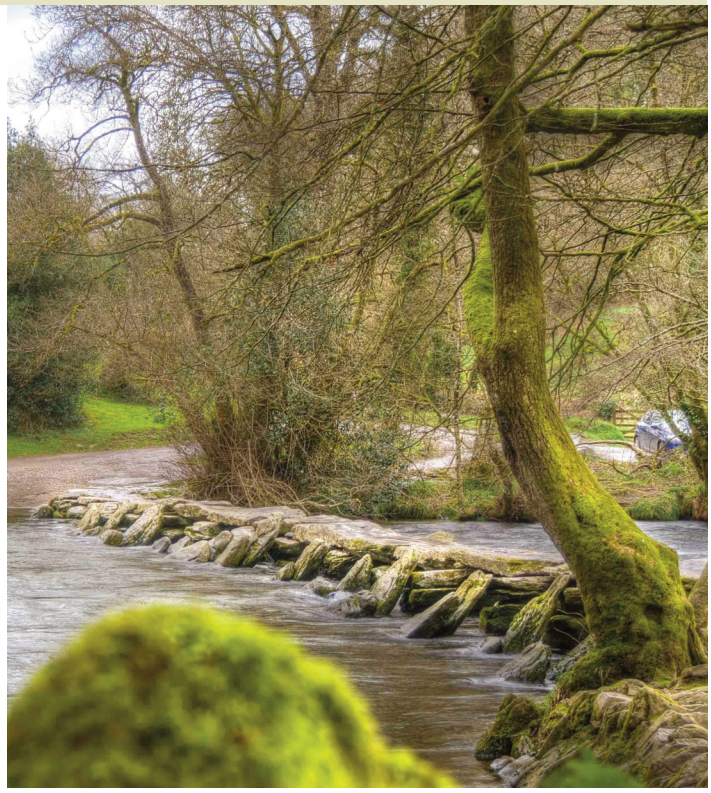
Exmoor Walk

EXMOOR Character Cottages

Tarr Steps
Circular walk 1.5 miles



All photographs by Julia Amies-Green

Cross the ancient stepping stones at Tarr Steps
4000 years old and the longest clapper bridge in Britain

This ancient drystone 'clapper' (from the Anglo-Saxon word 'cleaca') bridge that crosses the River Barle is the biggest and best example of Britain's most primitive type of bridge. It is held together by the sheer weight of its 40 gritstone capping stones, edged either side with giant megalithic ends, each weighing two tonnes. According to local legend, Satan built the bridge to sunbathe – and we know he likes it hot!!!

It's a great place for bird watching as the dense woods protect dippers, grey wagtails and pied flycatchers who swoop in and out of the dappled sunshine, hidden from buzzards and other predators. You might also see other wildlife - from dormice, otters and bats to red deer – and lots of butterflies. Whatever you spot, enjoy the densely packed sessile oak, birch, ash, hazel and elm trees, and the bright green lichens that adorn them.

The Walk 1.5 miles 1 hour

Directions: Ignore the sat nav and approach from the Winsford Hill side, between Exford and Dulverton on the B3223. **Sat Nav: TA22 9PY**

Follow the signs from the Car Park for the Scenic Walk, and cross the Tarr Steps, turning upstream where you see the sign for 'North Barton Wood'.

Walk for approx. ¾ mile alongside the wide riverbank, then cross the side stream where you see the mini Tarr Steps. Then cross the long footbridge over the River Barle at Westwater Copse.

Now head back down the river on the other side. Cross the footbridge at Knaplock Wood and continue to the Money Tree.

Continue on this path all the way back to the Tarr Steps and the Car Park. There is a small parking area closer to the Tarr Steps for disabled badge holders. Follow the signs from the main Car Park.

The money tree

You'll come across this on your walk, and as Julia's picture shows, it's a fallen tree trunk stuffed with coins. Nobody really knows when this custom started, but as you will see, some of the coins are really old.

How old are the Tarr Steps?

It's probably not as old as you think. It's estimated that the steps were laid between 1400 and 1600, although the earliest written mention of them was in 1644 during the English Civil War.

Dulverton

The pretty town of Dulverton is close to the Tarr Steps and well worth a visit. It boasts some lovely gift shops and boutiques, an art gallery, a gun and fishing shop as well as Woods pub and restaurant, a tea shop and great delicatessen.

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