

A TWO BLONDES BIMBLE

Beardown Tors

Blonde Bimble: a leisurely walk or journey enjoyed by two giggling Dartmoor ladies.

'They had a great Blonde Bimble over to Beardown Tors; followed by a cream tea at The Two Bridges Hotel.'

Location

Beardown Tors is a collection of smaller tors making up three separate summits. We Blondes don't think the name has anything to do with Goldilocks and her three companions; but we never take porridge with us just in case. Beardown is well worth a visit for the views alone; it is one of those coveted Dartmoor places that combines the feeling of complete wilderness with relatively easy access. Which is why we have chosen it for our latest Blonde Bimble.

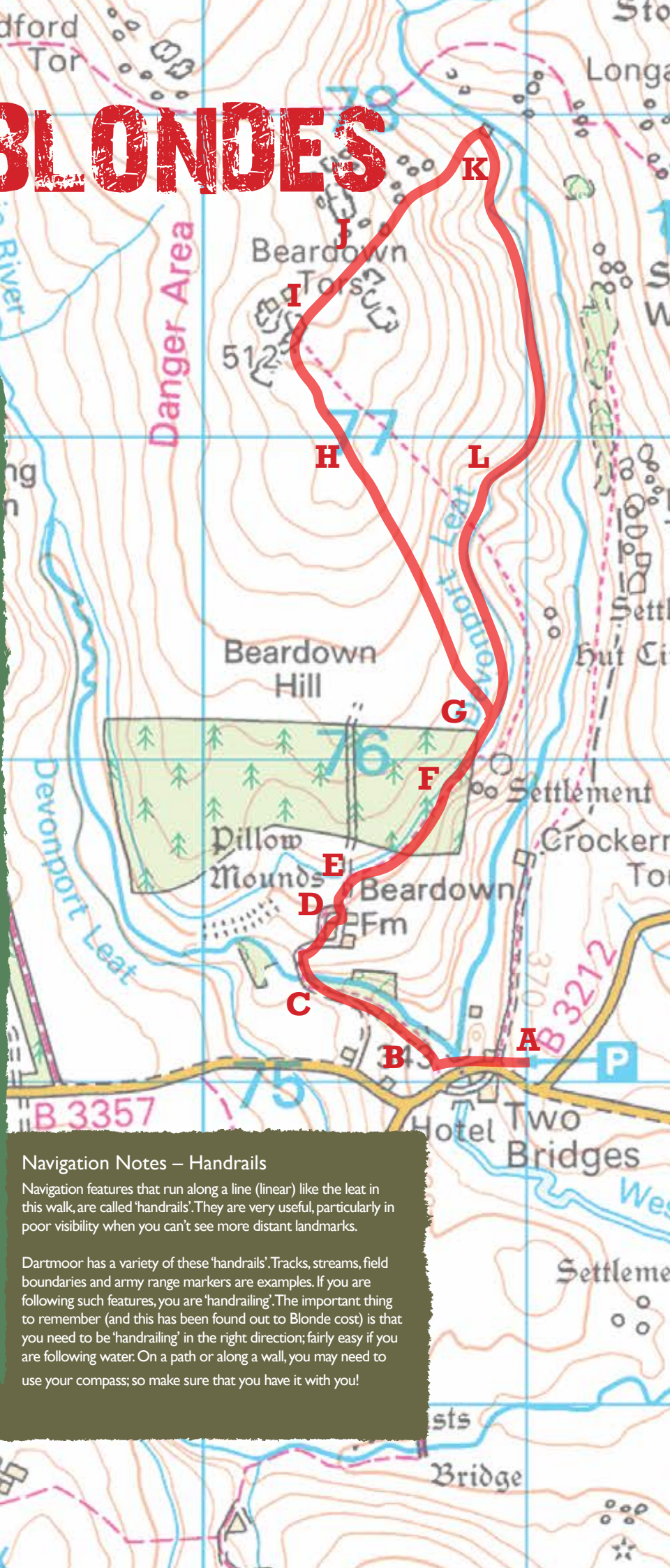
Warning

Beardown Tors is on the edge of one of Dartmoor's army firing ranges. Tempting though a load of army chaps (and chapesses) might seem; you really don't want to wander in when they are shooting real guns! Check for live firing times here www.gov.uk/government/publications/dartmoor-fring-programme

Navigation Notes – Handrails

Navigation features that run along a line (linear) like the leat in this walk, are called 'handrails'. They are very useful, particularly in poor visibility when you can't see more distant landmarks.

Dartmoor has a variety of these 'handrails'. Tracks, streams, field boundaries and army range markers are examples. If you are following such features, you are 'handrailing'. The important thing to remember (and this has been found out to Blonde cost) is that you need to be 'handrailing' in the right direction; fairly easy if you are following water. On a path or along a wall, you may need to use your compass; so make sure that you have it with you!



For this walk, park your car in the Two Bridges quarry car park SX 609750. The quarry car park fills up quickly, but if you fancy a cup of coffee or a delicious lunch first, you could park opposite at The Two Bridges Hotel (they won't mind if you ask nicely.)

The quarry car park is just behind the bus stop which means that you don't have to bring a car at all if you don't want to.

A On leaving the quarry car park, turn right and follow the road over the West Dart bridge for 200 metres. (Blonde note – although there are obviously two bridges at Two Bridges, don't confuse yourself by crossing them both now.)

B You will see an entrance to a footpath on your right SX607 749. Walk between the double boundaries for 75 metres. The path then continues for 150 metres across an open field (if you pretend that you are a horse, you will look silly) and into some trees.

C Climb the stile SX605 752 (taking care not to be attacked by the rather keen conifer) and continue through the trees; admiring the Cowsic River as it tumbles below you. After a meandering 300 metres, you will meet the track to Beardown Farm SX603 753. (Please note – this path is rocky but fun. See alternative route below.)

Alternative to A, B and C:

Turn right out of the quarry car park, cross the West Dart bridge and walk up the road for 700 metres (taking care on the bend). Turn right down the track to Beardown Farm SX604 750 and follow it for 400 metres until you meet the path on your right that comes up alongside the Cowsic SX603 753.

D Follow the track up towards Beardown Farm. On your left just after you cross the Cowsic, you will see a gate with a tent sign. This marks one of the Beardown Farm wild camping site fields ('wild' as in pretty but no loos!) Continue up the hill for 200 metres, but don't go up the farm drive. Instead turn left.

E Ahead of you, you will see a firebreak in a conifer plantation. This leads directly onto the hill below Beardown Tors but your path turns right here and follows the leat.

F It is a pretty walk along the leat, between fields and then into the plantation. About 100 metres after you enter the plantation, there is an interesting overflow for the leat SX606 757. If you like contours (trust us, they are good fun) there is an interesting kink in the contour line here to mark the dip in the ground below the overflow. (Go on, you know you want to find it!).

G You emerge back into the sunshine (or the mist) after 700 metres. Here the path officially crosses to the other side of the leat; but it's a less steep climb up to Beardown Tors if you follow the leat to the next footbridge SX609 760 and then get your compass out.

We told you to bring your compass! Set it to 333° and walk uphill (sorry) across some wet ground (even more sorry) for 700 metres until you come to a wall.

H Find the gate in the wall SX605 767 and go through it. Continue across a flatter area for another 600 metres and you will have reached the most westerly of the three Beardown summits SX605 773.

I Beardown Tors can be quite exposed so find yourself a spot out of the wind and take in the views (try to line up your map with what you can see). To the North, you can see Lydford Tor and, beyond that, Devil's Tor (it's okay, the devils are a fair way off) and then up into the wilds of the North Moor. Looking to the East you can see Longaford Tor above Wistman's Wood and the West Dart. Turning your attention to the West, well you can gaze at Holming Beam Bottom and Black Dughill if you want to, but they don't have quite the same charm!

J When you have finished view-gazing and map lining-up, you might want to explore the other Beardown summits. See if you can find the army hut and the fag pole (if the flag is up, be warned, it indicates live firing. Remember you are on the edge of the firing range!)

K Next you need to find your way down to the West Dart weir. From the northern Beardown summit, set a bearing of 58° and walk down the hill towards the river – 450 metres. This weir SX608 779 is the most northerly point of the Devonport Leat which was built in the 1790's. It took water from the West Dart, the Cowsic and the Blackbrook rivers all the way down to the thirsty dockyard workers at Devonport. It is a fascinating construction. Other sections are well worth walking along.

L Follow the leat back along to the plantation, down to Beardown Farm and along the Cowsic to the B3357/3212 and your car. At this point, you might want to take a diversion across the other (much more lovely) bridge in the grounds of the Two Bridges Hotel; if you do, you really should pose for a photo and sample a cream tea! ■

Family Option

The only section of this walk that is suitable for pushchairs is the track up to Beardown Farm. Children will enjoy the rocky section along and above the Cowsic River but progress may be slow. The climb from the leat up to Beardown Tors is a bit of an effort but youngsters should enjoy walking along the leat to the edge of the plantation. The views, as you emerge from the trees, will satisfy most adults. You could then continue along the leat to the West Dart weir to avoid going up any major hills.



PHOTOGRAPH: TWO BLONDES

FOOT FILE

LENGTH: 8 Kilometres Height Gain: 163 Metres.

TIME: 3 hours.

SUITABLE: A reasonable level of fitness required. Only one main uphill section. Basic navigation skills advantageous for moorland section. Dartmoor weather can change quickly.

ROAD WALKING: Please remember that country roads do have vehicles on them (Dartmoor ones often have cows too). We recommend facing the oncoming traffic (unless you are on a sharp bend) and wearing high visibility gear.

START/FINISH: Two Bridges SX 605749

TERRAIN: Mixed terrain: a short road section, track, rough/wet moorland, one section is rocky but a detour is possible.

MAP: OS Explorer OL28 Dartmoor.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: Train to Plymouth, walk 5 minutes to Pennycomequick station (real place, we promise!), Plymouth Citybus 46 (towards Okehampton) to Yelverton, Target Travel Bus 98 to Two Bridges. Bus travel time – 1 hour. (Please check for travel changes.)

PARKING: Two Bridges quarry car park SX 609750 (no charge but parking very limited) OR Two Bridges Hotel opposite if you buy lunch or a cream tea.

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS: Wistman's Wood, High Moorland Visitor Centre (Princetown), Dartmoor Prison Museum (Princetown).

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 jenny@activedartmoor.co.uk with your idea.