



EAST DEVON WAY LINK ROUTE - EXMOUTH TO WOODBURY CASTLE

Route Summary

Starting alongside the Exe Estuary in Exmouth this route climbs through the historic village of Woodbury and up to Woodbury Castle Iron Age hillfort on Woodbury Common. With stunning views out over the Exe Estuary and the chance to get up close and watch a wide range of water birds and explore the Pebblebed Heaths it's a great year round route.

Start: Imperial Car Park behind Exmouth Railway Station

End: Woodbury Castle Car Park

Distance: 7.5 miles/12 km

Estimated time: 3 hours 27 minutes

Difficulty: Category 3

Nearest postcode: EX8 1EN **What Three Words:** ///emphasis.excavated.slang

Access: Category 3 - Some sections are not accessible to mobility vehicles and buggies/pushchairs due to kissing gates, steps and narrow footbridges.

Terrain: Tarmac, rough stone, grass and mud.

Field furniture: 8 gates, 9 kissing gates, 4 footbridges and 28 steps.

Total ascent: 748ft (228m)

Maximum gradient: 1 in 7 (13.8%) ascent for approx 80 metres; 1 in 15 (6.7%) descent for approx 90 metres.

Narrowest path width: 45cm

Map: OS Explorer 115 Exmouth & Sidmouth

Other useful information:

Dogs: Welcome under close control on paths. Please be aware of the Paws on Paths initiative and always follow Nature Reserve signage for current rules.

Refreshments: There is a range of shops and places to eat in Exmouth and a village shop and several places to eat in Woodbury on the route.

Highlights: Stunning views out across the Exe Estuary and the chance to get close to a wide range of waders and water birds. The chance to spot the rare Dartford Warbler, and explore the remains of the Iron Age hillfort.

A landscape of history

Exmouth, with its two miles of golden sandy beaches, is one of Devon's oldest seaside resorts. It has the longest seafront promenade in the county and was established in the 18th century. The opening of the railway in 1861 made visiting the area much easier and the town remains popular to this day with visitors and watersports enthusiasts.

Woodbury was the final home of William Keble Martin, who wrote the *Concise British Flora*. Published when the author was 88, the book was the result of a lifetime's work painting and describing hundreds of plant species and was an immediate bestseller.

Woodbury Common is part of the Pebblebed Heaths. 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

The Exe Estuary is an internationally important wetland, a Special Protection Area and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. In winter it supports more than 20,000 birds and is a wonderful place to watch geese, ducks and various waders including black-tailed godwit and redshank.

Woodbury Common is part of the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths which are amongst the most highly regarded conservation sites in Europe. They 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 early summer nightjars arrive from Africa. These nocturnal birds are more often heard than seen. Listen for their churring calls on summer evenings.

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. Starting alongside the estuary at the edge of the Imperial Road Car Park head north with the estuary on your left.

- 2. Go through a wooden kissing gate and follow the footpath** alongside the estuary and around to the right to cross the railway.
- 3. Cross the railway and turn left in the park on the other side.** Follow the tarmac path out through a gap to Carter Avenue.
- 4. Turn left and follow the road over the bridge and around to the left.**
- 5. Continue straight on along the Exe Estuary Trail.** After approximately 545 yards/500 metres turn left onto a footpath.

This footpath is very narrow in places. If you would prefer a wider route continue on the Exe Estuary Trail. The two routes eventually converge again.

- 6. Follow the footpath alongside the railway to a crossing.** TAKE CARE crossing the railway to a grassy area alongside the estuary. Follow the footpath around to the right through the open area and on along a narrow path beside the estuary. There are stunning views out across the water along this stretch, but it is very narrow in places.
- 7. Follow the footpath until it comes out through a narrow gap onto a Sowden Lane.**
- 8. Turn left along the lane and follow it past the benches** overlooking the estuary and uphill into Lympstone.
- 9. Continue through Lympstone village** and turn left just before the railway bridge. Follow the Exe Estuary Trail uphill past the station and around to the right over the railway.
- 10. After the railway bridge turn left and continue to follow the Exe Estuary Trail** to Station Road in Exton.
- 11. Turn right along Station Road** and follow it around to the right and then left to a cross roads.
- 12. TAKE CARE and use the pedestrian crossing** to cross the A376 into Mill Lane. Follow the lane for a short distance.
- 13. Take the first right into Rydon Lane** and follow it for a short distance before turning right through a metal kissing gate onto a footpath through fields.
- 14. Follow the footpath straight on going through another metal kissing gate** to a footbridge on the right.
- 15. Cross the footbridge and turn left.** Follow the hedge on your left going through another metal kissing gate and continuing to a gated footbridge.
- 16. Cross the footbridge and head diagonally right** to go through a metal kissing gate and follow the hedge on the left to another footbridge.
- 17. Cross the footbridge and go straight across** the quiet Rydon Lane. Go through a metal kissing gate onto another footpath and go straight on across the field to follow the hedge on your left to a track.

18. Go through the gate and follow the track until it turns into a tarmac road. Continue straight on past a car breakers to a T-junction.

19. Turn left along Gilbrook TAKING CARE along the narrow section over the bridge. Continue straight on to the crossroads.

20. Turn right along the pavement along Broadway to the pedestrian crossing. TAKE CARE as you cross and turn left and then right into Greenway.

21. Follow Greenway through Woodbury ignoring all side turnings until it turns into Parsonage Way. Follow it to the edge of the village and turn right into Cottles Lane.

22. Follow Cottles Lane up to a T-junction.

23. Turn left up Castle Lane and follow it for a short distance before turning right through a gate onto a bridleway opposite the last house.

24. Follow the bridleway along a grass lane and out through a gate into fields. Turn left and follow the hedge on your left to a gate into woodland.

25. Go through the gate and follow the grassy track across a stream and straight on to join a stony track. Continue uphill to a junction of tracks.

26. Go around the metal barrier and diagonally right across the track. At the next track junction turn left. Follow the track uphill and around the side of another metal barrier to reach a main road.

27. TAKE CARE crossing the B3180 to reach Woodbury Castle Car Park where you can join the East Devon Way.

From here you can:

Turn right to follow the East Devon Way west to the South West Coast Path and Exmouth seafront.

Turn left (towards Woodbury Castle) to follow the East Devon east towards Newton Poppleford and eventually Lyme Regis.

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