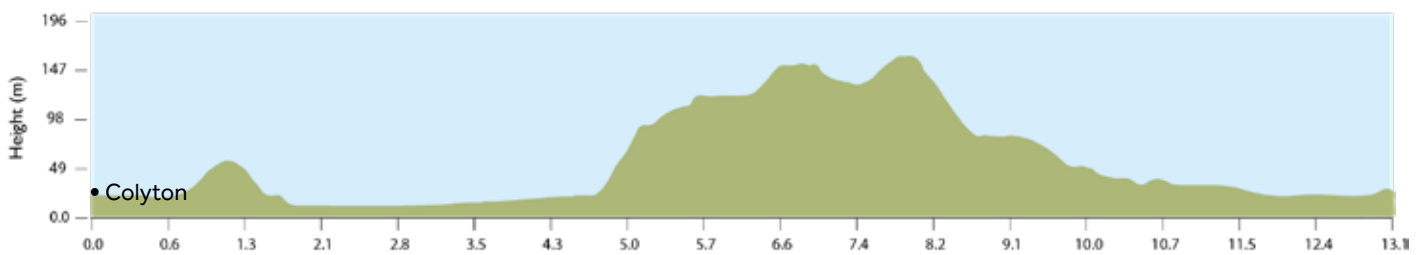


Difficulty: Moderate
Walking time: 4 hours 15 minutes
Length: 13.1km / 8.1mi



Distance 13.06 km Ascent 239m Descent 239m

Circular Route 11

Colyton, Shute Hill & Axe Valley Circular



Difficulty: Moderate

Walking time: 4 hours 15 minutes

Length: 13.1km / 8.1mi

Start location: Colyton

Route Summary: This 8 mile (13km) circular walk covers part of the Axe Valley and surrounding countryside with superb views of Musbury Castle hill fort and down the Axe estuary to the sea.

Description

[1] The walk starts from the pay and display car park in the centre of Colyton. Go straight across and through the Market Place. With St. Andrew's Church on your right, carry straight on along Vicarage Street. At the end turn right, cross Chantry Bridge and fork right, signposted to Umborne. Pass Road Green Farm and look for a footpath sign on the right (SY243945).

Head towards the midfield telegraph pole and walk diagonally across the field to the left hand corner. Cross the stile and walk along the right hand field edge. After passing through the next field turn right into a scrubby section that ends at a bridge over the Umborne Brook.

Go diagonally across the field over a stile and head for the bridge across the Umborne. The path runs in a northerly direction alongside the brook to another bridge over the Umborne and the Old Mill stream from nearby Lexhayne Mill.

The path cuts across a field, used as a caravan site in summer, and goes through a gap in the hedge and then turns left along the concrete track to Lexhayne Farm.

From the farm, turn right and in a north easterly direction.

Cross the field, another stile and to the concrete railway bridge at Seaton Junction. Turn right along the road and take the path to the left at the road bridge.

[2] Cross the stile (SY251964) and follow the hedge boundary north. The path becomes a track to Woodend Farm. The upper part of the track is a permissive path and can be very wet. Ignore the 1st stile to the right, but at the 2nd turn left across to a pedestrian gate and walk down the fenced section. At the bottom go through the gateway and follow the hedge around as it turns to the north east and head for the field gate.

Turn left along the surfaced road and right when you reach Shute Road. Walk up to the crossroads and begin the climb up Ashes Road which will lead you in a north easterly direction up to Shute Hill. The first part of the lane is surfaced but once past the last house it becomes amber coloured chert, rough in places. Carry on up the hill over the brow and down the other side looking for a footpath sign on your right a few hundred yards before Shute Road.

As you enter Shute the Gatehouse on your right is dressed with local Beer stone and dates from the 16th century. The graffiti around the entrance reveals the true antiquity of this building. Along the drive is Old Shute House or Shute Barton most of which was tragically dismantled in 1785 to provide stone for Shute House. It caused a great surge of disapproval, especially as a field of ripening corn was also destroyed to make room for it. A curse was therefore inevitable that there would be no issue to inherit. And so it was. The part that survives is tenanted National Trust property. St. Michael's Church goes back further, to 1205 and exhibits a variety of architectural styles. Built of robust dressed flint, the iron sanctuary ring and the statue of Sir William Pole are two of the more curious features to be seen.

[3] Head south over a stile into part of the plantation. The track follows parallel to the road but a path to the left leads to Kilmington with its Roman road.



As the track starts to drop down to the road turn sharp right and head up hill to a Tee junction, turn sharp left and look for a permissive signpost on the right. Walk along the permissive path to the Beacon.

Retrace your steps back down the hill to the road and turn right, south west, to the junction at Haddon Corner (SY260973).

At the Beacon there are good views of the Axe Valley with Axminster to the north east and Seaton, and the sea, to the south. The Armada Beacon (SY258974) is one of the few remaining buildings of its type, it has recently been restored. A network of beacons once provided a basic but effective national communication system – more information appears on the interpretation board below the Beacon.

[4] Turn half left and follow the road signposted to Hampton. Turn right at a tee junction and pass through the hamlet. After Lower Hampton Farm turn left in front of a large farm building, cross the grass lay by, and go down Woodhayne Lane, an unclassified county road. Take care as the lane is rough and wet underfoot. Pass Woodhayne Farm and at the road junction turn left then right down a signposted farm track (SY268964) and under the main railway line.

Look for the large wooden bridge to the south and head diagonally across the field towards it. (A route close to the river will miss the ponds in the middle of the field). After crossing the bridge turn right and look for a small gate in the hedge on the left. Cross the narrow footbridge go through another field and continue on until the track exits onto Maidenhayne Lane. Turn right and walk along the road to Whitford Road cross roads.

Cross the road and follow Waterford Lane to the end where you enter a field by the gate on the right.

Where Waterford Lane turns sharp right you can go straight on, following the East Devon Way waymarks to Musbury, the Iron Age hill fort and refreshments.

[5] Open the gate and look for Nunford Bridge (SY262947). Cross the bridge and walk across the field with the river on your right and Rawling's Hole to the north and Nunford Hole to the south. Look for a stile in the hedge and Nunford Lane.

The East Devon Way turns left over a stile but Nunford Lane carries straight on past Nunford Dairy and to Kingsdon Hill. The lane leads to the tram terminal at the old Colyton Railway Station. Follow the road between the piers of the old bridge then turn right and left to cross the bridge over the Coly River and Umborne Brook. Carry on the road until you reach the Market Square and the car park.

The trams of the Seaton and District Electric Tramway run to Seaton throughout the year. The station has a shop and café and are worth a visit.

A Saxon church occupied the site of St Andrew's church until replaced by the present Norman church in the 11th century. The 14th century octagonal lantern tower is said to have been used as a beacon for ships on the once navigable River Axe, to the east, although there is doubt that the tower may be seen at all from the river.

Map: OS Explorer 116 Lyme Regis and Bridport

Route developer: James Baldwin

Route checker: Ted Swan