**Hiking The Coleridge Way…in 2 Days!**

Last summer a group of friends and I hiked the 51 miles of The Coleridge Way from Lynmouth to Nether Stowey over the course of just two days. That’s the equivalent of hiking a whole marathon per day. Why did we undertake such a Herculean task? To raise money for Bristol Children’s Hospital. Our target was to raise £1,000 and we succeeded in raising just over £2,000.

Walking from Lynmouth towards Watersmeet along the River Lyn provided constant photographic moments due to the sheer beauty of the water rushing over the rocks, the trees reflected in the still areas of the river and the majesty of the ancient trees reaching up to the sky. The benefit of doing the walk in July was that we had fabulous weather, the downside was that we had to regularly check for ticks – a tick remover is absolutely vital on this walk.

Climbing away from the river was no less stunning as we passed Exmoor ponies, horned sheep and numerous birds. From the top of the moors, the view over the hills and valleys was breath-taking. As we neared Porlock we could see the sea in the distance, shimmering in the sun. We passed what seemed like a never-ending number of signs saying ‘Porlock 2 miles’ and wondered if this was an alternate universe where we would always remain 2 miles from our lunch destination.

Revitalised by delicious local ice-cream, we continued on through Horner Wood to Wheddon Cross. We had no spare breath for talking, but this made the stillness and silence of this stunning wood even more special. This stretch of the walk was a bit of a blur for most of us as we fantasised about being able to take our day packs off our sweaty backs, have a shower, put fresh clothes on, lie down with our feet up, eat dinner and sleep.

For me personally, the walk from Wheddon Cross to Bicknoller and the Quantock Hills was the least inspiring section of the walk as it mainly crossed farm fields. We did pass through numerous picture-perfect villages with their thatched cottages, streams running through and welcoming pubs where we were able to refill our water bottles, as well as passing a group alpaca walk from a local alpaca farm.

Reaching the Quantocks, we could all feel that we were on the home stretch and were on familiar ground. Friends who live in Alfoxton, above Holford, were waiting for us to pass their house and had laid out Pimm’s to pick us up for the final march. Various family members had met us at different points along the way to give moral support and much-appreciated treats, such as ice-creams and homemade brownies.

As we climbed Woodlands Hill towards the cairn, we watched the sun setting behind us, casting a gorgeous orange glow over us and the hills around us. Most of our families were waiting for us in the field after Walford’s Gibbet and walked the last couple of miles with us, in the dark. Arriving into Nether Stowey, there were more well-wishers standing in the road cheering for us and it was quite a cavalcade that finally arrived outside Coleridge’s Cottage on Lime Street.

The scenery along The Coleridge Way is stunning, but I would not recommend doing it in only 2 days. Walking from Lynmouth to Porlock was a challenge, but an enjoyable and entirely manageable one. Pushing ourselves onwards through Horner Wood and up Dunkery Beacon to Wheddon Cross was a challenge too far and we failed to appreciate the beauty we were passing through as we were so exhausted.

Our second day, we took advantage of the delicious breakfast at The Rest & Be Thankful Inn, resulting in a late start of 9:30am. This meant that our last couple of miles to Coleridge’s Cottage, along Watery Lane and up and over Castle Hill were in the dark. Again, a challenge too far at the end of 2 physically exhausting days. I had never understood the concept of crying with relief until that night…the adrenaline that had kept us all going was suddenly released, resulting in a total inability to stop the tears from flowing!

If you are considering walking The Coleridge Way, all I can say is DO IT. With rivers, combes, moorland, woods and the sea to feast your eyes on, I challenge anyone to not find it breath-takingly stunning. Just give yourself at least 3 days to do it!

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