



EAST DEVON WAY LINK ROUTE - WOODBURY CASTLE TO EXMOUTH

Route Summary

Starting at Woodbury Castle Iron Age hillfort this route sweeps down off the commons through the historic village of Woodbury to follow the Exe Estuary into Exmouth. With stunning views out over the Exe Estuary and the chance to get up close and watch a wide range of water birds it's a great year round route.

Start: Woodbury Castle Car Park (free)

End: Imperial Car Park behind Exmouth Railway Station

Distance: 7.5 miles/12 km

Estimated time: 3 hours 7 minutes

Difficulty: Category 3

Nearest postcode: EX5 1JJ **What Three Words:** ///diplomats.episodes.remotest

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: 213ft (65m)

Maximum gradient: 1 in 15 (6.7%) ascent for approx 90 metres; 1 in 7 (13.8%) descent for approx 80 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 village shop and several places to eat in Woodbury on the route and a range of shops and places to eat in Exmouth at the end.

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

A landscape of history

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.

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.

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.

Important wildlife

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.

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.

Directions:

1. Walk out through the entrance to the car park and TAKE CARE crossing the road to the car park opposite. Take the bridleway to the side of the car park. Where it divides after the metal barrier bear left downhill on a track.

- 2. Where the track divides keep right then bear left** and walk around a metal barrier. Follow the stony track down through the woods.
- 3. Continue straight on along a grassy track** and cross the stream.
- 4. Follow the bridleway out into fields** keeping alongside the hedge on the right.
- 5. Turn right through a gate** and along a grassy track to a road.
- 6. Go through the gate and turn left along Castle Lane** for a short distance.
- 7. Take the first right into Cottles Lane** and follow it down to a T-junction.
- 8. Turn left along Parsonage Way** which becomes Greenway. Follow it straight on through Woodbury, ignoring all side turns, to the pedestrian crossing.
- 9. TAKE CARE crossing Broadway.** After the pedestrian crossing turn right and then left into Gilbrook. Continue straight on along the pavement until it comes to an end.
- 10. TAKE CARE going over the road bridge.** Continue until the road begins to bear left then turn right along the footpath past Woodbury Car Breakers.
- 11. Follow the footpath past the car breakers** and alongside a stream on your left. When you come to the end of the tarmac keep left (straight on) along a grassy track.
- 12. Go through the gate into a field** and head straight on to a metal kissing gate.
- 13. Go through the gate and straight across** the quiet Rydon Lane onto a footpath over a footbridge.
- 14. After the footbridge follow the hedge** on the right across the field to a metal kissing gate.
- 15. Go through the gate and head diagonally** slightly right across the field to a gated footbridge.
- 16. Cross the bridge and continue alongside** the hedge on your right. Go through another metal kissing gate and continue beside the hedge on your right until you come to a footbridge on the right.
- 17. Cross the bridge and turn left.** Follow the footpath straight on through another kissing gate and across the next field to a kissing gate out onto Rydon Lane.
- 18. Go through the gate and turn left along the lane to a T-junction.**
- 19. Turn left along Mill Lane** and follow it to the crossroads.
- 20. TAKE CARE and use the pedestrian crossing** to cross the A376 into Station Road.
- 21. Follow Station Road around to the right** and then left and go past The Puffing Billy.

22. Just before the station entrance, turn left along the Exe Estuary Trail and follow it to Lympstone.

23. At the road junction, turn right and continue to follow the Exe Estuary Trail through the village.

24. Go past the benches overlooking the estuary and follow the road around to the left.

25. Just before the railway bridge, turn right through a narrow gap onto a footpath. This footpath can be very narrow in places.

If you would prefer a wider route continue under the railway bridge and turn right along the Exe Estuary Trail. The two routes eventually converge again.

26. Follow the footpath alongside the railway with stunning views out over the estuary. You will eventually go through a grassy area to a railway crossing.

27. TAKE CARE crossing the railway. Follow the footpath around to the right and continue along it until it joins the Exe Estuary Trail. Turn right along the Trail.

28. Turn right along Mudbank Lane and follow it around to the right over the bridge into Carter Avenue.

29. Shortly after the bridge turn right through a gap into a park and follow the tarmac path along the right side. After a short distance turn right on a footpath that goes up steps and crosses the railway.

For an alternative route avoiding the steps continue straight on along the Exe Estuary Trail and follow it to Exmouth Station. Continue past the station and shop to the Imperial Road Car Park and turn right to make your way to the end of the route.

30. Continue to follow the footpath around to the left and alongside the estuary. Pass through a wooden kissing gate and alongside the estuary wall to the end of the route on the edge of Imperial Road Car Park beyond Exmouth Station.

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