

WALK 5 5 miles/8km

Colyton to Beer via Ox Hill & Gatcombe Lane

(This walk can be combined with Walk 6 to make a circular 9.25 mile/15 km walk from Colyton)

Apart from the steep climb to the top of Ox Hill, and a steep descent into Beer, this high-level walk is generally level and gives extensive views over the Axe Valley and the sea. There is an hourly bus service from Beer to Colyton (except Sundays and public holidays). Check the timetable!

Timing: Allow up to 3 hours to complete the walk at a relaxed pace.

Terrain: Through fields alongside the beautiful River Coly followed by a steep climb to the top of Ox Hill through a wildwood. From then on the route follows a mixture of firm-surfaced tracks, and minor lanes that carry little traffic.

Number of stiles: 2.

Refreshments: pubs, tea rooms, and restaurants in Colyton and Beer.

Toilets: in Colyton car park opposite the Colcombe Castle pub, and on the promenade in Beer.

Always follow the Country Code <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code>. The most important advice is

- keep to public rights of way
- leave gates as you find them (either closed or open)
- keep your dog under effective control

Abbreviations used in the text:

FB: Footbridge.

KG: Kissing gate (a narrow gate hung in a stock-proof U or V-shaped enclosure).

PG: Pedestrian gate (narrow gate designed for walkers).

SP: Signpost.

WM: Waymark (a Devon County Council sign with a yellow arrow on a green background bearing the legend 'PUBLIC FOOTPATH', or a blue arrow on a white background indicating a 'PUBLIC BRIDLEWAY').

Route description

1 From the Market Place in the centre of Colyton, walk **downhill** keeping the Colcombe Castle pub on your **right**. A few metres beyond The Little Shop, **bear right** and walk down Church Path keeping the railings on your **right**. Just beyond the War Memorial **turn left** down a short, wide alleyway that joins a road.

2 **Continue ahead** along the road noting the elaborate gateway of Colyton House on your left. **Ignore** Rosemary Lane on your right and **continue ahead** to reach a road junction where you should **bear right** to the picturesque Chantry Bridge.

3 Cross the bridge and immediately **turn left** through a **KG** at an East Devon Way **SP** to enter a field. Follow the well-defined path that runs close to the river to reach a **KG (SP)** that gives access to a charming, narrow woodland glade. **Continue ahead** through the glade to a **KG (SP)**.

- 4 Pass through the **KG (WM)** on a short post) and continue along the well-defined path that leads to a **FB** with **PGs** and **WMs** at each end.
- 5 Cross the **FB** noting that the **WM** indicates that you should continue **straight ahead** along a path that runs through the **middle** of the field. (There's another path that runs near the seat on your left and follows the river bank, but this is **not** a public right of way.)
- 6 Follow the path across the middle of the field to the far end where the two paths meet beside the river at a **KG (WM)**. **Continue ahead** to a substantial **FB (WM)** across the River Coly.
- 7 **Cross** the **FB (WM)** and **turn left (WM)** on fence) and follow the well-defined path through a **KG (WM)** along the river bank. The path gradually curves to the **right** to pass a **WM** on a post and reaches a **double gate (WM)** that gives access to a track that runs uphill between hedges to reach a **gate (WM)**.
- 8 Go through the **gate**, pass Heathayne Farm on your right, and **bear left** to follow the access lane that joins the Colyton - Southleigh road. **Cross** the road to reach, a few metres later, another road, which should also be crossed, and enter a wood via a **KG (WM)**.
- 9 Follow the well-defined path that climbs uphill through the wood for 600 metres (12 mins) to cross a **stile (SP and WM)** that gives access to a field.
- 10 **Continue ahead** along a faint path keeping close to the hedge on your **left** to reach a **PG (WM)** beside a gate in the **left-hand corner** of the field. (Ignore the adjacent locked **PG** on the edge of a wood.)
- 11 **Pass through** the **PG (WM)** and follow the hedge on your **right** for **five metres**, then **turn right** and cross another **stile (WM)**. Go **forward** for 10 metres and then **turn left** to follow a broad track through the wood.
- 12 After 400 metres (7 mins) you will arrive at a clearing and a major junction of tracks. Here make a **90° turn** to the **left** and follow a track, enclosed by hedges, for 600 metres (10 mins) to the Colyton to Sidmouth road.
- 13 **Cross the road** and follow the lane for 1.5 km (25 mins) until reaching the busy A 3052 (Exeter to Lyme Regis) road. **Cross the road** and follow a lane downhill towards Gatcombe Farm.
- 14 At the bottom of the hill, where the driveway to Gatcombe Farm bears left, the tarmac ends and you should **continue ahead uphill** along an unsurfaced track for **800 metres** (14 mins) to a road.
- 15 **Turn left** along the road and almost immediately **fork left** to follow Stovar Long Lane.

16 Follow this lane for **900 metres** (13 mins), past the Football Club and a sharp right-hand bend, to some houses on the **right**. Just before reaching the first house, **turn right** along an access road (**SP**).

17 After 100 metres, look for a footpath (**WM**) **on the left** at the point where the access road becomes a private driveway and bears to the right. **Continue down** this very steep path until reaching a main road.

18 **Cross the road**, then turn left and follow it **uphill** to its junction with a narrow, steep road on your right. Continue along the main road for a few metres, then **turn right** into an access road that leads to some houses (**SP**).

19 Follow the access road for 75 metres around the perimeter of private gardens and **look for a footpath on your right** (**SP**) that will take you to a delightful open space overlooking Beer beach. Immediately **fork right** and descend a steep tarmac path to reach another path.

20 Here you should **turn right** and descend some steps to arrive at the promenade. If you turn left you can make a steep descent to the beach. If you **turn right** you will pass some public toilets and reach Fore Street which is Beer's main thoroughfare.

21 The bus stop for the 885 bus to Seaton and Colyton is at a road junction 300 metres (5 mins) on the right-hand side of Fore Street.

If you want to walk back to Colyton by a another route see Walk 6