



SW1. Short walks from Watersmeet.

Terrain: Paths and tracks, generally well-made but some uneven with stones and tree roots. Some steep ascents and flights of steps, some paths above steep drops particularly on walk B.

Access: There is a car park above Watersmeet on the A39, at ST 743 487, near EX35 6NT (£, unfortunately now city-centre prices). Alternatively start from the National Trust car park near Hillsford Bridge ('Combe Park', SS 740 477, near EX35 6LE; the second, larger parking area beyond the gateposts; £, NT members free); apart from walk A this adds 1.6 miles to each walk (see the second paragraph of walk A). No buses other than the summer 'Explorer' that stops on the A39 at Countisbury (walk D).

Map: Croydecycle 04 Lynton, Lynmouth and Doone Valley, or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor. Online, OpenStreetMap probably shows the paths in this area most accurately.

Refreshments: National Trust café at Watersmeet, inns at Rockford, Brendon and Countisbury, choice in nearby Lynton or Lynmouth.

WATERSMEET HOUSE NESTLES IN A BOWL AMONG WOODED HILLS at the heart one of England's deepest river gorges, where the fast-flowing East Lyn river meets cascading Hoarook Water. Built as a fishing lodge in 1832, it has been a tearoom for over a hundred years and is now owned by the National Trust. Even when the café is closed it is a delightful spot for a picnic or just a break to watch the birds and listen to the river. This leaflet describes three riverside walks and one up on to the hills above the Lyn valley. All have some steep paths; the alternatives for walks A and B are gentler.

Walk A. Hillsford Bridge. 1.8 miles, ascents and descents of 145 metres, grade 4. (Easier version 1.6 miles and 90 metres, grade 2).

From the A39 car park, cross the road and zigzag down to Watersmeet. Cross the first footbridge, then either head up the steps on the right or, to avoid them, continue with the river on your left and in 150 metres take a path on the right which will bring you to the top of the steps. Continue along this path (right at the top of the steps) with Hoarook Water to your right; it will eventually bring you to a road, but first pause to look at the waterfall on the right. For the easy option simply retrace your steps back to Watersmeet.

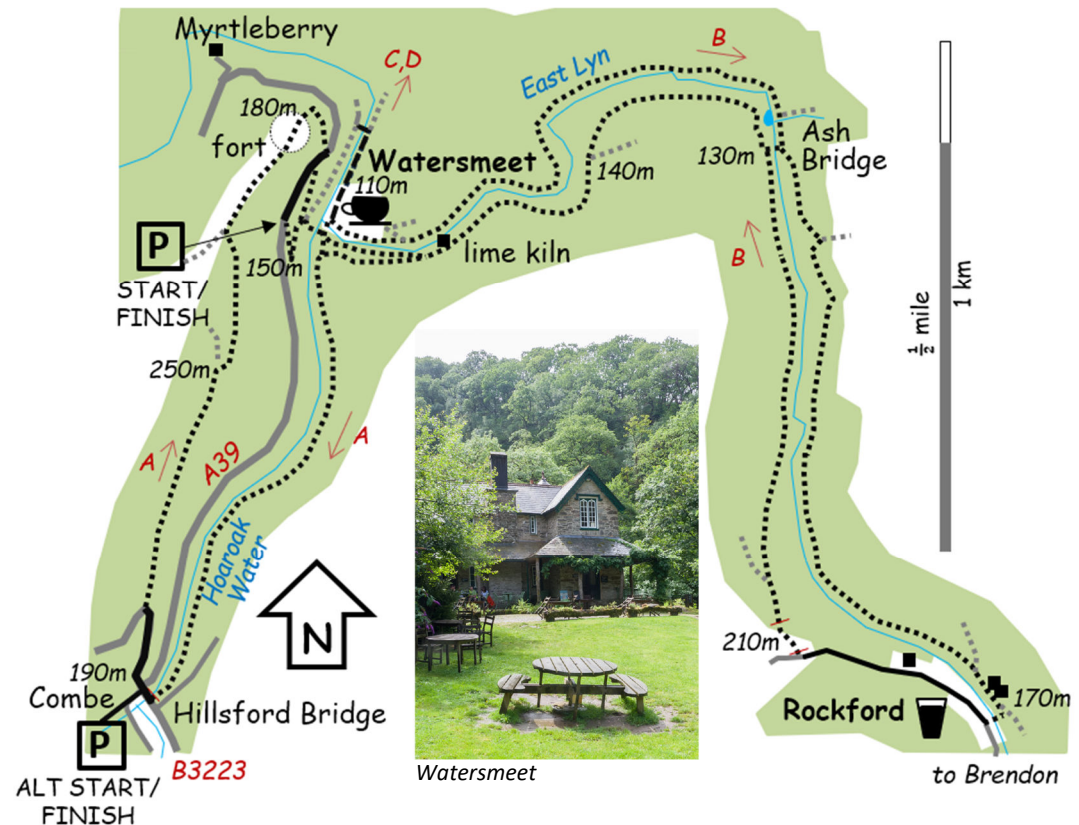
(If starting from Combe Park, return to the main road and turn left and immediately left again, walking upwards on the verge as described below. For the easy route to Watersmeet, turn right on the main road to cross the bridge, then go through the gate on the left).

To continue the walk, turn right on the road, go over the bridge, then immediately turn left and upwards on the A39. Walk along the verge on the right, then when the road bends left continue ahead on the path in front of you. The path is steep at first; when it levels out at a

grassy area take the right turn for Watersmeet. Walk through woods, then come in to the open at an Iron Age hill fort. Keep right. Entering woods again, the path zigzags steeply downwards to the A39. The car park is a short distance along on your right, or to return to Watersmeet take the path down from the small parking area almost opposite, turning left at the bottom and crossing two foot bridges.

Walk B. Rockford. 3.6 miles, ascents and descents of 230 metres, grade 3/4. (Return from Ash Bridge 1.9 miles and 110 metres, grade 2).

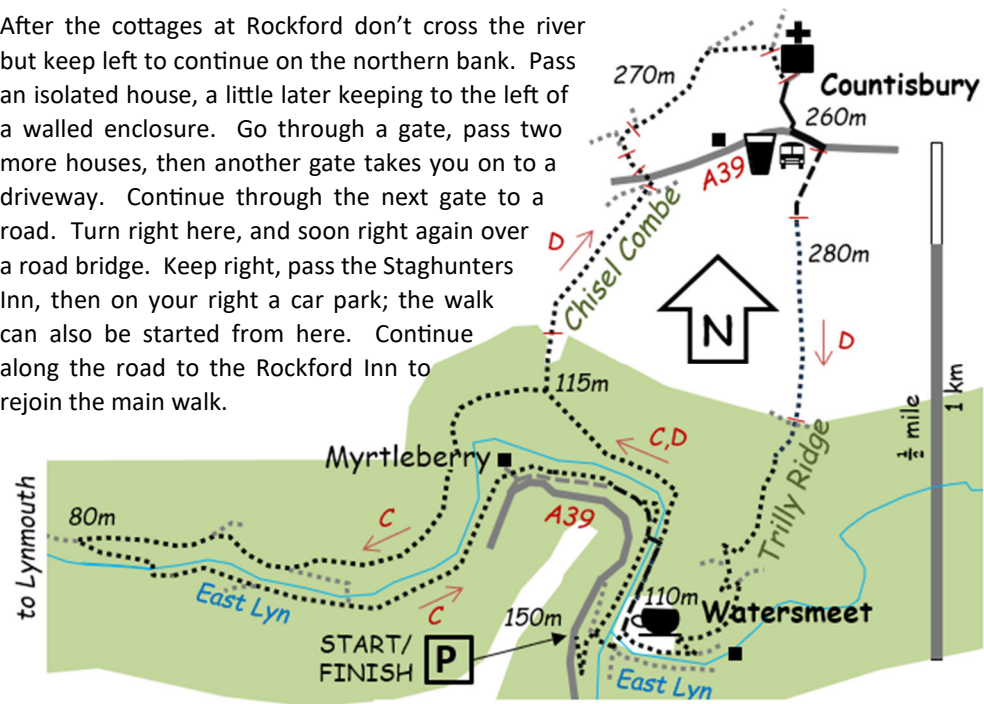
From the A39 car park, cross the road and zigzag down to Watersmeet. Cross both bridges and turn right past the side of the house. Soon pass a path on your left heading up to Trilly Ridge. Ignore any paths to the left as you continue alongside or above the river. In about three-quarters of a mile cross a small side stream and come to an open area with a seat, where the river opens out into a pool. Just beyond is Ash Bridge. For a shorter walk you can cross over and turn right, but the main walk carries on ahead along the eastern bank. In another three-quarters of a mile pass in front of a row of cottages, then keep right to cross the river on a narrow footbridge. Turn right on the road for the Rockford Inn and to start the return half of the walk.



To return, follow the road past the inn and uphill through woods. Pass the head of a ravine then turn right through a gate, signposted as a bridleway to Hillsford Bridge. Go through a second gate and head downwards, taking the right-hand, narrower path at a fork. The path descends into the East Lyn gorge, coming level with the river just before Ash Bridge. Continue ahead, soon gaining height. A path comes in from the left, then you will start descending back towards the river. Where a path joins from the right, look back to see a large lime kiln. Just after come to a fork; keep right to return to Watersmeet. For the car park cross the bridge on the left and re-ascend the zigzag.

Extension to Brendon (adds 2.2 miles and 100 metres, grade 4).

After the cottages at Rockford don't cross the river but keep left to continue on the northern bank. Pass an isolated house, a little later keeping to the left of a walled enclosure. Go through a gate, pass two more houses, then another gate takes you on to a driveway. Continue through the next gate to a road. Turn right here, and soon right again over a road bridge. Keep right, pass the Staghunters Inn, then on your right a car park; the walk can also be started from here. Continue along the road to the Rockford Inn to rejoin the main walk.



Walk C. The East Lyn downstream. 2.5 miles, ascents and descents of 190 metres, grade 4.

Paths on this route sometimes change due to landslips or fallen trees. Follow any diversions; you are initially heading for Lynmouth, then on the return for Myrtleberry and Watersmeet.

The paths downstream of Watersmeet are popular with locals and visitors alike, and are usually much busier than the upstream stretches in walks A and B. From the A39 car park, cross the road and zigzag down to Watersmeet. Cross both bridges and turn left on a gravelly vehicle track past the tea garden. Where the track turns left over a bridge, continue ahead on a broad path ('Lynmouth 1³/₄'). The path rises above the river, then descends again to a small picnic area. Climb again into the woods, soon coming to a junction ('Chisel Combe'); walk D leaves to the right here.

Soon afterwards you may catch a glimpse of a house down to the left, across the river; this is Myrtleberry, passed on your return route. The path descends slightly, then another path ('Watersmeet 1') comes in from the left; this can be used as a shortcut, taking about half a mile off the walk. About five minutes later, keep left at a junction (Arnold's Linhay). In 250 metres or so another path joins from the left at a junction also marked as Arnold's Linhay; this is your return route. (Lynmouth is about a mile further on, but you will currently need to return the same way as the path on the opposite bank is closed due to fallen trees).

To return, take the path down to the river and cross the bridge, continuing along the opposite bank. Pass another footbridge (this is where the short-cut comes back in), and soon afterwards note a plaque on the right commemorating the former Lynrock soft drinks works. Continue past the entrance to Myrtleberry, once also a tearoom; it is now a private house and holiday let. Soon afterwards join a wider track coming in from the right. The bridge on the left will take you back to Watersmeet; to return directly to the car park, keep ahead on a narrower path and re-ascend the zigzag.

Walk D. Countisbury. 2.1 miles, ascents and descents of 210 metres, grade 5.

Start as for walk C above, but take the right turn where indicated for Chisel Combe. Head uphill beside the combe. At the top the path swings right and comes to a signpost; turn sharply left ('Lynmouth 2') and skirt a small pond. A short climb brings you to a gate and the A39. Cross over carefully and ascend a steep path on the other side. Go through two gates; there are now views back down Chisel Combe, across to Wind Hill and down to Lynton and Lynmouth. Turn right through a field gate and keep the stone wall on your right; at a fork, take the broad path to the right. Walk through the churchyard and down a lane towards the Blue Ball inn.

Unless you are visiting the inn, turn left on the A39, then right on the footpath marked to Watersmeet via Trilly Ridge. 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 by the river, turn right and soon come to Watersmeet. Cross the bridges and ascend the zigzag to return to the car park.

Longer walks in the area: see walks 15, 17 and 20, and walk 18 for a short but steep and precipitous walk from Countisbury.

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