

Dunster Circular



Fact File:

Highlights: The Yarn Market, Dunster High Street, Dunster Castle, Dunster Working Watermill, Gallox Bridge, view over Avill valley, Bats Castle, views over Exmoor and Bristol Channel, ancient byway, Dunster Dovecot, Dunster church and gardens, Tithe Barn

Start Grid ref: SS 993 438

Distance: 4.3 miles, circular

Height gained/lost: 260 metres. A moderate walk, gaining height to enjoy excellent views both inland and out to sea.

High Point: 205 metres

Low Point: 28 metres

Toilets: at start car park, Dunster Castle

Eating places: in Dunster only

Time required: excluding stops: 2 hours

Public transport: 198 bus service. Please check the current timetable on Traveline 0871 200 22 33 www.travelinesw.com before travelling.

Route description: Dunster and its surroundings have so much to offer in the way of things to see during a walk. The village itself has an abundance of wonderful buildings. The adjacent hills offer some of the best views one can find on Exmoor. On the tops of these hills one comes across well-preserved Roman settlements. The Romans built a string of these along this coast to watch for invasion from the Silures across the channel in Wales. They never came. One of the many old coaching roads to cross Exmoor is then followed before finishing with views of the castle that can only be enjoyed by walkers.

Route directions: The grid references are given should you like to follow the route on an Ordnance Survey map. They are not needed to follow the route which is described very accurately in the text.

1, SS 993 438

This walk starts at the main car park in Dunster, called Dunster Steep car park. From this car park walk up to the National Park Centre, continuing along the road ahead, being aware of the traffic. Follow the road round to the left into the High Street. Pass the Yarn Market and continue towards the traffic lights.

2, SS 991 436, 0.2 miles

Now continue ahead uphill towards the Castle soon bearing right downhill, leaving the Castle on your left. Pass through the gates and turn left along the main road, West Street. Shortly turn left down Mill Lane towards the Working Watermill. Cross the stream bridge with the mill leat now on your left. Shortly turn right along Mill Gardens. The watermill is just ahead if you want to visit it first, then returning to Mill Gardens.

3, SS 989 432, 0.5 miles

Pass through the barrier at the end of Mill Gardens and bear left along the road to reach Gallox Bridge, a delightful pack-horse bridge over the River Avill. Cross the bridge and keep ahead on the track past houses on your right.

4, SS 989 430, 0.6 miles

Now keep to the main track that bears slightly right, so ignoring the path ahead uphill, the path on the left through the kissing gate and the path to the right and level. This track now climbs gently and quite straight through woodland.

5, SS 985 429, 0.9 miles

After a while ignore the track that bears off to the left uphill, instead keeping on the main track still climbing gently. A little further on ignore the path that bears off to the right downhill, instead keeping on the main track as it now bears round to the left. Look for the wonderful roots and mosses on the banks. At the top of the climb the track goes to the left. At this point just go over to your right to an excellent viewpoint over the River Avill valley, looking towards Timberscombe and Wootton Courtenay.

6, SS 981 427, 1.2 miles

Return to the main path, now effectively going straight ahead from here. Shortly take the next path that goes hard back to the left. Follow this uphill and then follow it round to the right through the gap.

7, SS 983 427, 1.4 miles

Now ignore the path to the left instead going straight ahead on the path uphill through the trees to emerge out of the woods on the top of Gallax Hill. On your right is an old Roman settlement with the earthworks still quite obvious. Continue ahead on the grass path.

8, SS 985 424, 1.7 miles

As the path loses a bit of height, ignore the path to the left, continuing ahead uphill again to reach Bats Castle, another Roman settlement. The path goes through the middle of this one, giving wonderful all-round views. On leaving it keep on the path ahead towards the woods, ignoring the paths off either side. Pass through the woods ahead to reach a bridle gate by a gate. Ignore the path to the left.

9, SS 993 418, 2.4 miles

Pass through the bridle gate and turn left along this ancient byway. Follow it as it loses height beside the old bank on your left with old beech trees that would have once been planted as a hedge. After a little while pass the gate to a reservoir on your left and a little further on when this track turns right, turn left here to a gate, signed to Dunster.

10, SS 998 426, 3.0 miles

Pass through the gate and go ahead with a fence on your right. Pass through the next gate by the ancient oak trees, keeping ahead with the Castle now over to your right. Keep on this path as it now loses height to a kissing gate by a gate.

11, SS 989 430, 3.6 miles

Pass through this and turn right, back past the houses to Gallox Bridge. Bear right by the car park along Mill Gardens, bearing left along Mill Lane back to West Street.

12, SS 989 434, 3.8 miles

Turn right along the main road and opposite the gates to the castle, instead of returning that way, cross over to go along St Georges Street opposite. Follow it as it winds right and left to reach the school.

13, SS 989 436, 4.0 miles

By the school, turn right along Priory Green, passing by the lych-gate to the church, passing through two old brick arches to reach the Dovecot on the left and the church gardens on the right. Continue ahead to pass the restored tithe barn on the right. Continue along this road following it round to the right near the end to go ahead to the main road and the National Park Centre and car park.

