

Stage 3/3A



There is a choice of routes between Sourton and Belstone. **Stage 3** takes the easier low level route, while **Stage 3A** describes the higher level, more challenging moorland route. If the Red flags are flying, denoting that the Okehampton Military Firing Range is active, you **MUST** take the Low route (Stage 3).

Stage 3



Low route



Sourton - Belstone



8 miles / 13 km



3½ - 4½ hours

Leaving by the Granite Way, we cross Meldon viaduct and descend alongside it to view what is such a fine example of Victorian engineering. Through the old quarry area and alongside the Red-a-Ven brook, the path ascends steeply keeping on the northern edge of the High Moor. After the Military Camp, lanes are followed to Lower Halstock before a wooded stretch down and across the East Okement River. The path steadily ascends to Nine Maidens stone circle and across Watchet Hill into Belstone.



**St Thomas à Becket,
Sourton**

EX20 4HN



Moorland route



Sourton - Belstone



8½ miles / 14 km



3½ - 4½ hours

A short section of the Granite Way takes us onto the Moor at Prewley where we drop down to Vellake Corner and along the West Okement valley to the delightful Black-a-Tor Copse. A steep ascent to the tor takes us across open moorland with paths and tracks leading to the bridge at Cullever Steps. Skirting Scarey Tor, Nine Maidens stone circle is reached before dropping down into Belstone village.



**St Mary the Virgin,
Belstone**

EX20 1RB

Sourton to Belstone

Prayer

I lift up my eyes to the mountains -
where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord,
The Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip -
he who watched over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

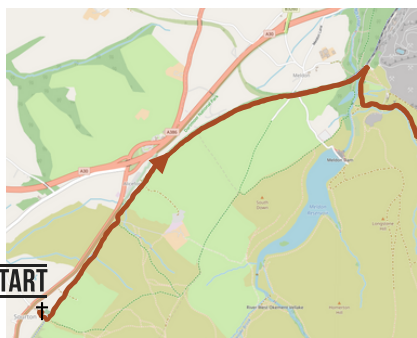
The Lord watches over you -
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all harm -
he will watch over your life;
the Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

Psalm 121, NIV

Directions

Stage 3 (Low route)



From the church, return towards the moor, but do not cross the bridge. Instead, take the lefthand path towards the Granite Way. Turn left and keep on the tarmac surface past Prewley Moor.

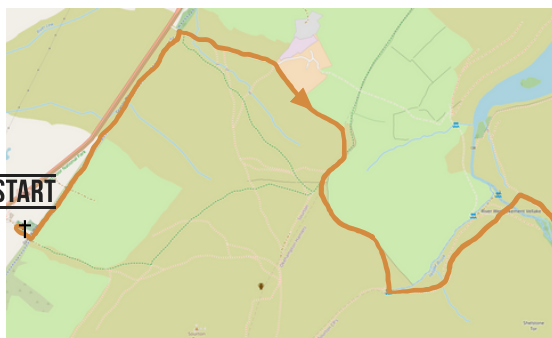
You will soon reach Meldon Viaduct, and at its end, turn right and head for the steps below the old railway coach.

Descend the steps to the bottom, turn left and follow the path.

Cross the road and take the path opposite that will lead you to a gate. Go through the gate; there is an old lime kiln to your left and other ruined buildings, as you are now entering the old Meldon Quarry works, with the river on your right.

Follow the track as it winds its way eventually up to the left, through another collection of buildings and structures before heading right following the Red-a-Ven brook up to the south-east.

Stage 3A (Moorland route)



If the red flags are flying, denoting that the Okehampton Military Firing Range is active, you **MUST** take the Low route (Stage 3).

From the church, return towards the moor, do not cross the bridge but take the lefthand path and follow the Granite Way to the Prewley Works entrance (on the Moor side), and take the track up towards the building entrance.

Bear right, keeping the works and wall on your left and head for the stone wall in front of you, bearing right to pass between two granite posts where Sourton Tor can be seen directly in front. Bear left and then left again onto the grassy track that leads down towards the stream.

Cross this, follow the tracks left and cross another stream and then along the top of the hill in front, the side of Homerton Hill. The track brings you out above Vellake Corner and with a bit of slaloming you arrive down at the weir, crossing the West Okement River that feeds Meldon Reservoir.

Cross the river and turn right at the wide path leading along the north-east side of the West Okement River. Stay on this path, rounding a walled enclosure, negotiating the rocks and wet areas, then work your way along the bank of the

Sourton to Belstone

Stage 3 (Low route)



Do not cross the bridge on your right, but continue along the track, following it up to the left, in front of an old mine working.

Head up to the stone wall corner. This marks the boundary of part of the quarry (and danger area).

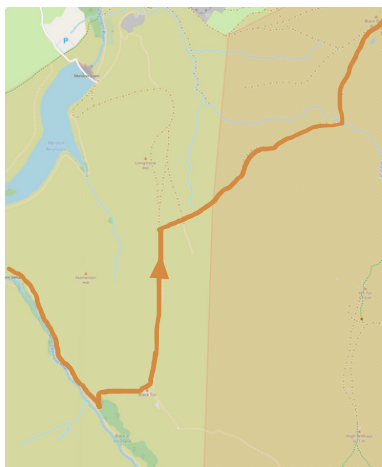
Follow this wall, keeping it on your left, all the way to Okehampton Army camp.

Make sure you don't stray across the red and white marker poles to your right. These denote the limits of the Okehampton Firing Range.

The track leads onto a tarmac road, before a bridge is reached. Do not cross this, but turn left, crossing the cattle grid. Then turn right and follow the road out away from the camp.

Shortly, there is a road to the right, leading to Lower Halstock Farm. Follow this road right through the farm, until it bears right after the buildings. Then take the signposted footpath to the left.

Stage 3A (Moorland route)



river following the paths until you reach Black-a-Tor Copse, a rare stretch of ancient oak woodland on Dartmoor. It is worth spending some time here.

Just before entering the Copse you passed a path going left up the hill to Black Tor and you now need to return to this.

Head north from the Tor and take the trackway north for 1km. Just after a track comes across from the south west, veer off the track to the right heading NE.

After a couple of hundred metres, you will see another track at right angles to your direction with a path continuing beyond it, heading NE. Keep on this path until you can follow some waymarker posts indicating the route around the edge of Okehampton Common.

Excellent views down and across Red-a-ven brook are in front of you and then to your left as you proceed eastwards and slowly descend to the brook. Cross the brook via the stepping stones and then head on the clear track north.

This track levels out, with Okehampton Camp to your left and Rowtor and West Mill Tor, to your right.

Directions

Stage 3 (Low route)



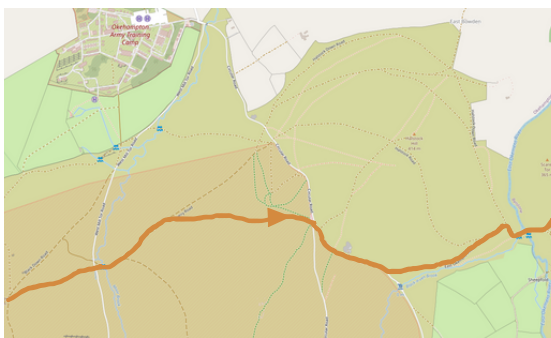
This track leads between some old stone walls, before curving right well above the Moor Brook. Pass through some trees and a gate, then down through the woods, and you will reach a delightful spot alongside the East Okemont River. Sit a while either side of the bridge – it is a lovely spot. You will also need a rest as it is all uphill to the finish at Belstone!

Having crossed the bridge, head left along the track that leads steadily northwards and upwards.

When you reach a higher track, turn right and follow this track back south, enjoying wonderful views both ahead and behind along the East Okemont valley.

Once the ground levels out and opens up, take a path diagonally to the left. When you reach the stony track coming up from the right, cross it.

Stage 3A (Moorland route)



Take a path leaving the track on the right, heading down to a further, obvious track crossing a stream, towards Row Tor.

After the stream, continue on the track contouring around the northern flank of Rowtor for about 0.5km until you see a grass path leading off to the right, heading ESE.

This will take you up to one of the military roads where there will usually be cars parked. There is a barrier across the road leading south into the moor.

Cross this road and head for the upper road and follow this to the right (south-east. You will pass a small car park area in an old quarry on your left.

Do not continue on the road towards the ford but take the track to the left.

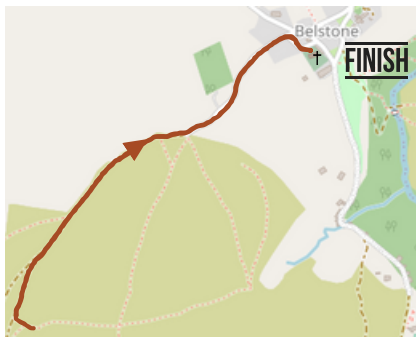
This track leads down to the East Okemont River at Cullever Steps, an area steeped in military history, dating back to horse drawn gun carriages being pulled through the water.

Cross the river, then fork left with Scarey Tor on your left and the Belstone Tor ridge on your right.

Sourton to Belstone

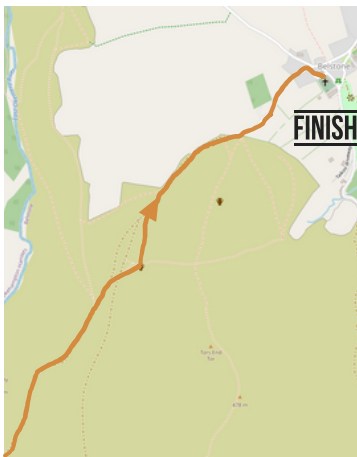


Stage 3 (Low route)



At the next track, find a narrow path opposite leading to the Nine Maidens stone circle. You may not hit them first time but persevere, they are there (all 13 of them)!

Stage 3A (Moorland route)



This track leads continuously uphill for a while and when it joins a stony track coming in from the right, cross it and find a narrow track on the right heading NE to Nine Maidens stone circle.

You may not hit them first time but persevere, they are there (all 13 of them)!

Reflection

The 'Nine Maidens' stone circle is a Bronze Age burial mound. As you look around you take a moment to remember that Bronze Age people lived and worked in this area over 4,000 years ago and in fact humans have inhabited areas of Dartmoor for over 12,000 years.

As you drop down into the little village of Belstone this is an opportunity to consider how adaptable we are as a species. Perhaps give thanks for all the modern inventions that you are grateful for in your own life, and be encouraged that others have weathered many storms here and found strength.

(Both routes follow these directions):

After getting your breath back, head northeast towards the flagpole on the top of Watchet Hill. Reach this, and it is then all downhill to the gate and the lane into Belstone village.

Inside **St Mary's Church** you'll find a standing stone with a simple cross etched into it. The stone dates from the 7th century and is one of the earliest examples of a stone cross found on Dartmoor. Trace your finger along the etched cross. How many others have traced this cross with their finger? Where did they find their strength?

