

RUBY



COUNTRY

Ruby Trails

The Sheepwash Trail



Cob Cottages

The Sheepwash walk circuits the north of this small, pretty village, taking in a mixture of pasture, cropland and

woodland. It also passes close to the village of Buckland Filleigh and offers good views over much typical Ruby Country landscape.

Front Cover Photo: Rowan Berries, English Nature. Inside spread: Sloes and Wild Rose, English Nature.



FACT FILE

Traveline have bus timetable details 0870 6082608.

Grid Reference
SS 486 064

Walk Length

The walk is 9 km/5.5 miles or it's possible to increase to 11 km/7 miles, by taking an extra loop. There are six stiles and the walk is generally level with one or two gentle climbs.

Following wet weather sections of this trail can be very muddy and there is an alternative ending to the walk advisable in these conditions – see trail directions.

Facilities

There is a pub and village shop in Sheepwash. There is no car park in Sheepwash, but it is possible to park in the Village Square.



www.therubycountry.com

The Walk



Sheepwash is a small, attractive village in the heart of Ruby Country. It's situated in the River Torridge Valley, half-way between Hatherleigh and Holsworthy and a couple of miles north of the A3072 road.

Look out for the red Ruby Country waymarkers.

1 Leave the Square by following the road next to the Post Office and stores. Follow the lane out of the village for about 0.5 km/0.3 miles. Just after a right bend, look out for a metal gate on the left with a public footpath and Ruby Country sign. Go through the gate and follow the right-hand field edge. Continue through another

metal gate, through a gap in the field and on to a stile.

This part of the trail takes you through a pastoral landscape with views of extensive woodland typical of the Ruby Country.

2 Walk directly across the next field to a stile and footbridge at the bottom. Cross the bridge, into next field.

This path formerly followed the line of a hedge and the area was once a series of long narrow fields - possibly medieval sub-divisions of earlier open fields.

3 Follow the left-hand field edge. Go through the metal gates to the track and continue to the lane. Cross the lane and follow the path opposite.

The lane follows the line of an old road, shown on the first Ordnance Survey Map of 1809. Looking back to Sheepwash with its prominent church tower, you can see Dartmoor beyond the rolling landscape of Ruby Country.

4 The path drops to pass Lake Farm. Continue past the buildings, then on to the wider track ahead.

The name 'Lake' is misleading, as it actually derives from a Saxon word meaning watercourse. As you can see, there is still a small stream here which has cut the valley in which the farm sits.

5 The track descends to the hamlet of Buckland Mill. This is the valley of the Mussel Brook, a tributary of the River Torridge. After passing the buildings, remains of the mill leat and sluice system can be seen alongside the path.

6 Shortly afterwards, the brook is crossed by a stone bridge and continues through woodland to arrive at a lane.

Much of this woodland is ancient and semi-natural, but there has also been partial replanting with conifers.

7 Turn left along the lane, staying on it as it rises steadily. At the entrance to Buckland House and Buckland Filleigh Church, turn left up the drive. Approaching the house, go left then immediately right through the lych-gate and into the churchyard.

The attractive church stands in what was formerly the parkland of Buckland House. The earliest part of the building dates back to Norman times and there is a medieval font and stained glass. The church contains a list of rectors going back to 1268 and the Saxon King Athelstan is said to have granted land for a church here as early as 925AD.

8 Take the path opposite the church porch to a stile. Cross it and head slightly to the right. Don't cross the little bridge but head for the prominent post to its right.

The lake is man-made and dates back to landscaping work done on the house in the 18th century.



It provides an important habitat for dragonflies and damselflies.

Through this area, make sure you follow the route as described as this is private parkland and only the public footpath is available for access.

9 Don't follow the obvious path directly ahead, but take the narrow path which bears right, heading between two prominent trees. This continues through new tree planting to arrive at a lane opposite Glebe Cottages.

The Old Glebe was originally the rectory for Buckland Filleigh Church, first built in the early 17th century.

10 From this point, there is a (3.2 km/2 mile) loop using the footpath next to Glebe Cottages.

For the more direct route at this point, turn left along the lane until you reach Woodhead Cottage, taking you off the road into the forest. Read on from point 20.

11 When you reach the gate, Glebe House and Cottages are in front of you. Cross the road and turn immediately right over a marked stile. Turn left, keeping the fence and cottages on your left. Proceed to a stile, go over it and turn left for approximately 50 metres, then turn right across the field. Dartmoor can be seen to your left.

12 Follow the path down across the hill towards woods. Pass down some wooden steps and go through the woods, down more wooden steps and over a bridge at the bottom. Proceed up the other side of the woods and over a stile.

13 Turn diagonally left, climbing up towards the tree line and top left-hand corner of the field. Turn left, keeping the field boundary and farm buildings on your right and follow the public footpath sign to a gate on your right.

OS maps for this walk:

Landranger: No.191 Okehampton and North Dartmoor (southern part of walk) (1:50,000 scale)
No. 190 Bude and Clovelly (northern part of walk) (1:50,000 scale)
Explorer: No.112 Launceston and Holsworthy (southern part of walk) (1:25,000 scale)
No. 126 Clovelly and Hartland (northern part of walk) (1:25,000 scale)

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14 Go through the gate, turn left and proceed through Chalhanger Farm between the farm buildings. Continue up the lane turning left at the telegraph pole. Follow the public footpath through the gate marked with a Ruby Country sign.

15 Walk along the lane towards Eastfield. You'll emerge into a field but continue to follow the track to the left. Go through a gate, a mobile phone mast will now be behind you and another gate in front of you. Proceed through this gate and Eastfield will be ahead. There's a public footpath sign on your right as you reach the road. Turn left and there'll be Eastfield house on your right.

16 Continue along this road for a short way, turning left onto the public footpath. Follow the track with farm buildings and a white cottage in the distance ahead of you. On reaching

Lovacott house, with a wooden gate before you, turn right to follow the public footpath. Proceed between hedges and through a small gate. Follow this path down between more hedges, but take care as it is quite rough underfoot. The path follows a small stream, so keep this stream to your left, walking along the right bank.

17 Cross the stream over a wooden bridge and go through a small gate. Turn right to follow a small track. Go over another bridge and over a stile and you'll emerge in a field.

18 Walk directly uphill. Go over a stile next to a metal gate, walk across the field towards another stile and you'll come out onto the road. Turn left towards the white cottage which is Woodhead.



19 As the lane rises slightly, there are superb views over a wide area of Ruby Country. Look out for a wooden gate on the right, just after Woodhead, with a public footpath and a Ruby Country sign.

20 Follow the forest track for about 30 metres then turn right onto a narrow forest track descending through the trees.

This is Upcott Wood, an extensive area of ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland which has been partly replanted with conifers.

21 Follow the field edge on the left and on into a second field. Continue on to a stile on the left. Cross the next field, heading for the left-hand end of the row of trees ahead. There is a farm track here and you can see Sheepwash in the distance.

22 Follow the track to a lane. *There are now two alternative ways to complete the walk. In dry conditions use route A but if wet you are advised to use alternative B route.



Alternative A

23 Turn left then turn right just before the large farm building and go through the yard.

24 Go through the gate on the right at the end of the yard, then bear left into the field. Follow the right-hand edge downhill, heading for Sheepwash.

25 Cross the stile at the bottom and go through the next rough field to the footbridge over the Mussel Brook. This field, with its grass tussocks and thatch reed provides an important feeding site for barn owls.

26 Cross the footbridge to a stile and bear left along the bottom of a pasture. At the end, turn right along the hedge and line of trees. The top of the slope leads to a green lane. As the green lane widens, it becomes an avenue of ancient oaks on one side, and old hedge on the other. The species indicate that the hedge is likely to be at least

600 years old, so this is probably a very ancient track.

27 Follow the track round to the left and go through a metal gate. When the track forks behind the farmyard of Old Court, bear left, then follow round to the right to pass through two more metal gates to the road. A short distance to the right leads back to Sheepwash Village Square.

Alternative B

23 Turn right on the lane and then into the left-hand side footpath. This takes you down through a grass landing strip used for light aeroplanes.

24 Go across the hedge steps into a paddock down across another set of steps and onto the road - you may well see llamas at certain times of the year.

25 Turn left at the road following it back into the centre of Sheepwash.