

## Walk 13: Watchet, Washford along the Old Mineral Line



**Length:** 7.5 miles – 12 km

**Good for:** Keen walkers and families

**Theme:** History

**Duration:** 2-4 hours

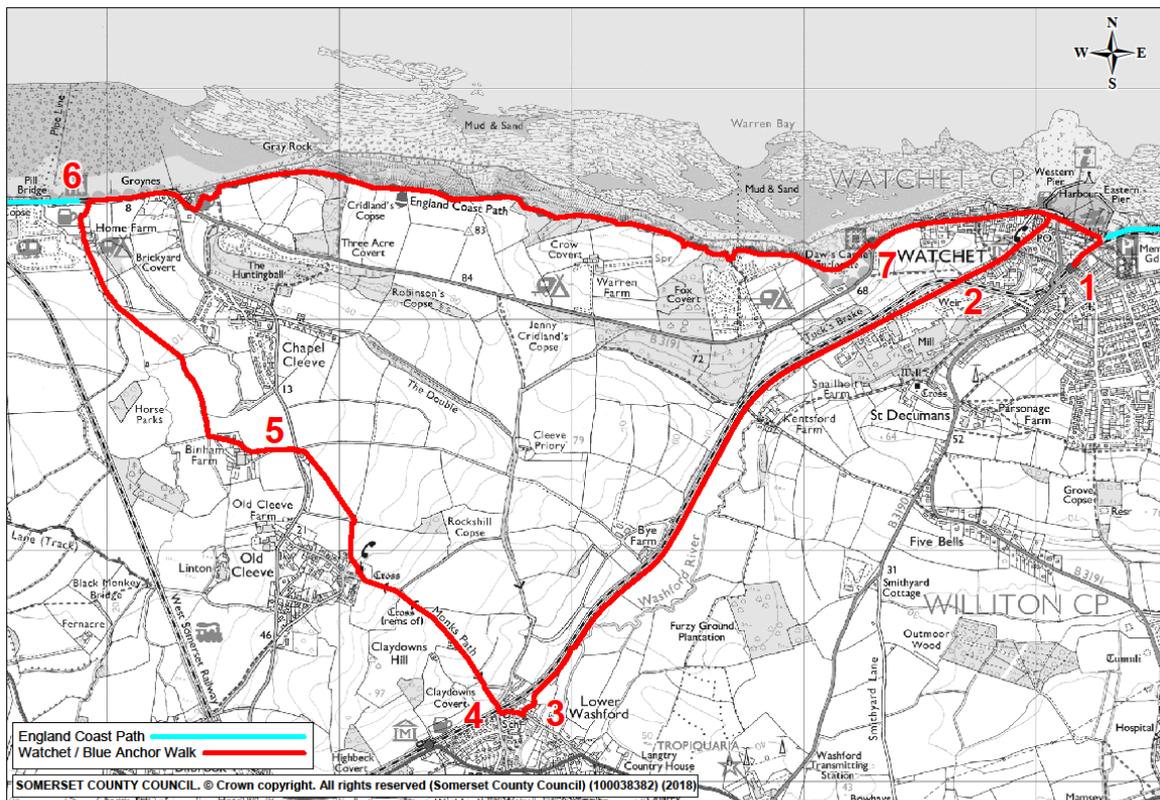
**Notes:** *This is a moderate to difficult walk in places, with steps, steep climbs and some uneven surfaces, although it is stile free.*

*There is loads to see and do in beautiful Watchet, including taking a trip from the town's picturesque station on the West Somerset Railway. There are two museums, independent shops, art galleries and a marina.*

### **Points of Interest:**

- Boat Museum and Information centre
- Statue of the Ancient Mariner
- Cleeve Abbey
- Blue Anchor Railway Station
- Dawes Castle

## Map:



**Directions:** From the car park, bus stop or train station in Harbour Road, Watchet (1) walk along Harbour Road towards the marina.

Turn left and follow the Esplanade until you reach Market Street. Go straight ahead then turn left into Mill Lane and follow footpath signs for The Old Mineral Line. Continue along this path until you reach Mill Street/Whitehall and turn right. Follow the road keeping right and following footpath signs until you reach the Old Mineral Line. (2)

Go through the gap to the right of the field gate, under the railway bridge and follow this path for the whole length of the former railway line. Near the end, you will go around the playing field then through a kissing gate and straight on until you reach the road. (3)

Turn right and follow the road to the T junction (4). At this point, you have three choices.

You can visit Cleeve Abbey by turning left along Willow Grove until you reach the main road and follow signs for Cleeve Abbey, one of the best preserved medieval monasteries in England. The abbey was a Cistercian House of "farmer" monks who, originally given to poverty, became very rich on the sheep and wool trade. It is the

most complete abbey ruin in Somerset and was originally named "Vallis Florida" or Valley of the Flowers.

Alternatively, you can travel on the West Somerset Railway from the beautiful village of Washford back to Watchet by taking the footpath straight ahead and following this path to the main road, turn right and head for Washford Station.

To continue the circular walk, turn right and go under the railway bridge. Take the steps on your left - you are now on the Monks Path. The route from St Andrews Church in Old Cleeve to Washford follows that which the monks once used on their way to Cleeve Abbey. There are good vantage points to see the beautiful steam trains of the West Somerset Railway in action at various points on this walk. At the end of the path join the road and continue uphill.

Follow the road and you will eventually come to a junction. Continue straight ahead, following signs for the picturesque village of Old Cleeve. Go through the gate on your right into the churchyard of the 12th century St Andrews Church. Follow the path through the churchyard looking out for way markers pointing right through the gravestones. From the bench, there are wonderful views of North Hill and Exmoor. Go through a gate, down some steps and take care following the uneven path down to the right.

Continue down some more steps then immediately up a few more and go through the kissing gate at the top. Veer diagonally left across the field heading for the house. Go through the kissing gate and continue ahead until you reach the road. (5).

Cross the road with care and take the track on the right. Follow the track and the waymarked path through Binham Grange, a manor house on the site of Cleeve Abbey Farm, go over the footbridge and turn right. Follow the path with the ditch on your right until you get to another bridge. From here there are stunning views to your right of Chapel Cleeve Manor, dating back to the 1450s when it was a pilgrims' hotel. It was enlarged in the 19th and 20th centuries when it was a private house. Go diagonally left across the field over another bridge and through the wooden gate to the right of the field gate.

Keep going diagonally left across another field and go through the field gate. Continue straight on with the stream on your left. You will eventually reach and then follow a tarmac track passing a pub on your right, until you reach the road. (6) Cross the road with care. At this point you can turn left and walk along the Promenade to Blue Anchor station and take the West Somerset Railway back to Watchet or turn right to follow the Coast Path back to Watchet.

Turn right and walk along the promenade until you come to the end then join the road and walk up the hill passing the pub on your left.

When you get to the end of the pub car park, take the England Coast Path signposted path to your left and head for the kissing gate in the corner. Go through the gate and follow the waymarked Coast Path along the clifftop - keeping well away from the cliffs.

Continue through several fields and kissing gates and more steps and you will come to the wood named Cridland's Copse. Follow signs for the Coast Path through the woods ignoring any signposted paths to the beach. Keep on the Coast Path through Crow Covert, after which you will go through a gate into a camping field. Follow the signposts and go inland for a short distance, then turn left and follow the Coast Path until you reach a concrete track.

Go straight ahead following the Coast Path signs. You will come to another kissing gate which leads into the English Heritage site of Dawes Castle. The castle is the site of a hillfort, originally enclosed by semi-circular ramparts and ditches. It may have Iron Age origins but was re-fortified by Albert the Great as part of a line of coastal defences linked by the Herepath or military coastal road.

Follow the obvious path where, at the top of the hill there are spectacular views to Wales, Steep Holm, Flat Holm and the Mendip Hills. You can also see Hinkley Point Power Station.

Keep left on the path until you come to another kissing gate, Follow the path for a short distance to a few more steps which lead onto the road. (7) Turn left and walk downhill with care on the road and verge back into Watchet. Retrace your steps back to the car park, bus stop or train station.

**Facilities:** There are toilets, cafes and pubs in Watchet, Blue Anchor and Washford.

**All information correct at the time of publication.**