

1 - Great Outdoors

Somerset is a county of diverse and changing landscapes, which offers countless opportunities for those that love the Great Outdoors.

Ebbor Gorge

You may have heard of the famous Cheddar Gorge but what about Ebbor Gorge? This is part of a National Nature Reserve (NNR) protected by English Nature that occupies a prominent position on the southern escarpment of the Mendip Hills. Ebbor Gorge is a dry limestone gorge, which also contains two geologically important caves, with deposits that include the bones of ice age mammals.

This wonderful place is made up of ash/maple woods, woodland glades and areas of limestone grassland. Look out for unusual fungi and ferns, greater and lesser horseshoe bats and woodland butterflies, including the rare white letter hairstreak.

The gorge is 4 km north west of Wells. By car, the site is accessed via minor roads from the A371. There are two car parks near the site both on the minor road from Wookey Hole to Priddy. There are amazing views from the little car park – and a bench to sit on and admire them, even if you don't fancy walking!



Goblin Coombe

Goblin Combe and Cleeve Wood are hidden gems located in North Somerset. Part of the Forest of Avon, the site divides into two sections with very different characteristics. Goblin Combe is a glacial outwash gorge containing several rare and interesting plant species, which make it a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Cleeve Wood is situated on a plateau above Goblin Combe and is made up of deciduous and coniferous trees. This beautiful area supports several rare and endangered flora and fauna species, including limestone fern, moonwort, stinking hellebore, the silver washed fritillary butterfly and purple hairstreak butterfly, dormice, and the greater horseshoe bat. www.goblincombe.com

Uphill Nature Reserve

Uphill Hill Local Nature Reserve is located to the south of the village of Uphill, which is itself just south of Weston-super-Mare, and is best accessed from the car park at the base of Uphill Hill. This 17 hectare site is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is part of the Mendip Limestone Grasslands Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This undiscovered hideaway supports a diverse range of flora and is a valuable insect habitat. There is a lovely circular route that starts in



Uphill Church

Uphill boat yard, passes through the nature reserve and follows the winding River Axe on the return journey. www.avonlocalnaturereserves.org.uk

Bossington Hill

Rising up from Minehead, on the edge of Exmoor National Park are Bossington and North Hills. Offering dramatic coastal views across the Bristol Channel to Wales and along Exmoor's coast, the hills are one of the best places in the area to catch sight of the famous Exmoor Ponies or hear the crack of rutting Red Deer stags in the Autumn. This area offers great walking opportunities, from short jaunts, to the longest National Trail in Britain, The South West Coast Path, which begins in Minehead. Walk from Bossington Hill car park over the headland down to Hurlstone Point for dramatic views of the Exmoor coastline – great at sunset. Continue back along the path from Hurlstone point, past the path you came down and into woodlands below Bossington Hill. After about 1.5 miles take a left to head back to the car park. The picturesque villages of Selworthy, Allerford and Bossington are also worth a visit.

For more information please contact Minehead Visitor Information Centre on 01643 702624





The Quantocks

A Walk in the Quantocks

Although not really a secret to Somerset residents, the Quantocks area is still relatively unknown by those further a field. This was the first place in England to be designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is a magical place where you can explore wooded valleys, sparkling brooks, open moorland, picturesque villages and enjoy stunning views. A favourite spot is Holford Combe, where you can just sit and enjoy the surroundings or take a gentle walk up the combe. For the more energetic, why not walk up the combe to the ridge path, turn right and walk to Bicknoller or Beacon Hill, where you can enjoy glorious views of the Bristol Channel, the Somerset levels and Exmoor. The villages of Bishops Lydeard, Crowcombe and Nether Stowey are well worth a visit. www.quantockonline.co.uk

Horner Woods

Horner Woods on Exmoor is the perfect place for a peaceful walk. Start out at Luccombe Village (4 miles west of Minehead), picnic by Robbers Bridge in Doone Valley and dip your toes in the crystal clear stream of Badgworthy Water. Unforgettable!



Cheddar Gorge

The West Mendip Way

The Mendip Hills are an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which stretch from the market town of Frome in the East, to the Bristol Channel in the West. The West Mendip Way is a 30 mile route across the southern edge of the Mendip escarpment from Wells to the sea at Uphill, visiting Wookey Hole, Draycott, Priddy, Cheddar, Shipham, Wavering Down, Loxton and Bleadon Hill on route. A particularly lovely part of the walk is to start from the viewpoint at Bleadon Hilldown and head over the motorway, before going up Crook Peak, down Wavering Down, then over Shute Shelf and into Cheddar - either through the Gorge and Black Rock Nature Reserve to Charterhouse, or over Beacons Batch to Burrington and the famous Rock of Ages. The path is named on the following Ordnance Survey maps: OS Landranger 172, 182, 183; OS Explorer 141, 153; OS Explorer Active 141, 153. www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk



Robbers Bridge

A Walk in Curry Rivel

The unusually named Curry Rivel is located 6 miles west of Somerton and 10 miles East of Taunton. A hidden gem of a walk is to take the footpath leading off Heale Lane, at the west edge of the village and head up to the Burton Pynsent Monument, where you are rewarded with terrific views across the Somerset levels, Quantocks, Mendips & Blackdown hills. The 140 feet (43 m) Pynsent Column (also known as the Curry Rivel Column, Burton Pynsent Monument, Pynsent Steeple or Cider Monument) stands on Troy Hill and is dedicated to the memory of Sir William Pynsent - a highly successful businessman in the thriving Somerset cider trade. The monument was designed in the 18th century by Capability Brown for William Pitt, the then owner of the Burton Pynsent Estate.



Marcus Trescothick - "You can't beat a round of golf at Burnham-on-Sea Golf Club"

Bridgwater Bay Nature Reserve, Steart

Bridgwater Bay Nature Reserve is located at the mouth of the River Parrett. It offers views across mud flats, salt marsh, shingle ridges and sand banks, and around 190 species of birds have been recorded using this area. There is a tower bird hide and some smaller hides that can be used. Head down after high spring tides to see a multitude of birdlife.
www.english-nature.org.uk

Burrow Mump, Burrowbridge

Burrow Mump is a hill and historic site overlooking Southlake Moor in the village of Burrowbridge. It is an ancient earthwork now owned by the National Trust and it stands at a strategic point where the River Tone and the old course of the River Cary join the River Parrett. It probably served as a natural outwork to the defended royal island of Athelney at the end of the 9th century. The ruined church at the top of the hill is dedicated to St. Michael and is allegedly situated on the same ley line as Glastonbury Tor.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burrow_Mump



Burrow Mump

The Dunster Estate

The Dunster Estate surrounds the medieval village of Dunster and is owned by the Crown Estate. It comprises 4,000 hectares (just under 1000 acres) of the west Somerset countryside, right on the edge of Exmoor National Park. It is an agricultural and forestry estate, with ancient hillforts, 18th century follies, an adventure play area and waymarked cycle and walking routes to discover – as well as the tallest tree in England! There are trails that are suitable for all ages, and it is a great place for families. The estate can be accessed either from Dunster Village, or from the car park, a mile or so from Dunster.
www.thecrownestate.co.uk or 01643 821309

Poets Walk, Clevedon

Poets Walk is a popular coastal route that starts at the south end of Clevedon seafront and goes up through woodland, before rewarding you with excellent sea views. This route is said to have inspired many great poets and writers including Tennyson, Thackeray and Coleridge. www.visitsomerset.co.uk



Clevedon Pier at sunset

Headland at Sand Point

For a coastal walk and wonderful views why not head to Sand Point in North Somerset? This peninsula stretches out from Middle Hope, which lies to the north of the village of Kewstoke, and the part of the coastline called Sand Bay. It is owned by the National Trust and on a clear day it commands views of the Bristol Channel, South Wales, Clevedon, the Second Severn Crossing and the Severn bridge. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Giant's Chair, Grabbist Hill, nr. Dunster

Another Exmoor hot spot is the Giant's Chair on Grabbist Hill. So named because it looks just like a huge chair on the side of the hill, the story goes that it was used by a giant who saved people in peril on the Bristol Channel. The spot can be reached after a steep climb up and is worth the effort for the tremendous view up through the Avil Valley. On a good day when the sun shines you can see all the way to Dunkery Beacon.



Andy Elson (hot air balloonist) – "Among my secret places in Somerset is the highest point on Mendip 'Blackdown'. The Panoramic views from the trig point are wonderful, whether South across most of Somerset, West across the Bristol Channel to the Welsh coast with the hills above, North with the Cotswolds marking the horizon, or East to the other end of the Mendips and the Wiltshire downs in the distance. For me as the sun sets on a clear evening this is the time and place for great mountain biking."