

DARTMOOR RAMBLE

This walk will take you across some of the wildest parts of Dartmoor, through picturesque villages and along beautiful river valleys. Along the way you will pass Bronze Age stone circles, High Willhays and Yes Tor (the two highest points on Dartmoor) and walk along part of the Tarka Trail.

The walk is fairly strenuous, suitable for people with some degree of experience. You will walk across open moorland, on good tracks and public highways. The walking route maps should be used in conjunction with the Ordnance Survey Outdoor Leisure 28 (1 :25,000) which covers the whole route.

BELLEVER YHA - OKEHAMPTON YUA 13 miles (21km)

Please check the military firing notice board before setting out on this route. (See important notice on back cover).

Leave the quiet little hamlet of Bellever and head for Postbridge, where you will cross the Medieval clapper bridge, thought to have been built in the 13th century. Follow the track along the river until you climb to reach the restored Grey Wethers Stone Circles. Built in 1000 2000 BC, little is still known about the true purpose of these remarkable constructions. The next section of the walk, from Sittaford Tor to Oke Tor, takes you across some of the wildest parts of the moor, climbing to a height of 603m and overlooking the northern plateau blanket bog, which is the source of the rivers Dart, Teign, Okement and Taw. At Oke Tor there are great panoramic views of Okehampton and North Devon. To the left of Oke Tor is Yes Tor (619m) and High Willhays (621m), the two highest points on Dartmoor. From Oke Tor follow the path which rises and falls as it leads you towards Okehampton, where the Youth Hostel is a converted Victorian goods shed at the uniquely preserved railway station.

OKEHAMP'ION - STEPS BRIDGE 20.5 miles (33km)

A longer walk today, although you can break the journey and stay overnight at Chagford if you wish - see route map for details. Leave the old market town of Okehampton and head for Belstone on the northern flanks of the open moor. The post office here was once a Zionist chapel and the village stocks and granite seat can still be seen. You climb steadily until reaching the thriving market town of Chagford - one of Dartmoor's stannary towns, responsible for the assaying of tin mined on the moor. The "Pepperpot" market house is a distinctive centerpiece to this pleasant little town. Highpoints of today's walk include walking along a small section of the Tarka trail, following the river Taw, walking along part of "The Two Moors way" footpath, which is a relatively new walking route linking Ivy bridge on the southern edge of Dartmoor and Lynmouth on the northern edge of Exmoor, and walking along the banks of the River Teign, via Fingle Bridge and Dunsford Wood nature reserve. This section of the walk is a haven for bird watchers and nature enthusiasts alike.

STEPS BRIDGE - BELLEVER 15.5 miles (25km)

The final stage of your walk takes you across open moorland to the villages of Morton Hampstead, and North Bovey, with its quaint thatched cottages, church and village green. The green was once known as the "play stow" or play place. This has to be one of the most perfect examples of an olde English village and is a special find for anyone who stumbles across it. At Hookney Tor (497m), on a clear day you have great panoramic views of South Devon and you even can see the sea at Teignmouth. Close by is Grimspound, a Bronze Age enclosure, with 22 hut circles. This is one of the largest enclosures in Europe. From here it is a relatively easy route back to Bellever, through farmland and crossing a boggy ford on the way! Depending on your progress today, you may want to make a detour of approximately 1m to The Warren House Inn - the third highest pub in England and one of the most remote in Devon. The log fire here has supposedly burnt continually for over 150 years!