

CICERONE

WALKING

THE SOUTH WEST COAST PATH

NATIONAL TRAIL

From Minehead to South Haven Point



Paddy Dillon

**WALKING THE SOUTH WEST
COAST PATH**
**NATIONAL TRAIL FROM MINEHEAD TO SOUTH
HAVEN POINT**
by Paddy Dillon

CICERONE

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Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. This guidebook was researched and written before the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are not aware of any significant changes to routes or facilities at the time of printing, it is likely that the current situation will give rise to more changes than would usually be expected. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1068/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

Register your book: To sign up to receive free updates, special offers and GPX files where available, register your book at www.cicerone.co.uk.

Front cover: Rocky headlands at Ilfracombe in North Devon (Stage 4)

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Route symbols on OS map extracts
(for OS legend see printed OS maps)

	route		start point
	alternative route		finish point
	ferry crossing		route direction
	start/finish point		

GPX files for all routes can be downloaded for free at www.cicerone.co.uk/1068/GPX



ROUTE SUMMARY TABLE

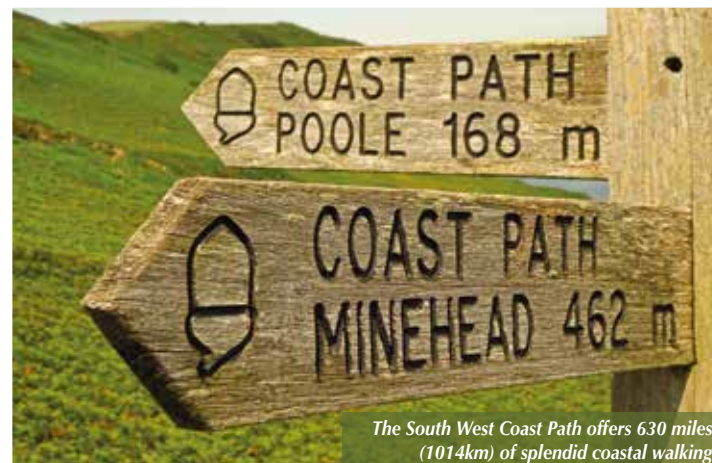
		Distance km (miles)	Distance from start km (miles)	Ascent m (ft)	Time	Page
1	Minehead to Porlock Weir	16 (10)	16 (10)	620 (2035)	5hr	40
2	Porlock Weir to Lymmouth	18 (11)	34 (21)	1200 (3935)	6hr	45
3	Lymmouth to Combe Martin	21.5 (13½)	55.5 (34½)	1330 (4365)	6hr30	50
4	Combe Martin to Woolacombe	23.5 (14½)	79 (49)	1020 (3345)	6hr	56
5	Woolacombe to Braunton	23.5 (14½)	101.5 (63)	430 (1410)	6hr	61
6	Braunton to Westward Ho!	37.5 (23¼)	140 (87)	250 (820)	9hr	66
7	Westward Ho! to Clovelly	18.5 (11½)	158.5 (98½)	980 (3215)	6hr	75
8	Clovelly to Hartland Quay	16.5 (10¼)	175 (108¾)	1000 (3280)	5hr	79
9	Hartland Quay to Bude	24.5 (15¼)	199.5 (124)	1390 (4560)	8hr	83
10	Bude to Boscastle	27 (16¾)	226.5 (140¾)	1380 (4530)	8hr30	90
11	Boscastle to Port Isaac	22 (13¾)	248.4 (154½)	1250 (4100)	7hr	96
12	Port Isaac to Padstow	19 (11¾)	267.5 (166¼)	920 (3020)	5hr30	102
13	Padstow to Porthcothan	22 (13¾)	289.5 (180)	640 (2100)	6hr	107
14	Porthcothan to Newquay	18 (11¼)	307.5 (191¼)	670 (2200)	5hr	111
15	Newquay to Perranporth	18 (11¼)	325.5 (202½)	580 (1900)	5hr	116
16	Perranporth to Portreath	19.5 (12)	345 (214½)	880 (2890)	6hr	122
17	Portreath to St Ives	29 (18)	374 (232½)	810 (2655)	8hr	127
18	St Ives to Pendeen Watch	21.5 (13¼)	395.5 (245¾)	1100 (3610)	7hr	133
19	Pendeen Watch to Porthcurno	25 (15½)	420.5 (261¼)	900 (2955)	7hr	138
20	Porthcurno to Penzance	18.5 (11½)	439 (272¾)	550 (1805)	5hr45	144
21	Penzance to Porthleven	22 (13¾)	461 (286½)	790 (2590)	6hr	150
22	Porthleven to Lizard Point	22 (13¾)	483 (300¾)	760 (2490)	6hr30	156
23	Lizard Point to Porthallow	24.5 (15¼)	507.5 (315½)	900 (2955)	8hr	162
24	Porthallow to Falmouth	26 (16)	533.5 (331½)	770 (2530)	8hr30m	169

		Distance km (miles)	Distance from start km (miles)	Ascent m (ft)	Time	Page
25	Falmouth to Portloe	22 (13¾)	555.5 (345¼)	860 (2820)	6hr30	176
26	Portloe to Mevagissey	19.5 (12)	575 (357¼)	890 (2920)	6hr	182
27	Mevagissey to Polnear	19 (11¾)	594 (369)	690 (2265)	6hr	187
28	Polnear to Polperro	21 (13)	615 (382)	940 (3085)	6hr30	192
29	Polperro to Portwrinkle	21 (13)	636 (395)	860 (2820)	6hr30	198
30	Portwrinkle to Plymouth	20.5 (12¾)	656.5 (407¾)	700 (2295)	6hr	204
31	Plymouth to Wembury Beach	23 (14¼)	679.5 (422)	440 (1445)	7hr	210
32	Wembury Beach to Bigbury-on-Sea	25 (15½)	704.5 (437½)	920 (3020)	8hr	216
33	Bigbury-on-Sea to Salcombe	21.5 (13½)	726 (451)	720 (2360)	6hr30	222
34	Salcombe to Stoke Fleming	29.5 (18½)	755.5 (469½)	1100 (3610)	9hr	228
35	Stoke Fleming to Brixham	25 (15½)	780.5 (485)	1300 (4265)	8hr	235
36	Brixham to Shaldon	31 (19¼)	811.5 (504¼)	1300 (4265)	10hr	242
37	Shaldon to Budleigh Salterton	22 (13¾)	833.5 (518)	470 (1540)	7hr	250
38	Budleigh Salterton to Seaton	27.5 (17)	861 (535)	1160 (3805)	8hr30	257
39	Seaton to Seaton	24.5 (15¼)	885.5 (550¼)	920 (3020)	8hr	264
40	Seaton to Abbotsbury	19.5 (12)	905 (562¼)	360 (1180)	6hr	271
41	Abbotsbury to Ferrybridge	18 (11¼)	923 (573½)	250 (820)	5hr	276
42	Isle of Portland circuit	22 (13¾)	945 (587¼)	510 (1675)	7hr	280
43	Ferrybridge to Lulworth Cove	23.5 (14½)	968.5 (601¼)	640 (2100)	7hr	286
44	Lulworth Cove to Swanage	33 (20½)	1001.5 (622¼)	1340 (4395)	10hr	292
45	Swanage to South Haven Point (end)	12.5 (7¾)	1014 (630)	180 (590)	4hr	305
South Dorset Ridgeway						
West Bexington to Osmington Mills		27.5 (17)	-	610 (2000)	8hr30	310



The Coast Path is usually scenic, obvious, well signposted and well trodden – Soap Rock (Stage 22)

INTRODUCTION



The South West Coast Path offers 630 miles (1014km) of splendid coastal walking

The South West Coast Path is the longest of Britain's National Trails, measuring a staggering 1014km (630 miles). It is not just a long walk, but an astounding and varied experience. This remarkable coastal trail is based on the paths trodden around cliffs and coves by generations of coastguards. The route starts in Minehead on the Somerset coast and quickly moves along the North Devon coast. After completely encircling the coast of Cornwall, it runs along the South Devon coast. A final stretch along the Dorset coast leads to a conclusion at South Haven Point on Poole Harbour. No other stretch of British coastline compares for scenic splendour, interest, history, heritage, accessibility and

provision of facilities all rolled into one.

A fit and dedicated long-distance walker would take a month to walk the South West Coast Path. The current record, set by Kristian Morgan in September 2020, stands at 10 days 12 hours 6 minutes. Others are happy to enjoy the experience, savour the delights of the trail, and take two months or more to cover the distance. Hardy backpackers happily carry a tent, sleeping bag and cooking equipment, while others prefer to mix youth hostels with B&B accommodation. Some walkers prefer a luxurious approach, staying in splendid hotels while sampling local seafood menus. The South West Coast Path appeals



*Cosy fishing harbours abound, but many locals now work in tourism instead.
Polperro (Stage 28)*

to all types, but remember that many facilities are only open through the summer season.

Individual approaches vary. Some walkers crave to cover the whole trail in a single expedition, while others take a weekend here and there, and make an occasional week-long trip, to complete the distance over a year or two. You must walk within your limitations, covering distances that are

comfortable for you, choosing accommodation that suits your tastes and pocket. Allow time to visit museums and heritage centres, if you have a passion for local history, or to observe birds along the cliff coasts if you are interested in wildlife. Given the nature and complexity of the coast, it makes sense not to rush, but to enjoy the experience.

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

Almost every town and village offers some refreshment (Cadgwith on Stage 23)



ITINERARIES

While some might be daunted at the prospect of walking for weeks on end, staying somewhere different every night, while keeping themselves fed and watered, it is simply a matter of careful planning. Almost every town and village along the way offers some kind of accommodation and refreshment, but it's always useful to know what's available in advance.

This guidebook describes the whole trail from Minehead to Poole Harbour, indicating the level of services along the way. The route is well marked with 'Coast Path' signposts and standard National Trail 'acorn' symbols. Read each section before setting out. You might, for example,

need to ensure that ferries are running across awkward tidal rivers, or secure accommodation in advance in summer, or you might like to know if the next sandy cove has a beach café. Break the route into manageable sections to suit your own ability. There's no need to stick slavishly to the daily breakdown given in this book, as there are usually plenty of intermediate places where you can halt.

The suggested itinerary covers 45 days, and while the author has comfortably completed the Coast Path by following this plan, he first covered the distance in only 28 days. The South West Coast Path Association, however, present a 52-day itinerary. If three achievable itineraries were



The beach at Swanage, looking towards the final chalk headland on the Coast Path (Stage 45)

offered for tough, average and easy-going walkers, they might cover 35, 45 and 65 days. It's unlikely that any walker would follow a set schedule, and almost everyone will choose a comfortable distance each day, taking into account whether the next stretch is easy or difficult, bearing in mind a good or bad weather forecast, coupled with an assessment of how well they feel.

You can allow more days by splitting some of the longer stages into two days, or you can double up a couple of stages, albeit at the risk of fatigue. The daily average in this guidebook is 22.5km (14 miles), generally in the 18–28km (11½–17½ miles) range. The longest day is 37.5km (23¼ miles)

but this is mostly easy and level, and it can be shortened or split into two if desired. The shortest day is 12.5km (7¾ miles), which happens to be the last one. Alter and adapt the schedule to suit your own needs and preferences, aiming for something that doesn't leave you wrecked!

The daily stages are not only of uneven length, but some days are fairly easy and others are quite difficult. Read each day's description carefully before committing yourself, taking note of steep ascents or descents, seasonal ferries, absence of food, drink and accommodation, or anything else that might affect your rate of progress. Keep an eye on the weather forecast and tide tables (see Appendix

WHEN TO GO

A for useful websites). Sometimes you might be walking into driving rain, which can be debilitating. Strong winds on clifftops can be very dangerous. Prolonged wet weather makes paths muddy and slippery. Long vegetation might be a problem in a few places in late spring, but it is usually cut back through the summer.

Despite all your planning, you may find yourself running out of time towards the end. If you're only short of one or two days, you could skip the one-day circuit round the Isle of Portland (regrettably, because it's an excellent walk) but still feel that you were staying faithful to the coast. There's also the South Dorset Ridgeway, inland across the downs, enabling you to keep an eye on the

sea while omitting Weymouth and the Isle of Portland altogether. It might give you the time you need to reach the end of the Coast Path on time. Other shortcuts may smack of 'cheating', but at the end of the day it's your walk and your walk alone!

WHEN TO GO

For many, the biggest hurdle is finding the time to complete the whole of the South West Coast Path in a single trek. You need to be able to put your home life on hold for several weeks, maybe taking leave of absence from work, or waiting until you retire! Are you serious about completing the whole trail, and are you equal to the task? It might be better to spread the journey over

Take an interest in the constant interaction between the land and the sea



WALKING THE SOUTH WEST COAST PATH

three or four trips of a fortnight or so, judiciously planned to give a taste of all four seasons on the Coast Path. At the end of the day it's your walk to be completed however you see fit.

All services along the South West Coast Path are in full swing during July and August, but that can be a stressful time to walk. Days can be hot and humid; crowds of people mill around the towns and villages, while accommodation for one night can prove difficult to obtain. Walking in May and June or September and October can be cooler without being too cold and wet. Crowds will be much reduced, although some areas will be busy. Accommodation is easier to obtain, while most places offering food and drink remain open. However, not everything will be open, and some beach cafés may be closed early or late in the season. Check that the smaller seasonal ferries are going to be operating.

Walkers who attempt the South West Coast Path from late October to early April must expect many places to be closed, and some ferries to be absent. Winter weather can be milder than in other parts of Britain, with snowfall rare, but it can still be cold and wet. Winter gales can be ferocious! Some places may flare into life over the Easter period, but close immediately afterwards. Winter walkers need their wits about them to be able to complete the trail successfully. The Coast Path was damaged at several points during the winters

of 2011, 2012 and 2013, with more damage early in 2014. Funding had to be secured for a programme of repair works to take place in 2015. Some slight amendments to the route are likely with the establishment of the England Coast Path, whose original opening date of 2020 has since been delayed. When complete, this will be the longest National Trail and the South West Coast Path will retain its integrity within that trail.

TRAVEL TO THE SOUTH WEST

By air

The main regional airports are Bristol, www.bristolairport.co.uk, and Exeter, www.exeter-airport.co.uk. Although these are a fair distance from the start of the Coast Path, they may suit those who have to travel from the furthest reaches of Britain, or who are coming from overseas. Other useful small airports are located at Newquay, www.cornwallairportnewquay.com and Bournemouth, www.bournemouthairport.com.

By train

CrossCountry Trains, www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk, run from Scotland, through Northern England and the Midlands to feed into the South West of England. Trains can be used to reach Taunton, from where there are regular buses to Minehead. If walking the Coast Path in stages, the same train runs all the way to



Waves beat against the sea wall supporting the railway line beyond Dawlish (Stage 37)

Penzance. CrossCountry Trains also run from Poole and Bournemouth to Scotland. Great Western Railway trains, www.gwr.com, run from London Paddington to Penzance via Taunton, and the company also serves branch lines to Barnstaple, Newquay, St Ives, Falmouth, Looe, Torquay, Exmouth and Weymouth. Other main line services include South Western Railway, www.southwesternrailway.com, from London Waterloo to Exeter, Bournemouth and Weymouth.

By bus

Most towns have National Express offices or agents, and most tourist information centres have details of services. National Express buses serve a number of towns, including Taunton, Ilfracombe, Barnstaple, Bideford, Newquay, Perranporth, Penzance, Falmouth, Plymouth, Torquay, Weymouth, Poole and

Bournemouth. There are direct coach services from London to various points in the South West, including Taunton, Newquay, Penzance, Weymouth and Poole. Bear in mind that there are seasonal variations on some services. Visit a National Express agent or tel 0871 7818181, www.nationalexpress.com.

TRAVEL AROUND THE SOUTH WEST

By train

Rail services in the South West consist of a main line and branch lines, with Great Western Railway, www.gwr.com, being the main local operator. The West Somerset Railway offers seasonal steam-hauled services to Minehead, but doesn't connect with main line services at Taunton, although there are bus links. The

WALKING THE SOUTH WEST COAST PATH

only coastal railway station in North Devon is at Barnstaple. Coastal stations around Cornwall include Newquay, Hayle, St Ives, Penzance, Falmouth, Par and Looe. Stations on the South Devon coast include Plymouth, the Dartmouth Steam Railway, then Torquay, Teignmouth, Dawlish, Dawlish Warren, Starcross and Exmouth. Stations on the Dorset coast include Weymouth, Poole and Bournemouth. Steam-hauled services at Swanage do not connect with the rest of the railway network.

By bus

Walkers who plan to break their journey and cover the South West Coast Path in several stages may need to use local bus services. With careful reference to timetables, walkers could choose handy bases and ‘commute’ to and from sections of the Coast Path. Most bus services in the South West are operated by the First bus company, www.firstgroup.com, although there are other operators.

The two most important services are the regular buses from Taunton station to Minehead, before starting the walk, and from Sandbanks to Poole or Bournemouth at the finish. Throughout this guidebook, places with bus services are mentioned, with some indication of connections along the coast, but do enquire further for specific timetable information, as this is often subject to change, and some areas are only

served by buses during the peak summer season.

Ferries

The South West Coast Path is broken into a number of stretches by several long, narrow, tidal rivers, especially on the southern stages. Ferries have to be used to cross these rivers, and as these are part of the South West Coast Path experience it shouldn't be seen as ‘cheating’. If the urge seizes you, it is possible to walk around the estuaries, but this leads well away from the coast and may take several hours – or even days – to reach a point that can be gained by a ferry in mere minutes.

Be warned that while some ferries operate all year, others are seasonal or irregular, or are subject to tidal and weather conditions. In the peak summer months of June, July and August, all ferries will be operational. Others may run from May to September, or Easter to October. Winter walkers will find some ferries absent. In this guidebook, contact numbers are given for the ferries, with some indication of the level of service you can expect. For regular, all-year-round ferries, it is sufficient to turn up and catch one on a whim, but smaller, less regular ferries should be checked in advance or your walk may grind to a halt on a lonely shore.

See Appendix A for the contact details of ferry operators along the South West Coast Path, given in the order in which you will encounter the

Ferries cross tidal estuaries so that walkers don't have to detour inland in search of bridges



crossings as you walk the route from start to finish.

Traveline

Check the timetables of any local train, bus or ferry through Traveline, tel 0871 2002233, www.traveline.info. It is also possible to use Google Maps ‘directions’ to search for public transport. Simply enter your start and finish points and hit the ‘bus’ symbol to be given the next available service and connections. Use ‘options’ to change the time and date to search for later services.

ACCOMMODATION EN ROUTE

There is abundant accommodation around the South West Coast Path, but think carefully a day or two in advance to ensure you have a roof

over your head. There are long and difficult stretches of coast that seem remote from habitation, and some places where lodgings are restricted to only one or two addresses. Even in the big towns, it can be difficult to obtain a bed for the night in the peak season. Check the online database at Luggage Transfers, www.luggagetransfers.co.uk, which lists almost a thousand addresses around the South West Coast Path, and see Appendix B for an overview of what's available along the way.

Backpacking

If you're prepared to carry all your gear, backpacking is a great option. You can walk with a high degree of freedom: setting off at dawn, walking until dusk, generally pleasing yourself. To locate campsites, there are several marked on

STAGE 1

Minehead to Porlock Weir

Start	South West Coast Path Monument, Minehead (SS 971 468)
Finish	Ship Inn, Porlock Weir (SS 863 479)
Distance	16km (10 miles)
Ascent	620m (2035ft)
Time	5hr
Terrain	A steep and wooded ascent, followed by gentle open moorlands and a steep descent. There is a 'Rugged Coast Path' also available. Level and easy field paths are used later.
Maps	OS Landranger 181, OS Explorer OL9, Cicerone Vol 1, Harvey 1
Refreshments	Plenty of choice in Minehead. Tea garden at Bossington. Pubs, restaurants and cafés off-route at Porlock, and at Porlock Weir.

After months of planning, you arrive in Minehead to start what may be the longest walk you have ever attempted. Take it one step at a time, setting your sights no further than Porlock in the first instance. Oddly enough, the South West Coast Path climbs high above the coast, drifts well inland on Exmoor and loses sight of the sea. It is a moorland walk rather than a coastal walk, but is pleasant and not too demanding.

A 'Rugged Coast Path' offers a tougher, more scenic beginning.

MINEHEAD

In the 18th century Minehead had a thriving harbour with ships sailing as far away as America. Inland from Quay Town are Lower Town and Higher Town. As shipping dwindled to little more than a small fishing fleet, 19th-century Minehead became a holiday resort and remains so today. Although its seaside pier has gone, its old harbour wall survives. There are no longer direct rail services, but the old branch line has been preserved as the West Somerset Railway (tel 01643 704996, www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk). The modern town is centred on Wellington Square and St Andrew's Church. The old church of St Michael's, high above town, dates from the 14th century. Try and spend a night in town before starting the Coast Path.

Facilities include abundant accommodation of all types, including a nearby youth hostel and campsite, banks with ATMs, post office, shops, toilets, pubs and restaurants. Transport links include regular buses to and from the railway station at Taunton. Buses also link Minehead with Porlock and Porlock Weir. For information contact Minehead Information Centre, Beach Hotel, The Avenue, Minehead, Somerset TA24 5AP, tel 01643 702624, www.mineheadtowncouncil.co.uk, minehead.visitor@hotmail.com.

An imaginative monument marks the beginning of the South West Coast Path at **Minehead**, located on the Esplanade, on the way to the harbour. It takes the form of gigantic hands holding a map, based on a design by local art student Sarah Ward, executed in bronze by Owen Cunningham. Pause for a moment of reflection. All who start this trail must feel they are stepping out on a formidable journey – perhaps with lingering doubts, but certainly with anticipation and a sense of adventure.

Walk along the promenade from the monument, to pass the little **harbour**, pub and lifeboat station. Continue past a road-end turning area to follow a clear coastal path across a grassy area at the foot of a well-wooded slope, above a pebble beach. The path later climbs through the woods and drifts inland, joining and following an access road towards **Greenaleigh Farm**. Turn left up steps before the farm, following a path that makes a sweeping zigzag up the wooded slope.



map continues on
page 43



There are good views across the Bristol Channel to South Wales, Swansea, Cardiff and the tiny islands of Steep Holm and Flat Holm.

Go through a gate, then up to a junction, and turn sharp right. The path rises across a wooded slope, continuing across a slope of bracken, gorse, bilberry and heather, to reach a junction. The interesting ruins of the Burgundy Chapel lie downhill and off-route, but the Coast Path turns left up to a signpost and bench near a small car park on **North Hill** at 250m (820ft). ◀

Turn right as signposted for Bossington. The path is easy, flanked by bracken and brambles, followed by heather and gorse. A signposted junction is reached where the main route keeps left and the 'Rugged Coast Path' is signposted down to the right.

RUGGED COAST PATH

(ADDS 1.5KM (1 MILE), 200M (655FT) OF ASCENT AND 30MIN)

The path is stony, then grassy, passing bracken, rowan, hawthorn and holly to reach a bench and a junction. Keep left along a clear path, later going through a kissing gate and down into a valley. Climb to pick up and follow a cliff path, enjoying splendid coastal views at **Eastern Brockholes**. Gradients are gentle, around 200m (655ft), except when another valley is crossed at Western Brockholes. Keep right at path junctions until the path bends left, with views across Porlock Bay. Turn right downhill to re-join the main route on **Bossington Hill**.



The main route runs more or less level and later goes through a gate. Sheep and cattle graze enclosed grassy fields to the right. The path narrows among gorse bushes and goes through another gate, then becomes broader again. Cross a road-end serving the enclosed fields and continue along a track, eventually reaching 290m (950ft) on **Selworthy Beacon**, whose summit, just to the left, rises to 308m (1013ft).

Turn right as signposted around a corner of the enclosed fields and there are good views inland to Exmoor. After a slight rise, the descent starts gradually, taking a right fork for Bossington on **Bossington Hill**, rather than a clearer track heading to Lynch. ▶

A steep path descends through a little valley towards the coast near **Hurlstone Point** (which has a ruined coast-guard station and can be visited by a short detour to the right). There are fine views along the shingle embankment of Porlock Bay. ▶

Take the second turning left at the foot of the slope and follow a broad path to a gate. Walk along a woodland track that follows a small river upstream. Turn right to cross a footbridge and enter the lovely village of **Bossington** by way of a car park and toilets. The village is mostly owned by the National Trust, which maintains the cosy cottages, with their tall chimneys and thatched roofs using traditional skills and materials. There is a B&B and a tea garden.

The Rugged Coast Path joins from the right here.

The pebbles were heaped up 8000 years ago, but the ridge was breached by a storm in 1996, converting farmland into a tidal saltmarsh.



An impressive storm beach curves around Porlock Bay and the Coast Path moves inland to pass it

Since the shingle ridge was breached, farmland changed to saltmarsh, resulting in the death of many trees. However, other wildlife has flourished and this is a good birdwatching area.

Keep right to follow a road out of the village, signposted for Bossington Beach. Walk down the road and continue along a track. Turn left as signposted to follow a waymarked route through fields. The paths are grassy and clearly marked, keeping well away from the shingle ridge, tracing the edge of the saltmarsh. Bear in mind that the highest tides can flood the path. Signposted paths offer access to the village of Porlock if required. ◀

The path passes a monument, followed by a stone barn, then turns right and heads towards Porlock Beach. Turn left to crunch along the pebbles, or use steps later to follow a road running to **Porlock Weir**. When the tide is fully out, the stumps of ancient trees – a submarine forest – are exposed on the beach.

PORLOCK AND PORLOCK WEIR

Porlock is a small, compact village clustered around the 12th-century church of St Dubricius. The tiny Chapel of the High Cross is located directly above the porch, reached by a short stairway. Down the road is Porlock Weir, where a tiny harbour features lock gates that can be closed to form a marina. It's only a small settlement, featuring a number of craft workshops.

Facilities in Porlock include accommodation, campsite, post office, shops, toilets, pubs and restaurants. Transport links include buses to Minehead. For information contact Porlock Visitor Centre, West End, Porlock, Somerset TA24 8QD, tel 01643 863150, visit@porlock.co.uk. Facilities at Porlock Weir include hotel accommodation, toilets, Boat Shed Museum, pubs, cafés and the same bus link as Porlock.

STAGE 2

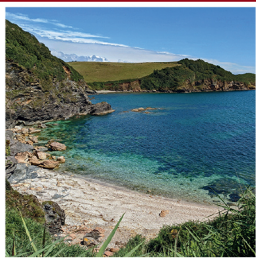
Porlock Weir to Lynmouth

Start	Ship Inn, Porlock Weir (SS 863 479)
Finish	Flood Memorial Hall, Lynmouth (SS 722 495)
Distance	18km (11 miles)
Ascent	1200m (3935ft)
Time	6hr
Terrain	An ascent through woodlands leads to the remote settlement of Culbone. More woodland walking, or alternative farm tracks, gives way to cliff paths and a gradual descent to Lynmouth.
Maps	OS Landrangers 180 & 181, OS Explorer OL9, Cicerone Vol 1, Harvey 1
Refreshments	Pub just off-route at Countisbury. Plenty of choice in Lynmouth and Lynton.

Walkers wishing to cover the distance from Minehead to Lynmouth as their first day's walk on the South West Coast Path need to be very fit, or risk wearing themselves out and compromising themselves for the rest of the journey. The landscape between Porlock Weir and Lynmouth features wooded slopes obscuring views of the sea. An inland alternative passes farm pastures at a higher level.

The Coast Path leaves **Porlock Weir** through a gap between the Ship Inn and the Porlock Weir Hotel, signposted for Culbone. The narrow path climbs, goes through a gate, runs alongside fields, then links with a track leading up past a farm. Turn right along a narrow road to reach a handsome, thatched, double-arched toll house at **Worthy**. The left arch is for a toll road, while the right arch is for the Coast Path to Culbone.

A broad path climbs from the toll house and passes under two arches. Old landslips on the wooded slope are avoided on the way up to a complex track junction. A signpost points up a winding path, where the woods are rich and varied (although predominantly oak and holly).



- 630 miles from Minehead to Poole • Devon, Cornwall and Dorset coastlines • superb cliffs, beaches and fishing villages • Britain's longest National Trail



The South West Coast Path is Britain's longest National Trail, measuring 1015km (630 miles) from Minehead to Poole. This guide describes the full route step by step along the north Devon, Cornwall, south Devon and Dorset coastline to its end at Poole Harbour.

This remarkable coastal trail is based on the paths trodden around cliffs and coves by generations of coastguards. No other stretch of British coastline compares for scenic splendour, interest, history, heritage, accessibility and ready availability of facilities all rolled into one.

- full route described in 45 day stages
- includes OS mapping, points of geographical and historical interest, information about facilities and accommodation along the route and comprehensive advice on planning your trek
- suitable for year-round walking, although many facilities are only open through the summer season

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