

Heddon's Mouth & Woody Bay

**A fairly strenuous coastal path to a Roman fort,
followed by a breathtaking waterfall**

Essential Facts

- Route distance: 10.3 km (6.4 miles)
- Approximate time: 2 hours 15 mins
- Optional extension: 1.8 km (1.1 miles),
+ 120 metres ascent
- Approx. total ascent: 310 metres
- Start point Grid Ref: SS 654 481
- GPS Ref: SS 65492 48196
- Recommended O.S. Map: Explorer OL 9
- Toughness Rating: Somerset 3

Please see the notes on Toughness Ratings at the end of this report

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CHALLENGE ?**

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Full Info from the Great Walks web site

THE ROUTE

This walk starts by The Hunter's Inn at Heddon's Mouth, near Parracombe. There is usually plenty of parking on the road as well as in a lush meadow bordered by towering woodland and a stream – the perfect place for a picnic. There is also a National Trust gift shop and public toilets

Start your walk at **S**, on the rough track to the right of The Hunter's Inn, signed for Heddon's Mouth, Martinhoe, Woody Bay. When the path forks at the information board, follow the right-hand fork (signed Woody Bay) on a stony track which winds steadily uphill through woodland

After about 15 minutes, the woods clear and the rough path turns into a grassy Roman cart-track. The gradient steepens to the sharp left-hand turn at Hill Brook, and you will undoubtedly be pleased to take a breather on the bench thoughtfully placed beside the stream!

There is a little more of the gruelling gradient up the second half of this dog-leg, but you will have every excuse to pause at the top to catch your breath again: there are spectacular views up and down the coastline, across the plunging cleave at Heddon's Mouth to the scree-clad hillside opposite, or over the channel to Wales. A little further on, at **A**, take the signposted detour up to the Roman fortlet, which was a lookout point and signal station, and enjoy rolling vistas over the fields and woodlands inland too. (Spare a thought, though, for the Italian soldiers who were reputed to have perished of cold on watch up here one winter!)

Follow the path around the coast and through the woodland, straight on through the gate, and onto the metalled road beyond at **B**.

Follow the road downhill to the left, and at the next junction, **C**, turn left again, taking the road down through the ancient hanging oak woods. Shortly after the house on the left, where the road takes a very sharp right-hander, take the narrow path leading through a series of wooden bollards uphill to the left, **D**. After a short, steep ascent the path winds through trees, with occasional glimpses of the sea far below.

This path doubles back on the first, but lower down the hillside. About halfway along, a plunging waterfall tumbles across the path and away down to the sea; and from here the path winds steeply uphill, to top out at Highveer Point. (Local legend has it that the Gurt Fish of Wringapeak terrorises anyone foolish enough to risk the treacherous currents around this point; but don't lean out too far to spot it or you'll be in them yourself!)

Follow the stony path down to river valley and turn left, back towards Hunters Inn, at **E**. Just after the footbridge at **F**, (don't cross the bridge!), it forks: the right-hand path is an easier route which follows the stream; to the left is a bridleway if you are still feeling adventurous! Both join up half a mile further on and lead back uphill to the gate where the route started.

From here it is a very short stagger back to The Hunter's Inn, **S**, which serves hot and cold drinks, cream teas and meals.

For an optional extension, turn right at **E** and follow the path down to Heddon's Mouth, a tiny pebble beach with stunning cliffs and a 19th century lime kiln. Crossing the beach, take the path back along the other side of the river, to rejoin the main route by crossing the footbridge at **F**.



The Waterfall



The Roman Track
In The Distance



Mill Farm

Refreshment

The Hunter's Inn
Public House
Heddon Valley,
Parracombe
Tel: 01598 763230
Country inn with meals
and bar snacks



The Hunter's Inn

LOCAL INFO

The rampant rhododendrons in the woods which are threatening to engulf the ancient oaks are nonetheless very pretty in the summer with their vivid pink flowers in among the trees. In the woods you are also very likely to see squirrels and hear lots of different songbirds, with the occasional raven or jay adding a strident note of their own.

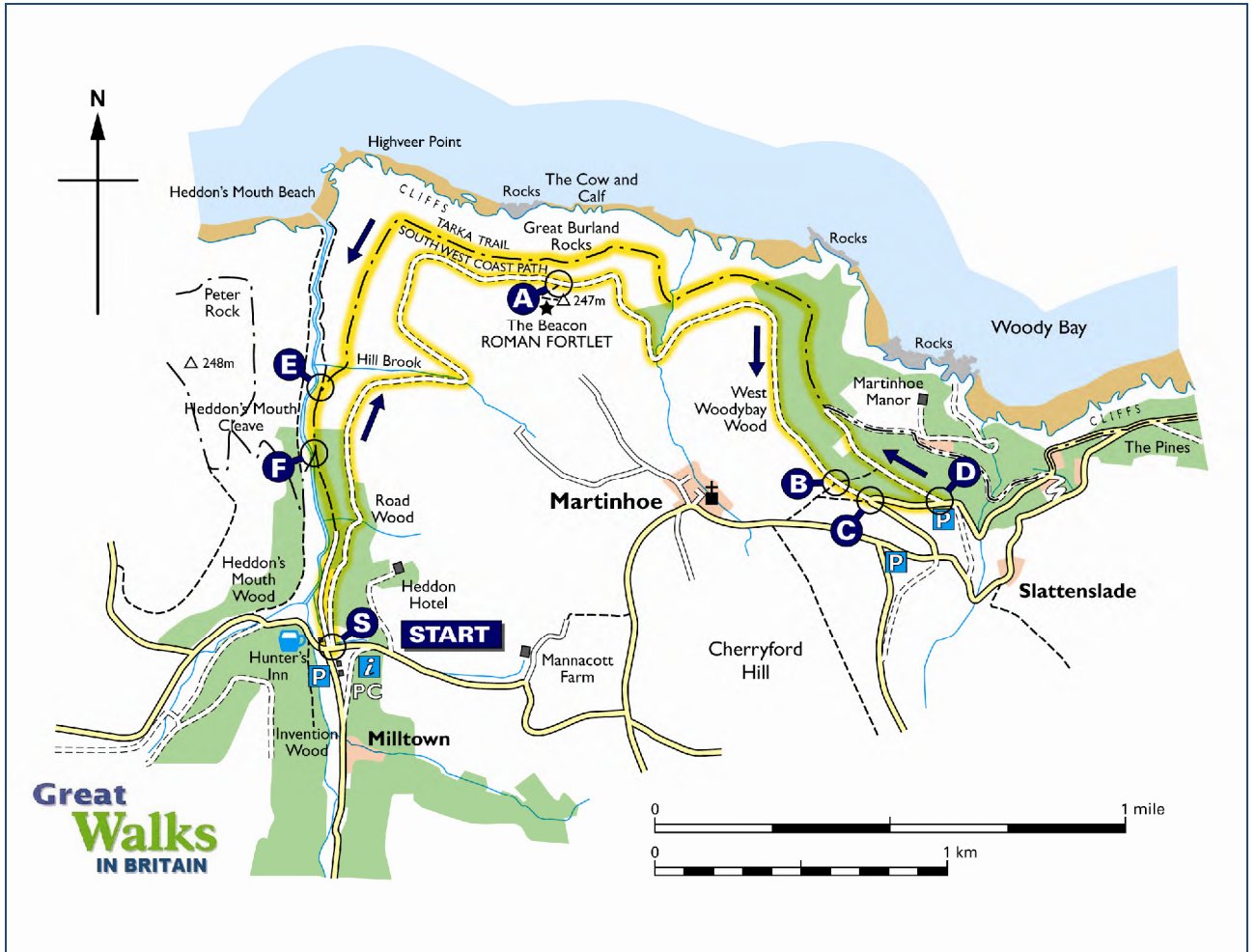
Take a detour down the river valley to Heddon's Mouth itself and listen to the sea washing over the massive boulders that make up the beach, and to the birds: gulls, kittiwakes, crows, even kestrels and harriers. Cliffs tower either side, and the old limekiln still stands on the shore

In the past, Heddon's Mouth was an ideal spot for smuggling, being remote and yet accessible. For the same reason, Nazi U-boats were reputed to send parties ashore to replenish supplies of fresh water.

Take another detour down through the woods at Woody Bay and onto the beach (but be aware that the ascent back up to the coastpath is breathtaking in a very literal sense, especially in the heat of summer!) Here you will find sand as well as rocks and cliffs, and all the solitude you could want, since the road down is not open to traffic.

HEDDON'S MOUTH & WOODY BAY G.P.S. WAYPOINTS

WAYPOINT NAME	MAP REF	CO-ORDINATES		ELEVATION: Metres
HED S	S	SS 65492	48196	42
HED A	A	SS 66246	49420	226
HED B	B	SS 67178	48716	254
HED C	C	SS 67351	48665	203
HED D	D	SS 67591	48680	170
HED E	E	SS 65492	49034	39
HED F	F	SS 65461	48815	30



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IN BRITAIN**

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MAP LEGEND					
	Great Walks route		Church with tower		Spot height - metres
	M6 Motorway		Church with spire		Information centre
	A23 Main road		Other place of worship		Parking
	B2116 Secondary road		Cathedral / Abbey		Public convenience
	Minor road		Building		Public house
	Other road		Built up area		Picnic site
	Track		Woodland		Camp site
	Footpath		Sand, shingle or mud		Major tourist feature
	Bridleway		Water feature		Other tourist feature
	National trail				
	Railway				

Safety First

Safety should always be your first priority in planning and undertaking a walk, whether on your own or leading a group. Please read these Safety First and Walking Our Routes notes.

Lead a group of other walkers only if you have leadership and navigational experience adequate for the 'worst case' conditions which may be encountered on the particular walk, bearing in mind the terrain, possible weather and navigational demands.

Weigh up the capabilities of your party, in terms of fitness and walking speed. Adjust your time expectations accordingly.

Ensure all your party are adequately clothed for the weather and conditions. Footwear is particularly important. Clothing must protect against cold, wet or strong sun according to the time of year.

Emergencies are quite rare, but it is essential to think ahead about what to do if someone in your party sustains an injury. Will you have a First Aid kit? Is there a qualified First Aider in the party? How could help be summoned in a serious eventuality?

Refreshment, particularly water, can be vital. Dehydration in hot summer conditions can be rapid, and frequent intake of fluids is essential.

On tougher walks it is a good idea to tell someone where you are planning to go – and when you expect to be back. Remember - mobile phones often lose reception in mountainous or isolated areas.

All our walks use legitimate routes: Public Rights of Way, Public Footpaths, Bridleways, Permissive Paths, Access Land, Byways and Roads.

Road walking calls for particular care. When there is no defined footpath or verge wide enough for safe walking it is usually best to walk on the right – facing oncoming traffic. An exception may be a tight bend, where walkers would be more visible on the left.

Occasionally you may find a public footpath blocked or unuseable. It is perfectly in order to take the shortest available diversion without damaging crops, perhaps around a field margin.

It is courteous to close gates after passing through, sometimes even if the gate was open when you arrived – particularly if it is obvious livestock may escape.

Mutual respect for farm animals is to be encouraged! Don't frighten or annoy them, but equally don't put your party members in danger or discomfort. You certainly wouldn't be the first walkers to go round the outside of a field of frisky bullocks.

Dogs should always be kept on a lead anywhere near farm animals, and under close supervision elsewhere in the countryside.

Walking Our Routes

Our walks are designed to be negotiated using the route directions in conjunction with the map section provided. We suggest walkers also take the Ordnance Survey Explorer or Outdoor Leisure map recommended for each walk.

On mountain, moorland and open heathland walks it is **ESSENTIAL** to have navigational expertise and tools, including the recommended Ordnance Survey map(s).

Take care to observe any cautions in the route description; exposed paths, areas liable to flooding etc.

Consider conditions before setting off. Will heavy rain have made a water meadow impassable? Will frost or snow make a path slippery?

When navigating the route look for clues to confirm you are in the right place. Are map features where you would expect on the ground? Are features mentioned in the text where expected? If you suspect you may have taken a wrong turn, take action sooner rather than later. It is better to re-trace to a known point rather than carry on regardless with the possibility of becoming increasingly confused.

All our routes are carefully checked before publication, but features can change on the ground – sometimes surprisingly quickly. Footpaths may be re-routed, buildings can appear or change significantly and these days pub names seem to change frequently.

The approximate time given for each walk is based on an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour (4 km/hour), plus an allowance for ascent, descent and any difficult terrain.

Total ascent is the approximate total ascent over the whole walk.

GPS users can enter in the waypoints provided in each of our walk reports. It is important to read our guide **Introducing GPS for Walkers**, available as a PDF file from the Great Walks in Britain web site.

Remember that GPS is a great navigational tool, but only one of those available to the navigator. Never dispense with conventional map and compass – and the training and skills to use them, especially on mountain, moorland or open heathland walks.

TOUGHNESS RATINGS

Most of our **Somerset & North Devon** routes can be undertaken by reasonably fit walkers able to utilise the map segments and our recommended Ordnance Survey maps, together with the route guidance notes.

The toughest walks should be undertaken or led only by experienced mountain walkers with navigational expertise. Always consider recent and forecast weather.

Each walk has been allocated a **Toughness Rating**:

1. Easier walks with modest ascent and generally on well defined paths. There may be stiles or narrow gateways to negotiate.
2. Routes which are more demanding. They may include more ascent and possibly paths which are looser or more difficult underfoot.
3. More strenuous walks. There may be prolonged steep ascents, and perhaps several ascents over the whole walk. Conditions may be challenging underfoot.
4. The toughest walks, requiring considerable fitness and navigational experience. There may be prolonged steep ascents. The ability to navigate by compass may be essential.

Toughness Ratings are allocated in the context of the terrain in the edition area. For example a walk rated as demanding in Cambridgeshire may be equivalent to an easier or moderate route in Somerset & North Devon.