

Combe Martin and the Hangmans



Combe Martin is well known for its rocks, minerals and remains of past mining. This hill and valley walk looks at these and the magnificent views from Great Hangman, which has mainland Britain's highest sea cliff.



POINTS OF INTEREST

Combe Martin Beach *SS 577474*

The beach is the sunken mouth of the River UMBER, which follows a large fault that separates Exmoor from the hills to the west. The rocks to the west of the beach have dropped along the fault and are newer than those to the east of the beach. On either side, however, they are similar looking shales and sandstones with bands of limestone. The concrete walkway crosses veins of iron ore and limestone and ends at the Camel's Head rock, which has been mined for silver.

Knapdown Mine *SS 597467*

This was the last successful silver/lead mine in an industry that went back locally at least to the 13th century. Lodes or ore bodies criss-cross under the lane and there were workings and shafts on either side. The engine house operated from 1843 until 1868 and pumped water from the main shaft (42 fathoms deep) behind it. The water was used to wash the ore, which was sorted by children on the dressing floor behind. Finds of silver were sporadic and the mine, after several changes of ownership, failed through lack of investment. The engine house has been plundered for building stone and is in a dangerous state. The land is private.

Sunken Lanes

Many lanes around Combe Martin are cut below the level of the surrounding land. This may be due to wear by carts and rainwater or deliberate cutting to reduce the gradient for horse drawn wagons. In Watery Lane is a cutting that may have been used to conduit water to the Old Combmartin Mine for working machinery or washing ore. Lanes like Pentice Lane and Shute Lane may have marked the boundaries of former medieval open fields. When the fields were enclosed, soil was dug from the lanes to make the hedgebanks. The lanes are all cut in soft shale known locally as shillet

EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK

Exmoor became Britain's eighth National Park in 1954 and these walks were designed to celebrate its Golden Anniversary.

The National Park covers 267 square miles of Somerset and Devon. It is a landscape of great variety: from rugged, towering cliffs to gently rounded hills, wooded valleys, colourful heaths, wild grass moors and farming hamlets and it is home to nearly 11,000 people.

For further information contact Exmoor National Park Dulverton Visitor Centre: Tel 01398 323841
E-mail : NPCDulverton@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk
Website : www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

MAP

Scale 1:25000 SHEET Nos SS

The map section below can be found on the Ordnance Survey Explorer Map OL9. The area is also covered by the Ordnance Survey Landranger Map 180.



EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK



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- 5 miles (9 kilometres). 3 hours. Start point: National Park Centre in Cross St.
- Strenuous with a high and exposed section. Buses run regularly to Combe Martin between Lynton and Ilfracombe. Several pubs and cafés around Combe Martin seaside
- WC At Kiln car park. On a lead.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Some of the land covered by this walk belongs to the National Trust and all is on Public Rights of Way. The start is at the National Park Centre, which is adjacent to Kiln Car Park, which overlooks the beach.

1 Facing the entrance to the National Park Centre, turn left and then right into Kiln car park. From the car park you can look across **Combe Martin Beach**. Keep upwards towards the National Park sign and the houses beyond. Follow the signs for the Coast Path, which runs between houses and continues up steps and around the backs of the houses.

2 On reaching the top, turn right and continue following the Coast Path along the edge of Lester Cliff, passing a shelter. The path continues over a stile and around the back of Wild Pear Beach and ascends to the base of Little Hangman. Here bear right around the outside of the field boundary. Continues upwards along the coast and over two stiles to the summit cairn on Great Hangman. From here bear slightly to the right, dropping inland.

3 At the crossing of paths by the corner of a field, leave the Coast Path and continue ahead, following the sign towards the county road. The track leads through three gates and past Girt Down bungalow, where you should bear left along the farm drive. Continue ahead to the county road.

4 Turn left at the road junction. Then take the next fork right,

marked Knappdown Farm. Fork right at the next junction, walking down the lane (Corner Lane), passing the remains of the engine house of **Knappdown Mine** on your left. Continue down the lane for about a kilometre until another lane, Watery Lane, joins from the right.

5 Turn right through the rock cutting and along the lane. Just after the little ford, bear right up the footpath. Turn left at the next junction, as indicated by an old concrete footpath sign, and continue up the **sunken lane** (Pentice Lane).

6 At the top of the lane, cross the road to take the farm lane that runs down the opposite side of the ridge. At the bottom of the hill, cross the ford and drop left down some steps to Hams Lane. After half a mile this runs into the village. Keep straight ahead on the tarmac road and at the next junction bear right down the footpath signposted to the beach. Bear left at the next junction, passing the school to join the main street. Here turn right and right again to rejoin Cross Street and the start.

Combe Martin Beach

