



## Walk 5A. The East and West Lyn gorges.

- 5.4 miles, ascents and descents of 520 metres. 2 hours 35 minutes continuous walking, allow 3-3½ hours.

Terrain: Mainly on paths, with some steep and possibly slippery sections. ! Some parts of this walk are above steep drops, but the paths are well-made 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. Bus 300 connects Lynmouth with Minehead in July and August.

Map: Croydecycle 04 or 54 Lynton & Lynmouth or OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

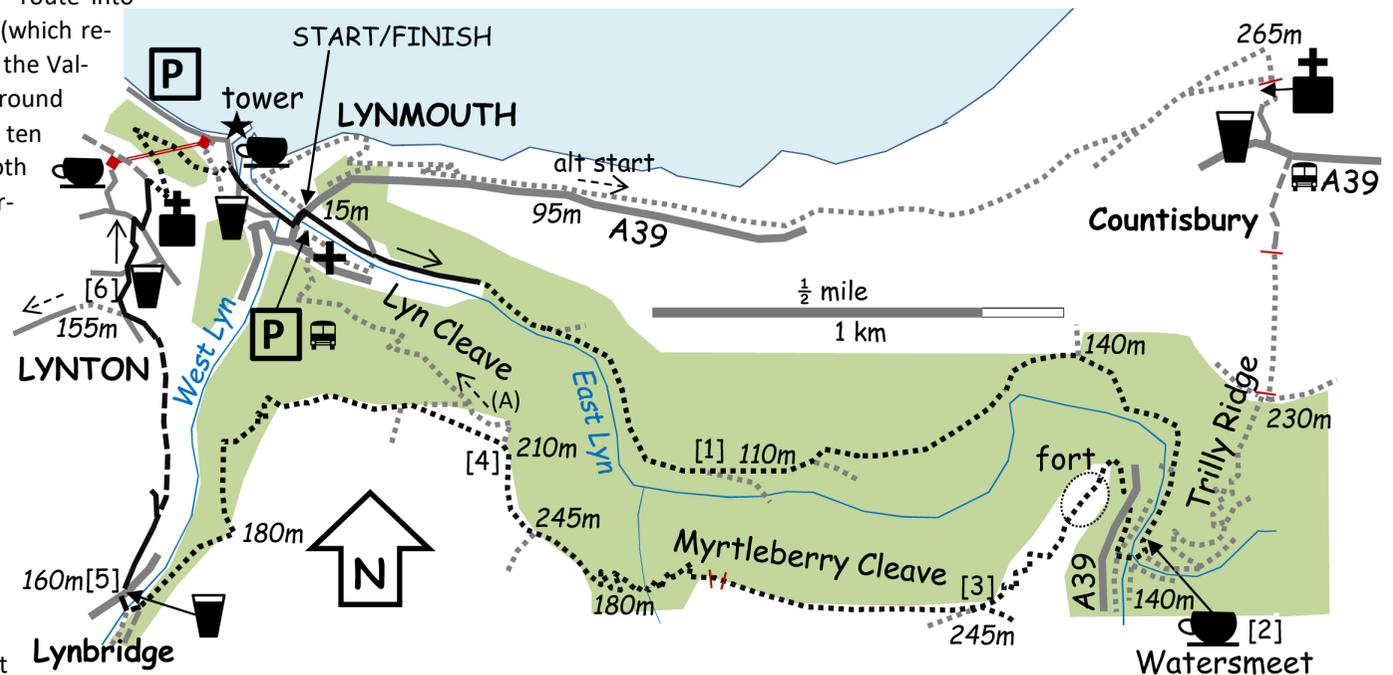
Refreshments: In Lynton and Lynmouth, pub in Lynbridge, seasonal cafés at Watersmeet and (for the extension) Lee Bay.

THE LYNTON AND LYNMOUTH AREA is one of the most scenic and fascinating corners not only of Exmoor, but of England. This superb if often steep walk explores the cascading East Lyn as far as Watersmeet, returns along the top of the magnificent East Lyn gorge, then follows the gentler West Lyn to Lynbridge. The final section uses a 'back door' route into Lynton before descending back to Lynmouth. With the extension (which reverses walk 5) it provides a grand tour of the whole area, including the Valley of the Rocks and Lee Bay; if you only have a day to explore around Lynton and Lynmouth and can manage a strenuous hike (nearly ten miles and a thousand metres of climb), this is the walk to do. Both versions have the option of returning to Lynmouth using the water-powered cliff railway (see walk 5).

Start in Lynmouth. From the A39 bridge, face away from the sea and head along the left-hand side of the East Lyn on Tors Road. Keep right to descend to the river. When the road runs out (10mins), continue on a footpath towards Watersmeet. Fork left at a signpost (30mins, [1]), taking the woodland route; ignore a path to the left, then fork left at the next signpost to continue on the woodland route. Ignore another path to the left, to Countisbury, gradually descending to the river where you will come to a footbridge. Three minutes further on arrive at Watersmeet (55mins, [2]), where there is a National Trust shop and tea garden. Turn right here to cross two wooden bridges, over first the East Lyn then Horner Water. Turn right, almost immediately left, and right

again (Lynbridge via the Cleaves) to come to the A39 at a small parking area. Cross over and head upwards on a narrow footpath. This brings you into the open at an Iron Age enclosure, Myrtleberry North. Head across it and onwards on a well-defined grassy path; before ascending the steps you will have a panoramic view down the East Lyn, across to the A39 Countisbury road, and over to Lynton. Continue uphill, bearing right at a seat. At a T-junction (1hr15mins, [3]) turn right to continue roughly along the contour at the top of the gorge. You will soon have views down to Lynmouth. Go through two gates in succession; soon afterwards the path zigzags down a steep side valley, crosses a stream, and returns up the other side, perhaps the most strenuous part of the walk. At the first signposted junction keep ahead towards Lynmouth; you will soon have views back up the gorge, with the A39 just visible in the bottom. Ignore a path turning off right to Lynmouth shortly afterwards (1hr40mins, [4]).

After another Lynmouth sign views soon open up to Lynton. The path now turns to the left, first along the contour then zigzagging down into the smaller West Lyn gorge. At T-junction keep left on the smaller path, and left again. Pass a cascade and soon after turn right to cross the river on a stone bridge (2hr5mins, [5]). This is Lyn Bridge: walk around the inn, then cross the main road and head up Lynway opposite. After an initial ascent fork right on the Lynway footpath; the lane levels out, taking a straight but scenic route into Lynton. If you are not doing the extension (see below), at the end of the Lynway (2hr20mins, [6]) turn right and descend Sinai Hill. Pass the Crown Inn and join Queen Street. To take the funicular back to Lynmouth, turn left at the top then right on a wide path beneath the Cliff Railway sign. To walk down, turn right then left before the church, and zigzag down the hill as signposted.

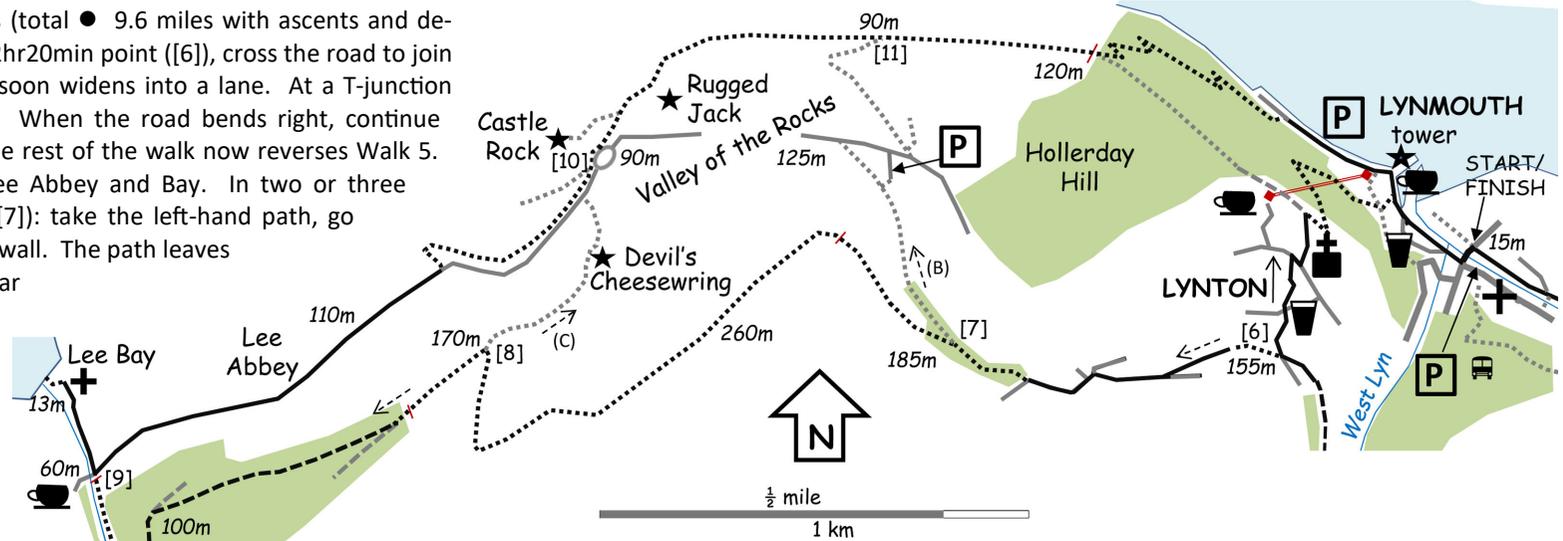


**Extension to Lee Bay and the Valley of the Rocks** (total ● 9.6 miles with ascents and descents of 970 metres; 4 hours 30 minutes). At the 2hr20min point ([6]), cross the road to join Alford Terrace, a footpath heading upwards. This soon widens into a lane. At a T-junction with a wider road turn right to head downwards. When the road bends right, continue ahead on a road marked 'unsuitable for motors'; the rest of the walk now reverses Walk 5. After a short climb turn right on a footpath to Lee Abbey and Bay. In two or three minutes the path forks at a signpost (2hr35mins, [7]): take the left-hand path, go through a pedestrian gate and alongside a drystone wall. The path leaves the wall then rejoins it, with views starting to appear over Lee Abbey and Lee Bay. Follow it sharply right, then left on the main path at the next bend (3hr5mins, [8]).

Go through a kissing gate and shortly after fork right at a bridleway sign. Turn left at a T-junction. Ignore a track heading uphill to the left, pass between two hairy lime trees and come to a pond, with a stream running downhill to the right. Cross the bridge and follow the track around to the right, in a few metres taking a narrow path to the right down steps. This can be very muddy and slippery. Turn right at the bottom and continue with the stream on your left; come to a gate and then a road (3hr25mins, [9]). Cross over to descend to Lee Bay, returning the same way.

A seasonal tea garden, run by Lee Abbey, is along the road to the right as you return. Otherwise turn left and walk past the abbey until in a little over 20 minutes you come to a roundabout (3hr55mins, [10]). Bear left here on the coast path between two large tors, Castle Rock on the left and Rugged Jack on the right. You are now on North Walk; ignore a path to the right (4hr5mins, [11]). This well-made path continues along the cliff edge and eventually comes to a gate. Go through, then turn left on a narrow zigzag path down to Lynmouth (continuing ahead will take you into Lynton, where you can either descend a surfaced zigzag path or - outside the winter months when it is closed - turn right at the church and walk through the town for the cliff railway). Watch your footing here, as it can be slippery. The path brings you out on the far end of the sea front; turn right to walk back into Lynmouth.

**Alternative start using the Coast Path** (adds 1 mile and 120m of ascent). Start in Lynmouth. From the A39 head towards the Rhenish Tower on the coast, but cross over the footbridge to the Rock House inn. Walk past a small kiosk and along a promenade. The promenade ends at a small beach; turn right and walk alongside a stone wall, then left to go up some steps. Turn left at a T-junction. The path zigzags steeply upwards to come to a useful seat before following the A39 for a while. Join the road briefly at a layby, leaving it at the far end (20 minutes from the footbridge, [1]). The path ascends steadily (ignore two paths coming in from the right, and note a small wartime gun emplacement), then levels off and goes through a gate. A short ascent brings you to a junction by a wall. Turn left here. Keep alongside the wall, then when you come to the churchyard turn right into it: this is Countisbury. Leaving at the opposite side go down a lane to join the main road to the left of the Blue Ball inn. Turn left on the



road (the busy A39), then right on the footpath marked to Watersmeet via Trilly Ridge. The path is initially a small lane. After a gate, it becomes indistinct; head for a large farm in the distance, slightly to the right of the field wall. This will bring you to a wide path that descends through gorse bushes to a gate. Go straight ahead here, following a ridge above and then into woodland. This is Trilly Ridge, above a wide loop in the East Lyn river. At the end of the ridge the path zigzags downhill: ignore smaller paths to the left. Arriving at a T-junction, turn right and stroll down to Watersmeet ([2]) to rejoin the main walk.

**Short-cuts.** Several paths allow either the main route or the extension to be shortened. The distances assume the riverside start rather than the Coast Path.

(A) Zigzag path to Lynmouth. At point [4], take a path to the right signposted M/W to Lynmouth. This first heads along a prominence (Oxen Tor), then bears left to start its descent of nearly 200 metres into Lynmouth. Keep to the main path, right and downwards. Arriving at a wall, turn right on a (possibly slippery) tarmac section and descend to the A39; turn left to head back to the sea front (● 4.2 miles, 475 metres of ascent and descent).

(B) Via the eastern end of the Valley of the Rocks. At point [7] keep straight ahead. About five minutes later, go through a gap on the right into a parking area. Head for a slate-roofed shelter, and take the tarmac path leading up from in front of it. This rises to the side of a cricket field, with views down the Valley of the Rocks, then bends right and downwards to come to the coast path ([11]); rejoin the main walk here (● 6.8 miles, 650 metres).

(C) Via the Valley of the Rocks. At point [8] turn right on a narrow path past the Devil's Cheesewring, rejoining the main route just before the roundabout (● 8 miles, 800 metres).

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