



LINK ROUTE - EAST DEVON WAY NEAR COLYTON TO BEER

Route Summary

Leaving the East Devon Way to the west of the historic market town of Colyton, this route takes you on a journey south to the Jurassic Coast at Beer. Passing through fields and woodlands and Holyford Woods Local Nature Reserve there are chances to spot a wide range of wildlife including wildflowers, deer, woodland birds and seabirds. The area is also rich in history spanning millions of years from the geological history of the Jurassic Coastline to the more recent rebellions in the 17th century and smuggling in the 18th century.

Start: East Devon Way near Colyton

End: The Story of Beer Shelter, Beer

Distance: 5.3 miles/8.5km

Estimated time: 2 hours 42 minutes

Difficulty: Category 4

Nearest postcode: EX24 6RS **What Three Words:** ///obscuring.roadmap.original

Access: Category 4 - Some sections are not accessible to mobility vehicles and buggies/pushchairs due to stiles, a large number of steps, kissing gates, a 2 in 1 gate and narrow footbridges.

Terrain: Tarmac, stone, grass and mud.

Field furniture: 7 gates (including a 2 in 1 gate), 9 kissing gates, 1 stile, 2 footbridges and 129 steps.

Total ascent: 997ft (304m)

Maximum gradient: 1 in 5 (20%) ascent for approx 70 metres; 1 in 4 (22.8%) descent for approx 110 metres (with steps).

Narrowest path width: 64cm

Map: OS Explorer 116 Lyme Regis & Bridport

Other useful information:

Dogs: Welcome under close control on paths.

Refreshments: There are shops and places to eat in Colyton close to the start of the route. There is a petrol station shop on the route close to the A3052 and shops and eating places in Beer at the end.

Highlights: Woodland wildlife in the Nature Reserve at Holyford Woods Nature Reserve. A chance to take in the stunning coastal views out over Beer Beach and explore the history of Colyton and Beer.

A landscape of history

Colyton was reputedly one of the first Saxon settlements established in Devon. It is known as 'the most rebellious town in Devon' due to the 105 local men and boys who supported the Duke of Monmouth in the Monmouth Rebellion, a plan to overthrow the King James II in 1685.

The main building of the church of St Andrew's, in the centre of Colyton, dates back to the 15th and early 16th centuries, while the tower is 12th century with an unusual octagonal lantern top stage sitting on top. During renovation after a fire in 1933, a late 10th century cross was found, which now stands beside the font.

Nestled in a deep valley just west along the coast from Seaton, Beer was mentioned in the Domesday Book and has a long history as a fishing village. You can still see fishing boats on the beach today. Due to its hidden bay and nearby caves, Beer was also a notorious smuggling area in the 18th century.

Beer is famous for its Chalk Limestone which has been used in many well-known buildings including Exeter, Winchester, St.Paul's and Norwich Cathedrals, Westminster Abbey and the Tower of London

Important wildlife

Holyford Woods Local Nature Reserve contains areas of woodland over 400 years old. Look out for birds including grey wagtails and long-tailed tits. In the evening you may hear and see tawny owls. The Reserve is also home to bats, including the rare Barbastelle and Bechstein's; dormice, weasels, badgers and roe deer.

Beer has an impressive rookery in the pines at the top of the Jubilee Gardens. Watch the rooks flying in and out of the trees as you climb upwards.

Directions:

- 1. Leave the East Devon Way by crossing the footbridge** over the River Coly. Follow the footpath around to the left to a junction of paths.
- 2. At the junction of paths turn right up the bridleway** to Heathayne Farm. Continue past the house on your right to the road.
- 3. At the road junction go diagonally left** across both roads and through a gate onto a footpath.
- 4. Follow the footpath as it winds its way** up through the woods. You will eventually come to a stile out into a field.
- 5. Go over the stile and follow the footpath** uphill alongside the hedge on your left to a metal pedestrian gate.
- 6. Go through the gate and then turn right** through another metal pedestrian gate into woodland. Turn left and follow the edge of the woodland around to the right to a junction of paths.
- 7. Walk between the posts and around to your left** onto a track. Follow the track, ignoring all side turns, to a road.
- 8. TAKE CARE as you go straight across** onto a minor road. Follow the road straight on for approximately 219 yards/200 metres.
- 9. Turn left through a gate onto a bridleway** and follow the hedge on your right through two fields.
- 10. Turn right through a field gate** and then left to follow the hedge on your left.
- 11. Head across the corner of the field to go through a field gate.**
- 12. Follow the grassy track downhill** to the junction with another bridleway. Turn right and follow the bridleway up through the middle of the field to a gate into woodland.
- 13. Go through the gate and follow the track** straight on. Keep left at the first junction (straight on) and follow the bridleway through the woods to an old reservoir.
- 14. Walk around with the reservoir on your left.** Go over a footbridge and continue around to your left.
- 15. At the next junction keep right and follow the path** straight on uphill through Holyford Woods Local Nature Reserve.
- 16. Go through a metal kissing gate** and follow the hedge on your left up to the road.
- 17. Go through another kissing gate** and TAKE CARE crossing the A3052 onto the right hand side of the B3172. Walk along the verge past the garage. After a short distance it opens out into a picnic site.
- 18. Walk through the picnic site,** through some trees and down a step onto a track.

19. Turn right up the track and after a short distance right again through a 2 in 1 gate. Turn left and follow the hedge on your left for a short distance to a metal kissing gate. Go through and head straight on to another kissing gate onto a fenced footpath through a field.

20. Follow the fenced footpath through the field to a wooden kissing gate into woodland.

21. Go through the gate and follow the footpath through the top of the woods. Take the second right - signed footpath.

22. Keep left at the junction and go straight on at the cross paths.

23. At the bottom of the wood go out through a wooden kissing gate and turn immediately left to a road junction. Turn right along the road to a T-junction.

24. Turn left along the pavement and follow the road around the bend and uphill for approximately 241 yards/220 metres.

25. Turn right and TAKE CARE crossing the road onto the Permissive Footpath Coast Path (Beer). Follow the track through the pine trees.

26. Keep right downhill to the road.

27. Turn left and follow the road to a triangle.

28. Turn right up Old Beer Hill for approximately 142 yards/130 metres.

29. Turn left to follow the South West Coast Path uphill and around to the right along the top of the cliffs.

30. Follow the Coast Path to the end of the route at The Story of Beer Shelter in the Jubilee Gardens. You can either take the first left turn down many steps through the gardens or continue to the junction with a footpath and turn left there for fewer steps.

This route was originally developed by James Baldwin and checked by Ted Swan. It was reviewed and updated in 2026.