



Walk 3. Hunter's Inn, Holdstone Down and Heddon's Mouth.

- 9 miles, ascents and descents of 720 metres. 4 hours constant walking, allow around 5½ hours.

Terrain: Principally paths and tracks, with some potentially muddy paths through woodland. ! The coast path above Trentishoe is narrow and sometimes uneven above steep drops. The worst of this (but also the most scenic and exhilarating part of the walk) can be missed by following the alternative walk after the 2hr50min point ([7]).

Access: By car, park at Hunter's Inn (SS 655 482, EX31 4PY), reached on narrow lanes; there is some free parking outside the inn, or use the National Trust car park (£/NT members free). Alternatively, park between Trentishoe Down and Holdstone Down, in a small unmarked car park next to a house called 'Moorlands' (SS 625 477, north of EX34 OPF), and start the walk from the 1hr5min point ([4]). If this is full, there are several other parking places on the same road a short walk away. No buses.

Map: Croydecycle 05 Combe Martin and Hunter's Inn; OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

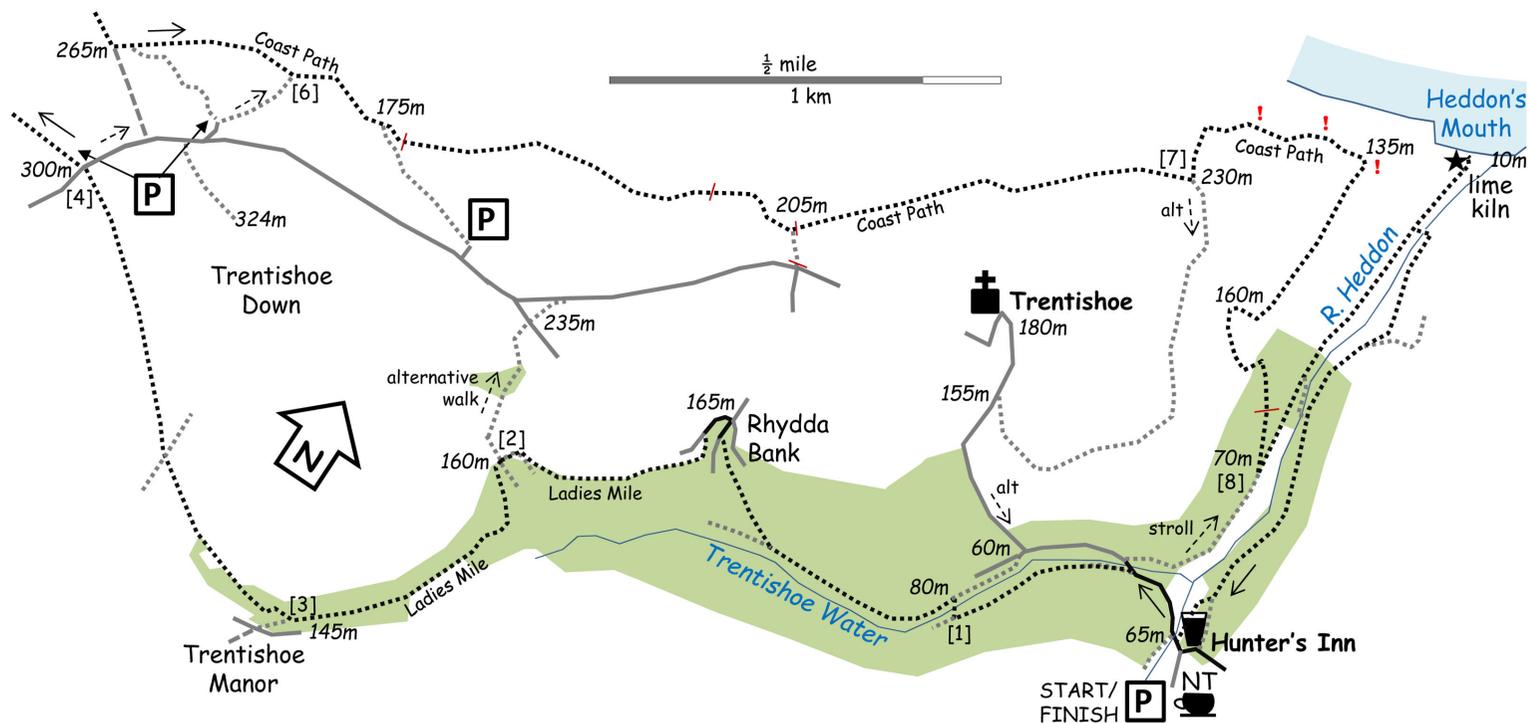
Refreshments: At Hunter's Inn and the NT kiosk opposite.

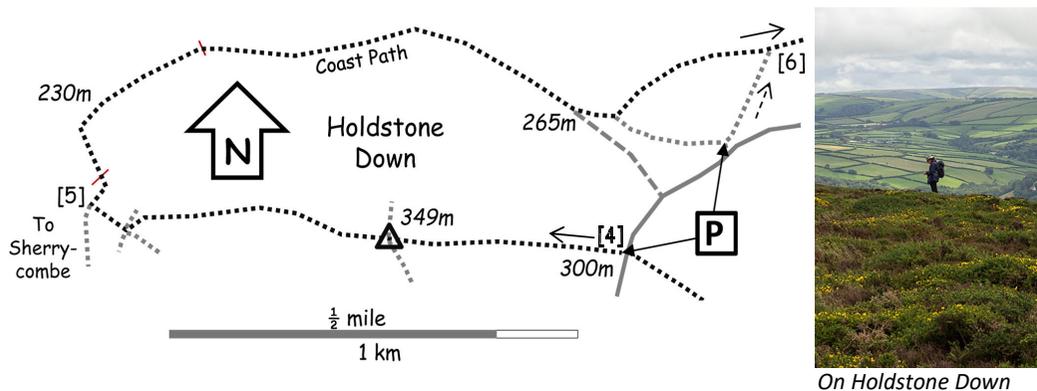
THIS IS A SUPERB WALK IN THE FAR WEST OF EXMOOR, combining ancient, atmospheric woodland, high moors with far-ranging views, and a spectacular stretch of coastline. It includes the western approach and descent into the steep-sided Heddon Valley; the eastern slopes are explored in walk 4.

From the National Trust car park, walk to Hunter's Inn and follow the road over the Heddon to its left. In three or four minutes approach a second bridge; turn left just before it on to a wide track signposted to Vention and Heale. Turn right at a house on a footpath to Trentishoe Mill and Rhydda Bank, walking between the house and its garage (13mins, [1]). Cross a footbridge and turn left. At a fork take the right-hand route to Rhydda Bank. A steep but short climb brings you to a road. Turn right here, then left at the crossroads. As you round the bend, take the path to the left (Ladies Mile).

This path roughly follows the contour, in ten minutes arriving at a crossing path (40mins, [2]). The alternative walk turns right here; for the main walk continue ahead on what is now an atmospheric woodland path with views through the trees over a lush valley.

A little under 15 minutes from the crossing path an unsigned narrow trail branches off right and upwards (55mins, [3]); if you miss it, come to the entrance to Trentishoe Manor, and retrace your steps for a hundred yards/metres or so. The trail meanders through woods, then it becomes a stony path heading directly up through bracken on to the open moor. Look back across the valley to a quintessential Devonian scene of patchwork fields. Where a path crosses diagonally, go straight ahead and upwards on a wide track that takes you across the southern slopes of Trentishoe Down. Come to a house at a road, with a car park opposite (1hr20mins, [4]; this is the alternative starting-point, and the short-cut turns right here). Walk through the car park and follow the path towards the summit of Holdstone Hill. At the top of the hill is a trig point and a cairn of stones. There are far-reaching views in all directions. Continue straight ahead here towards the next hill, Great Hangman. The path narrows through heather and bracken, then just beyond a broken-down section of bank it comes to a crossroads of wider paths. Bear right and downhill here (not sharp right) towards the seaward slopes of Great Hangman. Soon come to a T-junction (1hr40mins, [5]) overlooking Sherrycombe, and turn right on the Coast Path.





Now follow the path back around the coastward side of Holdstone Down. About twenty minutes after the T-junction, bear left a little way before a timber-clad house to continue on the Coast Path ('Hunters Inn 3¾'). Meet a path coming in from the right (2hr10mins, [6]; this is where the short-cut rejoins). Ignore any further paths to the right, keeping to the signposted Coast Path. In places the path is narrow above a steep bracken-covered slope, so watch your footing. A short diversion through gates takes you inside the field boundary to avoid a dangerously crumbling section. Returning to the main path, follow it beside a stone bank then climb to a signposted junction (2hr55mins, [7]). There is a decision to make here: the left-hand path is spectacular, but it will not suit vertigo-sufferers or anyone who is not reasonably surefooted. It is also not advisable in strong winds, heavy rain or fog. The right-hand path returns via Trentishoe (see the alternative walk description).

The Coast Path snakes around the clifftops with stunning views in both directions. The path is narrow and sometimes uneven above steep drops, so take particular care on this section: watch your footing, and stop to take in the views. The Heddon Valley appears suddenly around a bend, with Heddon's Mouth below and paths clearly visible on the opposite side. The path turns inland along the valley, still clinging to the hillside, and Hunter's Inn comes into view in the trees below. A right-hand bend brings you to some loose scree; cross carefully. Just beyond here, in front of the next tree, a narrow path (still shown on the Ordnance Survey map) used to ascend to the right and meet up with the Trentishoe detour, but it has now almost completely vanished.

Descend on the zigzag, go through a gate, and turn left at the valley bottom (3hr30mins, [8]). Walk along an easy path to Heddon's Mouth, where there is a lime kiln and small shingle beach. If the water is low it may be possible to splash across at some stepping-stones, but otherwise return to the first footbridge to cross the river and walk back along the other side. Pass another footbridge, then look out for a right turn which will take you through a garden area back to Hunter's Inn and the road.

Short-cuts and detours. (1) To shorten the walk after Trentishoe Down, turn right on the road at the car park ([4]). In just under five minutes turn left into another car park. Ahead of you is a wooden bench: continue past it and downwards on a grassy path to meet the Coast Path and turn right. (Shortens the distance by 1.8 miles and the ascent by 100 metres).

(2) To miss out the stroll to Heddon's Mouth and back, turn right at the 2hr55min point ([7]) and continue to the road. Turn left to return to Hunter's Inn. (Reduces the distance by 1.1 miles and the ascent by 60 metres).

(3) To Great Hangman. This walk can be extended to Great Hangman (see Walk 2) by turning left at the 1hr40min point ([5]), making the steep descent and re-ascent of Sherrycombe and continuing on the Coast Path. The only easy way to return is to retrace your steps. (Additional 2.5 miles return, with ascents and descents of 270 metres).

Alternative walk: Around Trentishoe (● 4.6 miles, ascents and descents of 365 metres). This shorter (but hilly) walk gives some of the flavour of the main route, but avoids the vertiginous part above Heddon's Mouth (the inland path tracks above steep-sided Heddon Valley, but the hillside is bracken-covered and there are no sheer drops or areas of scree). Follow the main walk as far as the 40-minute point ([2]), then turn right on the crossing path. This steep path takes you through a belt of trees to a narrow road. Cross over to continue on a broad grassy path, then turn right on a second road. When a minor road comes in from the right, turn left over a stile and cross the field to a gate in its far right-hand corner. Turn right here to join the Coast Path, following it alongside a stone bank to a signposted junction ([7]). Turn right here. This path contours high above the Heddon Valley. Come to a small seat, where there are views over Heddon's Mouth to the left and up-valley to Hunter's Inn and beyond. The path now bends right above the valley of Trentishoe Water before dropping to a narrow road. Turn right to visit the tiny fifteenth century church, then return down the somewhat steep road until it comes to a T-junction. Turn left here at some whitewashed cottages, go over the bridges and return to Hunter's Inn.

Stroll: Hunter's Inn and Heddon's Mouth (● 2.1 miles, ascents and descents of 115 metres). This is the classic short stroll for visitors to Hunter's Inn. Start as for the main walk, but cross the second bridge and turn right immediately afterwards on the signposted path. This well-made track takes you to the lime kiln and the beach. Return the same way or as described in the main walk.

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