



Stage 8: Lydford to Tavistock

Start	SX 5099 8478 Village car park, Lydford
Finish	SX 4825 7430 St John's Avenue on Whitchurch Road (Abbey Bridge), Tavistock
Distance	12.75 miles / 20.5 km
Total ascent	1,594 ft / 486 m
Refreshments	Lydford, Mary Tavy, Peter Tavy, Tavistock
Public toilets	Lydford, Tavistock
Tourist information	Tavistock

Please refer also to the [Stage 8 map](#).

S Facing the Castle Inn, turn left to pass Lydford castle (gaol) and St Petroc's Church, then head downhill to cross the River Lyd on a high bridge (note that part of this stage - to Mary Tavy - is shared with the West Devon Way). Look over the bridge into the narrow chasm below: it's impressive. Ascend past the Devil's Cauldron (upper) entrance to the National Trust's Lydford Gorge property.

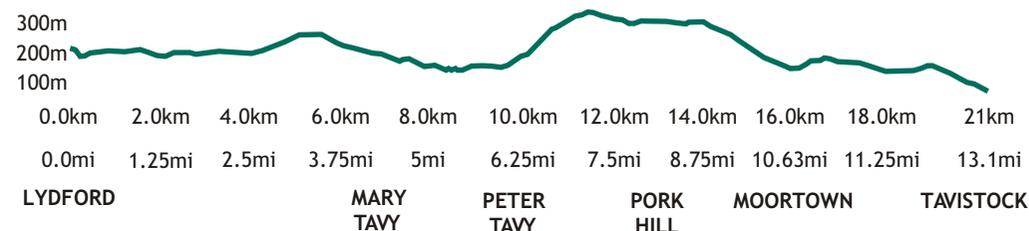
NT members can divert here and walk along the upper reaches of the gorge to emerge onto the road again via the lower Waterfall entrance, turning left to re-join the main route.

Now in the hands of the National Trust, Lydford Gorge is worth a visit. The River Lyd has carved a 1½-mile (2.4km) long gorge via a series of waterfalls and pools, which can be viewed from walkways through the beautiful woods. There is also a café on site.

The lane passes under the old Okehampton-Tavistock railway line, and bears right, then goes over the railway. Cross a tributary of the Lyd, then ascend past a sign for Lydford Gorge's upper entrance.

1 Just before the lane bears right turn left on a broad track under trees (the [Lydford Gorge option re-joins the main route here](#)). Cross the railway again; the open expanse of Black Down comes into view ahead. Reach a turning area and bear left through a gate. Turn right alongside a fence, heading towards Gibbet Hill.

Elevation Profile



The path bears away from the fence then picks up a track along the grassy lower slopes of Gibbet Hill; the church of St Michael de Rupe on Brentor comes into view ahead. Pass a hedgebanked field with a house below right and follow the broad grassy way on to meet a track by a DW sign. Look back for lovely views towards Great Links Tor. Keep straight on, eventually reaching a lane on a bend by a parking area. Follow the lane straight on along the lower edge of the common.

2 Where a rough track drops away right (private) towards buildings at West Blackdown, and just before a telegraph pole, bear left on a broad grassy way that rounds the western slopes of Gibbet Hill, ascending gently, with lovely views of Brentor and North Brentor village. Stay on the main path all the time, rounding the hill then bearing right downhill to meet Brentor Road on the edge of Mary Tavy. Cross over the cattle grid, and follow the road as it winds past houses to meet the A386.



Cross over (take care) and turn right along the pavement.

Brentor from Blackdown

Mary Tavy Victory Memorial Recreation ground, opposite the PO & Stores and purchased by the village in 1946, is a great spot for a picnic.

3 Opposite Mary Tavy PO & Stores turn left on a bridlepath that passes the Coronation Hall, then narrows and descends through woodland. Bear sharp left to meet another bridlepath; turn right downhill to reach a lane.

Turn right; the lane descends to cross the Cholwell Brook then ascends through 'old' Mary Tavy, passing a lane to Horndon on the brow of the hill. Pass the school and descend into the Tavy valley. As the lane bears sharp right to cross the brook turn left on a dead-end lane that passes St Mary's Church. The lane ends by the entrance to the Mary Tavy HEP station.



'Old'
Mary Tavy

POOR VISIBILITY OPTION **a**

In times of poor visibility or if anxious about your route-finding abilities over moorland bear right here on a footpath over a stile by an iron gate, descending to cross the Cholwell Brook. Ignore a path heading off right and ascend to cross a stile into a field, then follow the right hedge. As the ground levels the pinnacles of Peter Tavy church, and Smeardon Down, come into view, with Cox Tor beyond. Pass through a gate; follow the right edge of the next field, descending gently through a gap in an old wall. Cut a field corner then follow the hedgebank to find a tall ladder stile in the corner. Continue along the right edge of the next field, with views across the Tavy valley. Pass through a gate at field end then follow the left hedge, keeping ahead where the ground drops away steeply towards the river. Descend gently between banks of bracken and gorse to pass a path sign then head across the next field. Cross a ladder stile; cross the next field, keeping right of a short stretch of bank, then through a bank gap. Bear left, heading for a gate, then follow the track to meet the lane near Harford Bridge.

Turn right; just before reaching the A386 turn left on Cycle Route 27, which passes under the A-road then parallels it. A short stretch along the pavement is followed by a steady ascent right up a lane towards Wilminstone. Pass under the old railway bridge; take the next lane left (Old Exeter Road), soon passing back under the railway. Where the lane starts to descend towards houses follow the cycle route right through light woodland. Emerge from the trees to cross a viaduct; pass under a bridge to meet a lane, Turn left (Old Exeter Road again), soon descending past houses on the edge of Tavistock.

Where the road ahead narrows under a bridge turn left (Route 270) through Kilworthy Park, passing council offices and the old Tavistock North railway station (to see Tavistock from the viaduct follow a signed path by the station). Head downhill to reach Drake Road; turn left, descending under the railway viaduct, to reach the edge of Bedford Square. Cross Duke Street, pass the Town Hall and the Guildhall, then turn right over the pedestrian crossing. Turn left over Abbey Bridge then right for a few paces to find St John's Avenue and the end of the stage.



St Peter's church, Peter Tavy

Keep ahead on the bridlepath, descending to the very pretty River Tavy (a good spot for a break). Cross the river on a high double-railed footbridge; turn right on the other side, soon heading along the top edge of a meadow. Pass through a gate then continue between hedgebanks. Reach a T-junction; turn left to reach the lane end by the Peter Tavy Inn. Follow the lane ahead, passing to the right of St Peter's Church with its beautiful pinnacled tower.

Note the parish playing fields with picnic tables to the right of the lane.

At the lane junction turn right through the village.

4 At the next junction turn left, almost immediately bearing left again (just before the village hall). Pass the Methodist Chapel; the path narrows then ducks under trees alongside the Colly Brook. Reach a lane and turn left across the brook, then ascend steeply. Pass a terrace of cottages; at lane end keep ahead between hedgebanks, soon passing through a gate to reach a path crossroads in woodland.

Turn right ('the moor via the Coombe') on a narrow path that crosses the Colly Brook via a wooden double-railed footbridge. It's an idyllic spot - and there's a handy bench too! The path heads steeply uphill; within a few paces, past a telegraph pole, bear right and continue to ascend alongside a wall. Make sure to stop and look back for glorious views to Brentor and the path over Gibbet Hill, with Smeardon Down right. Keep heading uphill towards Great Combe Tor. On reaching its lower reaches follow the path left; once past the rocky outcrops bear right uphill, bearing right again alongside a wall to arrive at the top of the tor. The farm that comes into view below is Lower Godsworthy, with White Tor rising above.

Bear left up a broad grassy corridor between granite-faced hedgebanks, now heading towards the huge swell of Cox Tor. There are fabulous views west towards Kit Hill and Bodmin Moor.



*On
Great Combe
Tor*

Pass through a gate onto common land. Bear left as signed along the lower edge, paralleling the hedgebank. Keep heading uphill, cutting wall corners. Eventually meet the wall and follow it for a few paces to meet a track at a path junction. Turn left, signed to the moor, still paralleling the wall and heading gently uphill towards Cox Tor. At the top of the enclosed land pass through a gate onto the open common and reach a lane.

5 Turn right; the lane heads due south-southwest along the western slopes of Cox Tor. Look right for views towards Tavistock, and Bodmin Moor beyond.

6 Look out for a post to the left of the lane and bear left on a footpath that heads south-southeast across bracken-studded grassland.

7 Eventually the B3357 on Pork Hill can be seen ahead, and the path reaches a patch of rough ground. Look right to spot the cattle grid fences on the edge of the moor, and turn right to meet the road.

Cross over; walk straight ahead along the western slopes of Barn Hill. The path descends to meet a wall corner on the right, then follows the edge of enclosed land at Moortown Farm. On meeting another wall corner follow the path sharp right, soon crossing a little gully. Soon bear right downhill; where a lane comes into view ahead, and farm buildings appear over a gate right, turn left on a broad path. Within a few paces, immediately past a solitary hawthorn, turn right on a narrow path that descends to meet the lane by a telegraph pole.

Cross over and follow the lane ahead, downhill. Pass Langstone Manor, then ascend steadily, passing a lane junction.

8 At the next junction turn left, heading for Whitchurch Down and Sampford Spiney to reach a staggered crossroads (Warren's Cross).

[The High Moor Link joins from the left here.](#)

9 Turn right, signed Whitchurch Down. Follow the road across the Down, which is shared with the golf course; it's easy to walk alongside the road on the close-cropped turf. The Pimple, our next port of call, comes into view ahead on the highest point of the Down. At the next staggered five-lane junction (Caseytown Cross) bear left towards Holwell and Whitchurch. Soon the Down spreads onto the left side of the road too; look out for a Millennium Stone to the right of the road, marking the Tavistock town boundary, just before a parking area.

10 As the road bears away left and heads towards Whitchurch bear right, passing a low bench. Take the middle of three broad grassy paths, heading steadily uphill and passing between stands of gorses on the upper slopes, to reach The Pimple (designed by the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens of Castle Drogo fame).



The Pimple, Whitchurch Down, near Tavistock

Continue in the same direction downhill, heading for a wall corner (right). Follow the wall down to find a kissing gate onto a tarmac path. At the road turn left downhill through a residential area.

11 Where the road bears very slightly left (look for a Dartmoor Way sign on a telegraph pole) cross the road and head down a broad tarmac way to reach Deer Park Lane; continue downhill to meet Whitchurch Road. Cross over; turn right to find St John's Avenue on the left (just before the roundabout and Abbey Bridge). **F**



Bedford Square, Tavistock

The flourishing market town of **Tavistock** is steeped in history. The 10th-century Benedictine Abbey was sacked by the Vikings; little remains today of the second abbey, granted a charter in 1105. It had a flourishing woollen industry and in 1395 became a stannary town. At the Dissolution the first Earl Bedford took over, and his descendant - the Seventh Duke - created the impressive range of 19th-century buildings in the town centre. The Bedfords owned Devon Great Consuls Mine in the Tamar Valley, the most productive source of copper in the world in the 1850s. The Tavistock Canal was constructed early in the 19th century to link the town with Morwellham Quay on the River Tamar, a bustling port.

Since 2006 Tavistock has justifiably been proud of its designation as gateway to the UNESCO Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. The town is also the western end of the Abbots Way. The town's brilliant Pannier Market dates back over 900 years, and you'll find everything you need here or in the excellent range of independent shops.



Market Street, Tavistock