



Walk 5. Lynmouth, Lynton and the Valley of the Rocks.

- 5.5 miles, 2 hours 40 minutes. Ascents and descents of 560 metres.

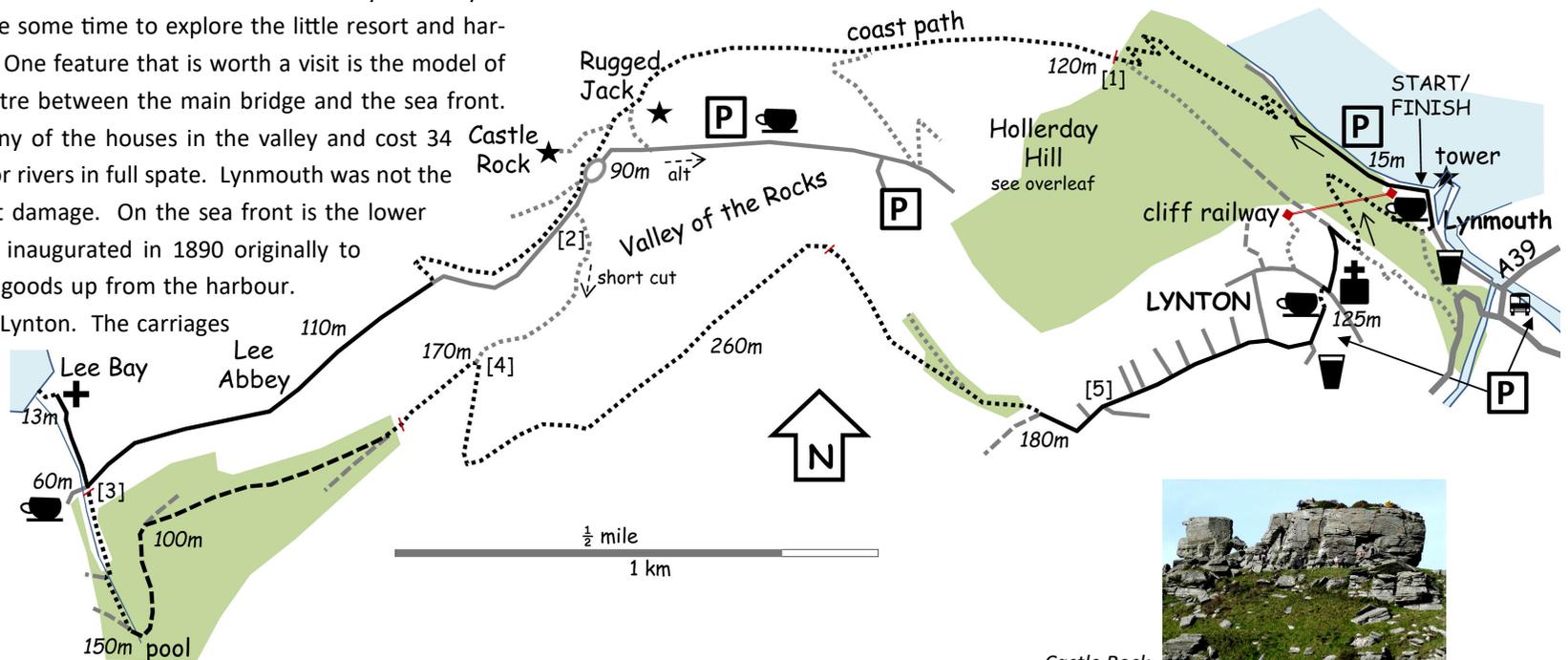
Terrain: Mainly on well-made paths, with some steep and possibly slippery sections. The coast path to the Valley of the Rocks runs alongside cliffs above the sea, but the path is well-constructed and provided you look where you are walking there is little actual danger other than in strong winds or poor visibility.

Access: Parking at either end of Lynmouth (SS 724 494, EX35 6ES or SS 719 497, EX35 6HJ, both £; or there is free on-street parking between November and Easter). Lynton and Lynmouth can be reached by bus 309/310 from Barnstaple, and the summer Exmoor Coaster bus from Watchet and Minehead or 300 from Ilfracombe and Combe Martin.

Map: Croydecycle 04 Lynton, Lynmouth & Doone Valley or 54 Lynton and Lynmouth alternative with Hunter's Inn; OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

Refreshments: In Lynton and Lynmouth; seasonal café just beyond Lee Bay.

THIS SHORT BUT STEEP WALK TAKES IN THE ATTRACTIVE TWIN TOWNS of Lynton and Lynmouth, along with some stunning coastal scenery and the enigmatic Valley of the Rocks. Exmoor has few tors, or exposed rocky outcrops; several of them are clustered here above Lynton. If you haven't visited before, you may want to take some time to explore the little resort and harbour of Lynmouth before starting the walk. One feature that is worth a visit is the model of Lynmouth pre-flood, in the small visitor centre between the main bridge and the sea front. The summer flood of 1952 swept away many of the houses in the valley and cost 34 lives, demonstrating the power of the Exmoor rivers in full spate. Lynmouth was not the only place affected, but it suffered the most damage. On the sea front is the lower terminus of a funicular railway, which was inaugurated in 1890 originally to transport coal, building materials and other goods up from the harbour. It now takes passengers up the steep hill to Lynton. The carriages are powered by gravity, using water piped from the West Lyn River a mile away; the top car fills its tank in order to descend (carefully controlled by the 'driver') while pulling the bottom one up. It empties at the bottom while its twin fills at the top and repeats the process. The railway runs daily between mid-February and mid-November.



Castle Rock



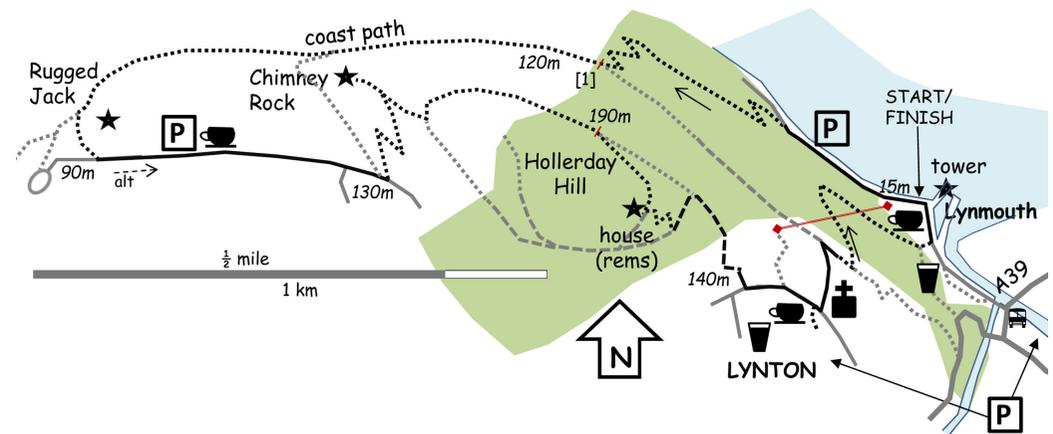
From Lynmouth, start from the Rhenish Tower on the sea front. Walk along the promenade past the cliff railway and through the car park, looking out for a path on the left between two squat stone pillars, signposted to Lynton. Zigzag upwards, eventually coming to a T-junction where the path joins from Lynton: turn right here ([1], 20mins). To start from Lynton (or if you have used the cliff railway for the ascent), facing St. Mary's church turn left along North Walk Hill, and continue until you meet up with the coast path coming up from Lynmouth ([1] just past a stone shelter. This fairly wide, hard-surfaced path now continues high above the sea. Ignore a turn to the left, but eventually veer left into the Valley of the Rocks, in front of the outcrop known as Castle Rock. When the path runs out follow a grassy track across to the road 'roundabout' and onward in the direction of Woody Bay. (A steep, narrow path goes uphill from just beyond the 'roundabout' ([2]), signposted Mother Meldrum's Cave: this is the path referred to in short walk B). Keep left (Coast Path Woody Bay) then bear right to stay on the path as it converges with the road. The path curves right and then left, leading up some steps and back to the road. Turn right on the road, entering the Lee Abbey Estate (50mins); the abbey, a Christian community, retreat and activity centre rather than a conventional monastery, is a short distance along on the right.

Follow the road past the abbey and downhill, detouring to the right to the beach at Lee Bay, an ideal place for a picnic. Note the simple and rather atmospheric little chapel beneath the building. Returning to the road ([3], 1hr10mins) there is a seasonal tea garden, run by Lee

Abbey, on the right. Cross the road and continue on a track beside a cottage, signposted to Bonhill Bridge. Take the narrower path on the right next to the now cascading stream: the path becomes steeper and possibly slippery, and eventually rises on steps to a broad vehicle track. Turn left here and cross a bridge between the combe and a pond, continuing between two hairy lime trees. Bear right where the track splits at a viewpoint, then ten minutes later a path comes in from the right; continue ahead, going through a gate and snaking uphill. At a junction ([4], 1hr45mins) the main path turns sharply right and heads up towards a crag (the narrower path is the shortcut coming up from the 'roundabout'). Follow it to zigzag high above Lee Abbey. The path runs next to a stone wall, over a hilltop, then rejoins another wall to continue along the contour and come to a kissing gate. Go through, then a little later enter a small wood and descend to a T-junction. Turn right here. Turn left at a second T-junction ('Lynton via County Road'), pass a cul-de-sac on the left, then keep left where the track joins the road into Lynton ([5], 2hr15mins). Ignore all the turns to the left, regardless of what the traffic is supposed to do: eventually you will come to the Crown Inn set back on the right. Continue around to the left and join a pedestrian street. Either bear right up steps to the church or left on the street to come out a couple of doors down.

To head back to Lynmouth you now have a choice. For the cliff railway, turn left on the main road, then right beneath the ornamental iron sign to come to the upper terminus. To walk down, take North Walk Hill to the left of the church as you are facing it, then turn right to start down the zigzag path to Lynmouth. Go straight ahead past the house, and then turn left to Lynmouth and follow the path down; if you are parked by the bridge (or are heading back to the bus stop), the Glen Lyn Gorge path will bring you out just above both.

Shorter walk via Hollerday Hill (● 3.1 miles, ascents and descents of 300 metres). Follow the main walk along the coast path until it starts to turn inland in front of Castle Rock. Bear left to pass some seats, then turn left on the road. Walk uphill past the car park and cricket ground, then turn left in front of a stone shelter. Take the right-hand, grassy path, which zig-zags uphill; you will soon have views west along the valley. At a seat, the left-hand path just takes you to a viewpoint on Chimney Rock; the main path continues to the right. Soon afterwards, arrive at a T-junction and turn left to walk high above the coast. As the path starts to enter woods, go through a gate and take the right-hand fork. This brings you to the remains of Hollerday House, built in 1893 for Sir George Newnes, a wealthy publisher and MP who was also instrumental in developing the cliff railway and Lynton's town hall. The house burned down in 1913, three years after Newnes' death. The path to the right continues back to the T-junction, while the small path below the information boards heads towards Lynton. Following this downhill, turn left on to a broad track at a T-junction where there are views over Lynton. This drive was once the carriage route to the house. Follow it around to the right then through a cutting to come to stone gateposts. Turn right, then left at the main road into the



centre of Lynton. The next left takes you to the cliff railway, while for the zigzag path back to Lynmouth continue to the church and turn left in front of it along North Walk Hill, as in the main walk.

Short walks from Lynton. At the beginning either use the cliff railway from Lynmouth to cut out 100m of ascent, or start in Lynton as described at the beginning of the main walk instructions. Short cuts: (A) From Castle Rock start to follow the Hollerday Hill walk, but continue ahead on the road to come into Lynton (● 2.4 miles, ascents and descents of 170 metres). Alternatively (B) follow the main walk to the 'roundabout' ([2]) and scramble uphill on a narrow path to the left just beyond it. Pass just to the right of the Devil's Cheesewring, then join a slightly wider path; this is the 1hr45min point on the main walk ([4]). Head left here to re-join the main walk (● 3.4 miles, ascents and descents of 330 metres).

Other walks in the area. Walk 4 connects Parracombe, Heddon's Mouth, Woody Bay and Lynton, finishing by reversing the outward part of this walk. Walk 5A takes in the valleys of the East and West Lyn rivers; it includes this walk in reverse as an extension. Walk 5B circles inland behind Lynton and Lynmouth. Walk 6 heads east along the coast to Countisbury and returns via Watersmeet, and includes instructions for more short walks in the area.

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