



Walk - Lynton and the Valley of Rocks

Difficulty

◆ Easy - The Coast Path from Lynton to the famous Valley of Rocks is relatively level and has been surfaced with tarmac to make it easier for everyone to use. Whilst the path description is based on starting on Lynton, the walk can be shortened by starting in one of the car parks in the Valley of Rocks, and just doing the loop. It is likely to be suitable for people with impaired mobility or with a pushchair, although due to the lack of passing places it is not recommended for wheelchair use. To check that this walk is suitable for you click [here](#) where you can find additional mapping and photographs showing gradients, path surfaces, and other detailed information.

Start

Lynton Cliff Railway Station - EX35 6HU

Finish

Lynton Cliff Railway Station

Length

2.9 miles (4.7 km)

Summary

A classic easy walk along a relatively level section of high cliffs between Lynton and the spectacular Valley of Rocks. Children will love the stories associated with the spectacular rock formations, and the herd of friendly feral goats. A good walk in autumn, when the crisp rust-coloured bracken of the heathland is punctuated with banks of purple heather and vivid gorse.

It is also a good walk for dogs. Have a look at our [Top Dog Walks on the South West Coast Path \(/top-dog/\)](#) for more dog friendly walks.

Public Transport

There are regular bus services to and from Lynton from Minehead, Porlock, Combe Martin, Ilfracombe, Woolacombe and Barnstaple. For timetable information, zoom in on the interactive map and click on the bus stops, visit [Traveline](#) (<http://www.travelinesw.com/>) or phone 0871 200 22 33.

There are no bus services from Minehead or Porlock - local taxis can be used.

Nearest toilets

Lynton & Valley of Rocks.

Nearest refreshments

In Lynton there are shops, pubs and cafés, and there is also a café in the Valley of Rocks.



Route Description

The walk starts at the Lynton station of the cliff railway, which is the easiest way to climb up the 500 feet (140 metres) ascent from Lynmouth. Built between 1887 and 1890, with most of the rock being cut by hand, this is one of several cliff railways built around England by local entrepreneur George Newnes (see the [Hollerday Hill Walk \(/walksdb/253/\)](/walksdb/253/)). This railway is unique, however, being wholly water-powered and so carbon neutral (see the [Valley of Rocks Woodland Walk \(/walksdb/256/\)](/walksdb/256/)).

1 *From the lift station follow the track out to Lynton's main street, and then turn left to descend to the church.*

Although the tower of the St Mary the Virgin Church dates from the 13th Century, most of the rest of the building is Victorian. According to local legend, the church was first sited opposite Cherrybridge on the Barnstaple road; but disapproving pixies spirited the materials away every night, until the exasperated builders finally gave in and built it here instead.

2 *At the church turn left down North Walk Hill. At the bottom of the hill, you cross a bridge over the cliff railway and join the South West Coast Path, which follows North Walk to the Valley of Rocks.*

The bridge affords good views over Lynmouth and along the coast to the lighthouse at the end of Foreland Point. The construction just offshore in the bay below, resembling a small oil platform, was the world's first open-sea tidal turbine, generating electricity using the powerful tidal currents of the Bristol Channel. It provided 25% more power than anticipated, and led to the construction of a very successful commercial turbine in Northern Ireland (see the [Foreland Point Walk \(/walksdb/235/\)](/walksdb/235/)).

3 *Continuing along North Walk the road turns into a path. Please close the wooden gate behind you, to keep the feral goats from wandering into the town.*

The eleventh century Domesday Book recorded 75 goats in the Manor of Lynton, and a herd of feral goats roamed the valley until the mid-nineteenth century. Their habit of killing the more valuable sheep by butting them off the cliffs made them unpopular with local farmers, however, and they were culled. Later it was recognised that the goats provided a valuable service by keeping the vegetation and scrub under control, and at the start of the twentieth century, a replacement herd of white goats was brought in, although by the mid-1960s the whole herd had perished. The current herd was introduced in 1976 from the Cheviot Hills in Northumberland. Not only are these goats hardy enough to survive the exposed conditions on this part of the coastline, their numbers have increased dramatically since then, reaching over 100 at one time. It was agreed that the valley could only support around 25 in any twelve-month period, and there are periodic culls to maintain the herd at that size.

4 *After about half a mile, the craggy tor of Rugged Jack appears on the left.*

Another local legend claims that some Druids were having a riotous time here on a Sunday, dancing and making merry. Suddenly the Devil appeared amongst them and turned them all to stone.

Continuing onwards, the towering mass of Castle Rock comes into view, and soon you enter the Valley of Rocks and the end of the tarmac path.

It is thought that the dry valley was originally created by the River Lyn flowing through it, before it changed its course to flow down to Lynmouth. Some geologists believe that the coastline was eroded to a bend in the river, which created

a cliff waterfall that continued to erode directly inland. Others suggest that during the Ice Age an ice dam across the mouth of the Lyn diverted the river through the Valley of Rocks.

As you join the road from the footpath, look out for the White Lady whose shape appears in the cracks between the boulders making up Castle Rock, now on your left. On the opposite side of the valley to Castle Rock is the 'Devil's Cheese Ring', home of the White Lady herself, white witch Mother Meldrum in R D Blackmore's novel, Lorna Doone (see the [Lorna Doone Walk \(/walksdb/240/\)](/walksdb/240/)). According to the novel:

"This valley, or 'goyal' as we term it, being small for a valley, lies to the east of Linton, about a mile from the town, perhaps, and away towards Ley Manor. Our home folk always call it the 'Danes' or the 'Denes,' which is no more they tell me than a hollow place, even as the word 'den' is. However, let that pass, for I know very little about it; but the place itself is a pretty one, though nothing to frighten anybody unless he hath lived in a gally-pot. It is a green, rough-sided hollow, bending at the middle, touched with stone at either crest, and dotted here and there with slabs in and out the brambles. On the right hand is an upward crag, called by some the 'Castle,' easy enough to scale, and giving great view of the Channel. Facing this from the inland side and the elbow of the valley, a queer old pile of rocks arises, bold behind one another, and quite enough to affright a man, if it were only ten times larger. This is called the 'Devil's Cheese Ring,' or the 'Devil's Cheese Knife,' which means the same thing, as our fathers were used to eat their cheese from a scoop; and perhaps in old time the upmost rock (which has fallen away since I knew it) was like such an implement, if Satan eat cheese untoasted."

Ley Manor, mentioned here by Blackmore, was a Domesday manor sited a little way to the north of Lee Abbey (see the [Crock Point Walk \(/walksdb/244/\)](/walksdb/244/)).

- 5** *To return to Lynton, turn left to walk up the road, passing a couple of car parks, a café, public toilets and a picnic area. After going past what must be one of the prettiest locations for a cricket ground anywhere, a tarmac path leads off on the left, signed Lynton and Lynmouth via North Walk.*
- 6** *If you follow this path it will take you through a small 'pass' between Chimney Rock and Rugged Jack and onto the Coast Path whereupon you can retrace your steps back to Lynton. Alternatively, for a shorter, but less scenic walk, continue following the road which leads directly back to Lynton.*

Nearby refreshments

In Lynton there are shops, pubs and cafés, and there is also a café in the Valley of Rocks.

If you spot any problems or changes to this walk please email the details to hello@southwestcoastpath.org.uk so we can get it fixed for those that follow in your footsteps.



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