

# Tarka Trail



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## Circular Routes



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# Tarka Trail

## Circular Routes

The Tarka Trail is 180 miles long and follows in the footsteps of the character Tarka the Otter from Henry Williamson's famous novel. The Trail splits into 2 loops centred at Barnstaple and is a great way to explore the world class environment of North Devon's UNESCO Biosphere that stretches from Dartmoor to Lundy and Exmoor to Hartland. This booklet guides you around 11 circular walks from the Trail.

### At a glance

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- 180 mile Tarka Trail
- North and South loops that take in Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks and the North Devon Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- 31 miles of Shared-Use-Section on former railway line
- 18 miles of Tarka Railway Line
- 55 miles is shared with the South West Coast Path
- 11 easy to follow way marked circular walks, 9 with easy access to pubs or cafes

### North Loop

Going counter-clockwise from Barnstaple, the North Loop heads inland along the tidal section of the River Taw. The Trail rises up through little villages with cob and thatched cottages, takes in remote farms and follows rocky, deep cut lanes and wooded valley paths until it reaches the high plateaus of Exmoor.

As the route descends to the coast it joins the River Lyn tumbling over granite boulders and winding down through the narrow, ancient wooded valleys. At Lynmouth the Tarka Trail follows the South West Coast Path all the way along cliff tops, visiting coastal towns and villages, and crossing beaches before tracking back along the Taw estuary to Barnstaple.

*"Swimming towards the sunset, Tarka went westwards, under the towering cliffs and waterfalls in whose ferny sides he liked to rest by day."*

from Henry Williamson's "Tarka the Otter"

## South Loop

Heading south west from Barnstaple, the Trail continues alongside the expansive saltmarsh, mudflats and sandbanks of the Taw/Torridge Estuary to Bideford. This is part of the Shared-Use-Section that covers 31 miles of former railway line between Braunton and Meeth. The Shared-Use-Section has a tarmac surface as far as Watergate and is open for bicycles, wheelchairs and walkers. Horses are welcome between Torrington and Meeth.

From the ancient port town of Bideford the Trail travels inland leaving the wide rivers and their estuaries behind and follows bubbling streams through woodlands and flower-rich culm grassland before finally arriving at the edge of the high moor. The River Taw rises on Dartmoor and the



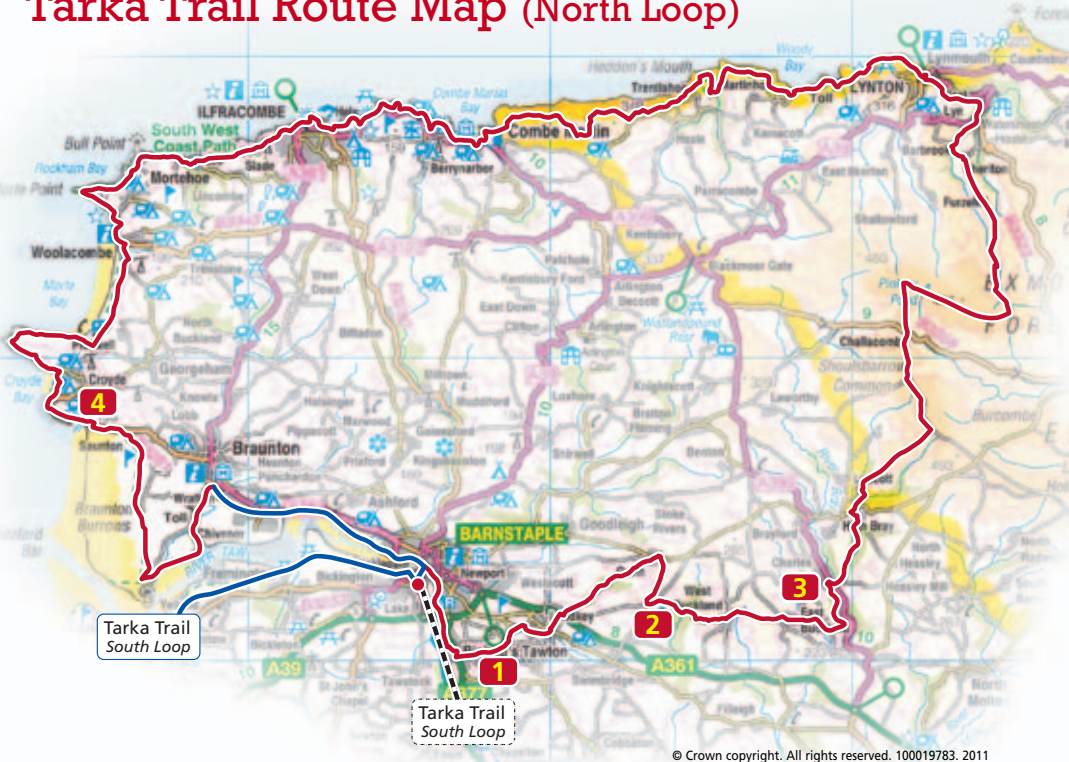
Trail joins it and returns with it, passing through the gently rolling countryside to meet the Tarka Railway Line at Eggesford. The railway line is the final leg of the South Loop; criss-crossing over the twists and turns of the River as it heads back to Barnstaple.

*"...time flowed with the sunlight of the still green place... the otters hunted and ragrowstered for many days under the high wooded hills below which the river wound and coiled like a serpent."*

from Henry Williamson's "Tarka the Otter"



# Tarka Trail Route Map (North Loop)



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## Map Key

- Tarka Trail (footpath)
- Tarka Trail (shared use section)
- - ● - - Tarka Line (railway)

## Circular Walk Locations

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Tarka Trail  
North Loop

# Tarka Trail Route Map (South Loop)

Tarka Trail  
North Loop



## Bishop's Tawton

### Overview

**Location:** Bishop's Tawton

**OS map:** 139 Bideford, Ilfracombe & Barnstaple

**Length:** 6 km/3.7 miles

**Length of Tarka Trail section:**  
2.25 km/1.4 miles

**Time:** 3 hours

**Sat nav postcode:** EX32 0DQ



Photo: David Corke

### Highlights:

- Spectacular views stretching from Hartland Point to Braunton Burrows and inland along the river valley
- Tranquil walk along a wooded river valley

Walking conditions vary from tarmac country lanes to muddy woodland paths and gravelled paths over Codden Hill.

### Details

This walk takes you from Bishop's Tawton along a partly wooded valley, past a quarry and back over Codden Hill for one of the best views in North Devon. On a clear day you can see Lundy, Hartland and Morte points on the coast and Exmoor and Dartmoor. At the top of Codden Hill there is a monument to Caroline Thorpe, wife of ex-MP Jeremy Thorpe, who died in 1970 aged 32. Bishop's Tawton is a small village in the valley of the River Taw, about three miles south of Barnstaple. The church dates from around the 14th century and the farmhouse by the church was a residence of the Bishops of Exeter until the Tudor period.

### The Chichester Arms pub

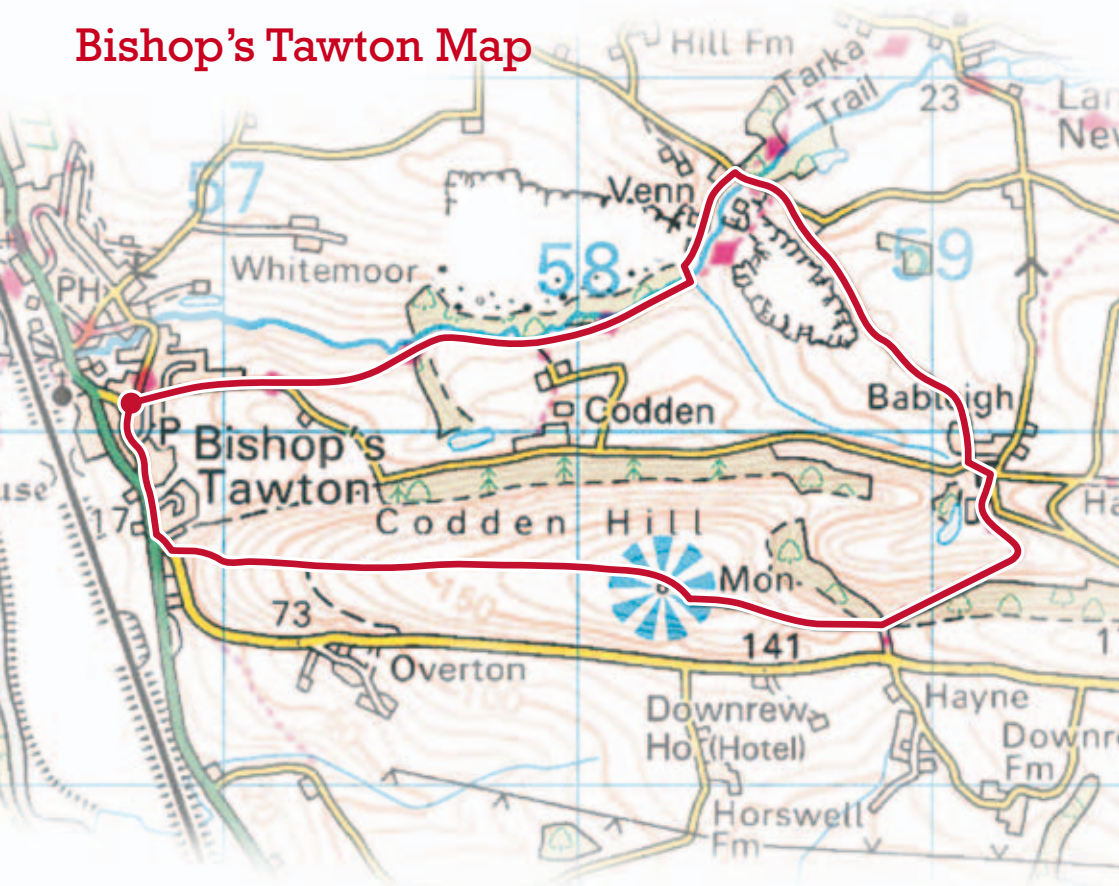
The walk starts at the Chichester Arms pub, which dates from the 15th Century and has kept much of its original character. Head up Sentry lane and then along the path marked Tarka Trail which will take you through fields and broad leafed woodland.

The path follows a tributary of the river Taw where, if you look carefully, you can see evidence of the industrial works associated with the lime kilns active in this area until the late 1800s. When you reach Higher Venn, turn right up the hill towards Higher Bableigh. You then take the unmetalled road up to Codden Hill car park. From here you follow the path past Codden Beacon and back to Bishop's Tawton.



Photo: David Corke

## Bishop's Tawton Map



# Tordown

## Overview

**Location:** Tordown Farm

**OS map:** OL9 Exmoor

**Length:** 2.9 km/1.8 miles or  
1.6 km/1 mile

**Length of Tarka Trail section:** 0.5 km

**Time:** 1 hour 15 mins/35 mins

**Sat nav postcode:** EX32 0QY

## Highlights

- Opportunity to see and walk around a traditional Devon Farm that serves home made Cream Teas
- Panoramic viewpoint taking in Exmoor and Dartmoor National Parks and the coast
- The Nature Trail takes you through steep hidden valleys and native woodland
- Opportunity to take a long or short walk



Photo: David Corke



## Details

Go to Tordown Farmhouse for a map and to let the farmer know you are visiting. The walk starts at the farmhouse and heads out across the fields and woodlands, meeting the Tarka Trail in the bottom of the valley before heading back up over the hill to the Farm. There are green markers on the gates that will help to guide you around this circular walk.

From the roadside go to the other side of the farm buildings and through the gate on your right-hand side at the start of a farm track. Once in the field, keep to your right and go through another gate that takes you through a former orchard out onto an ancient steep-sided lane. Go left up the lane to a gate on your left. Look out for the viewpoint marker post at the top of the slope. Going over the brow of the hill to your left, follow the route out over the fields and down into the valley to meet the Tarka Trail. Turn left along the wooded Tarka Trail green lane until you can turn left again through the farm gate back into the fields and up the steep hill through the fields and back to the Farmhouse. Do remember to close the gates behind you!





Photo: David Corke

## Tordown Map

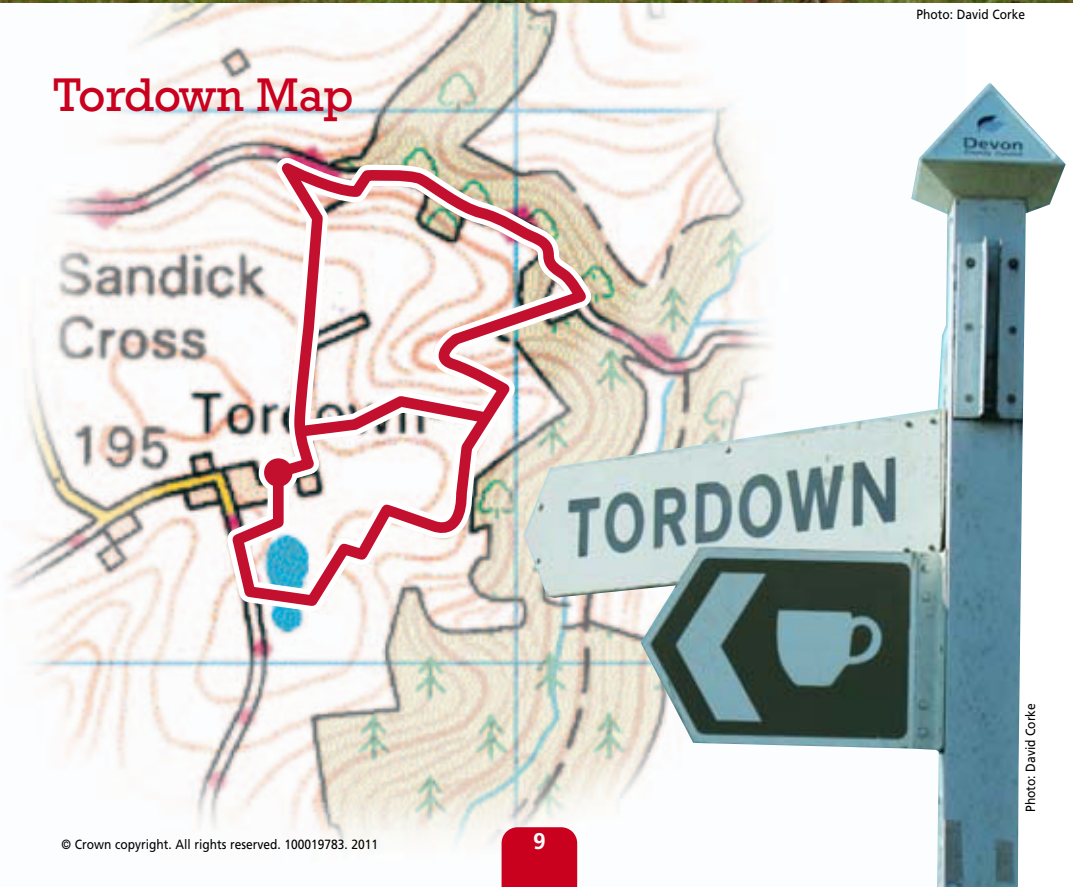


Photo: David Corke



Photo: David Corke

## Charles

### Overview

**Location:** Charles

**OS map:** OL9 Exmoor

**Length:** 6.75 km/4.2 miles

**Length of Tarka Trail section:**  
3.5 km/2.2 miles

**Time:** 2 hours

### Highlights

- The Tarka Trail follows the river Bray very closely on this section though woodland
- Footpaths and small country lanes take you through unspoilt steep sided valleys

Walking conditions vary from tarmac country lanes to muddy woodland paths. This walk requires a lot of hill ascents and isn't recommended if you struggle with them.

### Details

This walk starts in Charles and takes you along the Bray and back through woodland and steep sided valleys.

The Bray starts on Exmoor and continues through Brayford where it eventually joins the River Mole and finally the Taw before reaching the sea.

The walk starts outside the Church of St. John the Baptist in Charles.

Follow the road down the hill until you see a sign on your right for the Tarka Trail. Follow the Tarka Trail down the hill and along the river. The Trail will then take you up the hill and along some country lanes until, just after Charles Bottom, you see a sign for a public footpath on your right hand side. This path takes you through conifer woodland until you get to Middlecott, then turn right when you get to the road and follow the road back to Charles.

# Charles Map

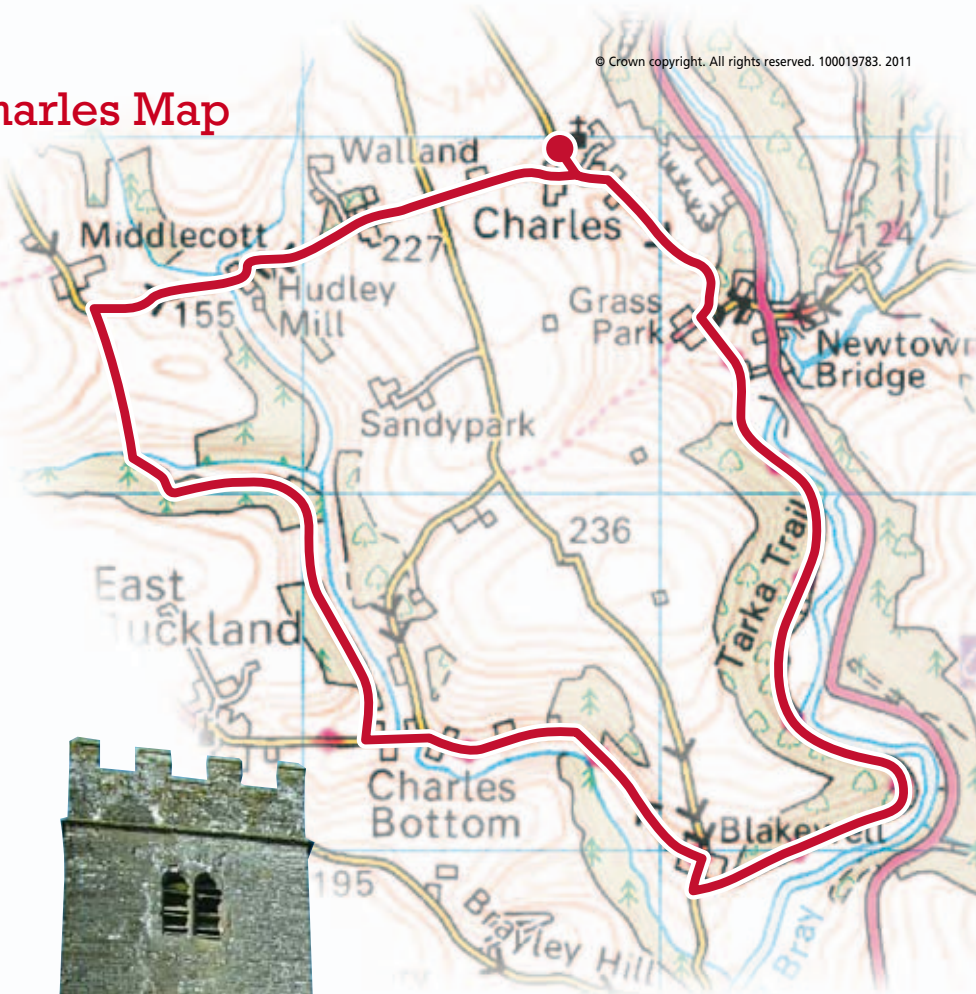


Photo: David Corke

## Croyde to Saunton

### Overview

**Location:** Saunton Sands

**OS map:** 139 Bideford, Ilfracombe and Barnstaple

**Length:** 6 km/3.7 miles

**Length of Tarka Trail section:**  
2.5 km/1.5 miles

**Time:** 2 hours

**Sat nav postcode:** EX33 1LZ

### Highlights:

- Stunning views of the Bay and Braunton Burrows
- Walk along Croyde beach

### Details

This walk takes you along Croyde beach and the South West Coast Path before climbing steeply up and over Saunton Down before looping back into Croyde through woods and country lanes.

Croyde is one of the most popular villages in Devon for families, surfers and walkers. The village is charming with its thatch and cob buildings, surrounding hills, sand dunes and beautiful beach. There are many places to stay, eat and drink and little

shops to explore. Saunton is less developed than Croyde with the amenities centred round the beach car park. From the top of Saunton Down you have one of the best views in North Devon looking over Bideford Bay and Braunton Burrows, one of the biggest dune systems in the UK. It is the core of North Devon's UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

There is a public car park located in the centre of the village but this walk starts at Billy Budds pub in Croyde. From Billy Budds follow the footpath to the beach and then turn left. Follow the Coast Path along the beach and cliffs to the road just beyond the old Coastguard lookout. Turn left along the road back towards to Croyde and cross when you see the footpath sign on your right. This path will take you to Saunton where there is a beach shop, café and restaurant. Cross the road to visit the beach and amenities or follow the footpath up the hill marked 'Public Footpath Croyde'. When you get further up the hill turn right to pass behind the abandoned building - sign posted 'Coast Path Saunton'. Follow the track until you see a footpath sign pointing over the hill and then look out for signs leading you through the field (they are attached to 7ft posts with yellow paint). On the other side of the hill you join a wooded path that will take you all the way back to the village.



Photo: David Corke

## Croyde to Saunton Map



## Coldridge

### Overview

**Location:** Coldridge

**OS map:** 113 Okehampton

**Length:** 8 km/5 miles

**Length of Tarka Trail section:**

3.25 km/2 miles

**Time:** 2 hours 45 mins

**Sat nav postcode:** EX17 6AX

### Highlights:

- Brushford church is a great place to have lunch and enjoy the views of the surrounding countryside
- Wooded valley walks along the river Taw

Walking conditions vary from tarmac country lanes to muddy woodland paths. This walk would be most enjoyable during good weather due to sections of the paths becoming very muddy and wet.

### Details

Coldridge is a small village about 10 miles from Crediton. The settlement has been around since Norman times and was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. St. Matthew's has many interesting features, especially the 15th century carved wooden screen with its unique 'carver's joke', and is well worth a look. Although the village doesn't have a pub there is a small post office selling refreshments. The nearest pub is in Lapford, which is a 15 minute drive away.

After parking by St. Matthew's Church, follow the road towards Eggesford until you reach a path on your left signed as a bridleway. Follow this path until you cross over a country lane at which point the path becomes the Tarka Trail. Follow the Trail across Brushford Bridge and up to Brushford Church, which is worth visiting for its air of remoteness, its beautiful situation and its chancel screen. Follow the footpath past Brushford Church all the way back to Park Mill Bridge where you turn right and follow the signs back to Coldridge.



Photo: David Corke

# Coldridge Map

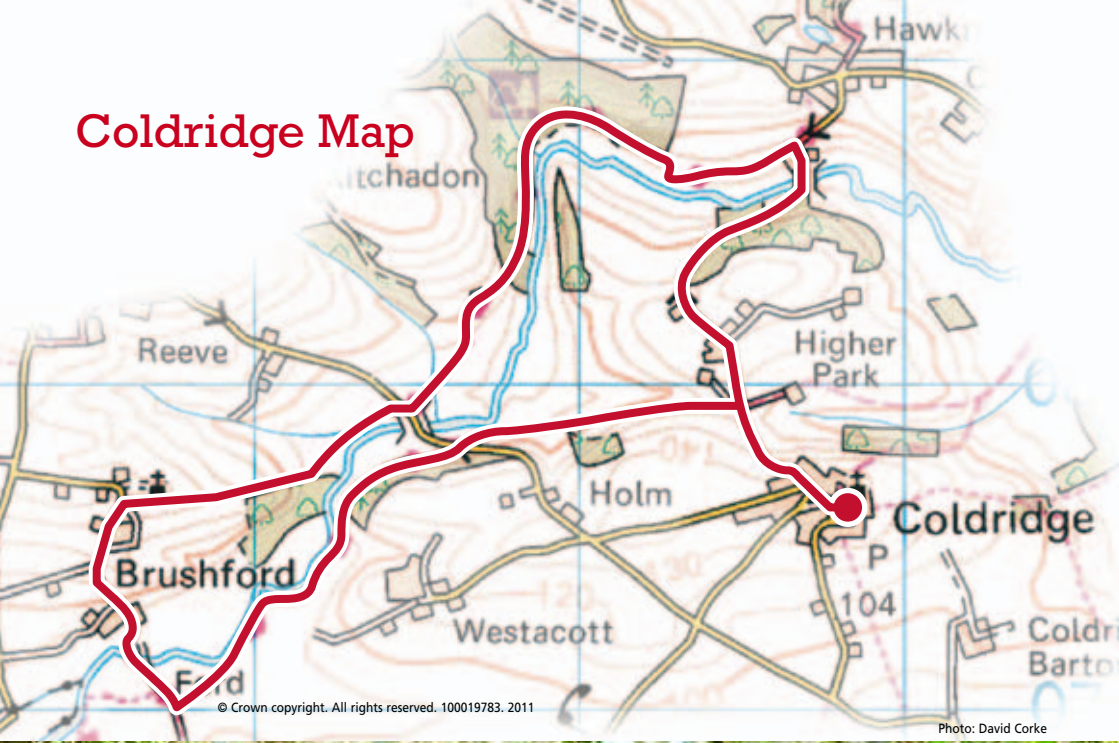


Photo: David Corke



## North Tawton

### Overview

**Location:** North Tawton

**OS map:** 113 Hatherleigh, North Tawton & Lapford

**Length:** 4.5 km/2.8 miles

**Length of Tarka Trail section:**  
2.25 km/1.4 miles

**Time:** 2 hours

**Sat nav postcode:** EX20 2DT

### Highlights:

- The footbridge over Bailey's Ford allows close up views of the river Taw
- Walking along the river bank on the Tarka Trail for over a mile

Walking conditions vary from tarmac country lanes, muddy footpaths and grassy fields. Appropriate footwear is essential for this walk due to muddy sections after rain.

### Details

This walk takes you through North Tawton, through the surrounding countryside and then back along the river Taw. North Tawton is a rural town situated on the river Taw, close to Dartmoor National Park. It has been



inhabited since Roman times when it was a military camp and crossing point over the river. By the end of the 12th century it was a prosperous market town. The tower of the St. Peter's Church was built around this time although the rest of the church dates from the 14th-15th centuries. In 2005, North Tawton was chosen as the filming location for Jennifer Saunders' BBC television series *Jam & Jerusalem*.

From the start of the walk at The White Hart in North Tawton turn right onto Letheren's Lane, which is clearly marked as a footpath. Follow this path until you reach Yeo but do not cross Yeo Bridge. Instead, follow the sign marked un-metalled road until you reach Bailey's Ford and cross the river on the footbridge. From here the path is sign-posted Tarka Trail all the way back to the main road bridge into North Tawton.



# North Tawton Map

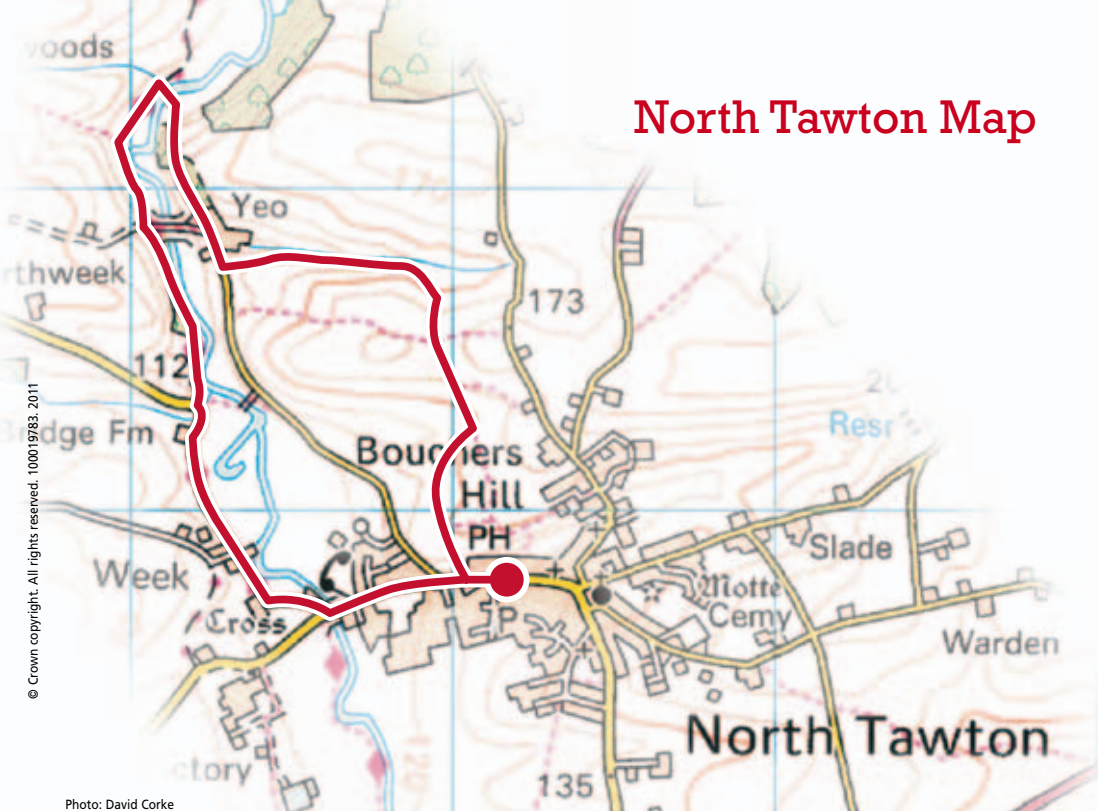


Photo: David Corke



## Sticklepath

### Overview

**Location:** Sticklepath

**OS map:** OL28 Dartmoor

**Length:** 4.8 km/3 miles

**Length of Tarka Trail section:**

3.2 km/2 miles

**Time:** 2 hours 30 mins

**Sat nav postcode:** EX20 2NW

### Highlights:

- Explore the historic villages of Sticklepath and Belstone
- Views of the Taw valley, Belstone and the surrounding countryside

Walking conditions vary from tarmac country lanes to muddy woodland paths.

### Details

Sticklepath is a village set amid the beautiful Dartmoor countryside. Its name derives from the Saxon 'staecl', meaning 'steep', as it lies at the foot of a high mount. Sticklepath is home to Finch foundry, the last remaining water-powered forge in England that in its heyday made 400 tools a day; sickles, scythes and shovels for West Country farmers and miners.

Belstone is a quaint little village that has kept much of its character and architecture. The village church originated in 1260 but the present building dates from the 14th and 15th century though there was a major restoration in 1881. The church contains an incised granite cross that has been dated to between the 7th and the 9th centuries. Belstone also has its own 'jail', although it is actually a holding pen for stray sheep.

This walk starts outside the Finch Foundry in the centre of Sticklepath. With the foundry on your left, head up the road and turn left down the lane where the main road bends to the right. After about 500 metres on this lane take the track to your left which opens out into an informal parking area. Follow this track along the north of the river to Belstone village. Through Belstone keep left, past the 'jail' out onto the wide-open village common with views up to Cosdon Hill and out over the Cleave. Find the path over the hill before dropping down to the bridge over the river. Follow the path up the hill to the pillow mounds and out across the side of the open hill to the edge of the walled Skaigh Warren. Keep the wall on your left until you turn left through the gate and follow the bridleway off the moor back down into the woods and round onto the road at Sticklepath. A short walk up the road to your left takes you back to the foundry.

# Sticklepath Map

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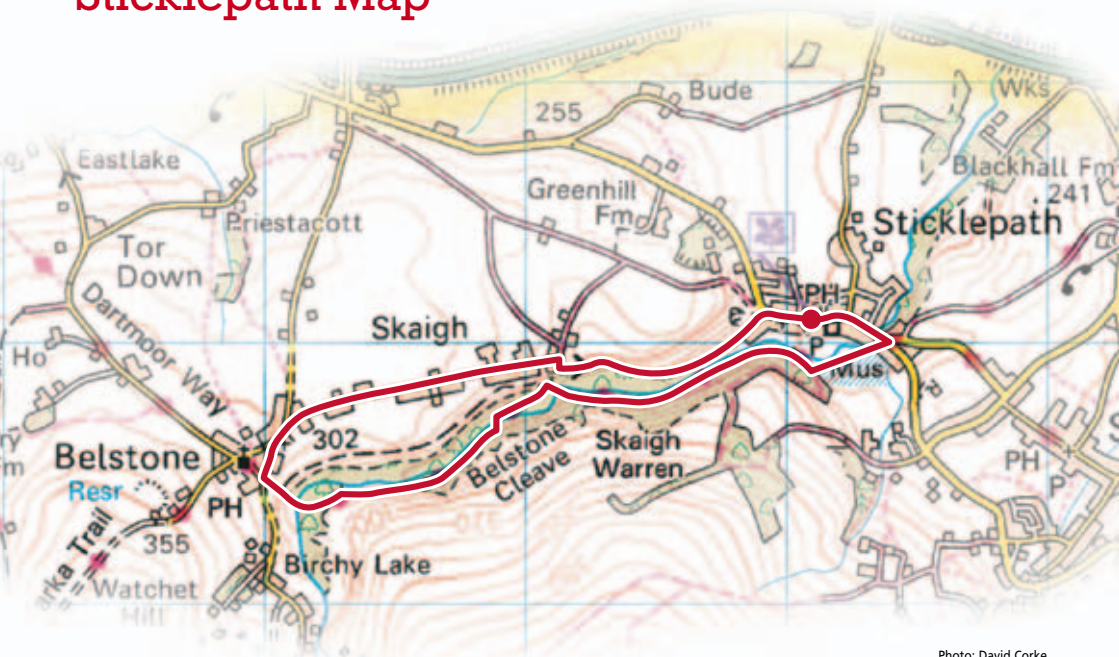
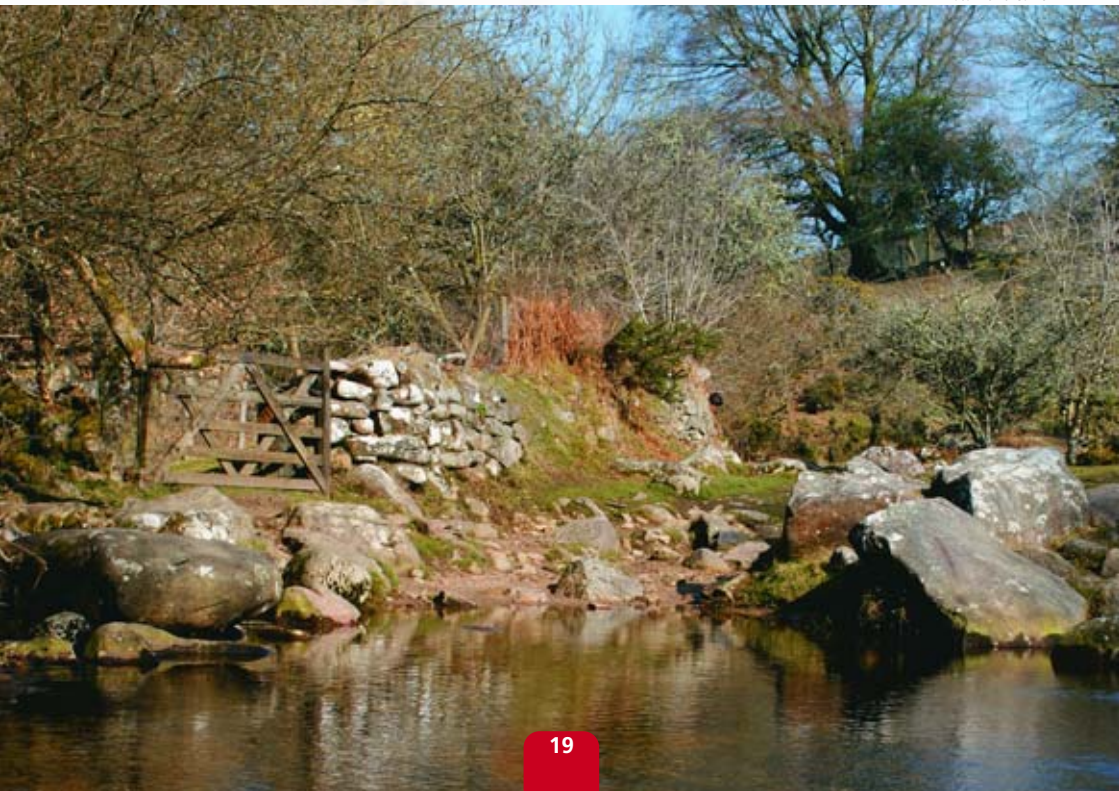


Photo: David Corke



## Hatherleigh

### Overview

**Location:** Hatherleigh

**OS map:** 113 Hatherleigh, North Tawton & Lapford

**Length:** 6.5 km /4 miles

**Length of Tarka Trail section:**  
1.5 km/1 mile

**Time:** 2 hours

**Sat nav postcode:** EX20 3JN

### Highlights:

- Hatherleigh Monument
- Views of Hatherleigh moor and Dartmoor

Walking conditions vary from tarmac country lanes to open fields.

### Details

Hatherleigh stands at the meeting point of the Rivers Lew and Torridge and was founded by monks over a thousand years ago. It has remained an important market town ever since with a market being held every Tuesday. The town has managed to keep its original charm and is full of independent shops and artists selling their wares making a refreshing change from chain stores.

It is well worth exploring before you start the walk.

The walk starts at the George pub that dates from 1450, though it was much rebuilt after a fire in 2008. Despite this, like much of Hatherleigh, it has managed to keep its original character. From the George head along Market Street, turn left onto Oakfield Road and then right onto Sanctuary Lane where the Tarka Trail begins. Follow this lane until you see a bridleway sign



Photo: David Corke

on your right. Halfway up this path there is a brick viewing platform called Belvedere Castle with stairs leading to the top from where there are superb panoramic views across a patchwork of woods and farmland to Dartmoor. When you reach the end of the lane turn left and keep on the left hand side of the road until you reach the William Morris monument. This obelisk was erected to commemorate William Morris who was a commanding officer in the Crimean

War and was injured in the Charge of the Light Brigade in 1854. From the monument, cross the road and rejoin the Tarka Trail across Hatherleigh Moor. Follow the Tarka Trail until it reaches the road and then stay on the moor by following the footpath. Eventually this will bring you to a small lane which will take you all the way back to the start of the walk in the centre of Hatherleigh.



Photo: David Corke



## Hatherleigh Map

## Dolton

### Overview

**Location:** Dolton

**OS map:** 127 South Molton & Chulmleigh

**Length:** 5.5 km/3.4 miles

**Length of Tarka Trail section:**  
1.25 km/0.8 miles

**Time:** 2 hours

**Sat nav postcode:** EX19 8QF

### Highlights:

- Close up views of the river Torridge
- Hide by the river where you have the chance of seeing otters, kingfishers and salmon jumping
- Broad leaved woodland

Walking conditions vary from tarmac country lanes, well maintained paths through Halsdon and open grassy fields.

### Details

This walk takes you down quiet country lanes, around the beautiful Halsdon nature reserve, along the river Torridge and over the fields around Dolton, a small village located between Beaford, Winkleigh and

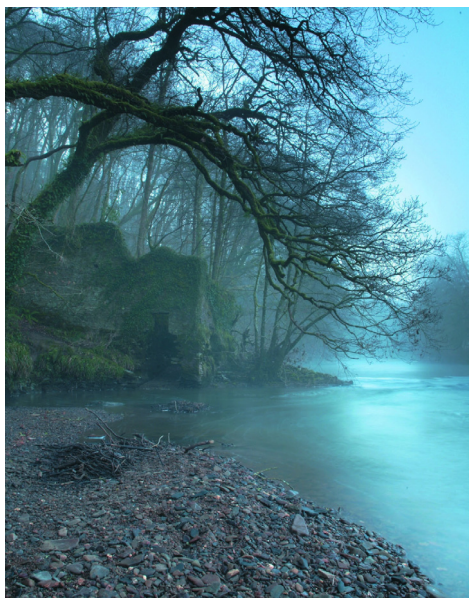


Photo: Kevin New

Merton. It has three pubs, a thirteenth century church and a village shop. Halsdon Nature Reserve covers an extensive area of flood plain pasture and valley-side woodland alongside a 2.6 km stretch of the River Torridge.

The walk starts at The Royal Oak in the centre of Dolton and follows the Tarka Trail along West Lane until the crossroads. Cross the stream on the stone bridge and follow the path into the Devon Wildlife Trust's Halsdon Nature Reserve. Follow the river along the well maintained white band path until you come out by Halsdon house. Once you have walked up the lane to the road, turn right and head down until you see a footpath sign on your left. This will take you to Iddlecott and then back to The Royal Oak.

# Dolton Map

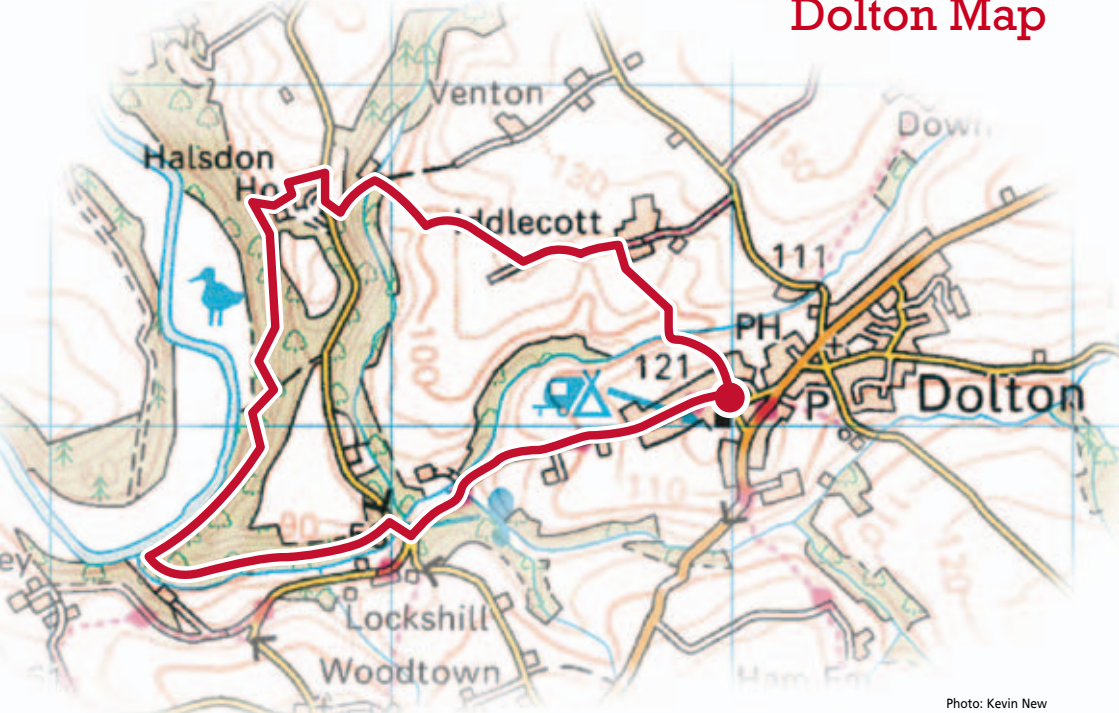
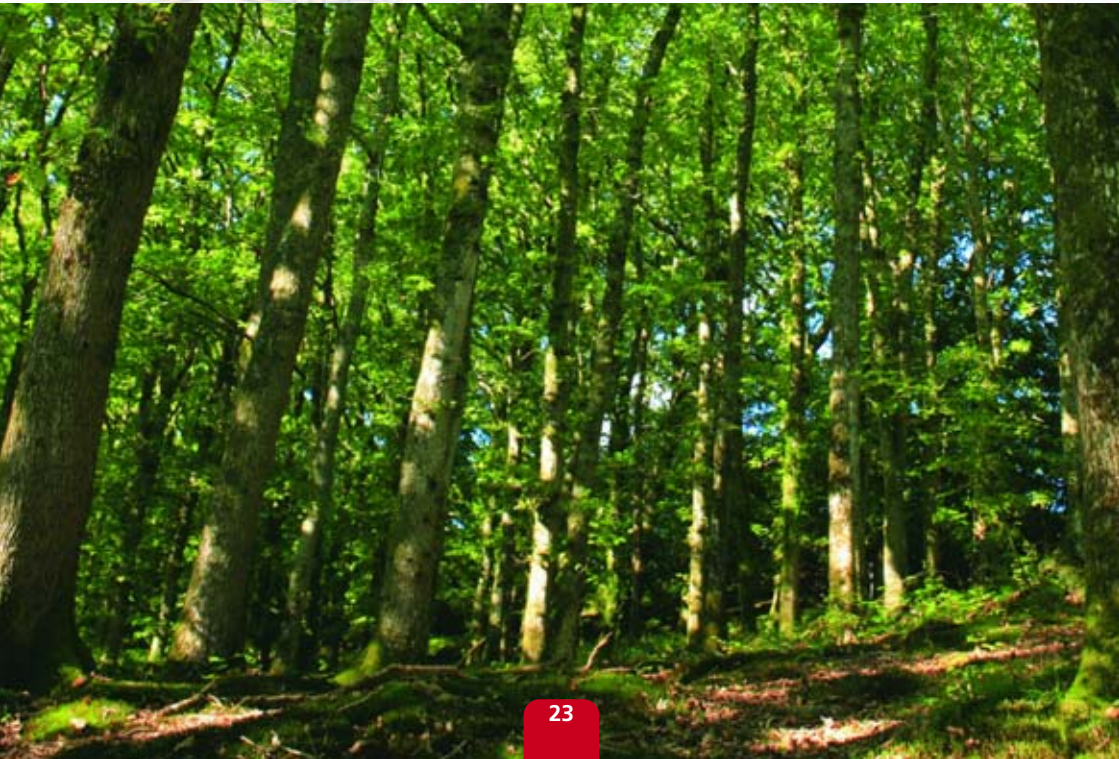


Photo: Kevin New



## East Yarde

### Overview

**Location:** East Yarde

**OS map:** 126 Clovelly & Hartland

**Length:** 7.25 km/4.5 m

**Length of Tarka Trail section:**  
2 km/1.25 miles

**Time:** 1 hour 45 mins

**Sat nav postcode:** EX38 8QA

### Highlights:

- Spectacular views of the surrounding countryside and of Dartmoor in the distance
- Walk along the Tarka Trail through broad leaved woodland and over Stowford Moor

Walking conditions vary from tarmac country lanes to muddy woodland paths and the well maintained Tarka Trail. The footpath section of this walk can become extremely wet and muddy after rain, so wear appropriate footwear or undertake the walk in good weather.

### Details

This walk will take you over farmland and then round country lanes with spectacular views of the surrounding countryside before bringing you back to East Yarde along the Tarka Trail. East Yarde was once an intermediate halt on the initially privately run North Devon and Cornwall Junction Light Railway, constructed in 1925 to serve clay works along its route. The platform can still be seen on the other side of the road from the car park and is the highest point of the former railway. The last passengers to use the line were in 1965 but it remained in use for ball clay until 1982. The line now forms part of the Tarka Trail.

The walk starts at Yarde Orchard, an award winning Cafe and bunkhouse. Follow the road up the hill until you see a footpath sign on your right. Follow this track until you reach a wooden gate that leads to a field. Instead of passing through the gate, continue onwards keeping the hedge



Photo: David Corke



to your left until you reach the top of the hill and a stile. Go over the stile and follow the footpath into Peters Marland. Follow the sign marked Langtree and walk up the lane until you reach Berry Cross and then turn right towards Stowford.

Follow this road until you reach Bagbear Holt where you turn right onto the Tarka Trail once more. Follow the Tarka Trail up the hill until you return to East Yarde.

## East Yarde Map



## Monkleigh

### Overview

**Location:** Monkleigh

**OS map:** 126 Clovelly & Hartland

**Length:** 8.75 km/5.45 miles

**Length of Tarka Trail section:**  
2 km/1.25 miles

**Time:** 3 hours

**Sat nav postcode:** EX39 5JS

### Highlights:

- The art work adds to the attraction of this wooded part of the Tarka Trail
- Views of the Torridge valley

### Details

This walk takes you through small villages and through open countryside before walking back along the Tarka Trail past some of its most popular art work. Monkleigh is a small village located between Bideford and Torrington. St. George's, its church, is thought to originate from around 1423 though additional parts were added in 1537 before a Victorian restoration in 1862. Watergate was once an intermediate halt on the initially privately run North Devon and

Cornwall Junction Light Railway, constructed in 1925 to serve clay works along its route.

The walk starts at the Bell Inn in Monkleigh, which is located on the main road through the village. Head down the road towards the church and then turn right by the community centre and follow the footpath signs over the fields until you reach a small lane. Turn left down the lane until you see a footpath sign on your right hand side. This path takes you towards Frithelstock. When it meets the road you can detour left to explore the hamlet including the remains of its priory begun in 1220 and dissolved in 1536, or continue right down the road until you see a footpath sign on your left hand side. Follow this path all the way down to Watergate and join the Tarka Trail towards Torrington. Follow the Trail until you see a bridleway sign on your left in sight of the iron bridge across the Torridge. Follow the bridleway back up to the road that leads all the way back to Monkleigh.



Photo: David Corke

# Monkleigh Map



Photo: David Corke

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June 2011



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