PUBS WORTH THE WALK · EXMOOR

The Ship Inn (Bottom Ship) Walk

Exmoor's Coastal Sanctuary: Ada Lovelace's Terraces, England's Smallest Church & The Ship Inn at Porlock Weir

DISTANCE	TIME	ASCENT	DIFFICULTY
5.3 miles	**3 hours**	**1400 ft**	**Moderate**
8.5 km	approx.	430 m	Long, steep ascent

OVERVIEW

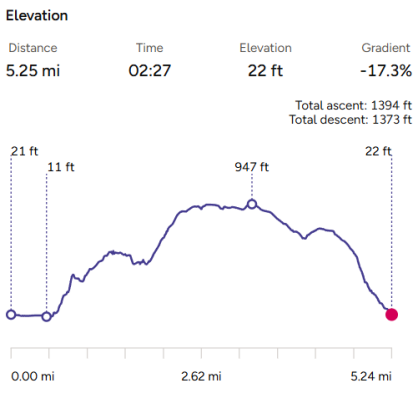
This is a varied walk, with a demanding initial climb, some lovely woodland walking and a rewarding mix of coastal, historic and rural scenery.

From Porlock Weir harbour, the route heads west towards Gore Point before joining the pebble beach. This is a particularly atmospheric start, with the Bristol Channel ahead and the wooded slopes of Exmoor rising behind you. The footpath to Culbone Church leaves the beach and climbs steadily through woodland. It is a substantial ascent, with some steep sections, but the route is well established and frequently signposted. Along the way you'll pass the remains of Ashley Combe, where terraced gardens, stone archways and tunnels offer tantalising glimpses of the estate created by the Lovelace family in the nineteenth century.

The church itself is a wonderful reward for the climb. Tucked away in its secluded combe, it feels a world apart from the coastal activity at Porlock Weir.

The return takes a different route, heading through Withy Combe and up towards Silcombe Farm, before following quiet lanes and sections of the Coleridge Way bring you back to The Ship.

START / FINISH	**The Ship Inn (Bottom Ship), Porlock Weir**
PARKING	Public car park opposite The Ship
GRID REFERENCE	SS 860 484
WHAT3WORDS	///captures.sampling.clerk
PATHS / TERRAIN	Pebble beach; woodland paths; quiet lanes; farm tracks
PUBLIC TRANSPORT	Bus stops at The Ship Inn, Porlock Weir
TOILETS	At The Ship Inn



ELEVATION PROFILE

OTHER PUBS NEARBY

The Ship Inn at Porlock Weir is known locally as the Bottom Ship. **The Ship in Porlock** village, 1.5 miles away, is known as the Top Ship. Both are excellent! Also try **The Blue Ball** on the A39 outside Lynmouth at Countisbury; and seek out The **Rockford Inn** near Brendon on the East Lyn river.

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 · Porlock Weir to Culbone Church *steps 1–5*

1 Facing The Ship, turn right to walk past the front of The Porlock Weir Hotel, and continue straight ahead past a number of small businesses and workshops. Look for Gore Point on the Bridleway signs from here. The start passes the inner harbour and moorings of Porlock Weir.

2 Join a grassy track towards the raised pebble beach ahead, and Gore Point. Signs warn that this route can become impassible during times of exceptionally High Tides. Use the alternative routes on such occasions.

3 Join the pebble beach and bear left. Continue ahead for 100 metres - you'll soon spot the footpath signs for Culbone Church leading off the beach, and marking the start of nearly 2 miles of uphill walking to the church. (**Waymark #2**)

4 The woodland path is straightforward, frequently signposted and well used, but steep in places, sometimes zig-zagging to ease the slope. *You'll notice that the steep, wooded hillside seems terraced and you pass a number of stone tunnels. This is Ashley Combe. In the 1800's, it was here that Ada Lovelace—computing pioneer, mathematician, and daughter of Lord Byron—made her summer home alongside her husband, William King, Earl of Lovelace. To tame this sheer, sea-facing incline, William sculpted the hillside into a series of grand Italianate terraces, carving stone archways and subterranean walkways so his family could promenade effortlessly above the crashing sea. Though the main house is long gone, these moss-covered stone tunnels and terraced tracks remain woven into the woodland trail.*

5 Continue uphill, following signs all the way. **(#3)** Eventually, the path opens up a little offering views of the Heritage Coast of Glamorgan across the Bristol Channel. A wider gravel path on a welcome downhill section finally leads towards the Church, with views below you through the trees. **(#4)** *There are 7 houses in the community of Culbone, with the electoral roll recording only 7 people here. The first Rector of the Grade I Listed Church is recorded as 1329, although in the Assizes Rolls of 1280 it is recorded that Thomas, the chaplain of Cattenor (Culbone), was indicted 'for that he had struck Albert of Esshe (Ash) on the head with a hatchet, and so killed him'. Church services are still held regularly for the (now friendly) congregation.*

Part 2 · Culbone Church to Porlock Weir *steps 6–12*

6 Having visited the Church, proceed to the far end of the churchyard to pass through a small wooden gate next to the stream. **(#5)** Follow the footpath in the direction of Silcombe Farm, through the archway ahead. The path soon returns to the woods, climbing uphill once again as you make your way out of Withy Combe.

7 Just beyond an ageing wooden gate, the path seems to fork (the leaf fall of Autumn obscuring the path a little in places). Bear left, and soon reach a farm track, where you break clear of the woodland. **(#6)** Turn left here and follow it all the way to the road at Silcombe Farm **(#7)** where the route joins The Coleridge Way (yellow leaf emblem sign).

8 When you reach this very quiet road, turn left and follow the lane for around 1 mile past a number of farm entrances – Parsonage, Ash and Yarner. At Yarner Farm, follow the sign for Porlock Weir **(#9)**, and again at a sharp left-hand bend at the Pitt Farm junction. **(#10)**
This road is the Worthy Toll Road which offers drivers an alternative to the 1:4 of Porlock Hill on the A39. Tolls are collected at an archway of Ashley Combe Lodge, at what was once the entrance to Ashley Combe House.

9 A few hundred yards ahead, look for a path to the right into Worthy Wood in Worthy Combe, signpost Porlockford. **(#11)** The path rises gently initially, and once over the crest, look for the Coleridge Way yellow emblem sign to the left, on a narrower track downhill. **(#12)**

10 Drop onto a wide stony track, and continue straight ahead. This section is loose stone underfoot, so take care after the initial downhill part where the route becomes steeper. Thankfully, it soon levels out.

11 After a short distance of level walking beyond the steepest part, look for a Bridleway sign on your left for Porlock Weir **(#13)**. Continue on a narrow track downhill. The rhododendrons here encroach over the path and as you get closer to Porlock Weir, the narrow track runs behind gardens as it continues towards a lane. **(#14)** Take care as you join it – it's the Toll Road again.

12 On the lane, turn right downhill, then left to reach to reach The Ship at the bottom of the lane.

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

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pubsworththewalk.co.uk