



## Minehead: A gateway to Exmoor

**T**he coastal town of Minehead in north-west Somerset is perfectly placed for enjoying the walks and paths of Exmoor. The town is the start (or end) point of the South West Coast Path (SWCP), the 630-mile trail following the coastline to Poole, Dorset. The point is marked by an impressive monument along the seafront in Minehead – enormous hands gripping a map, providing the perfect photo opportunity before you set off.

From Minehead, the path takes you uphill through woodland, heading west along heather-clad cliff-tops with steep combs, and bracken and gorse-covered slopes. You can choose to follow the more dramatic route, known as the 'rugged' coast path, which runs close to the cliffs, or stay a little inland on the moor and drink in the spectacular views from Selworthy Beacon.

The Exmoor sections of the SWCP can be broken up into three parts: Minehead to Porlock Weir (14.5km/9 miles), Porlock Weir to Lynmouth (19km/12 miles), and the final Exmoor stretch from Lynmouth to Combe Martin (22.5km/14 miles). There's a regular bus route between Porlock and Minehead, to pick

up or drop off after a day's walk on the SWCP.

From the town, you can head east and join the England Coast Path. This section, which joins up to Brean Down runs for 58 miles, covering the beautiful and diverse coastline of Somerset. You can, of course, do shorter point-to-point sections from Minehead, heading out to Blue Anchor and Watchet and hopping on the West Somerset Railway – the longest heritage railway in England – to return back to base!

North Hill, part of the Exmoor National Park, sitting above Minehead, is made up of nine separate woodlands. The area was used extensively for military training in the Second World War and you can still discover the remains of tank training circuits and other reminders of the era in the heathlands. There are many paths and tracks on North Hill, some of which link up with the SWCP, and all with excellent views over the town and coastline.

From Minehead, there are plenty of options for walkers to enjoy – not only the incredible coastline, but also adventures off the beaten track. From the town you can join Macmillan Way West, taking you up

to Hopcott Common, a stunning heathery backdrop to this pretty seaside town. Once on the common, the trail splits. Follow the path east, over Grabbist Hill, and you arrive in the medieval village of Dunster. Or head west, climbing to Exmoor's highest point, Dunkery Beacon, at 519 metres. Be prepared for some incredible views! From Dunkery Beacon, on a clear day, you can see as far as Dartmoor in the south, the Mendips and Quantock Hills to the east, Wales and the Bristol Channel to the north and over to North Devon and Hartland Point to the west. Position yourself on the sheltered lee slope for a magnificent panoramic vista.

Whether you're after dramatic coastal views, wide-open moorland or glorious woodland walks, Minehead is a great base for exploring picturesque Exmoor.

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