



East Devon
National
Landscape

EAST DEVON WAY - EAST TO WEST (SIDBURY TO WOODBURY CASTLE)

Route Summary

Starting in the village of Sidbury, this section of the route takes you through a wonderful range of landscapes including secret green lanes, field footpaths, open heathland and apple orchards. It climbs steeply to White Cross and Fire Beacon Hill, where on a clear day you will have stunning views out to Sidmouth and the coast, before descending through Harpford Woods to pass under the old Feniton to Sidmouth branch line. From there it's a short walk through the village of Harpford and across the flood plain of the River Otter to the apple orchards to the north of Newton Poppleford. Leaving the orchards behind you will climb to Harpford and Collaton Raleigh Commons, part of the famous Pebblebed Heaths. Once again enjoy the far reaching views as you make your way to the end of this section at the 2,500-year-old Iron Age hillfort of Woodbury Castle.

If you are walking the whole route and looking for facilities at the end of this section, Woodbury is an enjoyable approx 1.5 miles/2.5km walk away using directions 1 - 8 of the Woodbury Castle to Exmouth Link Route.

Start: Sidbury

End: Woodbury Castle car park (free)

Distance: 10.4 miles/16.8km

Estimated time: 5 hours 17 minutes

Difficulty: Category 4

Nearest postcode: EX10 0SD **What Three Words:** ///clef.support.enthused

Accessibility information:

Access: Category 4 - Some sections are not accessible to mobility vehicles and buggies/pushchairs due to kissing gates, 2 in 1 gates with a stepover bar, steps and narrow bridges.

Terrain: Tarmac, stony tracks, narrow paths with tree roots, loose stone, mud and grass.

Field furniture: 16 gates (including six 2 in 1 gates), 6 kissing gates, 4 footbridges and 72 steps.

Total ascent: 1660 feet/506m

Maximum gradient: There are several steep sections, one ascent of approximately 1 in 5 (18.5%) for 77 yards/70 metres and one descent of approximately 1 in 3 (26.6%) for 66 yards/60 metres.

Maps: OS Explorer 115 Exmouth & Sidmouth

Other useful information:

Dogs: Welcome under close control. Please follow the Paws on Paths messages, particularly during the bird breeding season from 1 March until 31 July.

Refreshments: Sidbury has a pub and a shop at the start. There is a shop and pub close to the route at Newton Poppleford and a shop and several pubs in Woodbury close to the end of the route.

Highlights: Panoramic views out towards the coast, particularly from the top of Fire Beacon Hill. The chance to explore Fire Beacon Hill Nature Reserve and the Pebblebed Heaths. If you're lucky you may spot a Dartford Warbler (year round) or hear a nightjar (summer months).

A landscape of history

Sidbury was mentioned in the Domesday Book and is said to be one of the oldest settlements in Devon with its Iron Age Fort at Sidbury Castle. It still has a working mill producing flour.

St Giles in the centre of the village is a Grade I listed church with a 7th century Saxon crypt under the chancel.

Fire Beacon Hill was one of the sites where a beacon was lit to warn Elizabethan London that the Spanish Armada was coming.

The route passes under the old Feniton to Sidmouth branch line railway which closed in 1967. Part of the old railway between Tipton St John and Bowd is now a cycle path.

Newton Poppleford's claim to fame is the King Alfred daffodil which was bred by the Hill family and received an RHS Gold Medal in 1899. The original daffodil field has now been built over, but groups of bulbs were planted around the village and can be seen flowering every March.

The heathland area was created by Neolithic farmers around 4000 BC when they started clearing the area of deciduous woodland to create pasture for their animals. Further clearance, grazing and burning over the centuries created the heathland.

Important wildlife

Fire Beacon Hill is a Local Nature Reserve and an important area of lowland heath, 85% of which has been lost in the UK since the 1800s. It has sandy, acidic, nutrient poor soils

which support a wide variety of plants including ling, bell heather, cross leaved heath and gorse, which all look spectacular in season.

The area is also an important breeding ground for yellowhammers and Dartford warblers. Other birds to look out for include stonechats, merlins, crossbills and, in early summer, nightjars arrive from Africa. These nocturnal birds are more often heard than seen. Listen for their churring calls on summer evenings.

Grazing management is carried out with small herds of cattle and Exmoor ponies to reduce bracken and scrub encroachment.

The East Devon Pebblebed Heaths support over 3000 species of wildlife including many which are rare or threatened. Of the 140 bird species, the Dartford Warbler is one of the rarest and most iconic. Look out for it year round in areas of dense gorse. In the early summer months nightjars are also found here.

The Pebblebed Heaths also support a large number of insect species including 50 species of butterfly, 517 species of moth, 26 species of dragonfly and damselfly, 243 species of beetle, 94 species of wasp, bee and ant. Look out for the southern damselfly, one of the rarest species in the area, and the silver studded blue butterfly flying from June until August.

There are also 38 species of mammals on the heaths including 14 species of bat. Look out for evidence of roe deer, rabbit, badger and hazel dormouse.

Directions:

1. **This section starts at the junction where Bridge Street joins Fore Street** in the centre of Sidbury. Facing Fore Street, turn left along the pavement for a short distance and then TAKE CARE crossing onto the footpath to White Cross. Follow the track between buildings and go straight across the drive and follow the footpath past a barn on the left and into a field.
2. **Follow the hedge on the right to a gateway** on the right in the top corner of the field. Go through and follow the path parallel with the hedge on the left to a 2 in 1 gate onto a minor road.
3. **Go through the gate and turn right.** Follow the road over a bridge and bear left up a track.
4. **Follow the track up past the farm on the right** and continue straight on through a wooden field gate and up the track.
5. **Follow the track, going through a metal field gate** and straight on to a 2 in 1 gate into a field.
6. **Go through the gate and head straight on up the field,** then bear left up to a gateway.

7. **Go through the gateway and follow the track by a fence** on the right to a 2 in 1 gate. Go through and follow the edge of a wood on the left.
8. **At the end of the wood bear right up the field** to a 2 in 1 gate and stile.
9. **Go through and follow the track for a short distance to a minor road.** Go straight across and follow the track to a junction.
10. **Turn left along the track** and follow it to a cross of tracks.
11. **Go straight on along the track.**
12. **At the Hollow Head Cross continue straight on.**
13. **At Y junction bear right and then immediately left** along an avenue of beech trees to a metal bridleway gate.
14. **Go through the gate to a Y-junction and bear left** into Fire Beacon Hill Local Nature Reserve. Continue straight on ignoring all side turns.
15. **At Y-junction as path begins to go downhill,** bear right (straight on). Follow the path, ignoring all side turns, down and around to the left.
16. **Continue to a cross of paths by an interpretation board.** Turn sharp right (back on yourself) and follow the bridleway along and down left to a minor road.
17. **Turn right along the road for a short distance,** then turn left onto a footpath down steps and through a metal kissing gate into a field.
18. **Go through the gate and head diagonally right** down the field to a metal pedestrian gate. These fields are owned by The Donkey Sanctuary and you may see donkeys grazing here.
19. **Go through the gate and follow the fenced path downhill** to a 2 in 1 gate. Go through and straight across the track and through a metal kissing gate. Turn left and follow the path to the road.
20. **TAKE CARE going straight across onto a footpath.** Bear right along it. At the path junction turn left and follow the footpath down to the left through the woods.
21. **Go under the railway bridge and bear right.** At the path junction go straight on.
22. **Continue to follow the path alongside the stream,** ignoring all side turns until you come to a wooden kissing gate.
23. **Go through and follow the path to a junction.** Turn left along the track and follow it to a minor road.
24. **Turn left along the road to the next junction.**
25. **At the T-junction turn left** and then take the first right after the church.

26. **Go past the cottages on the right and take the first footpath** on the right. Follow the footpath to Harpford Bridge. Beware of river erosion on the right just before the bridge.
27. **Cross the bridge and continue straight on** with the river on your left. where the path divides follow the fence on the right to a sleeper bridge and wooden kissing gate.
28. **Go through the gate and follow the footpath** over a footbridge and through a metal pedestrian gate into a field. Follow the footpath in a slight right arc across the field to a metal pedestrian gate and another footbridge. This area can be very wet at times.
29. **Cross the bridge and bear right** up through the trees to a flight of steps.
30. **Turn left up the steps and follow the hedged footpath** to another set of steps. Go up and turn left.
31. **After a short distance turn right up a footpath** through the orchard alongside a row of poplars to a metal kissing gate.
32. **Go through the gate and follow the hedge on the left** down to a 2 in 1 gate onto a minor road.
33. **Go through the gate and diagonally left across the road** to follow the road to Southerton.
34. **Follow the road past a footpath on the right.** When the road bears sharply right turn left onto a hedged footpath.
35. **Follow the footpath on and around to the right** and up steps on the left. Continue along the fenced footpath to a path junction.
36. **Turn right at the junction** and then keep right at the next path junction.
37. **Go through a wooden bridleway gate** and follow the track straight on. Where the path divides, turn left and follow the path out onto Harpford Common. Where the path divides again take the middle path.
38. **Where the path divides yet again keep right** (straight on). Ignore the footpath on the right and continue straight on following the path around to the left and then right to a wooden bridleway gate off the common.
39. **Go through the gate and bear around to the left.** Follow the track for 153 yards/140 metres and take the first footpath on the left.
40. **Go through the wooden bridleway gate** and follow the track along the edge of the common to a stream and cross via a footbridge.
41. **Continue straight on up the track to a metal bridleway gate** and go through to a junction.
42. **Turn left (straight on) up the tarmac drive** and go through the gate alongside the cattle grid.

43. **Follow tarmac drive past the footpath on the right** and continue to follow it, ignoring all side turnings, out through a gate to the A3052.
44. **TAKE CARE crossing diagonally left.** Walk through to Joney's Cross car park and continue straight across to the entrance.
45. **Cross the road diagonally left and go through a wooden gate** onto the heath. Follow the track straight down to a cross of tracks.
46. **Turn left and follow the track ignoring all side turns.** Eventually you will go downhill to a minor road.
47. **Go through a wooden gate and turn right down the road.**
48. **At the T-junction turn left.**
49. **At Hawkerland Cross turn right onto a bridleway** and follow the track up and past a metal barrier.
50. **Where the path divides shortly after the barrier** bear right uphill. Follow the track ignoring all side turnings.
51. **At the cross of tracks under the trees** bear slightly right (straight on).
52. **At the path Y-junction bear left.**
53. **At the next path junction go straight on.**
54. **At the next path junction go straight on.**
55. **At the cross of paths go straight on.**
56. **At the next cross paths go straight on.**
57. **At the cross paths by the pines go straight on.**
58. **At the next path junction keep straight on.**
59. **At the next cross paths go straight on.**
60. **At the next path junction turn right** and then after a short distance at the next junction turn left.
61. **At the next junction go straight on** and then at the next junction go straight on again over the pebbles.
62. **At the Y-junction bear left and follow the path** as it swings left alongside a wood.
63. **Take the first right into the wood** and then turn immediately left through a gap in the bank. Turn right and follow the path alongside the earth bank on the right, then head straight on to a path junction.

64. **Go over the bank to a track and turn right.** At the next junction bear left to Woodbury Castle Car Park.