

Stage 6

Dunchideock to Dunsford

Start: St Michael & All Angels, Dunchideock (EX2 9UB)

Parking on the road below the church

End: St Mary's, Dunsford (EX6 7DA)

Distance: 5.3 miles (8.6 km)

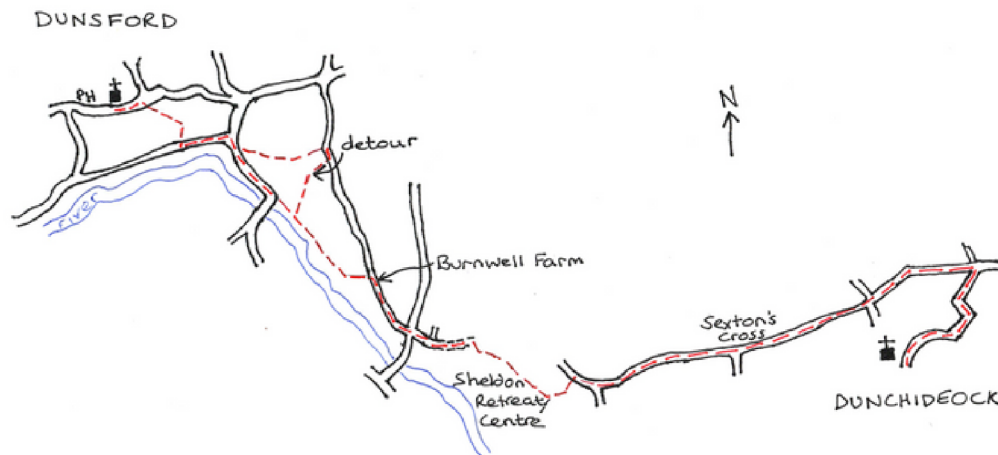
Time: Approximately 2¾ hours

Difficulty: Challenging



Overview

At the start, the route is primarily on country lanes and the pilgrim needs to be aware of light traffic. Once these lanes have been negotiated however, there is a wonderful section of footpaths across fields and by brooks, which treat the walker to spectacular views of the Teign Valley with its rolling hillsides and verdant pastures!



St Michael & All Angels, Dunchideock

Open 8am - 6pm



Reading Genesis 1:14-19

'And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.'

Meditation

'When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?' (Psalm 8:3-4)

How small we are. How insignificant. And yet how God loves us, that our Creator should share our humanity and live with us. Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.' (John 8:12)

'Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures, especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendour! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness. Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.' (Francis of Assisi, 'Canticle of the Sun')

God speaks to us today through the language of all created life. Now we see the glory of God in the world around us, a glimpse of the glory that awaits. 'And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.' (Revelation 21:23)



Prayer

Kindle in our hearts, O God, the flame of love which never ceases, that it may burn in us, giving light to others. May we shine for ever in your temple, set on fire with your eternal light, even your Son Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Redeemer. Amen.

Directions

Hi-vis

On leaving St Michael & All Angels Church turn left and follow the country lane for ¼ mile to a T-junction where you turn left again.

Continue down this lane for just over ½ mile and then at a crossroads go straight on signposted to Doddiscombsleigh.

In ⅔ mile at Sexton's Cross, there is a sign for Doddiscombsleigh. Take the road forking to the right and continue for ¾ mile.

Just past Hereford Cottage turn right. In a short distance, with Batts Brook on your left, you will see a sign for a footpath heading up some wooden steps to a metal gate, also on your left. Go through the gate and follow the narrow path for 100yds and cross a wooden plank and through another gate.

In front of you is a hilled field. The footpath isn't clear, but you are heading centrally across the field in a north-westerly direction to a middle point at the far side of the field. Be mindful of sheep in this field.

Arriving at a triple metal gate fenced area for stock holding – continue straight going through two of these gates (ignore the rightmost gate).

Once again, continue in the same north-westerly direction via the unmarked footpath diagonally across the middle of the field, to the middle point of the far edge of the field. Pass through the gate and keep straight ahead noting the yellow footpath arrow on a wooden post.



Continue straight on this path enjoying the truly spectacular views across the Teign Valley.

The path veers to the right and there is a well-positioned bench to rest a while, taking in the vistas across Sheldon Retreat Centre and beyond.

Go through the wooden gate and turn left heading down the hill and passing Underoak on your left.

Hi-vis

The path turns into a country lane. Shortly, turn left to pass under the old railway bridge. In less than 100yds cross straight over the B3193 taking care of the blind bend and fast-moving traffic.

After ⅓ mile you reach Great Lear and Burnwell Farm. There is a footpath signposted down the farm track. Take this track and pass through a metal gate.

Head down the main path which veers right at the bottom, passing through the farm buildings and onto the bridleway to your left.

Continue down the bridleway, ignoring turnings to the right.

Continue down this beautiful path for just over ⅓ mile with the field and brook on your left.

Pass through a metal gate, followed shortly by a wooden gate. At this point you have two options. The **Main route** follows a busy road, which the **Detour** avoids while adding just over ½ mile to your route.



Main route

If you have not opted for the detour, take the footpath directly to the side of the cottage, ignoring the footpath heading uphill to the right.

Pass through the houses (there is public right of way) and follow the lane next to a stream on your left.

Continuing in the same direction, we now head onto a busy road, so keep well tucked into the right hand side. Walk along this road for ½ mile and at the junction turn left onto the B3212 signposted to M'hampstead/Dunsford.

Detour

If you wish to avoid a busy section on the road, take the footpath heading uphill to the right for 1/3 mile.

On reaching the road, turn left and in a short distance turn left again onto a footpath. Pass through one metal gate, follow the path downhill to another gate. Follow the hedge on your right as you pass into another field.

Head diagonally across the middle of the field to a gate in the far northwest corner. Be aware of cattle in this field.

Over the turnstile follow the path downhill, making sure to turn left at the fork (don't enter the gate marked 'Beware of bull').

Keep heading downhill until you emerge onto the road, and follow the B3212 signposted to M'hampstead/Dunsford.

You may now pick up the main route directions.

Hi-vis

A short way along you will find a narrow pavement on the right side of the road.

Continue for a short distance when just beyond a sign for Dartmoor National Park and before some garden fencing, you will find a footpath sign to your right.



Minding the barbed wire on the fence, take this path and follow it to a metal gate. Walk on the left side of the field until you reach another gate. Continue along this path and follow it into Dunsford village.

Turn left at the road and you will see St Mary's Church on your right.

There has been a place of worship here since Saxon times. The present church building dates from the 1420s and in its well-kept churchyard, stands at the heart of the village.

Rest your tired feet and enjoy this peaceful and holy place.



St Mary's, Dunsford

Open 9am - 6pm



And finally...

Every journey is a challenge, whether it be a walk, a hike, a pilgrimage... or life. As we return to the quiet of St Mary's we can look back on our journey and reflect on the steep slopes, the paths slippery with rain and the stunning views we have seen.

'A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' (Isaiah 35:8-10)

Even if we were solitary, we were never alone. When we may feel inadequate and vulnerable, unwilling or unable to continue, God is with us:

'I will lead the blind by a road they do not know, by paths they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them.' (Isaiah 42:16)

This is God's promise...

'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.' (Isaiah 43:1-2)

...fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who said:

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)

And so Godspeed: may you be blessed on your journey:

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

(Traditional Irish blessing)

