

Coast and countryside...4 miles

Boscastle, Cornwall

Beginning in the picturesque seaside village of Boscastle, this walk explores the cliffs above Boscastle's medieval harbour before heading inland across the Valency Valley and through peaceful woodland, alongside the meandering Valency River.

Start: Boscastle car park – grid ref: SX098917 – maps: OS Landranger 190, Explorer 111

How to get here & local facilities

By foot: the South West Coast Path runs south along the north Cornwall coast, passing through Bude and then onto Boscastle

By bike: National Cycle Network Route 3 to Wainhouse Corner, then 3 miles to start of walk along minor, quiet roads with some hills

By bus: Western Greyhound 595 from Bude or 584/594 from Wadebridge

By car: 14 miles from Bude on the A39

Car Park (pay & display), gift shop and café (NT) in Boscastle Harbour. Tearooms, pubs and accommodation at Boscastle. For details call the Boscastle Visitor Centre on 01840 250010. Contact us on 01288 331372

Things to look out for...

Boscastle village and old village

The charming village of Boscastle is sheltered in the steep sided Valency Valley. From the reign of Elizabeth I, right up until the end of the 19th century, the practice of pressing and preserving pilchards was a vital source of income for the village and was carried out in the building that is now a National Trust gift shop. Pass some attractive old cottages dating back to the 15th century as you walk the Old Road.

Valency Valley

The Valency Valley is rich in wildlife. Its meadows are filled with wildflowers in summer, attracting butterflies like the rare pearl-boarded fritillary, and the oak woodlands are home to colonies of protected horseshoe and lesser horseshoe bats. The secluded paths running alongside the Valency River offer a peaceful retreat.

Thomas Hardy connections (English novelist and poet, 1840-1928)

The area around Boscastle provided inspiration for one of Thomas Hardy's early books, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. It is also where Hardy met and courted his first wife, Emma. He returned to the wild cliffs of North Cornwall in 1913, after Emma had died, and was once again inspired by the landscape, resulting in twenty-one of his most emotional poems.



The cliffs above Boscastle Harbour are frequented by birds such as kestrel, peregrine, stonechat, gannet and fulmar. The blowhole in the harbour booms and spouts water two hours each side of low tide - an impressive sight if you're lucky enough to catch it!



At Forrabury Common you'll see evidence of a medieval way of farming, the Forrabury Stitches. The long strips or 'stitches' were individually farmed to grow food crops in the summer and used for grazing in winter. Many of the original strip boundaries are still visible and the practice continues today.



Minster Church is nestled between Minster and Peter's Woods in the Valency Valley. The original church at Minster is Norman and dates back to the 12th century. The valley landscape changed immensely after the heavy floods in 2004, but is gradually growing back into its natural woodland habitat.

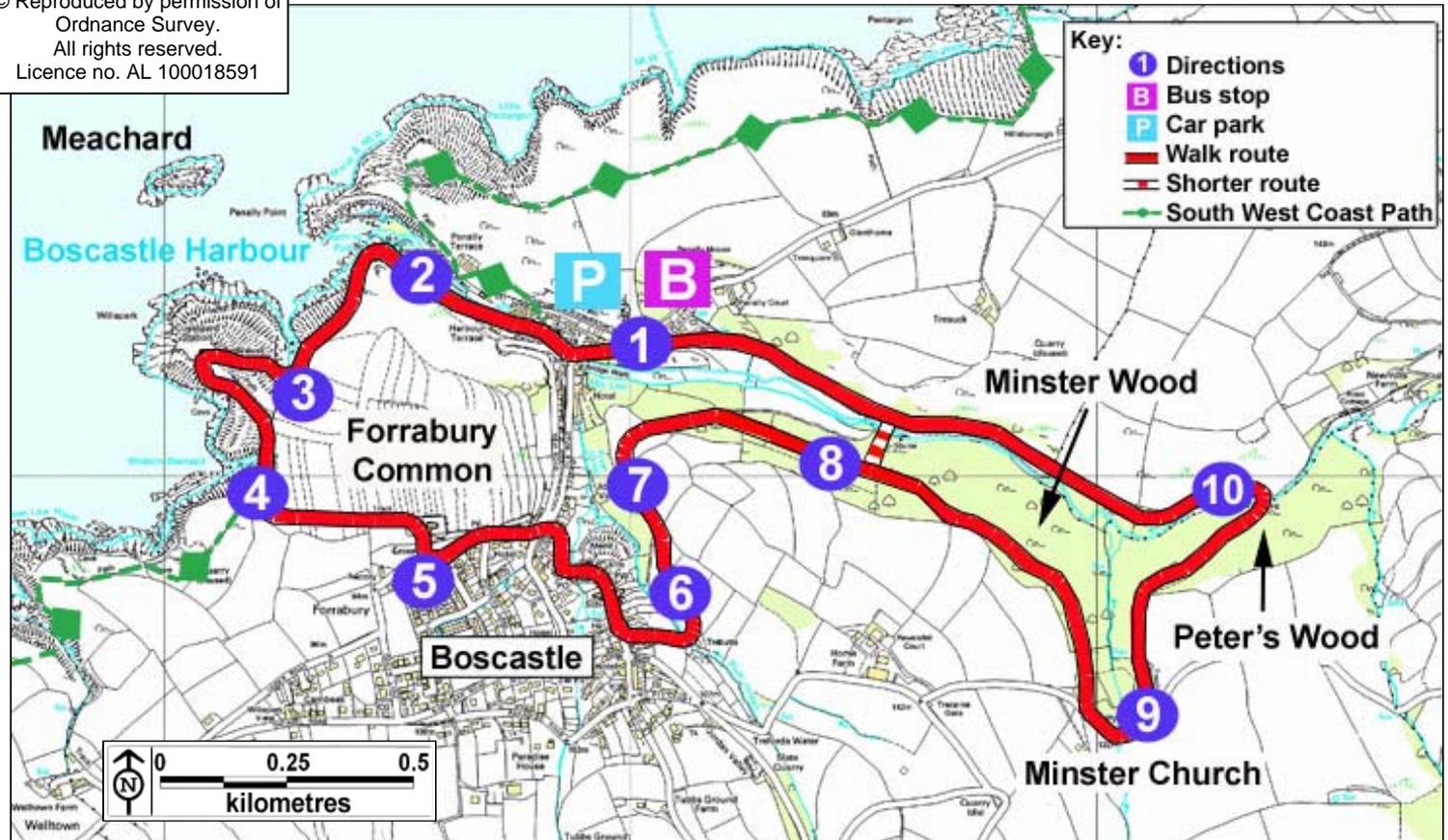
Terrain and accessibility

4ml (6½km) along coastal and woodland paths. Includes steps, stiles, gates and a few short, but steep ascents. Shorter route 3ml (4½km). Dogs welcome, please keep under close control through farmland.

Directions

1. Leave Boscastle car park and turn left. Follow the road down through the village to the riverside tarmac track, heading for the quayside in the harbour.
2. Ascend the steps next to the breakwater and bear left onto the South West Coast Path. Here there are views of the Meachard, an island rock, where there are seabird colonies in summer.
3. When the path splits, take the right-hand fork sign-posted 'Willapark'. Follow a steep path to the Coast Watch Tower, then bear right as you descend and right again to rejoin the coast path.
4. Bear left to follow the path around the Forrabury Stitches to St Symphorian's church. Go through the churchyard where you will pass a medieval cross.
5. On leaving the churchyard, turn left, go downhill then cross the main road. Go down the slip road opposite and turn right. Take the public footpath on the left near the top of the street just before the main road. Pass between a house and small pond with an aggressive gander! Go through the gate.
6. Turn left onto a path marked 'Home Farm' and way-marked 'Minster Wood'. Follow hedge on left and cross a stile. Take the faint track straight across the field. Go through the gap in the wall, to the gate in the corner of the field.
7. Pass through Cold Frame Orchard, exit via stile and keep left. Cross another stile then follow a faint track diagonally across the field to a gate, then take the track way-marked 'Valency Valley' through Minster Wood.
8. Keep the Valency River on your left and, climbing now, follow the woodland path to Minster Church. **Optional route: to shorten the walk, cross the stepping stones over the river, turn left and follow valley path to Boscastle.**
9. Go through a kissing gate below the church and descend through Peter's Wood to the footbridge, crossing the river.
10. Turn left off the footbridge and follow the valley path back to Boscastle and the car park.

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