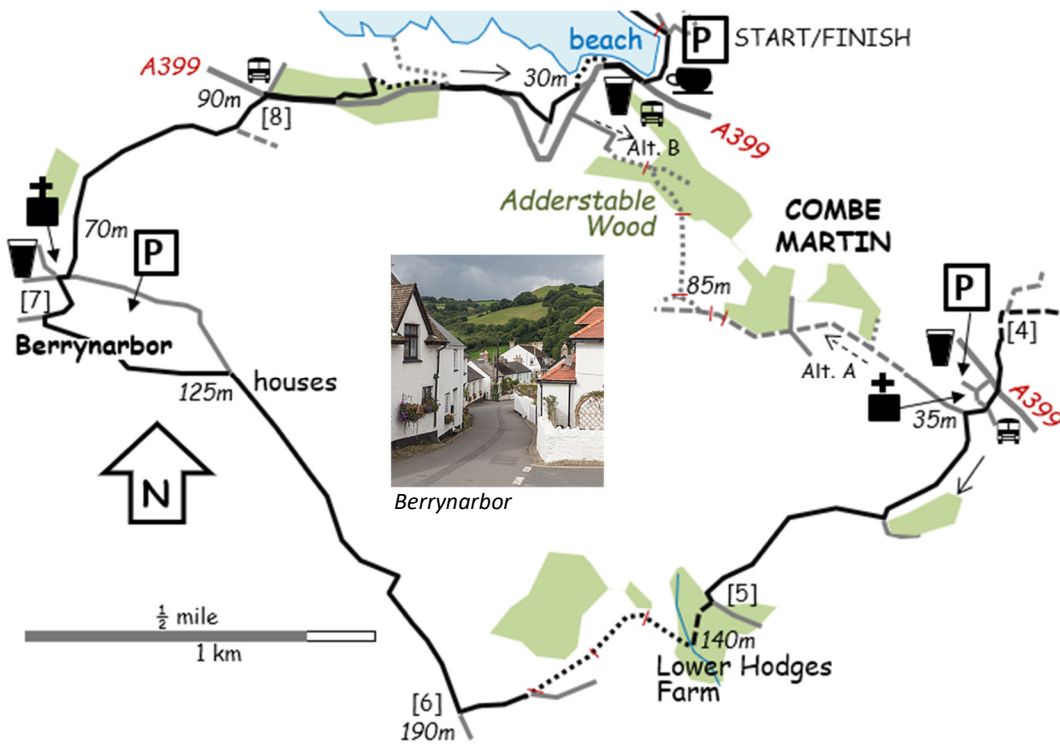
Start at the main sea front car park in Combe Martin. Walk uphill and along a closed-off coast road to a bandstand-style shelter, then head up some steps and uphill to a young oak tree with a seat beneath. Just beyond is a gap in the vegetation; go through to take a narrow, rocky path that ascends steeply. Turn left when it meets the official coast path. The path comes to a viewpoint where Little Hangman looms in front of you, and views open up across Combe Martin to the right. Soon after the viewpoint take either fork; the right-hand path has better views. Soon come to a gate (20mins, [1]). Go through and continue uphill to Little Hangman, ignoring a path on the right towards West Challacombe. It's well worth the climb to the summit, as you will have far-reaching views in all directions (and a seat to take a rest).



Retrace your steps to the main path and turn left to continue upwards to Great Hangman. In a mile, about 30 minutes of gradual ascent, you will come the cairn at the top. Though Great Hangman is 100m higher than Little Hangman, it is round-topped and less spectacular. You will however have good views, particularly to the east across Holdstone Down.

From Great Hangman continue on the main path and follow it down to the corner of a stone wall, Blackstone Point Cross (1hr15mins, [2]). The path ahead descends and reascends Sherrycombe to come to Holdstone Down (see walk 9), but your onward route is to the right at the signpost ('Girt Down Farm'). Follow the path until it comes to a stile. Cross the field keeping the boundary on your left, then go through a gate to the right of a low barn, joining a vehicle track. Pass a modern bungalow at Girt Down Farm and keep left, climbing briefly on a concrete drive. Ignore a signposted path to the right to Combe Martin (this is used in shorter alternative A, overleaf). Come to a T-junction and turn left, then in under a minute take the first right, another broad farm track (1hr30mins, [3]). Turn right again on a wide partly-surfaced track towards Silver Mines Farm; the remains of one of the local silver mines is hidden in the field on the left. The track descends for three-quarters of a mile. After a path comes in from the right (1hr45mins, [4]) there is a steep and potentially slippery section on a concrete path. This soon joins a surfaced road as it comes into the village.

Arriving at the main road in Combe Martin, cross over and continue along Church Street. When you come alongside the church, follow the road around to the left past a car park, up-



hill past modern houses, and to the speed derestriction signs where it bends left: turn right and uphill here on a narrow road. Follow this through a sharp left bend and to a second left bend as it enters woods: now turn right into the driveway for Lower Hodges Farm, a public bridleway (2hr10mins, [5]). At the farmyard walk between the house and barn, heading uphill on a narrow stony path to at a pedestrian gate. Go through, walk to the right of a small hill-ock, then veer left and head across the field. Head uphill, towards a telegraph pole slightly below and to the right of the top-right field corner. Tucked into a corner in the hedge, a narrow opening leads to a gate into the next field. Continue ahead and slightly to the left to arrive at a field gate. Join a farm road, turning right. Turn right when you reach a road just after a house (2hr30mins, [6]) and follow it for 20 minutes or so to arrive into Berryrnarbor (ignore the right turn to the post office and car park). Come to a T-junction (2hr55mins, [7]), with the church and Globe Inn ahead of you. Turn right to walk through the village. At the next T-junction turn right in front of the church (left for the Globe Inn) and follow the road around to the left.

The road climbs, and in around 15 minutes meets the A399 (3hr15mins, [8]). Cross over, turn right and follow the footpath along the roadside. Turn left when you come to Newberry Close, following it to the left and briefly down. Opposite some large houses, take a signposted path to the right, heading down steps at first. The path soon rejoins the main road; turn left here. (Turning immediately left again will take you down a very overgrown footpath and

down some steps to David's Hole, also known as Mermaid's Cove; return the same way). Pass a chalet park, then take the minor road to the left signposted Combe Martin. Bear left, join a narrow lane coming in from the right, then turn left on a path to walk down to a stony beach. Go up some steps and follow the promenade to the main beach and car park.

Shorter alternatives: (A) Combe Martin and the Hangman Hills. There are several possible routes back to Combe Martin after ascending Great Hangman. For a shorter route (● 4.2 miles, ascents and descents of 380 metres), follow the main instructions past Girt Down Farm then take the signposted footpath to the right, Knap Down Lane. Views open up on the right to Little Hangman and Combe Martin Bay. Turn right at a road and head downhill. When the road bends left, continue ahead on an enclosed path. This sometimes slippery path brings you to a road junction. Continue ahead on a narrow path under trees signposted to the beach. Turn left at a T-junction, then right at the main road and walk to the sea front.

The longer version shown on the map (● 5.4 miles, ascents and descents of 440 metres) follows the return route used in walk 8 through Adderstable Wood. From the 1hr45min point ([4]) continue to the main road and across into Church Street. Turn right after the church on a narrow lane signposted as a footpath. After passing some houses the path becomes concrete, slippery when muddy or covered in leaves. Go straight on at a crossing track, through two road gates, then turn right on a path under trees. In a minute or two turn right over a stile and head across the field towards a clump of bushes and small trees hiding a lime kiln. Continue to a pedestrian gate on the far side of the field, and enter a wood. Follow the path, keeping left at a junction to walk beside a static caravan park. Join a driveway; turn right then left between the houses and stroll down to the main road. Turn right here to arrive back in 'seaside' Combe Martin, walking around the beach to the sea front and car park.

(B) Combe Martin and Berryrnarbor (● 5.3 miles, ascents and descents of 340 metres). From the seaside car park return to the sea front and turn right on the main road. Head along the coast and look for the Poplars Hotel on the right - a building with a crenellated wall. Turn left opposite its car park to walk up an unmarked access lane between houses. The lane bends right; soon afterwards bear left on to a narrow footpath. Head uphill beside a caravan park, go through a gate (which may be open) and turn right and uphill. This is Adderstable Wood. Follow the path to a gate and go through it to enter a field. Head to a lime kiln in the middle of the field. Continue to a stile in the hedge ahead. Cross it and turn left, soon joining a wider path. Go through two gates, downhill, and diagonally across a service road. Continue downhill, then after a rutted section the track becomes concrete, and finally tarmac alongside houses. Pass the church and turn right on the road, joining the main walk instructions.

See **walk 6** for linear routes between Combe Martin and Ilfracombe.

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