

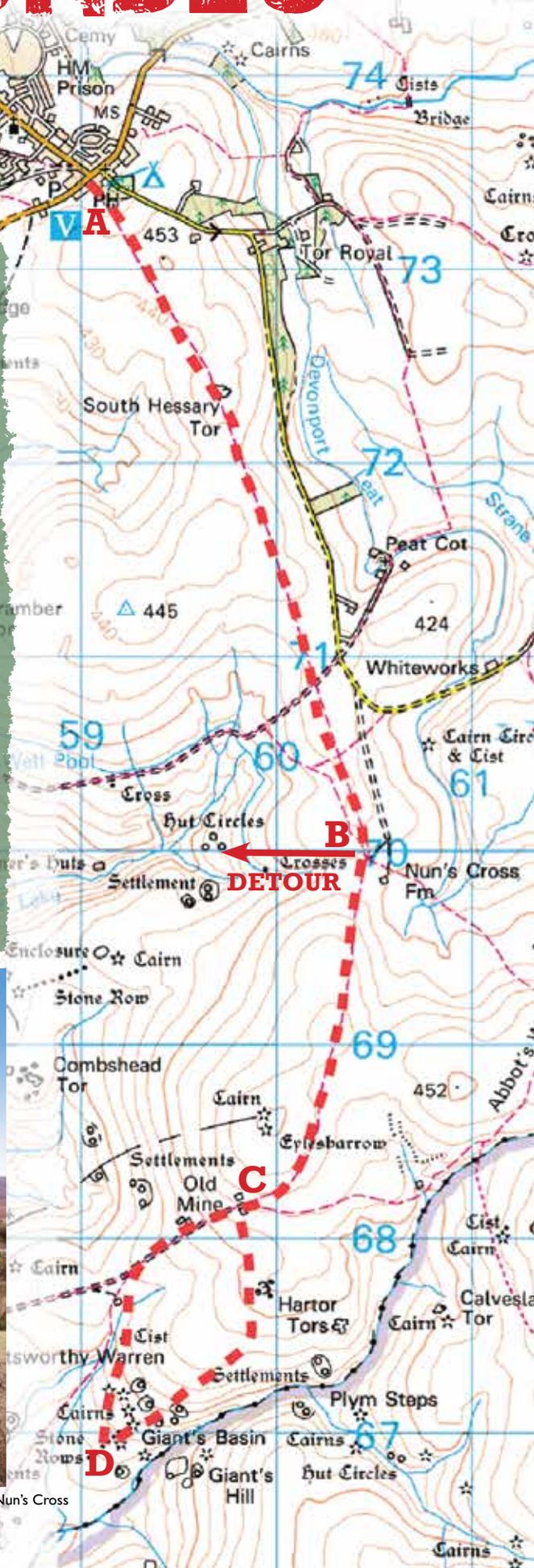
A TWO BLONDES BIMBLE

Drizzle Combe

In the first of our new series of reader's favourite walks Dartmoor bloggers, the Two Blondes, share a great route out from Princetown.

This walk has to be top of the list of Two Blondes' favourites. It takes in our favourite cafe, our favourite cross, our favourite valley and even our favourite kink in our favourite leat. If you have already done it and have the necessary navigation skills, please give it a go in the dark as it offers lots of great navigation points within the bounds of some obvious catching features (things that stop you from getting completely lost).

If you don't have the necessary navigation skills, then maybe now is the time to get them. There are a wealth of Dartmoor organisations offering basic navigation workshops ...



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All good Dartmoor walks start with a cup of coffee and a slice of cake so park in the main car park at Princetown (this will cost you a pound but we promise that your walk will be worth it), and wander over to Fox Tor Cafe. Fox Tor is a true walker's cafe with just about everything a good walker could need plus some extras that you will almost certainly not think you need until you see them.

Don't linger too long by the two wood burning stoves (did we mention those earlier), you have a long but rewarding walk ahead of you and if you walk quickly enough, you can be back for another cuppa before closing.

A Find the Plume of Feathers pub (don't go in, you will be tempted by their ale and sausages). Take the bridleway that runs south east to the side of the pub and follow it through the gate up onto the moor. Follow this path for just over 1 km and you will come to South Hessary Tor. Continue for 2.3 km and you will find yourself at the impressive Seward's or Nun's Cross which has been part of the Dartmoor landscape since at least the 13th Century (we feel that this is a very long time to stand around on Dartmoor).

B From Nun's Cross, you have a route choice. You can either continue to follow the path (bearing 190°) or the line of boundary stones (bearing 200°) to Eylesbarrow Tin Mine. If you opt for the boundary stones, have fun trying to match them to the ones on the map (we never can). The two cairns at Eylesbarrow are worth seeing. From there, you will need to make your way back to the path at the much more modern but still fascinating Eylesbarrow Tin Mine (bearing 196°).

C From the tin mine, head across to the more natural feature of Higher Hartor Tor (bearing 164°) where you may stop to admire the views down over Drizzle Combe. Drizzle Combe has the tallest Bronze Age menhirs on Dartmoor plus stone rows, hut circles and the impressive Giant's Basin cairn. Be warned though, there is a reason for the valley's name the weather here seems to have its own rules which differ to those of the rest of Dartmoor. Be prepared for hail, snow, torrential rain, beautiful rainbows and overbearing heat all within the time it takes to eat your lunch.

D Once you have explored the antiquities, head north and pick up the track back to Eylesbarrow Tin Mine and then Nun's Cross. From here, you can either return to Princetown via the main track or take the following rather diverting detour.

E From Nun's Cross, head west for 300m and find the point where the Devonport Leat flows out of its rather creepy tunnel. The leat is fascinating, which is good news because you are going to follow it for a while. The first landmark apart from footbridges and a cross that is not on the OS map, is Older Bridge. If you have had enough of leats at this point and don't fancy any rough moorland, this is the point of no return. Take the path north east which joins the main track after 500m.

F From Older Bridge, continue following the leat rather than the path which lies just to the south. After 2km, you will come to a big kink in the leat (affectionately known as Kink-in-Leat by those who have had to find it in the dark). Stop for a cuppa (we always do) and decide if you want to see a bottomless pool or not. If you do, head on a bearing of 170° for 250m to Crazy Well Pool and then come back to the leat again. Don't fall in, it is cold, we have tried it!

G When you get back to the Kink-in-Leat, engage four wheel drive as you are about to cross some rougher ground. Find the footbridge just before Kink-in-Leat and walk north (2°) for 600m to Cramber Tor. From there, you are going to find a pool at the top of a girt (tin workings). Set a bearing of 98° and walk for 500m, this will take you to the edge of the girt which you can follow up to the pool. From the pool, a 300m walk east (bearing 72°) will take you to a trig point.

H The trig point could be your last navigation feature but, if you want a bit more of a challenge, try to find the pool that is marked on the OS map about 700m south of South Hessary Tor. It took us a few attempts to locate it because it doesn't often look like a pool but (you can trust us) it is there.

I From either pool or the trig point, a north-easterly bearing will take you back to the main track where you can happily find your way back to either the Plume of Feathers for the sausages and ale that you didn't have on your way out, or to Fox Tor cafe for a mug of tea and an enormous plate of cheesy chips. ■

Family Option

The first section of this route (A and possibly B, going as far as you want then returning the same way) makes a great family option. Although it is a linear there and back walk (or cycle) there's plenty to see along the way including stone walls, boundary stones, the stone Nun's Cross, the ruin of Nun's Cross Farm and, for the more ambitious, the disused tin mine at Eylesbarrow.

The sandy surfaced bridleway is easy to follow and perfect for balance bikes and mountain bikes – although do keep a look out for the cross drains and clapper bridges! It also offers a real sense of being out in open moorland even though you are never that far from civilisation.

It is approximately 3.75 miles (6km) from Princetown to Eylesbarrow.



PHOTOGRAPH ADRIAN KEIGHTLEY



Crazywell Pool

PHOTOGRAPH DAVID AYRES

FOOT FILE

LENGTH: Without detour along leat – 15km (9 miles).
With detour – 18.5km (12 miles).

TIME: 6-7 hours.

SUITABLE: A good level of fitness with navigation skills required for some short sections. Stick to the path or leat in poor visibility if you are not used to moorland navigation. Remember that Dartmoor weather can change very quickly. Walking boots and full waterproofs essential.

START/FINISH: Princetown SX 590735

TERRAIN: Tracks can be muddy, open moorland including rough, wet sections.

MAP: OS Explorer OL28 Dartmoor.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: Train to Plymouth, bus to Tavistock, bus to Princetown.

PARKING: Public car park in the centre of Princetown (£1 for cars for the day).

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS: a Dartmoor National Park Authority Visitor Centre provides insights into many aspects of Dartmoor life. Opening times on the DNPA website – www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk. You might also like to visit the Dartmoor Prison Museum.

Want to share your favourite walk with readers?

If you have a particular walk that you think other readers would enjoy and have some good images to go with it we'd like to hear from you. Email anna@activedartmoor.com with your idea.