Exmoor Walk

EXMOOR Character Cottages

Horner Wood
Circular walk 3 miles

All photographs by Julia Amies-Green

Owned by the National Trust, Horner Wood's ancient oak trees, lichen and wildlife including 15 of the UK's 17 species of bat-have secured its status as a National Nature Reserve. There are over 330 different types of lichen here, including rare pollution-sensitive species such as Lobaria Pulmonaria. You'll find them clinging to wood, rock and brick. The moist atmosphere here means the wood is widely considered a temperate rainforest. It's a truly lovely area for a walk at any time of the year.

Some of this three mile walk is steep and rocky, and you share part the route with a bridleway too, so watch out for other road users. The odd names of the paths we recommend you follow originate from the Victorian Acland family. 'Cat's Scramble' is named after Lady Acland's pony named Cat, 'Flora's Ride' after Flora Acland, and 'Cabinet Walk' (beyond this walk), because Arthur Acland had a seat in cabinet. But no one knows where 'Granny's Ride' originates.

The Walk 3 miles 1.5 hours

Directions: Take the A39 from Minehead towards Porlock. It's approx. 5 miles to the turning on your left for West Luccombe. Follow this minor road to the pay and display car park. NT members park free.
Sat Nav: TA24 8HY

Exit the car park at the path by the noticeboard and turn left past the row of cottages to the medieval packhorse bridge ahead of you. Follow the signs that say 'Permitted Path' which takes you to 'Granny's Ride'.

This track takes you up past Rey Combe and Yeals Combe into Horner Wood.

Continue onto 'Granny's Ride'. This joins the bridleway 'Flora's Ride' at Yeals Ridge and turns to the right.

When you reach a crossroads turn left onto Lord Ebrington's Path and you're back on the footpath. It runs parallel to Horner Water, up to Horner Side.

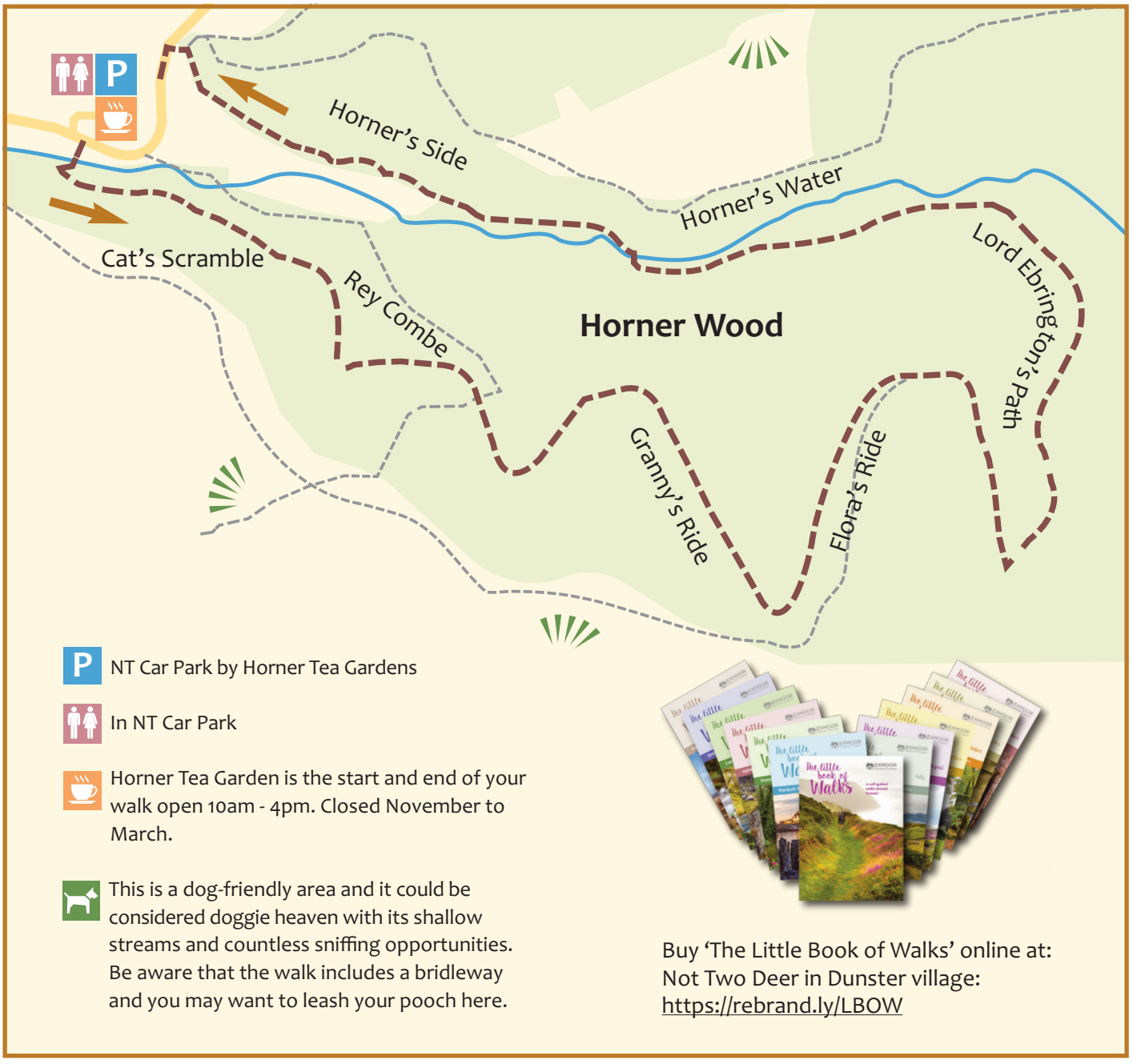
Some of this path is steep. When the pathway splits at a small bridge, keep left, pass the scout camp to your right and continue back to the Horner Tea Garden.

Exmoor Red Deer

Exmoor has 3000 or so Red Deer, the largest surviving land mammals in Britain. The deer here are very much forest animals, and they can easily navigate between woodlands, farmland and open moorland. Watching them jump over fences and streams in a herd is magical. Like most wild animals, deer don't like people or dogs. Your best chance of seeing them is to start early or come at dusk. Better still, book one of the National Trust Ranger experiences or a 4x4 safari.

Packhorse Bridges

There are several of these bridges mentioned in our 12 Exmoor walks. As the name suggests, they were built to carry horses bearing loads in sidebags across rivers and streams. They can usually be found on a traderoute, for instance to a market town. The sides are built low to avoid hitting the sidebags and damaging the cargo. You might want to take a detour from the A39 to on the way to or from this walk to view Allerford's beautiful packhorse bridge, river and ford. You'll also see two other examples in Dunster's 'Gallox' bridge and in Winsford village.



EXMOOR Character Cottages

Lucy Green, owner of Exmoor Character Cottages, researched this and 11 other walks, and her friend and talented photographer Julia Amies-Green supplied all the images. The routes are designed to suit all abilities, from short and easy to longer and more challenging. Most are dog friendly, but please always be ready to leash your dogs and close gates – and follow additional requests from farmers where you see them. Our maps are for guidance, and for more detailed maps we recommend the 1;12,500 versions sold in the Exmoor National Park Centres. Collectively the walks are published in 'The Little Book of Walks' which was created in response to requests from guests at our four luxury holiday cottages in Dunster and Minehead. You can find out more about the Book and holiday cottages here:
www.exmoorcharactercottages.co.uk