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Exmoor explorer



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Route name: Exmoor explorer
Start/finish: Porlock village central car park (off the B3225 road to Porlock Weir). Nearest train station is Minehead (11km/7 miles away), the end

of a seasonal heritage line that starts at Bishop's Lydeard (9.5km/6 miles from Taunton)
Ride length: 36.4km **Climbing:** 1,300m **Bike type:** This is mountain bike territory – ideally a full-suspension model. Electric assistance is helpful, too **Ride level:** Best for experienced off-road riders. Due to the steep hills, a high level of fitness (or an e-bike) is recommended
GPX file: [cyclinguk.org/weekender-exmoor-explorer](https://www.cyclinguk.org/weekender-exmoor-explorer)

Summary

A hilly route with some steep, challenging trails. The hills make this physically demanding too, but it can easily be split into two rides.

01 Porlock village
This small village provides plenty of facilities for visitors, with nice venues to eat and drink, ranging from friendly pubs, such as the Ship Inn, to artisan cafés and a quirky delicatessen (The Big Cheese). It even has a campsite in the village itself. There is no bike shop, however, so come prepared. The main car park and village can be very busy at peak times, but Horner village makes a great alternative start location, with a large car park, toilets, a farm shop and a nice tea shop.

02 Horner Wood
This is the largest area of ancient oak woodland in Britain. We

descend its steep-sided valleys to cross Horner Water. The protected National Nature Reserve, owned by the National Trust, is home to a variety of wildlife and plant life, including 15 of the UK's 17 species of bat, many interesting and rare birds, and more than 330 types of lichen.

03 Dunkery Beacon
This is the highest natural point in Somerset (519m). It provides great views across the moors and over the Severn Estuary to Wales. The cairn at the top of this hill has been visited by humans since the Bronze Age and contains several burial mounds. It's exposed up here so be prepared. After you've enjoyed the view, there is a great descent waiting for you.

04 Hawkcombe Woods
A lovely woodland of Special Scientific Interest. It's just over 100 hectares in area,

and it's home to important and rare flora and fauna. Take note that the route crosses over itself here. Make sure not to ride up Shillet Wood Combe, as that is definitely best enjoyed with gravity on your side. Be aware that, at the very end near Porlock, the trail forks: left is a very rocky track down to Porlock; right takes you to Hawkcombe for an easier and less technical end to the day.

05 Porlock Weir (and beach)
This pebble beach may not be ideal for sunbathing but the coastline is dramatic where the steep wooded hillside plunges down to the sea. Bridleway access to the beach makes it a good place to cycle out to, so you can enjoy a cooling plunge at the end of the ride and then admire the lovely little harbour. This has a good café and a pub, as well as a venue selling fresh local oysters.