



## Walk 2. Combe Martin, the Hangman Hills and Berrynarbor.

- 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 Berrynarbor; 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.

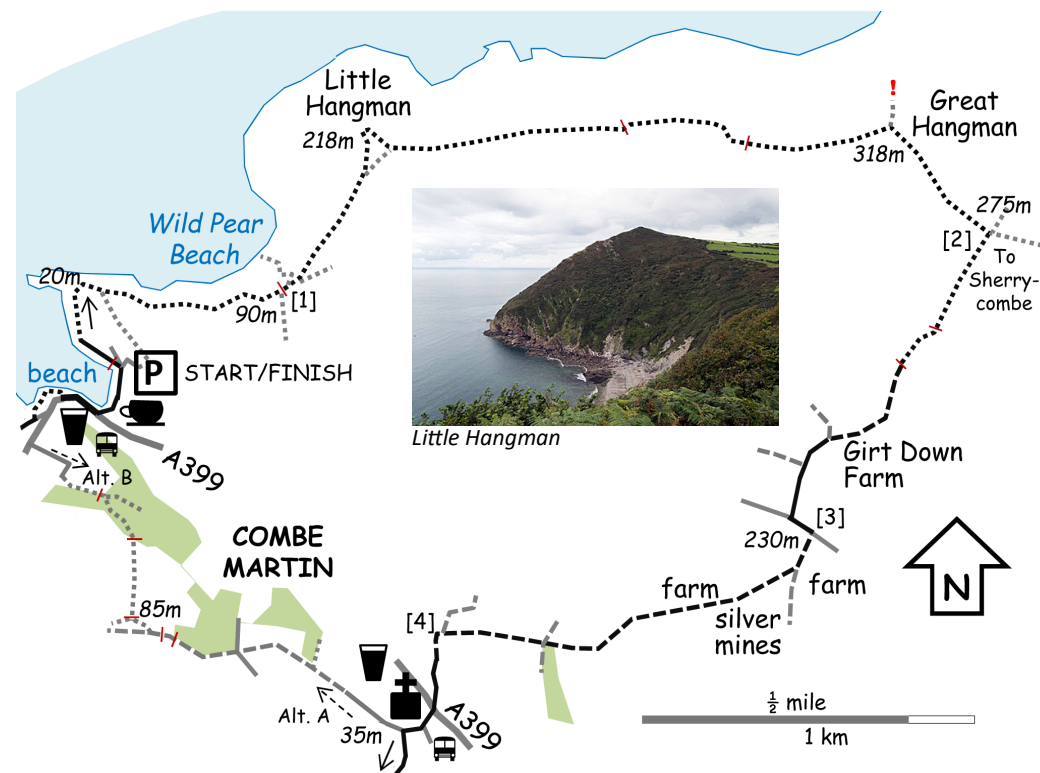
Access: Park in Combe Martin near the sea front (Kiln car park, SS 577 472, close to EX34 0DJ; £). A bus (301) runs from Ilfracombe and Barnstaple to Combe Martin. Alternatively, start from Berrynarbor using the free village car park (SS 562 466, near EX34 9SE).

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

Refreshments: Wide choice in Combe Martin, pub in Berrynarbor.

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 a straight valley. The walk starts at the seaside end, heading up on to the hills before returning to the very different old village and church. The second part of the walk uses lanes to head to the pretty village of Berrynarbor, already explored in walk 1, and back to Combe Martin above the coast.

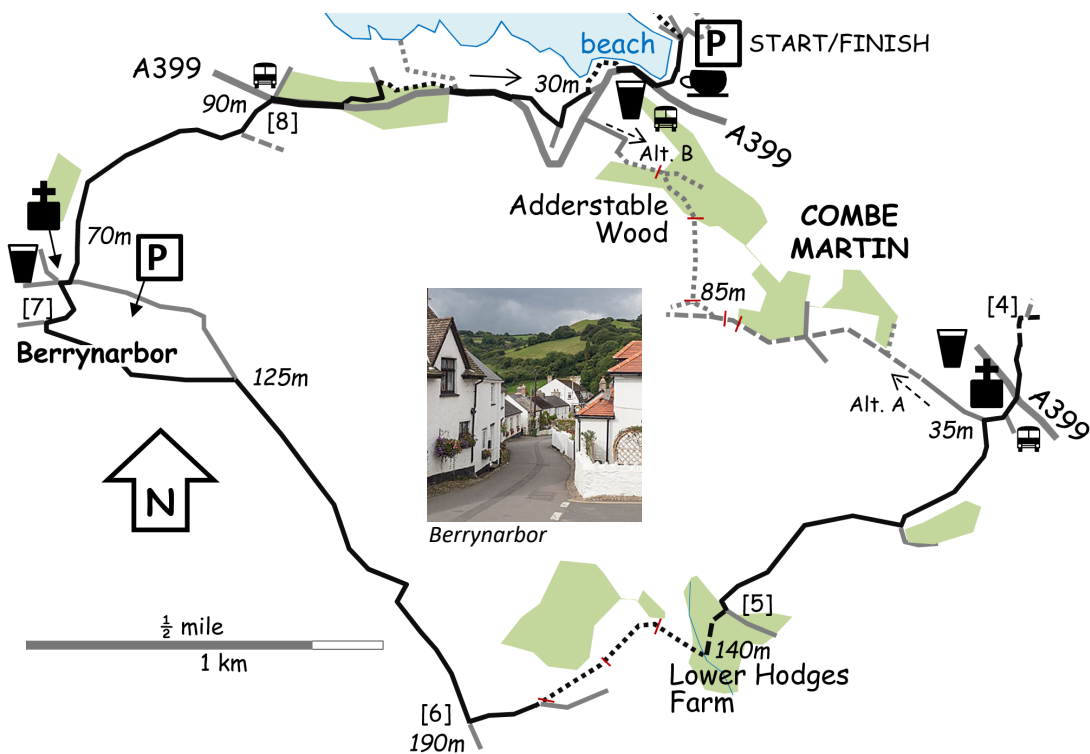
Start at the main sea front car park in Combe Martin. Walk uphill and along a closed-off coast road to a bandstand-style shelter, then head up some steps and uphill to a young oak tree with a seat beneath. Just beyond is a gap in the vegetation; go through to take a narrow, rocky path that ascends steeply, turning left where 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. After the viewpoint the path descends to a gate (20mins, [1]). Go through and continue uphill to Little Hangman, ignoring first a left turn down to Wild Pear Beach then a path on the right towards Great Hangman. 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 Hang-



man is 100m higher than Little Hangman, it is round-topped and less spectacular. You will however have good views, particularly to the east across Sherrycombe.

From the top of Great Hangman continue slightly to the right 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 3), but your onward route is to the right at the signpost ('County Road'). Follow the path until it comes to a stile. Cross the field keeping the boundary on your left, go into the next field, then through a gate to join a vehicle track. Views open up to Little Hangman and Combe Martin Bay. Pass Girt Down Farm and follow the road, ignoring a track to the right (this will take you back to Combe Martin). 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 at the first junction 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, uphill 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: turn right here into the driveway for Lower Hodges Farm, a public bridleway (2hr10mins, [5]). Come to the farmyard and continue 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 hillock, then veer left and head across the field. Head uphill, slightly to the right of the uppermost field boundary, on the opposite side of the field to the white house. A narrow opening between woods and a hedge 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 at a T-junction (2hr30mins, [6]) and follow the road for 20 minutes or so to arrive into Berrynarbor. 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 wider road, then turn left on a path to walk down to a stony beach (1hr35mins, [3]). 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 track to the right, Knap Down Lane. Turn right at a road and head downhill. When the road bends left, continue ahead on an enclosed path. This brings you to a road junction. Continue ahead here on a surfaced path signposted to the beach. Turn left at a T-junction, then right when you come to the main road; this will bring you back 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 2A 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 area and the main car park.

**(B) Combe Martin and Berrynarbor** (● 5.3 miles, ascents and descents of 340 metres). From the car park return to the sea front and turn right on the main road. Head along the coast then come to the Poplars Hotel on the right - a building with a crenellated wall - and turn left opposite its car park to walk up a lane between houses. Soon after the lane bends right, bear left on to a footpath. Head uphill beside a caravan park, go through a gate and turn right. This is Adderstable Wood. Follow the path to a gate and go through it to enter a field. Head to a clump of trees and bushes, where there is a lime kiln. Continue to a stile in the hedge ahead. Cross it and turn left, soon joining a wider path. Go through two gates, downhill, and over an access 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 main road, joining the main walk instructions.

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