



Walk 72. Watchet to Minehead.

- 7.8 miles, ascents and descents of 165 metres. 2 hours 45 minutes continuous walking, allow 3½-4 hours.

Note: Three routes are given between Watchet and Blue Anchor. The main walk is always accessible but makes use of a permissive path. The coast path route was reopened in 2023 after erosion and *may* remain trouble-free for the next few years. ! The beach route is only accessible near low water: check the tide times and do not set out on a rising tide.

Terrain: Paths (potentially muddy), pavement and shingle beach; some road walking. The alternative start beneath the cliffs includes patches of slippery rock and deep sticky mud. The route (all options) may be briefly closed by the tide just after Blue Anchor.

Access: By car, park anywhere in Minehead and walk to the station (SS 974 463, TA24 5BG) for the train or bus to Watchet (the bus stops outside the station, not on the seaward side of the road as you might expect). The West Somerset Railway connects Minehead, Dunster, Blue Anchor and Watchet in season, while bus 28 runs from Taunton and stops at Watchet, Dunster and Minehead, but not Blue Anchor.

Maps: Croydecycle 55 Watchet & Quantock North plus 01 Minehead Dunster Selworthy, or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

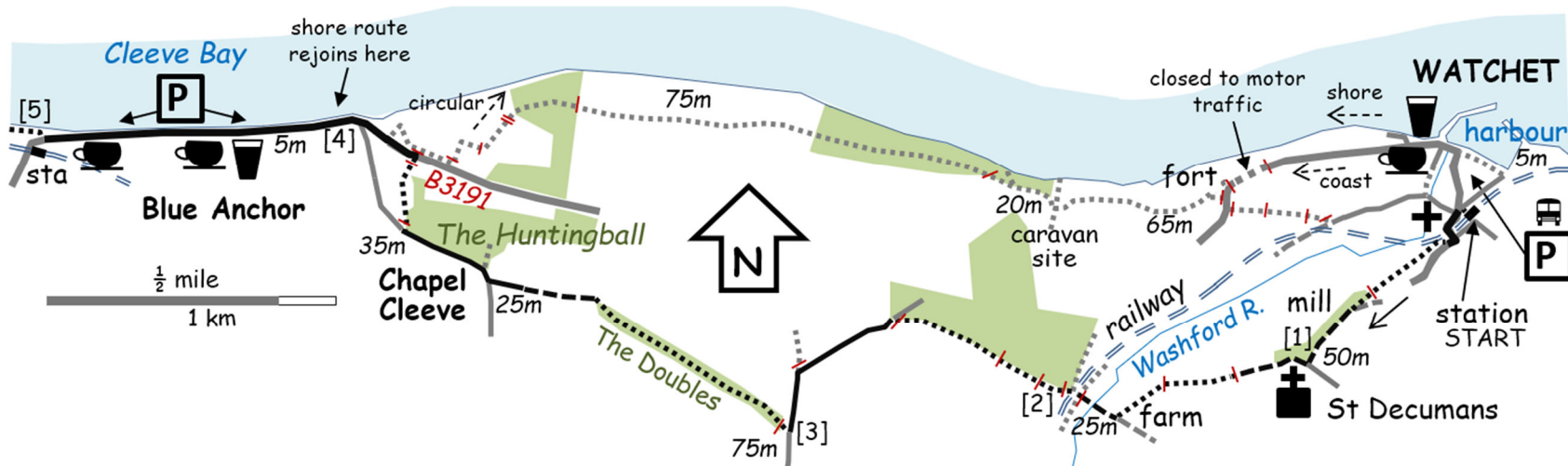
Refreshments: Minehead, Blue Anchor and Watchet are all well-provisioned; buffet on the West Somerset Railway and kiosk at Dunster Beach.

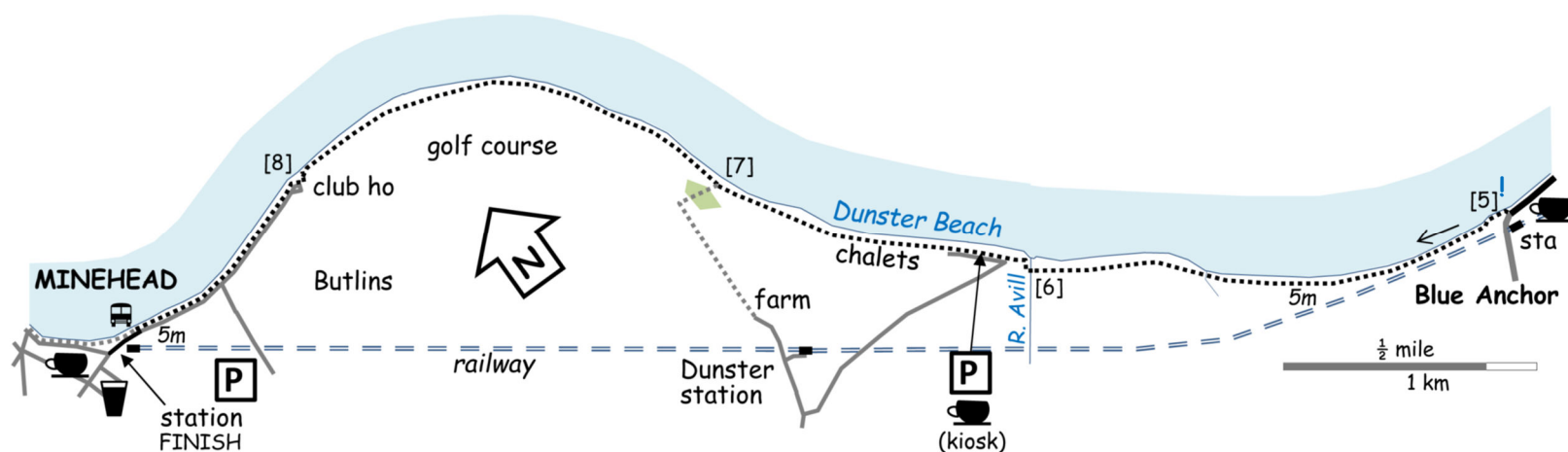
THE BRISTOL CHANNEL COAST HAS ONE OF THE LARGEST TIDAL RANGES IN THE WORLD. At low water the sea blends in to the wide expanse of mud and rock with the distant coast of south Wales as a backdrop; but as the tide returns the water races across the flats, a danger to the unwary. This fairly gentle walk divides into two halves, with at the Watchet end a choice of routes depending on tides and the state of the coast path. From Blue Anchor onwards the coast is low-lying, with promenades connected by rough paths alongside (and on) the stony beach. Watchet and Minehead are linked by the seasonal West Somerset Railway; this makes a practical and enjoyable (though not cheap) way of connecting the start and finish.

Start from the railway station in Watchet. For the main **inland route**

cross the railway line on the road bridge and turn right, almost immediately heading right again down a narrow footpath in front of a small electricity substation. This takes you through a short tunnel and, after a gate, alongside the former Wansborough Mill, a paper mill that operated from the fifteenth century until 2015. There are currently plans to use the site for housing and light industry. Just beyond is St Decuman's church (12mins, [1]); turn right here. On the right is a gate that leads to a holy well in a secluded garden. Continuing along the path, go through a gate and cross the field, then over a stile and along the edge of a second field. At a road turn right between farm buildings and cross the Washford River on two flat concrete bridges. The path now crosses first the old mineral line (see walk 76), now a shady footpath between Watchet and Washford, then the West Somerset Railway (25mins, [2]). Continue on a sunken path. In about ten minutes come to a lane and turn left. Pass a pair of gates on the right at a bend, then in another couple of minutes as the road comes to some trees, turn right on a narrow unmarked path at the back of a pull-in for vehicles (45mins, [3]). The path follows a belt of trees for about half a mile, then joins a farm track which soon becomes an unsurfaced lane, passing houses. Turn right on to the road at a T-junction: take care here. After a bend you will be walking beside a wooded area on the right. When it ends, turn right on a footpath. Go through a gate, across a field, then through another gate to come to the B3191. Cross the road and go through a gate to join a path on the other side; turn left and follow it parallel with the road, then head diagonally right as sign-posted across a small field. This brings you to a car park; cross it to rejoin the road and walk down to the sea front (1hr10mins, [4]).

For the **coast path route** first head to the harbour. Turn left on the pedestrian promenade, pass the vehicle barrier and continue along the road. On the left is the head of the former West Somerset Mineral Railway, with the station house on its left and goods shed (now an Indian restaurant) on the right. Continue out of the town and through a vehicle barrier, then turn right through a gate marked as the Coast Path. The outline of the Saxon fort Daws Castle is just about visible and there is an old lime kiln on the right. Cross the field and continue with the cliffs on your right. At a caravan park the path drops into a gully then meets a con-





Minehead

crete path heading down to the beach (30mins); more lime kilns nestle in the hillside opposite. The way on is across the concrete path slightly to the right, signposted towards Blue Anchor. The path continues alongside the cliffs, joining a trail through woods; ignore a turn to the right. Around 25 minutes after the caravan site enter a second wood. Follow the signs to cross a stream and continue through two pedestrian gates, now on a fenced-off path next to a field. Follow the path through further gates, eventually turning right to walk parallel with a road. Soon head diagonally right as signposted to walk across a small field. This brings you to a car park; cross it to rejoin the road and walk down to the sea front (1hr10mins, [4]).

The **shore route** can be followed when the tide is out: leave before it turns, as the water comes up to the cliffs and apart from the path to the caravan park (not easy to spot from seaward) there is no way up. The safest times to leave are between three and five-and-a-half hours after high water. First head to the harbour. Turn left on the pedestrian promenade, pass the vehicle barrier and continue along the road. On the left is the head of the former West Somerset Mineral Railway, with the station house on its left and goods shed (now an Indian restaurant) on the right. After a row of terraced houses turn right to West Beach and head left along the shore. After you have crossed the stony section near Watchet the first half is easy going on hard sand. The second part is more difficult and involves picking your way over rock, avoiding slippery seaweed and thick sucking mud. At the Blue Anchor end, if the slipway (close to [4]) is closed walk just beyond it to steps leading up to the promenade.

To **continue to Minehead from Blue Anchor** follow the long promenade nearly as far as the station (1hr25mins, [5]). Unless you are finishing the walk here go down steps to continue briefly along the shingle beach (at high water you may have to wait for the tide to turn; the 1930s Driftwood Café is conveniently positioned just before the station). In five minutes or so join a more comfortable path. This takes you over two foot bridges, the second one crossing the canalised River Avill (1hr50mins, [6]). Continue through Dunster Beach car park, then keep to the seaward side of a long line of chalets, walking on grass. At the end of the chalets, a path turns inland to Dunster station (2hr5mins, [7]). Ignore this and continue along the

edge of a golf course past two wartime pillboxes. Either continue along a narrow path, always keeping close to the edge of the course, or head down to the beach. You will soon arrive at the club house and the eastern end of Minehead promenade (2hr30mins, [8]), which will take you back to the station and bus stop. If you haven't visited Minehead before, an extra half-mile along the promenade will bring you to the small harbour tucked picturesquely beneath a steep hill.

Shorter walks: Several short walks can be made up using any of the stations or bus stops on the route. A particularly convenient place to break the walk when the railway is running is Blue Anchor (Watchet to Blue Anchor using the inland route ● 3.8 miles, ascents and descents of 130 metres, or Blue Anchor to Minehead Station ● 3.9 miles, 35 metres).

Circular walk: Watchet and Blue Anchor (● 6+ miles, ascents and descents of 260 metres). Follow the main walk to Blue Anchor Bay, continuing as far as you want along the promenade. Return by walking up the road past the former inn then turning left into the car park to reverse the coast path route; it is fairly well-signposted and clear when not. (Note when leaving the caravan park just over halfway to Watchet, the path is on the far side of the hedge to the caravan field).

Linked walk: Start at Kilve using **walk 90** and join this walk at Watchet (● 14.2 miles, ascents of 350 metres and descents of 375 metres).

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