

7 Night Discover More of Exmoor

Trip style: Small group holidays

Destination:  Exmoor

Trip code: SEL07-HCH05

Carbon Footprint:  135kg CO2



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

From willow weaving to cider making, this small group tour introduces you to a side of Exmoor only the locals know. Find out about the conservation efforts underway at Higher Barn Farm and the Holnicote Estate's resident population of beavers. Follow in the footsteps of literary greats in the Valley of Rocks, dive into Porlock Bay's maritime past at an oyster farm and get facts on Exmoor's endangered ponies - the oldest native pony breed in Britain - from a national park guide. It's all capped with a scenic journey on the West Somerset Railway, ideal for taking in the region's natural beauty.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Small group sizes
- A talk about the Holnicote beaver population
- Visiting Poets Corner and exploring Doone Valley, the setting for R.D. Blackmore's Lorna Doone
- Riding the Lynton funicular railway
- A trip to Porlock Bay Oysters to learn about oyster farming
- Sampling local cider on a visit to Burrow Hill Cider Farm
- A more personalised experience thanks to small group sizes (maximum 15 people)

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Comfortable en-suite accommodation in our country house
- Cream tea on arrival day
- Cooked and continental breakfast every morning
- Daily packed lunches
- Three-course evening meals, plus tea & coffee
- Guided sightseeing with an experienced HF Holidays leader
- All transport included in the itinerary
- All entrance fees
- Easy-to-follow routes, maps and information in our Discovery Point if you want to explore independently

TRIP SUITABILITY

This holiday is active and busy with visits throughout the day. You will need to be able to get on and off minibuses with ease, and be able to walk up to 2 miles, across uneven, grassy terrain where the ground can be slippery underfoot. It is important for your own and your fellow guests' enjoyment that you can maintain the pace. We've provided a simple fitness test below, which will help you assess whether this holiday is for you:

You should be able to do the following:

- Walk for one hour at a reasonable pace (2 miles per hour) without needing to take a break to rest
- Climb two flights of stairs at a reasonable pace
- Stand unaided for an hour
- Stand up and sit down ten times in one minute
- Please ensure you are able to fulfil these fitness requirements, to ensure you get the very best from your holiday.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

You're welcome to check in at Holnicote House from 4pm onwards. Enjoy a complimentary cream tea on arrival.

Day 2: Conservation & Regeneration

We start our trip with a visit to Higher Barn Farm, a small farm in the eastern foothills of Exmoor. With the Wild CIC are a community benefit organisation with a passion for protecting nature and own the farm. They have a vision to transform the parcel of land to become a diverse and thriving ecosystem, full of wildlife and wonderful food that they can share with the local community. After lunch back at the house, we'll have a chance to visit the habitat of Holnicote's recently reintroduced beaver population with a National Trust Volunteer. After a short talk about the beavers, there's free time to explore the village of Selworthy with its famous Periwinkle tearoom and All Saints Church.

Day 3: Poets & Literary Greats

Starting the day with a journey to the Valley of Rocks, we'll visit Poets Corner, a shelter built in the 1920s which has been inscribed with poetry by local people. From here, we'll head to Lynton, enjoying a ride on the funicular railway. It's then on to the Doone valley, the inspiration for R D Blackmores Lorna Doone novel. There's time for a coffee before our visit to Watchet via Ash Farm where Coleridge penned Kubla Khan. Watchet inspired Coleridge to pen the hauntingly beautiful poem, the Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner and you can find a statue of the mariner looking over the Bristol Channel on Watchet Harbour. Afterwards, enjoy free time to explore this lovely fishing village.

Day 4: Free Day

Discover more about Holnicote House and the local area for ideas on how to fill your free day.

Day 5: Coastal Life

Spend a day exploring the coastal beauty and maritime heritage of Porlock. We'll begin at Porlock Marsh, home to a diverse array of birdlife and unique coastal plants. It's then on to Porlock Bay to learn about Exmoor's historic oyster farming industry and the opportunity to sample a freshly shucked Porlock Bay Oysters. In the afternoon, we'll visit either Greencombe Gardens, with its camellias, rhododendrons, and woodland blooms overlooking the bay, or Brendon Gardens, a rural haven of wildflowers, apple and olive trees, and peaceful lakeside views.

Day 6: Wildlife on the Moors

Today we'll take a trip to the Exmoor Pony Centre to learn about the welfare and conservation work underway by the staff here and more about the ponies themselves. We'll then journey back towards the coast via Withypool Tarr Steps, a typical clapper bridge construction dating from medieval times. In the afternoon, we'll meet with one of the Exmoor National Park Volunteers for a talk on the wildlife and wildflowers on Exmoor.

Day 7: Produce & Steam

Our final day begins at Willow and Wetland Visitor Centre where we can learn about the different aspects of willow growing, processing and basket making. From here we'll travel to Burrow Hill Cider Farm to learn about the cider making process, before finishing the holiday with a scenic ride on the West Somerset Railway.

Day 8: Departure Day

Departure after breakfast.

Holnicote House

There's plenty to look forward to at this beacon of Somerset hospitality near the impossibly pretty village of Selworthy. The location couldn't be more perfect; within rolling-out-of-bed distance from Exmoor National Park and an easy drive from Dunster Castle, Coleridge Cottage, the twin villages of Lynton and Lynmouth, and the sandy delights at Porlock and Minehead. The walking opportunities here are standout, too, not least for the trails around the Quantock Hills, Dunkery Beacon, Bossington, and a section of the England Coast Path that takes you on a glorious journey along the county's coastline.

A warm welcome

We want you to feel comfortable from the moment you arrive. You'll find a welcome pack in your room with guest registration forms, menus, order forms for dinners and picnic lunches, the Wi-Fi password, and the front door code. Our houses are locked at night, so we recommend noting the Duty Manager's number on arrival in case of an emergency (or getting locked out).

Evening entertainment

While evening entertainment varies from house to house, HF Holidays Inter-House Quiz night held after dinner on Wednesdays is a weekly staple. Your HF Holidays leader may be around for tips on guided and self-guided walking routes as well as visit-worthy local attractions.

Walks talks

Our HF Holidays walk leaders host guided walking information briefings before dinner on guided walking holiday arrival days. This is followed by a group Walks Talk for information on the following day's guided walks (held before dinner every evening). Self-guided walking guests are, of course, welcome.

The walking day

Prior to setting off on guided walks, your HF Holidays Leader will run you through a short safety briefing. There's also an up-to-date weather forecast on display at the house to ensure you have appropriate clothing and footwear. If you choose to do your own walks or are on a self-guided walking holiday, we ask that you please complete an Independent Walker Card each day. These can be found near the Discovery Point in the house.