PUBS WORTH THE WALK

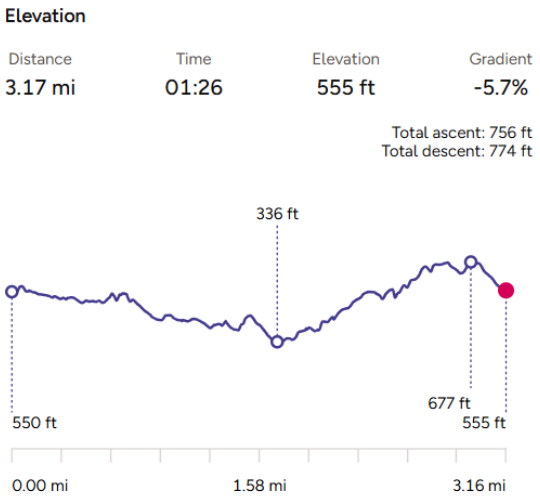
The Rockford Inn, Rockford, near Brendon

Exmoor Circular Walk to Watersmeet along the East Lyn River, 3.2 miles

OVERVIEW

The East Lyn River runs through one of Exmoor's great hidden landscapes — a deep, oak-wooded gorge that feels removed from the world above in a way that the open moor never quite does. From the Rockford Inn, cross the river to take the downstream path, following the river as it tumbles over rocks through increasingly dramatic scenery towards Watersmeet.

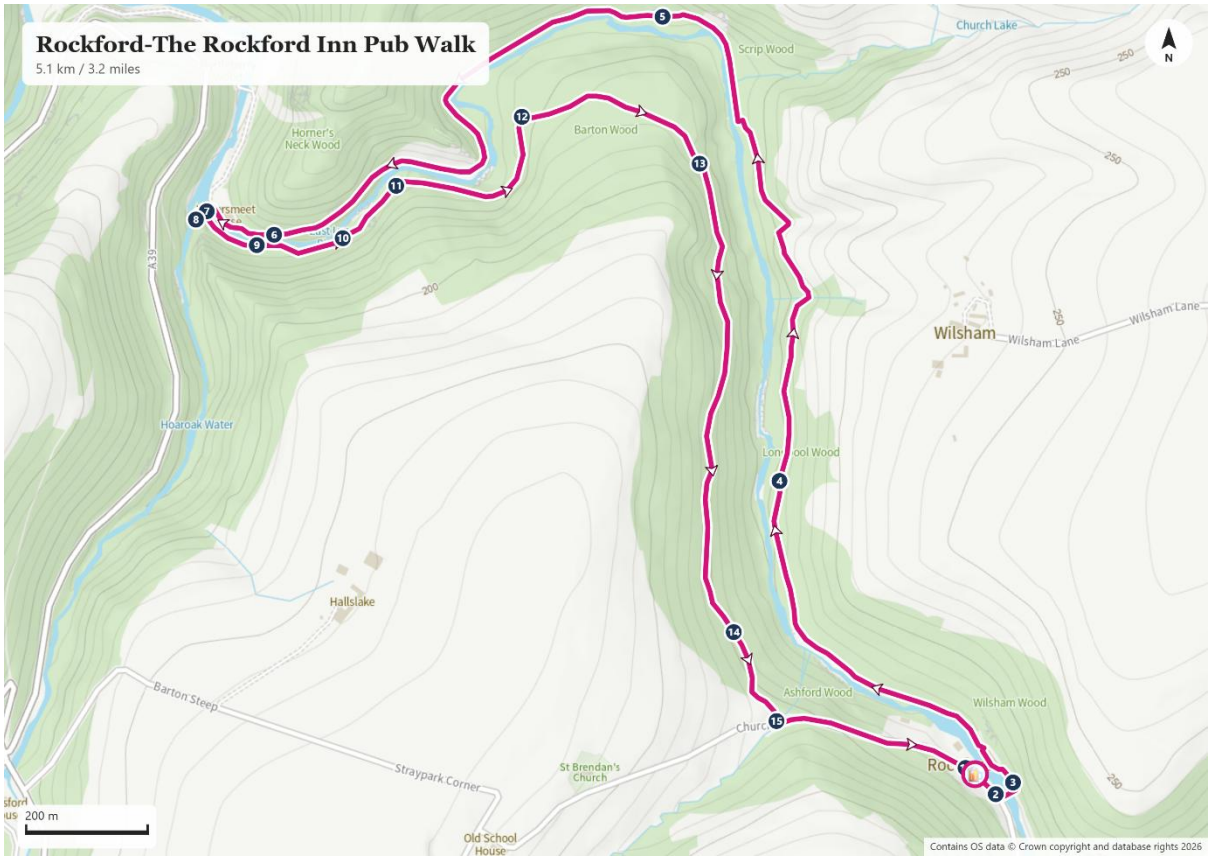
Watersmeet — where the East Lyn meets Hoar Oak Water beneath a Victorian fishing lodge now run by the National Trust — is one of North Devon's most visited beauty spots, and deservedly so.



Cross the footbridge at Watersmeet for the return to Rockford. At Barton Wood the route leaves the riverside and picks up a bridleway through the trees before joining the lane back into Rockford.

Start/Finish	**The Rockford Inn**				
Parking	At the pub, and carefully along the lane if the small car park is full.				
Grid Reference	SS 756 477				
What3Words	///routs.corded.select				
Distance	3.2 miles / c.5 km	**Time**	1.5 hrs	**Ascent**	760 ft / 235 m
Paths/Terrain	Woodland trails, and river bank paths, some stony tracks. Short section on quiet lanes.				
Difficulty	Easy				
Public Transport	Bus Services run along the A39				
Toilets	At The Rockford Inn, and at Watersmeet House. Check opening times for each.				
Other Pubs Nearby	**The Staghunters Inn** 1 mile up the East Lyn valley in Brendon. **The Blue Ball Inn** high above the valley on the A39 at Countisbury.				

DIRECTIONS



1. The Rockford Inn sits in the stunning East Lyn valley. This pretty circular walk to the National Trust Watersmeet is easy to follow, with some uphill sections. The instructions are straightforward as you'll see.
2. A footbridge a few yards upstream from the pub crosses to the other side of the river. Now turn left downstream and follow the trail all the way to Watersmeet House and Gardens. There's a tea room, ice cream parlour and toilets. It's one of the visitor hot spots in the area.
3. There are some improvements and maintenance activities taking place in 2026, but there are still plenty of opportunities for some wonderful photographs as the East Lyn River meets Farley Water.
4. For the return journey, cross the bridge and keep left upstream, following the bridleway sign for Rockford. You'll notice that the path here has been cleared with some large machinery and is very different to the natural, untouched path on the outward journey. You'll return to 'normal' footpaths soon, but this route does keep you further away from the river than the Rockford to Watersmeet leg.
5. Continue past lime kilns and up to a junction at Barton Wood. The yellow route continues ahead, to rejoin the bridleway route further ahead. I opted to follow the bridleway route to the right.

6. The path continues uphill, with the yellow route soon rejoining, continuing up to a wooden gate at the top of the hill. This is the first opportunity to climb above the tree canopy, offering the first views across the valley, towards Countisbury.
7. Proceed through the gate, then down to a lane. Turn left here. This is the road that leads back to The Rockford Inn, around ¼ mile ahead.