

Day Walks in Somerset

20 COASTAL, MOORLAND
& RURAL ROUTES



Jen & Sim Benson



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Front cover: **Kelston Round Hill from Prospect Stile** (route 19).

Back cover: **Triscombe Quarry and Wills Neck from Great Hill** (route 7).

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LOWER EBBOR GORGE (ROUTE 16)



Exmoor

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Bath & North East Somerset

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- 18** Ammerdam 12.6km 127
- 19** Cotswold Way 17.9km 133
- 20** Kennet & Avon Canal Loop 14.6km 139



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Section

1

Exmoor

Exmoor National Park lies across the borderlands of West Somerset and North Devon. It is a place of open hilltops, steep-sided valleys, ancient woodland and farmland, edged by a dramatic stretch of coastline along the Bristol Channel.

The walks in this section begin on the National Trust's Holnicote Estate in the north of Exmoor, where a loop of the South West Coast Path takes us on what must be one of the finest stretches of coastal walking in the country. Next, we head for the highest point on the moor at Dunkery Beacon, flanked by ancient trees and the nature reserve at Horner Wood.

Dunster Castle is a fine place to begin the third walk in this section, which explores the wooded hills that hide the fascinating earthworks at Bat's Castle and Gallox Hill. The final walk traverses the utterly peaceful, surprisingly wild and remote-feeling forest around Wimbleball Lake.









A circuit of the National Trust's Holnicote Estate on the edge of Exmoor, starting in the picturesque village of Selworthy and taking in a truly dramatic stretch of the coastline.

Selworthy » Upper South West Coast Path » Bratton Ball » Lower South West Coast Path » Henners Combe » Hurlstone Combe » Hurlstone Point » Bossington Hill » Selworthy Beacon » Selworthy

Start

Selworthy car park (National Trust).

GR: SS 920467.

The Walk

The Holnicote Estate was owned by the Acland family – who also owned Killerton to the south – until 1944, when it was gifted to the National Trust. It covers 12,000 acres of moorland, woodland, villages and farmland within Exmoor National Park, and a long stretch of coastline along the Bristol Channel dotted with wild beaches. Look for red deer and Exmoor ponies year-round and bats and butterflies over the summer months.

This walk begins in the village of Selworthy, all cob and thatch with sweeps of bright green lawn and a white-painted church. Passing tantalisingly close to the tea rooms, we wind up through the densely wooded Selworthy Combe, emerging on to open moor below Selworthy Beacon. From here, we take in a wide loop of the South West Coast Path, starting along the upper path

– a well-used bridleway and farm track – and ticking off the summit of Bratton Ball before heading for the rugged lower path. One of the most spectacular and dramatic stretches of the coast path that loops and winds and rises and falls with the steep-sided hills and combes, this is truly breathtaking walking.

From near Bossington, at the western end of the headland, we drop down steep Hurlstone Combe to take in the views from Hurlstone Point, a former coastguard lookout station, the grey pebbles of Bossington Beach far below. There are a number of caves tunnelling deep into the rocky cliffs along this part of the coast, possibly used in the past for stowing smuggled goods.

From here we take a long climb all the way to 308-metre Selworthy Beacon – it's well worth it for the superb coastal and moorland views from the top. And then it's downhill all the way back to the tea rooms.

SELWORTHY & BOSSINGTON

DISTANCE: 16.5KM/10.3 MILES » **TOTAL ASCENT:** 480M/1,570FT » **START GR:** SS 920467 » **TIME:** ALLOW 5.5 HOURS » **SATNAV:** TA24 8TR » **MAP:** OS EXPLORER OL9, EXMOOR, 1:25,000 » **REFRESHMENTS:** PERIWINKLE TEA ROOMS, SELWORTHY » **NAVIGATION:** WELL-MAINTAINED TRAILS MOSTLY ON THE SOUTH WEST COAST PATH.



HEADING AWAY FROM HURLSTONE POINT





01 Selworthy & Bossington

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Directions – Selworthy & Bossington



- 1** From the car park follow the lane down to the church, **turning right** just after the church but before the gate to the Periwinkle Tea Rooms on to a bridleway that runs up through a wooded combe. Keep the stream on your left and follow the bridleway as it curves up and right, leaving the woods and climbing over open, gorse-covered moorland. Keep following the track uphill until you reach a lane.
- 2** **Cross straight over the lane** and head north to reach the upper section of the South West Coast Path at a five-way junction. **Turn right** and follow the South West Coast Path until you reach a gate leaving the Holnicote Estate.
- 3** **Go through the gate and bear right**, following paths to reach the small pillar at the top of Bratton Ball (where there's also a car park). Then **walk north**, heading straight for the sea, to meet the South West Coast Path. **Turn right** and walk a short distance along the South West Coast Path to a path junction.
- 4** **Turn left** (heading west), following the lower 'rugged' route of the South West Coast Path, with the sea on your right, into Grexy Combe. Continue following the coast path as it winds spectacularly around Henners Combe and then East Combe, eventually reaching a path junction and signpost.
- 5** **Turn right**, following the South West Coast Path (signposted *Porlock*) and walk down the steep valley of Hurlstone Combe. **Turn right** at the bottom and follow the path to the former lookout station at Hurlstone Point, built in 1902 and in use until 1983. The long pebble beach at Bossington to the west is well worth a detour to explore.
- 6** **Retrace your steps** to Hurlstone Combe and back up to the path junction and signpost at the top of the combe (point **5**).* Follow the South West Coast Path **straight ahead** (signposted *Minehead*).



***Turn right** to detour to Bossington Hill, then continue **straight ahead** to return to the South West Coast Path.

Continue following the South West Coast Path then **bear right** towards Selworthy Beacon, a fantastic viewpoint.

- 7** Carry **straight on** from the beacon, following the track as it trends right to reach the lane crossed at point **2**. **Cross the lane** and rejoin your outward path, following the bridleway down Selworthy Combe to reach Selworthy village. Emerging through the gate at the bottom, stop at the tea rooms to your right (cream teas highly recommended) or **turn left** to return to the car park.



HURLSTONE POINT



Section 2

Quantock Hills & Blackdown Hills

The Quantock Hills stretch for 25 kilometres between the Vale of Taunton Deane in the south and Kilve on the Bristol Channel in the north. A dramatic landscape that inspired Coleridge and Wordsworth, the area is networked with footpaths and bridleways, many leading steeply up from the surrounding villages to reach the crest of the hills.

Our walks here begin on the coast – a geologically fascinating area that's great for finding fossils, including some sizeable ammonites. Heading south we explore the northern and southern reaches of the Quantocks, passing the remnants of millennia of human activity including the Bronze Age stone at Triscombe and the numerous earthworks at Cothelstone Hill.

The final route in this section follows the East Deane Way long-distance trail through the Blackdown Hills, a peaceful and little-visited Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the Devon-Somerset border.





08 East Deane Way Link-up

19.4km/12.1 miles

A walk through wildlife-rich woodland on the edge of the Blackdown Hills, linking up a loop of the East Deane Way long-distance path.

Castle Neroche » Middleroom Lane » Curry Mallet Drove » Bickenhall » Farmers Arms pub » Netherclay » Wych Lodge woods » Staple Park Wood » Staple Common » Castle Neroche

Start

Castle Neroche car park.

GR: ST 274156.

The Walk

The East Deane Way winds through the countryside and villages to the south and east of Taunton, Somerset's county town, exploring the bowl of Taunton Deane, the Blackdown Hills and the Levels at Sedgemoor. At a little over 70 kilometres in total, it lends itself well to being split into a series of shorter walks, while many sections provide the starting point for excellent circular adventures.

Our walk takes in one such circuit, closing a wide loop of the Way at its southern edge and linking some of the area's interesting villages, commons, peaceful pockets of woodland and the fringes of the Blackdown Hills.

We begin at Castle Neroche, a ruined Norman motte-and-bailey castle built upon an Iron Age hillfort. The steep

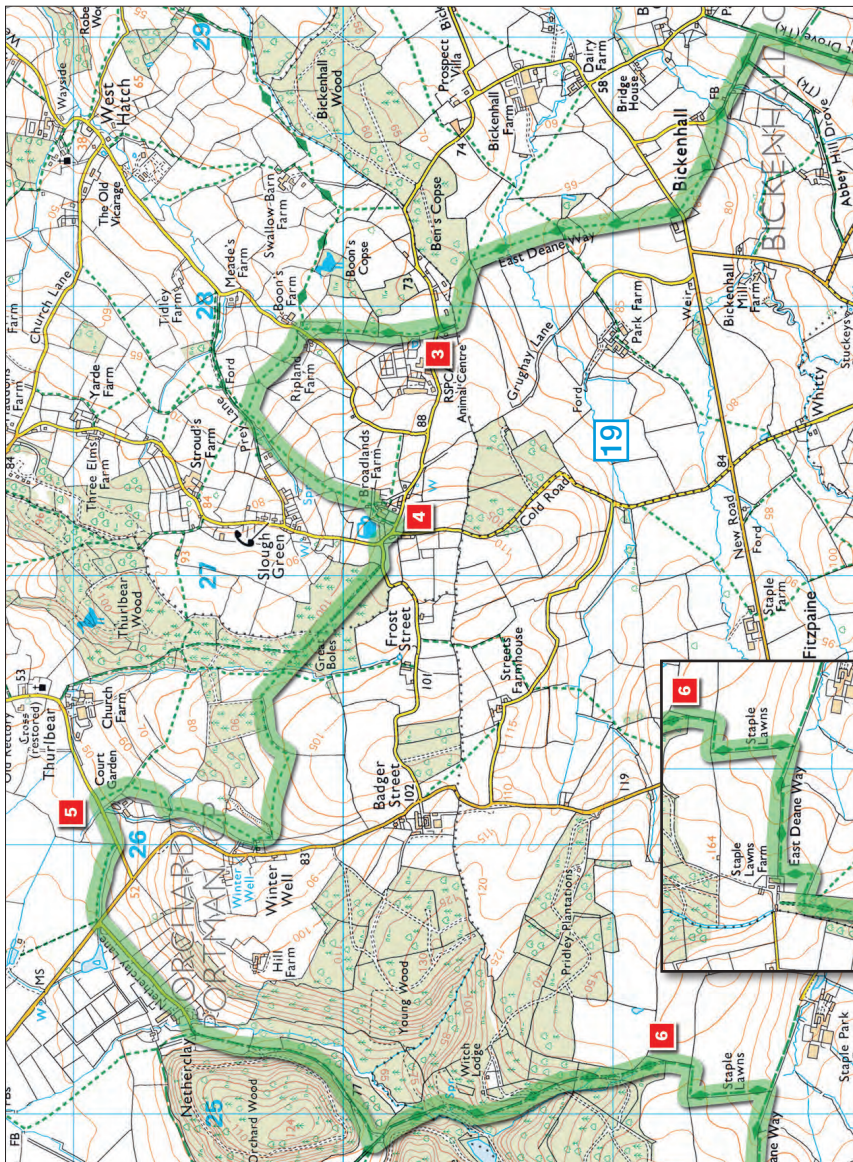
ramparts and elevated position offer great views across the Vale of Taunton to the Quantock Hills, Exmoor and even as far as the Mendips and Glastonbury Tor on a clear day. Descending the ramparts, we wander through majestic beechwoods – listen out for woodpeckers and buzzards and keep your eyes peeled for deer sheltering between the trees as you go – and follow ancient drovers' roads north over Curland Common and Bickenhall Plain.

In the northernmost section of our walk, we cross west on winding footpaths and country lanes to rejoin the East Deane Way as it traces the course of a brook through a densely wooded valley.

At around 16 kilometres (10 miles) we pass the Butterfly Conservation reserve at Mount Fancy Farm – well worth a short detour. Our final miles take us across further commons and woodland to return to Castle Neroche.

EAST DEANE WAY LINK-UP

DISTANCE: 19.4KM/12.1 MILES » **TOTAL ASCENT:** 350M/1,150FT » **START GR:** ST 274156 » **TIME:** ALLOW 6 HOURS
SATNAV: TA20 3LB » **MAP:** OS EXPLORER 128, TAUNTON & BLACKDOWN HILLS, 1:25,000 » **REFRESHMENTS:** THE GREYHOUND INN, STAPLE FITZPAINE » **NAVIGATION:** STRAIGHTFORWARD, MOSTLY FOLLOWING THE WELL-SIGNED EAST DEANE WAY.





08 East Deane Way Link-up

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Directions – East Deane Way Link-up



- S** **Turn right** out of the car park on to the East Deane Way, following the path as it curves round to the left and descends steeply through the earthworks of Castle Neroche. Follow the path north-east to a path junction, crossing **straight over** and following Middleroom Lane to reach a track at the edge of the woodland. **Turn left** on to this track then **turn right** on to a straight path between fields that leads to a lane.
- 2** **Turn left** and follow the lane for a short distance, then **turn right** on to Curry Mallet Drive signed to *Bickenhall Wood*. Follow this trail between large fields then take the **first left-hand turn**, signed as a *Footpath*. Follow this path north-west and continue **straight ahead** at the next junction to reach the end of a lane. Follow this across a stream and uphill to a **gate into the field on the left**. Take this path across the field and through a gate into the next one. **Turn right** and continue on the footpath north along the edge of the field to New Road. **Cross the road and follow the path straight ahead** across the next field, either following the right-hand edge or cutting across trending right depending on the crops. Go through a small gate into an area of shrubby woodland and then out the other side into another large field. **Follow the East Deane Way** across the next two fields to a gate at the corner of Ben's Copse. **Go through this gate** and follow the path **diagonally left** across the next field and **turn right through a gate** to reach a lane near the RSPCA Animal Centre.
- 3** **Turn left** on to the lane then **turn right over a stile** into a field. Follow the path along the left-hand hedge line and through a thin belt of woodland. Cross a little orchard to a **stile leading on to the lane to the left**. Leave the East Deane Way and **cross the road and the stile opposite** into the next field. Follow the path along the left-hand edge and cross into the next field, then **go left** to reach the opposite hedge. **Turn left**, following the path along the hedge line and over a series of stiles until you reach the back of Broadlands Farm. Use the **small gate on the right** and follow the narrow path beside the barn and into the back of the Farmers Arms' car park, continuing to the **road in front of the pub**.

- 4** **Turn right** on to the road, **turn right** at the next road junction and then **turn left** at a larger T-junction. Follow this road until you can enter Thurlbear Wood through a **gate on the right**. Follow the path north-west to a path junction, where the main track curves to the right. **Turn left** here on to the smaller path; walk downhill and cross a small stream into a large field. Continue on the path aiming for the corner of the woodland opposite. **Turn left at the wood**, following the field edge around to a gate. **Go through the gate** and head straight across the next field aiming to the left of the cottage at Winter Well. **Turn right behind the cottage** and follow the path north across a couple of small fields and through a line of pine trees. Follow the footpath to the right of the Court Garden and then **turn left** to reach a road.



PATH THROUGH WOODLAND NEAR MOUNT FANCY FARM

Directions – East Deane Way Link-up continued ...



- 5** **Turn left** on to the road then **bear right** through a gate and into a field, following the path across the field to reach another road. **Cross the road and walk up the road directly opposite** (Netherclay Lane); continue on to a bridleway at the end by a paddock. **Turn left** (signposted *Wych Lodge woods*) and follow this clear path through woodland to reach a path junction. **Turn left**, rejoining the East Deane Way and following it into Wych Lodge woods, crossing a footbridge and following a clear track uphill. Continue on the path signed to *Staple Park*; follow this path to the edge of the woods.
- 6** Follow the path across the first field then **bear right** along the edge of the next field past a large oak tree. **Turn left** and walk downhill along the hedge to a track junction at the bottom of the hill. **Turn right** and follow the track for a short distance then **turn left** into the next field. **Immediately turn right** and follow the field edge to Staple Lawns Farm. **Turn left**, following the path alongside the paddock, and then **turn right** into Oakey Copse. **Turn left** and follow the main path south and around a left-hand bend to Underhill Lane.
- 7** **Turn right** and follow the lane uphill to a **left turn** into Mount Fancy Farm Reserve. Follow this path generally south-east through woodland and across scrubland to reach a field and track just south of Mount Fancy Farm. **Turn right** here to a gate signed *East Deane Way*, **turning left** and continuing on a track towards Britty. **Stay right** at Britty on the East Deane Way, walking through the woodland on Staple Common to reach a lay-by and road.
- 8** **Cross on to a forest track** (signposted *Castle Neroche*) and follow this uphill **trending left** to reach a track junction. **Turn sharp right**, following a blue arrow and a sign to *Castle Neroche car park*. Either follow the steep footpath **on the right** up to the castle viewpoint or the gentler and wider trail to the castle's left. If taking the easier trail, turn right at the top to visit the viewpoint. From the viewpoint **head south** and follow the path back to the start.



EAST DEANE WAY SIGN NEAR MOUNT FANCY FARM