



Walk 26. Exford to Winsford and back.

- 10.9 miles, ascents and descents of 525 metres. 4 hours 10 minutes constant walking, allow 5-6 hours.

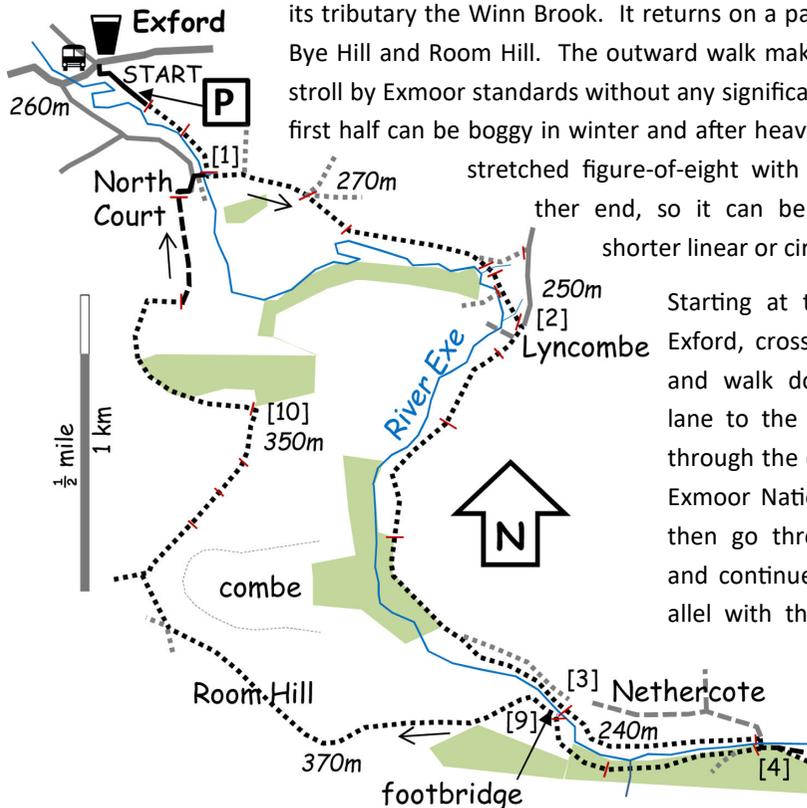
Terrain: Paths, fields and short stretches on roads. The first stretch along the River Exe can become very muddy.

Access: By car, park in Exford (car park SS 854 383, near TA24 7PP), or alternatively start the walk from Winsford (SS 906 349, close to TA24 7JG). Bus 198 connects Winsford and Exford with Dulverton and Minehead twice a day Monday-Saturday.

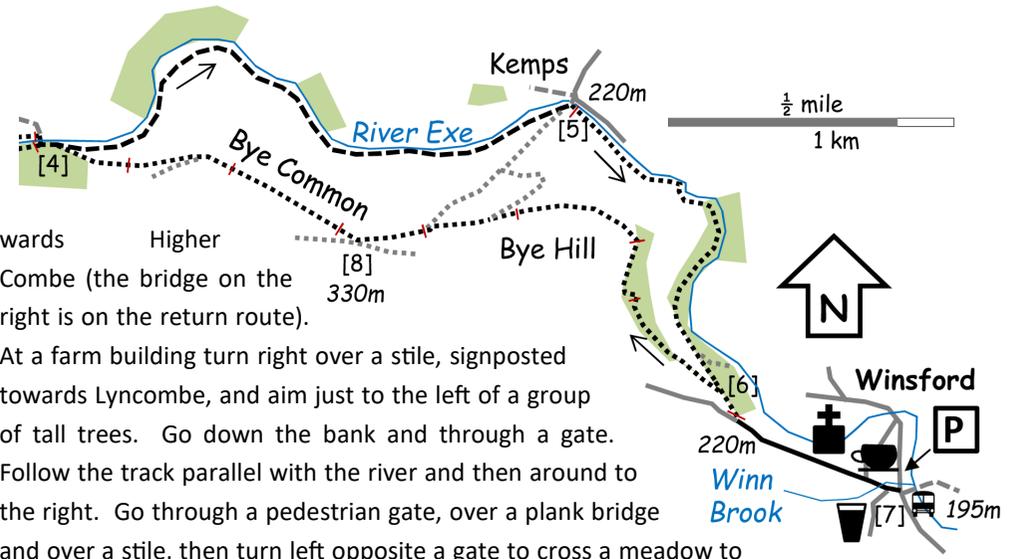
Map: Croydecycle 53 Exford or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: Pubs and tea room in Exford, pub and seasonal café/tea garden in Winsford.

THIS WALK SOUTH-EAST FROM EXFORD follows the River Exe to one of Exmoor's most attractive villages, Winsford, with its thatched houses, village green and many bridges over the Exe and its tributary the Winn Brook. It returns on a parallel route taking in Bye Hill and Room Hill. The outward walk makes for a fairly gentle stroll by Exmoor standards without any significant hills, although the first half can be boggy in winter and after heavy rain. The walk is a stretched figure-of-eight with bus connections either end, so it can be easily divided into shorter linear or circular routes.



Starting at the Crown Hotel in Exford, cross over to the school and walk down the signposted lane to the car park. Continue through the car park and pass an Exmoor National Park workshop, then go through a kissing gate and continue through fields parallel with the river. When you arrive at a signposted T-junction (8mins, [1]), turn left uphill to-



wards Higher Combe (the bridge on the right is on the return route). At a farm building turn right over a stile, signposted towards Lyncombe, and aim just to the left of a group of tall trees. Go down the bank and through a gate. Follow the track parallel with the river and then around to the right. Go through a pedestrian gate, over a plank bridge and over a stile, then turn left opposite a gate to cross a meadow to another plank bridge. Cross over and head right to a gate or stile, then turn right on an unsurfaced lane to go past Lyncombe house (25mins, [2]). Follow the track away from Lyncombe, through a gate, across fields and through two more gates, keeping high above the river. Arrive at two beech trees on the right, and take a right fork signposted for Winsford. In a little over five minutes pass a footbridge and a ford, and continue ahead through a gate (50mins, [3]; for the short walk back to Exford, cross the bridge and turn right). After passing some houses at a distance on your left (Nethercote), go through a gate and cross the river on a concrete bridge (1hr, [4]), turning immediately left on a wide vehicle track.

Follow the track alongside the river for a mile and a half before it crosses back over at another bridge (1hr30mins, [5]). Just before the bridge, turn right on a footpath signposted to Winsford. In a further twenty minutes the path forks: keep right and uphill, then bear left where it joins another path (1hr50mins, [6]; this is the return route). You will soon arrive at a road: turn left here and stroll into Winsford. (An interesting detour is to take the footpath through the front garden of house number 2, cross the churchyard, and turn right to rejoin the road). A footbridge across the Winn Brook, beside a ford, takes you to the village green, pub, tea garden, and parking area (2hrs, [7]); the bus stop is just beyond, to the right.

To return, go back over the Winn beside the ford and follow the road past the church and out of the village. Just beyond the speed derestriction signs, turn right through a gate on a path signposted to Exford. In just over a minute take the left, upper fork to Exford via Bye Common (2hr10mins, [6]). Continue uphill; eventually the path levels out with views across the Exe valley and beyond to Dunkery Beacon. Join a track coming up from the right, then go through a vehicle gate and take the bridleway towards Ash Lane (2hr40mins, [8]). Follow the

right-hand field edge and go through two gates. In the third field there is a gate on the right: ignore it, but soon afterwards start to descend into a gully and go through a pedestrian gate. Follow the grassy path downhill, go through a gate, and turn left to walk alongside the River Exe. Almost immediately you will come to the concrete bridge you crossed on the outward route (2hr55mins, [4]): ignore it, and turn left through a gate on to a permitted path towards Exford. Keep close to the river; divert away from it to cross a stream, then cross the field to go through a gate. Continue parallel with the river. When you come to a raised footbridge (3hr5mins, [9]) go through the gate and turn left. The track soon turns left and starts to ascend, gently at first then more steeply.

The character of the walk changes again as the path flattens out and comes into the open at a marker post on Room Hill. Continue ahead on an initially vague grassy track, around the end of a small valley, and at a signpost take the right turn towards Exford. Pass the head of a deep combe on your right and join another bridleway, bearing right to walk alongside the hedge of trees on your left. Follow the path through three gates, the last two at lines of beech trees. After the last gate the path starts descending; turn left through a gate, signposted to Exford (3hr50mins, [10]). You will have a panoramic view over Exford and beyond before the path goes through a gate into a small wood. The well-defined path now continues downhill towards Exford, eventually becoming a vehicle track and passing between houses. Where it comes to a junction turn right ('footpath to Exford and Winsford'), then continue ahead over a bridge. On the far side of the bridge turn left, and follow the river back to the car park and Exford.

Short walk A. Exford and Room Hill circular (● 4.7 miles, ascents and descents of 250 metres). At the 50-minute point [3], cross the footbridge and turn right ('Exford via Room Hill') to pick up the return part of the walk at the 3hr5min point.

Short walk B. Winsford and Bye Hill circular (● 5 miles, ascents and descents of 270 metres). Start from Winsford, and follow the return half of the walk as far as the concrete bridge [4]. Turn right and pick up the outward route from the 1-hour point.

One-way walks. Use the bus between Winsford and Exford to do one half of the walk. The outward half fits with the morning bus from Winsford to Exford (park at Winsford; ● 5.5 miles with ascents of 170 metres and descents of 235 metres), while for the return half park in Exford and take the afternoon bus to Winsford (● 5.4 miles, ascents of 355 metres and descents of 290 metres).

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