



125 RHS Gold
Medals

BOWDENS

Better Plants - Better Gardens

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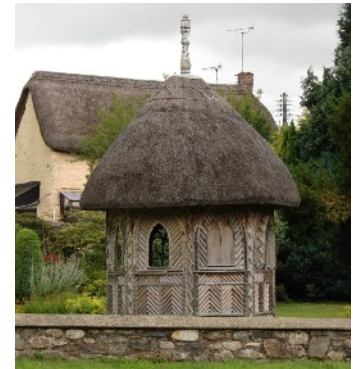
Cosdon Hill Walk

Easy-moderate grade, 5.2km (3.2 miles), 1 hour 15 mins.

1. On the west side of the entrance to Bowdens' nursery is Cleave House, former home of Albany Finch, grandson of William Finch (founder of Finch Foundry), and grandfather to Roger Bowden founder of Bowdens nursery. On the opposite side of the road is St Mary's church, site of a c12th chantry, and further down the c17th Devonshire Inn. Opposite the inn is a plaque and information board that commemorates Nelson's victory and death at the battle of Trafalgar 1805. This route is part of the Trafalgar Way that runs from Falmouth to the Admiralty in London. Walk from Bowdens 1.45km (0.9 mile) east on the B3260 through the village of Sticklepath.
2. 230m (250yds) down the road on the opposite side is the National Trust's Finch Foundry. Formerly the site of a c13th grist mill and c16th serge mill, it was converted by William Finch in 1814 for industrial use. The leat dates to 1147, diverting from the River Taw at Belstone Cleave 1,000m (1,100 yds) to feed the wheel for the only remaining water powered tilt hammers in England. Tom Pearce a mill owner (of Widecombe Fair fame) owned the last working serge mill on the leat in 1822. Go through the archway to enjoy the peaceful gardens with Tom Pearce's summerhouse and the Quaker burial ground, where Tom is interred.
3. Head east passing over Sticklepath Bridge at the River Taw. Apparently George III's coach got stuck between the parapets of the original bridge. The river starts at Taw Head, a spring high above Belstone in Dartmoor and after meandering through Tarka country it reaches an estuary mouth which it shares with the river Torridge, emptying into Bideford Bay in the Bristol Channel at Appledore. On the right just before the bridge is Albany House, with its 1972 waterwheel to power electricity, site of the last mill on the leat. For a better look walk a short distance down the public bridleway on the other side of the bridge opposite, where you can also see the leat re-entering the River Taw. This road was formerly the A30 until the new dual carriageway was built in 1988 bypassing Sticklepath. The village name is derived from the Anglo Saxon Staeclepath, or steep path.
4. Still on the B3260, head up the road out of the village, pass the bus stop and shelter and 'OkeHayes' (formerly a nursery) to 'Newlyn' a semidetached white house on the right; here there is a fingerpost BRIDLEPATH TO THE MOOR. Follow the bridle path for 360m (390yds), ignoring the next fingerpost and footpath on the left and instead continue uphill passing 'Hillstead' house along the concrete lane. At a bend further along this lane is an unsigned grass track on the left which departs from the concrete lane, and a three step wall stile with fingerpost pointing down on the corner. Take the grass track which follows the eastern flank of Cosdon Hill for 1.78km (1.1 miles) and eventually breaks out into open ground. There are stone field walls either side along most of this route. Along the track follow the finger post CAWSAND AND THE MOOR straight ahead. Go through the wooden gate and at a T section where it joins a track from the right, keep left. Walk ahead to a second gate. Keep following the track to a third gate. Further along, the wall on the left ends and intersects with another wall at 90 degrees coming uphill from the left. From here leave the track walking diagonally to the right in a WSW direction with the wall to your back to an upright triple stone row.
5. The triple row runs uphill and is 146m long. At the top of the stone row are two kistvaens: burial tombs or cists from the late Neolithic and early Bronze age 2500-1500BC. Dartmoor kistvaens are usually small rectangular pits covered with a mound of earth and surrounded by a circle of small stones. Bodies were placed in a foetal position or cremated, and ashes placed in a cinerary urn before being placed in the kistvaen. On Dartmoor most kistvaens were orientated NW/SE so the deceased were facing the sun. Dartmoor has the highest concentration of stone rows in Britain. The rare triple row at Cosdon, along with one at Challacombe, are considered to be the most impressive.



Finch Foundry



Summer House



Triple Stone Row



Cosdon Hill

6. Proceed west straight ahead uphill for 700m (760yds) to the summit of Cosdon Hill to the trig point and Cosdon/ Cawsand Beacon cairns. There are five cairns around the ridge. Views extends 360° and on a clear day Teignmouth on the English Channel, and the Bristol Channel to the north are visible. Nicknamed "The Dome of Dartmoor" Cosdon Hill is 550m and only surpassed by Yes Tor 619m and High Willhays 621m, (both visible nearby) as the highest peaks in southern England. Looking across to the other tors, it is easy to understand why the summit was used for burial cairns. From this point, you can either walk back towards Sticklepath or take an extended walk to the White Moor stone circle and standing stone past Little Hound Tor before returning. From the Cosdon Hill trig point, walk NNW to descend the hill for 1.70km (1 mile) to the bottom. Admire the view with the villages of Sticklepath, South Zeal, and South Tawton in the distance. The bottom section of the hill is crisscrossed with many worn paths and it is easy to stray off course. Keep veering left with Sticklepath in view and head towards a corner wall on the right with open land to the left.
7. Turn right on the path past the inside of the wall for 20m – it eventually gives way to a trackway bounded by stone walls either side, for 500m (550yds). Don't worry if you have strayed too far to the right when descending and hit a continuous field wall running in front – follow the wall down to the right as it converges with a wall running downhill on the right to an open section and it will eventually meet the track.
8. At the end of the track go through the wooden gate and after a few metres at the three-way fingerpost, take the left track for 210m (230yds) passing Beacon Cottage, until it merges with a track from the right. Keep left and follow the track 210m (230yds) until it meets a sealed road near Ford Farm. Turn right to re-join the B3260, turn left and retrace your steps back for 1km (0.6 mile) to Bowdens in Sticklepath.



Bowdens nursery and gardens (including fern stumpery) and the National Hosta and Agapanthus Collections are open from March to August, Monday to Saturday from 10 to 4pm. Complimentary hot drinks are available when you visit.

We also undertake a personally guided group tour and talk of the gardens weekdays during the normal gardens opening times with one of our knowledgeable plant enthusiasts. Minimum group number is 15 and prior booking is essential.