

Rivers around Colyton and Colyford

This 3½ mile walk takes quiet lanes and open field tracks from Colyford along the River Axe before heading into Colyton to return alongside the River Coly. As this includes some river floodplain, the fields can often be muddy, so wellies are advised. Park in the White Hart Inn car park right near the Colyford Tram station. If however you don't intend spending any money in the pub and feel parking is a little cheeky, then there are a couple of spaces just over the road at the near end of Cownhayne Lane where the walk really begins. Colyford has a second pub, the Wheelwright Inn and opposite this is the Filling Station Cafe which has some wonderful old petrol pumps outside that are worth a look.



From the White Hart car park, cross the road and turn right away from Colyford to cross over the Seaton Tram line and reach Cownhayne Lane. Turn left into it and follow the quiet road. After 5 minutes or so you will see some footpath signs, one on the left and two on the right – ignore all of these, but continue up the lane until the road bends sharply left at Lower Cownhayne Farm. Turn right here in front of the farm buildings to enter a farm track.

Shortly this reaches a gate into a field and although the path isn't clear, you simply follow the left edge of the field. Just when it looks as if you might have to wade through a ditch, look for the gate in the left hedge into another field. Go through, turn right and pass soon into a second field before reaching a stile in the hedge on the right that leads back into the main field again. Follow the path past the finger post in the field to reach the banks of the River Axe. Cross a footbridge and keep following the path being as quiet as you can just in case you might be lucky enough to see a kingfisher or even an otter.

Eventually the path will lead away from the river to a row of trees through which you reach a very rough farm track where you could go left or right. Turn left here and follow the track through Nunford Dairy and then ascend Kingsdon Hill. As you near the top you will be able to look back towards the village of Musbury, and then at the top you will have a great view across towards Axmouth village and harbour, and also to the sea below the houses of Seaton.

Continue on down the hill and Colyton will come into view. At the bottom you will find the northern terminus of the Seaton Tramway. Follow the road around the S bend and at the T junction turn right. Shortly at a busier T junction turn left to cross the road bridge over the river Coly. If you cross to the opposite side of the bridge you can look down to see the pretty view of where Umborne Brook feeds into the River Coly. Ahead along the road on your left you should be able to spot the footpath sign where the walk will head next, but don't be too hasty as there are good reasons to not be in too much of a rush.

The gallery just over the bridge has a cafe and riverside seating, but it is also worth considering the 5 minute extension into Colyton and back. There are some good pubs, a few shops, a cafe and a garden centre also with a nice cafe. There are also some wonderful old houses, narrow winding streets and a beautiful church.

Returning to the footpath, this will take you past the gallery and then look carefully for the footpath sign directing you right around the next building and into a field. Follow the banks of the River Coly downstream, crossing the newly built Ham Bridge to reach the opposite bank. Turn right and carry along by the river where once again a kingfisher is a real possibility. Pass through a gate, ignoring the path on the right before eventually seeing a bridge ahead in the right corner of the field. Do not cross this, but instead carry on through the gap in the fields to pass the old mill and then head under a raised water pipe. Continue alongside the river before reaching a gate that leads to the pavement right opposite the White Hart Pub.

This walk can very easily be started from Colyton as an alternative, where there is free roadside parking near to the bridge and art gallery. It could also be nicely combined with a trip on the Seaton Tram.