PUBS WORTH THE WALK · DEVON · EXMOOR

London Inn Pub Walk

The Stewardship of a Parish-Wild Exmoor in Miniature from Molland.

DISTANCE	TIME	ASCENT	DIFFICULTY
5.2 miles	**3 hours**	**1060 ft**	**Moderate**
8.3 km	approx.	325 m	Navigation Skills on Moor

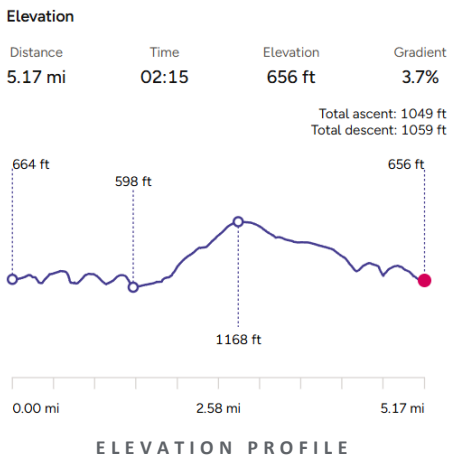
OVERVIEW

This is a wonderful introduction to the quieter, less-visited side of Exmoor. Starting in the remote village of Molland, the 5.2-mile route takes you through a landscape of wooded combes, pretty valleys and working farmland before climbing onto the open moorland at Anstey Gate. It's a walk of contrasts: from sheltered lanes and ancient farmsteads to big skies, wide horizons and apparent wilderness of Exmoor itself.

The landscape is magnificent, and very much alive. This is not simply countryside left to nature, but a working rural estate shaped by generations of farming, stewardship and sporting traditions. Keep an eye out for Exmoor ponies grazing on the common and red deer moving across the hillsides. You may hear the distant sound of a shoot, or spot pheasants and partridges in the hedgerows. As the woodland falls away and the moor opens up around you, it's easy to appreciate both the beauty of this place and the people whose lives remain so closely connected to it.

The return across the moor requires some confidence with navigation, particularly in poor visibility, but rewards you with a real sense of space and remoteness.

START / FINISH	**The London Inn, Molland, EX36 3NG**
PARKING	At the pub.
GRID REF	SS 813 283
WHAT3WORDS	///smuggled.gifted.musician
PATHS / TERRAIN	Lanes, fields, farms tracks, open moorland
PUBLIC TRANSPORT	Route 696, Thursdays only. South Molton.
TOILETS	At the pub, or Village Hall opposite.



ELEVATION PROFILE

OTHER PUBS NEARBY

The **Masons Arms** in Knowstone is excellent – I'll feature it on the website soon. **The Royal Oak** at Withypool already features on the site, including an excellent walk to Tarr Steps. At Tarr Steps itself is the **Tarr Farm Inn.**

THE ROUTE



Numbered waymarks on the map match the badges in the directions below. Not every waymark is mentioned in the text.

DIRECTIONS

Part 1 · London Inn to Whitley Farm *steps 1–5*

1 The London Inn sits next to the Church with a small car park to its right-hand side, but a larger Village Hall car park opposite. The Church of St Mary is a special place and worth taking time to visit – it starts to provide an insight into the history of this remote Devon village. With the church on your left follow the quiet lane as it leaves the village.

2 At a junction, continue straight ahead signposted for Stone and Bramley. The lane drops downhill to cross a bridge, then winds back uphill to the Latchgate junction. Go straight ahead here, leaving the lane to join a footpath. **(waymark #2)** Almost immediately, pass through a gate to the right into a field – horses or sheep here perhaps – and follow the left-hand hedgerow straight ahead, continuing in a straight line through a number of field gates & fields.

3 Cross a stile and continue straight ahead. You'll see a lane at the bottom of a steep slope in front of you. Navigate down to it – there is a route on the OS Map straight ahead **(#3)** but I cut to the left, working with the slope to drop down to a fence to exit onto a forest track and then 25 metres to the right to join the lane. **(#4)**

4 Once on the lane, bear left to follow it round a bend and up a short, sharp hill to a junction. Follow signs for Whitley Farm, leaving the lane to join a bridleway on a tarmac farm drive through a metal gate straight ahead. There's an electricity pole by the gate if you're unsure. **(#5)**

You'll by now have a sense of Exmoor birdlife, especially the volume of pheasants and partridges in the hedges, fields and in the air. The 6000 acres comprising the Parish of Molland is estate land, having been in the same family for hundreds of years. The Molland Shoot is internationally acclaimed – and you may see or hear the sound of guns on this walk.

5 Cross the stream and pass through a wooden gate, continuing on the driveway uphill towards Whitley Farm. At the top of the hill, follow the lane as it bends right through a farm gate to the side of the Farm – the route almost passes the front door, but continue 10 metres to the right of it to a wooden gate beyond. This farm is available as a holiday let on the Best of Exmoor website.

Part 2 · From Whitely Farm onto the Moor and Anstey Gate *steps 6–11*

6 Pass through the gate and go left on a waymarked bridleway into Brimblecombe. Fine views of the valley from here **(#6)**, and to the left the uphill stretch to the open moor, the highest point on this walk

7 Continue left downhill, soon passing over a footbridge over a stream into woodland – Gourte Wood. **(#7)** Stay on this route gently uphill to eventually arrive at the old stone barn/farmhouse called Brimblecombe in front of you where the tracks curves to the left. **(#8)**

8 Make your way across the farmyard to the obvious exit a short distance ahead, and start the steep uphill climb on the concrete driveway as we continue towards Anstey Gate at the top of Brimblecombe Hill.

9 At the top of the driveway, pass through a gate. Here, the track opens out, leaving the woodland, to cut between sheep fields as we progress towards the Moor. Continue gently uphill to reach a cattlegrid near a corrugated iron shed and beyond, footpath markers offer route options in all directions! **(#9)**.

10 **The next stretch leads up to the open Moor, to Anstey Gate above us, but if the weather is bleak and you're minded to shorten the walk, you can take the signs here for Molland to the left (rejoin the described route at waymark #14)**. Instead, bear right on the level track signposted for 'West Anstey 2 ½' and continue for 100 metres. **(#10)**

11 Here take a distinct stone track to your left uphill (cut in two by rainwater run off). It soon curves to the right to cut across the slope and continue to follow it towards the hedge row. It continues uphill to the car park at Anstey Gate, one of the crossing points on this quieter part of Exmoor, often a good spot for sightings of Exmoor Ponies and red deer on Anstey Common and Molland Common. (#11)

Part 3 · Anstey Gate to Molland *steps 12–20*

12 Continue across the left-hand fringe of the car park towards the road, and a few metres before the road, cut left on a grass track leading into the moor. The track immediately forks – take the left-hand option. *As you look out over the moor, you'll see a combe to your left – Anstey Combe – and the moorland starting to descend and arc to the left. That's the direction to aim for. The paths here can be indistinct – confidence with navigation is important especially in poor visibility – and the routes on the OS Map are not always a 100% match to what's in front of you on the ground. Notable landmarks are few.*

13 Pass above Anstey Combe to your left, and a few hundred metres beyond the moorland track opens out to reveal an area of grazing, quite unusual amongst the rough moor that surrounds it. Look ahead for a lone holly tree. If the tree is 12 o'clock, follow a faint track at 10 o'clock making towards what looks like a gorse hedge ahead. **(#12)**

14 Once you've reached the gorse hedge, **(#13)** join a more distinct track in front of it running to the left downhill towards the fringe of the moor – where it meets a beech hedgerow, and a field gate in the hedge should be visible. As you approach the hedge, look for a signpost at corner on the left alongside a distinct track that follows the hedge line **14)**. ***This is where the shorter alternative route that I suggested from the cattlegrid near Brimblecombe rejoins this route back to Molland.***

15 Follow the hedgerow to the right – this is more like field walking now rather than moorland. The route starts gently downhill, and then steeply on a rough track towards a stream at the bottom of Smallacombe. **(#15)**

16 Pass through a wooden farm gate and continue straight ahead, up a track. Molland is signposted, 1 mile ahead. Pass the front gate of Smallacombe Farm on your left and join a quiet tarmac road gently uphill.

17 At a junction follow the Public Footpath sign straight across, to pass through a metal farm gate into a field. **(#16)** The route is diagonally left down the field, making towards a small wooden gate you can see at the fringe of a hedge.

18 Once at that little wooden gate, identify a gap in the hedge at the bottom of the steep slope below you, roughly in a line with the route you took to reach this point in the field. Make your way down to cross a pair of footbridges over the stream, then some steps beyond up to a track. **(#17)** Go left on this distinct track, and follow it uphill – the last of the day – as it opens out into a field. Continue diagonally across to a gate in the far corner. **(#18)**

19 The gate leads to a lane just above the village. Cross carefully, following a footpath over the lane up into a field above and onward to the Church. *On my visit, the field was newly planted, so I decided to step back to the lane and follow it back to the village to avoid a muddy stomp around the field edge towards the Church*.

20 Arrive back at The London Inn.

Don't walk past, go in....before it's not there anymore.

More pubs worth the walk across England and Wales, with a GPX download and OS Maps link for every route, at

pubsworththewalk.co.uk