



CORNWOOD INN

A Dartmoor freehouse with a warm welcome for all

Walk 8 - 14.3 miles: Exploring The Erme Valley

Moorland walk along the river Erme to its source, taking in Bronze age settlements, burial cairn and enclosures including Erme Pound plus Europe's longest stone row. Should only be attempted in good weather and with OS map / app and compass.

Walks are undertaken at your own risk. **Please follow the countryside code and leave no trace. It is the responsibility of the walker not to trespass, cause damage or upset livestock.** Remember, that livestock are kept in the open fields and open moor so dogs should be kept on leads. Some pathways can be muddy and therefore, suitable footwear should be worn. But don't worry if you do get muddy shoes/boots, muddy boots are still welcome in the Cornwood Inn.... and it will clean off! We recommend you carry OS Explorer map 28 (Dartmoor) or have the OS app on your phone if venturing off the roads and onto the moor.

General Information

This is a long moorland walk following the river Erme almost to its source. Sturdy boots are recommended. Return is via the outward route, so the walk can be cut short at any stage. The underfoot conditions can be wet and rough in places.

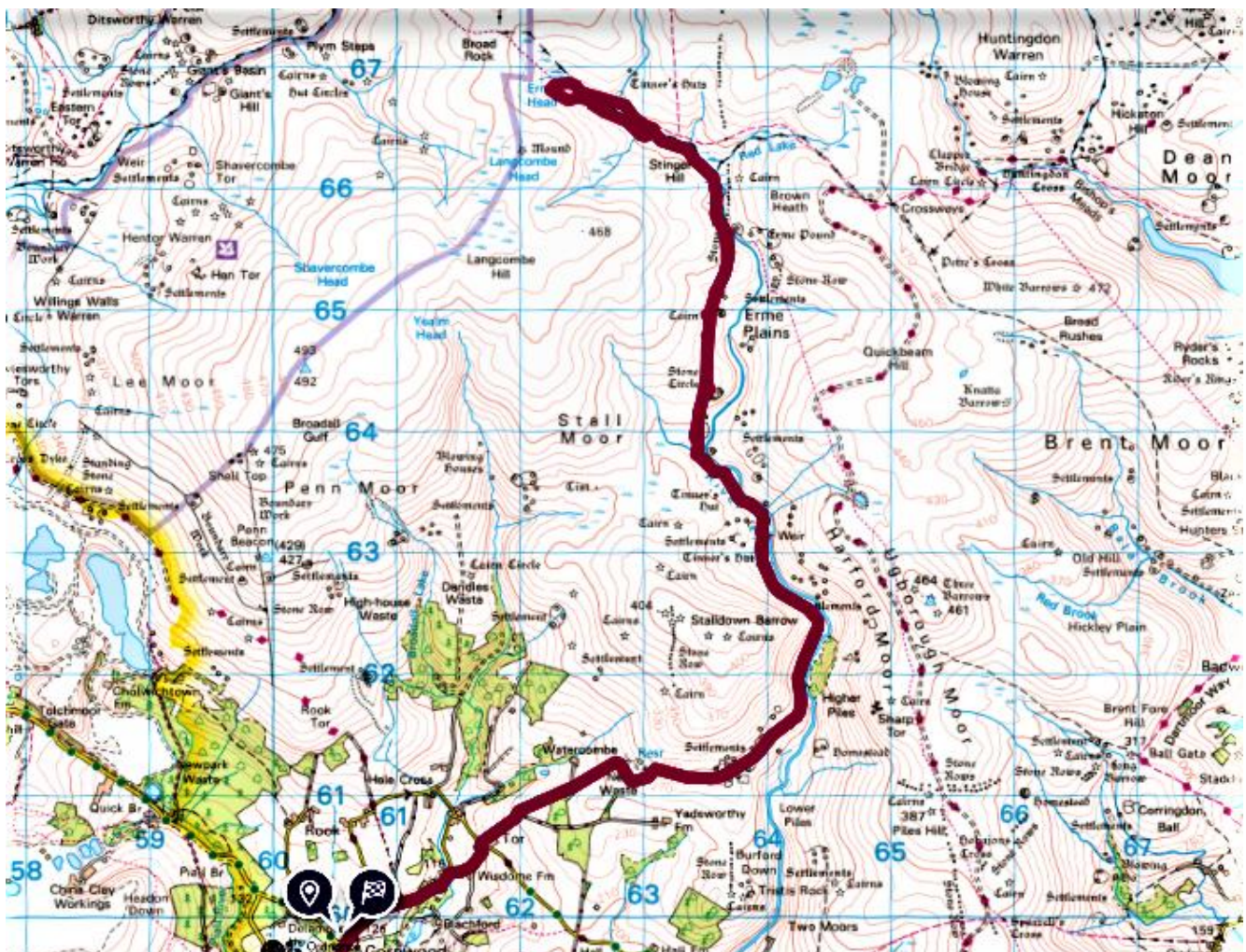
Length: 14.3 miles / 23km

Ascent: 2000ft / 610m

Grade: Good level of fitness required.

Approximate Duration: 5hrs 30mins

QR code to the map on [explore.OSmaps.com](https://www.explore.osmaps.com)





Walk Description

Parking is no longer possible beyond the New Waste moor gate (GR625611), so park in Cornwood village and take the Harford road from the village square, continue past Wisdome Bridge (also referred to locally as Vicarage Bridge) and follow the lanes to the New Waste moor gate at GR625611. The walk can be shortened if a friendly taxi driver can drop you off at New Waste moor gate! From the moor gate follow the concrete track uphill to the Public Footpath sign immediately before the water works. Follow it right around but outside the waterworks perimeter. After crossing a small stream on a clapper-style bridge go leftwards to a stile over the field wall and onto the open moorland. Go directly uphill until the gravel waterworks track is met then follow the track eastwards. In about 0.5km, the field wall on the right curves away from the track.

Note: Just before the wall curves away you can see banked earth against the field side of the wall and a ditch on the moor side, this is typical of a "corn-ditch wall" – it creates a barrier to animals trying get off the moor into fields that contain crops and allows any animals that get into the arable field system to easily escape.

There are fine examples of small Bronze Age enclosures and hut circles just above the track hereabouts, so it is worth deviating from the track and walking just above it. The larger circular enclosure walls and the smaller hut circle walls can be easily made out. One of the first huts displays the double wall construction with rubble / earth infill, an internal dividing wall and a south facing entrance. The track cuts right through a fairly extensive Bronze Age settlement area. The huts and enclosures below the track are in poorer condition. There are in the region of 40 or so hut circles, probably occupied somewhere between 2000BC and 800BC but it is not known if occupation was continuous or known how many huts were occupied at any one time.



Follow the track round into the Erme valley and continue up the valley, past the ancient woodland of Piles Copse on the opposite side of the valley. Once past Piles Copse the track bears left but still follows the valley. Continue along the track until a stream is reached at GR639629.

Note: In the main valley bottom around this point there is much evidence of tin streaming in the form of tinner's mounds. Tin was found as alluvial deposits in valley bottoms along old (and existing) river courses. The valley bottom was effectively turned over and the distinctive spoil mounds created. The mounds often show one face which appears deliberately faced like a small stone wall. Water channels were used to help wash out the tin grains. Tin streaming has probably taken place off and on since the Bronze Age right up to the 1800's, but the peak output years for streamed Dartmoor tin were between 1500 and 1550.

Close to the stream bed, on its right hand side and a few metres up from the track lies Downing's House which is worth a look. This is of beehive construction and was probably used by the tin streamers as a cache to store tools overnight. Continue following the gravel track, past the small weir (waterworks intake) and the out-of-place looking small hut associated with the weir. Beyond the hut the track ends so follow any reasonable path you can find. Pass an old quarry on the left (perhaps the source of the stone used to build the weir – although most of the weir seems to be constructed with concrete blocks) and then make your way through the tin streaming mounds. The remains of a blowing house (tin mill) can be found on the left at the



base of the rising ground above. Follow the ground on the left hand side of the river until a small stream descends from the left in front of you. Here, either cross this stream as closely as you can to the river and then follow the river bank closely or go upstream until drier ground can be followed round the head of the flat boggy area. A second stream (Blatchford Brook) now needs to be crossed. Walk upstream and there are several crossing places using large boulders. Cross Blatchford Bottom, the flattish tin streamed area aiming to get to rising ground which will lead you away from the main river.

Note: Wet patches at the foot of the rise usually contain Sun Dew plants, Britain's indigenous species of the Venus Fly Trap (Latin name *Drosera Rotundifolia*). Please do not disturb these plants. The plants have a reddish tinge and close inspection will reveal the miniature traps. They can usually be found here in the wettest patches of ground amongst the sphagnum mosses in the mid-summer months.



Ascend the slope and towards the top a ruinous Bronze Age enclosure and some hut circles appear. Now walk northwards aiming for the middle of the flattish horizon before you. Small animal tracks leading in the general direction can be found, although some rough ground may be encountered. The next target is the ceremonial



stone circle (GR635644), the upright stones appearing as the horizon is reached. The stone circle marks the start of the long, Erme Valley stone row. This is **Europe's longest stone row**, over 3km long. The row links the stone circle and a barely visible cairn on the furthest horizon (Green Hill). The row is far from straight and tends to lose direction as the destination cairn disappears from view, re-aligning itself once the cairn reappears. From the stone circle follow the row until it descends slightly into a wet depression. Find the best crossing point and re-join the stone row. A large untidy Bronze Age burial cairn, with its centre hollowed out appears to the left of the row. Continue following the row and descend into a small valley. Climb up the opposite side of the valley and find the continuation of the stone row. From here the stones can be hidden under an overgrowth of peat (showing that significant peat growth has occurred since the Bronze Age). There is evidence of peat cutting around here (turf ties - the rectangular shaped areas of removed peat with banks left to separate the individual ties). The stones from the row re-appearing in the turf ties.

Several Bronze Age enclosures are visible on the opposite hillside above the Erme. Erme Pound, a substantial Bronze Age enclosure, appears next to the river on the opposite bank as the stones from the stone row appear to come to an end. The row actually crosses the Erme and continues heading towards Green Hill on the opposite side of the river. If you want to take a closer look at the pound and other Bronze Age remains in the locality the Erme can be crossed near the pound (but not easy if the river level is high). It is now easier (and drier) to stick to the Erme's left bank. A vague path leads down to flatter ground at river level. Follow the edge of rising ground with flatter ground on your right, past a deep looking black pool, until the Erme bends leftwards into the upper valley.





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Continue on flat ground until a stream (Hortonsford Bottom) is met. Cross the stream close to the Erme. Now either continue up the valley using a small path just above the flat ground until Erme pits are reached or, if you are in need of excitement, cross the Erme and make use of the Abbots Way track which lies on the opposite side of the river. This make for easier walking if you succeed in crossing the Erme. If you are going to cross the Erme, do this on the outward journey otherwise you may find yourself trapped on the wrong side of the river! Erme Pits is a series of deep depressions made by miners in search of tin. It is possible to walk right round the top edge of the pits or into the pits themselves (but beware of wet ground). The Erme rises in the wet ground surrounding Erme Pits. Return is by the outward route in reverse. Alternatively the bank of the Erme can be followed after reaching the point where Erme Pound is visible instead of returning by the stone row.

Time for a well earned pint perhaps?

