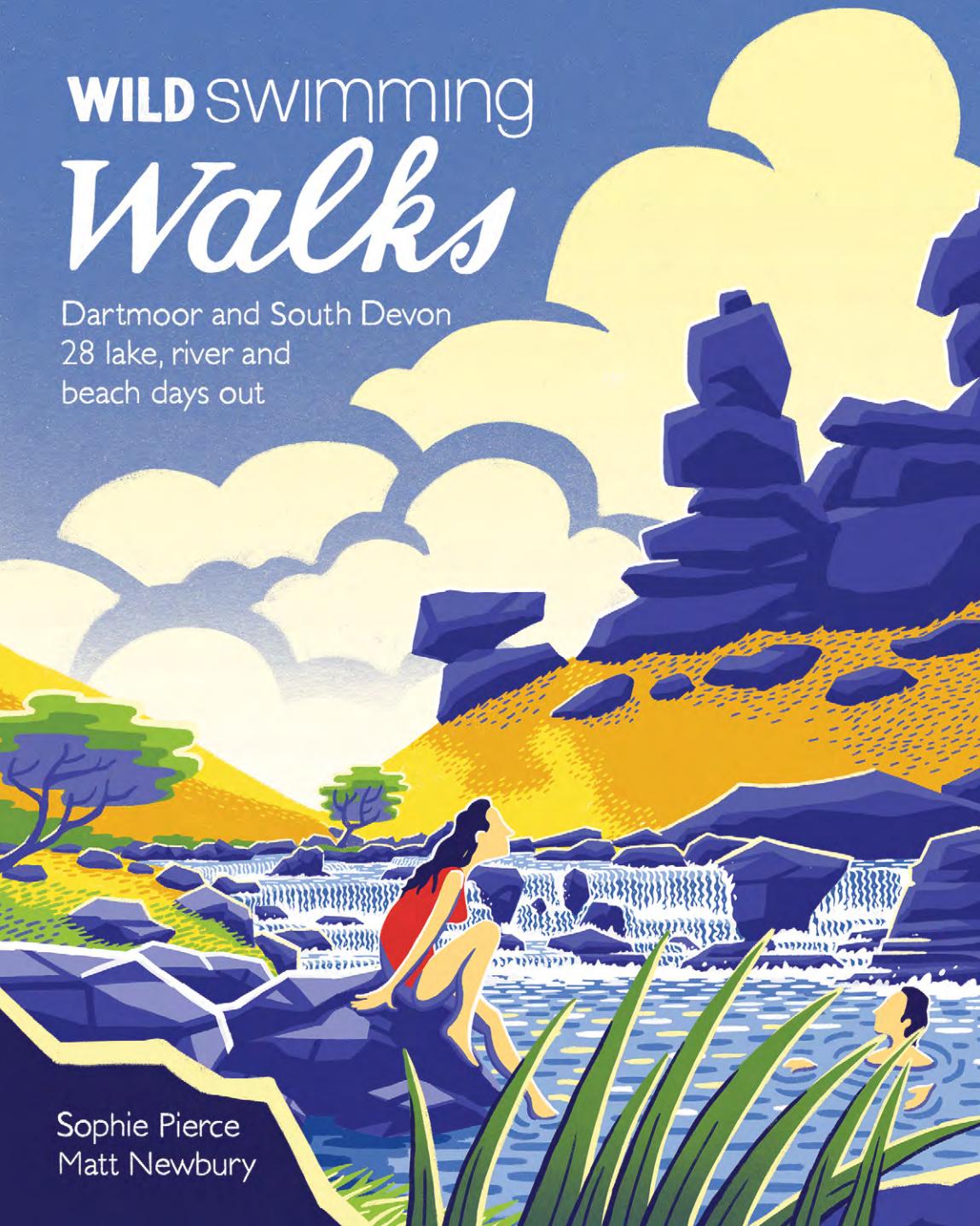


# WILD swimming *Walks*



Dartmoor and South Devon  
28 lake, river and  
beach days out

Sophie Pierce  
Matt Newbury

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28 lake, river and  
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## WILD SWIMMING WALKS

Leads you on 28 adventures into the beautiful scenery and wild swimming paradise of Dartmoor and South Devon. Discover wooded river pools and tumbling waterfalls, secret coves and amazing sea caves, safe in the company of Devon's two most intrepid and fun-loving explorers.

All the walking routes include places to swim and ideas for pubs and refreshments along the route.

**WILD**  
THINGS  
PUBLISHING



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Sophie Pierce lives on the edge of Dartmoor and started the South Devon Wild Swimming Club after getting caught in a rip-current during a New Year's Day dip. She has worked as a reporter for the BBC for 20 years.

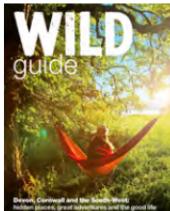
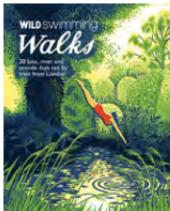


Matt Newbury is a writer and marketing specialist born and raised in Devon. He has completed many swimming challenges including escaping from Alcatraz and swimming to the Isle of Wight.



Sophie and Matt are authors of *Beyond the Beach: the secret wild swims of Torbay*.

If you like *Wild Swimming Walks* you might also like these other titles from [WildThingsPublishing.com](http://WildThingsPublishing.com)



# WILD SWIMMING SAFETY



Great Mattiscombe Sand

**S**plan your walk, taking necessary supplies and protection; don't forget water, a map, compass and waterproofs, especially on the moor.

Remember that cold water can limit your swimming endurance. If it is your first outdoor swim of the season, be careful to enter the water slowly and acclimatise. Stay close to the shore until you are comfortable. Wear a wetsuit for added warmth and buoyancy. Do not overestimate your ability. Remember that the cold water quickly creates hypothermia – shivering is the first stage.

Don't enter water without first establishing an exit point, especially in fast-flowing water. Never jump or dive into water without first checking the depth and whether there are any obstructions. Even if you have jumped/dived there before, always check every time. Large obstructions like tree branches and rocks move about underwater and an area that was previously clear may well be blocked.

Swim in a group wherever possible or, if swimming alone, let people know your movements and take extra special care.

Take extra care following heavy rainfall, when rivers might be in spate and flowing much faster than normal.

Watch out in high surf - rip-currents can form which take you out to sea, to behind the breaking waves. Swim perpendicularly from them to escape, then body-surf back in.

Beware of tidal currents, especially near estuary mouths and around headlands, especially at mid-tide, and on fortnightly spring tides, when flows are strongest.

If you are concerned about water quality, cover cuts and open wounds with plasters and do not swim front crawl.

## TIDES AND WEATHER CONDITIONS FOR SOUTH DEVON

When planning a swim on the South Devon coast, it's very useful to look at the wind forecast as well as the tides. If you want calm water, you need to know which way the wind is coming from. The prevailing winds in Devon are south westerly, and if this is the case, then choose a swim spot that faces east. Conversely, if the winds are easterly, then it's a good idea to pick a west or south west facing beach. The principle here is that you don't want the wind blowing from the sea onto the land, as the sea is more likely to be rough. Tides are of course very important. Before you go, find out what the tide is doing; it is important to know whether it's going out or coming in. The interesting thing to note about tides in South Devon is that on spring tides (the biggest tides, occurring at the time of the full and new moons), high water will always be at about 6pm, while low water will always be at about noon.



## Walk 10

# CRAZYWELL CIRCULAR

This is a spectacular walk, with majestic views of tors and the sea that make you feel as though you are literally on top of the world.

t the start of the walk, as you ascend, you see the grey mass of Down Tor to your right. Don't forget to look behind you every so often for increasingly impressive views of the shiny mirror of Burrator Reservoir spread out below, with Sheeps Tor looming behind it. Just before you turn off the path to get to Crazywell Pool, you will see Crazywell Cross ahead on the brow of the hill. It's believed to be one of several old crosses on the moor which marked a track followed by monks travelling between Buckfast and Tavistock Abbeys. It's one of many ancient crosses which Dartmoor National Park has now microchipped, in order to deter thieves. The plundering of these ancient artefacts has been a real problem in the past.

When you get to Crazywell Pool ③ - which is shaped like an enormous lozenge - it feels rather surreal, almost as though one has stepped into an alien world. The Victorian writer Eden Phillpotts incorporated it into the plot of one of his novels: "Like a cup lies Crazywell upon the waste... a haunt of mystery and a water of power". It has a vast, open feel and one friend describes it as a 'lido on the moor'. The pool is rumoured to be bottomless, probably because its waters are so dark and mysterious, but it's actually only about four metres deep, and is probably the result of tin mining. It has some wonderful legends: that the water level rises and falls with the tides down at Plymouth Sound; that on some nights a voice is heard, announcing the name of the next person from the parish to die; and that on Midsummer's Eve, if you look into the pool, you will see the face of the next person to die. No one knows how it got its outlandish name. In the first OS map of 1809 it appears as Classenwell Pool; other names over the years include Clacywell, Classiwell and

## INFORMATION

**DISTANCE:** 4 miles

**TIME:** 4 hours

**MAP:** OS Explorer Dartmoor OL28

**START POINT:** Norsworthy Bridge north of Burrator Reservoir (SX 567 693, PL20 6PE)

**END POINT:** Norsworthy Bridge

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT:** Only on Sundays: the 48 bus from Plymouth

**SWIMMING:** Crazywell Pool – a large lake high up on the moor (SX 582 704) and Hart Tor Waterfall (SX 575 715)

**PLACES OF INTEREST:** Crazywell Cross, Crazywell Pool, Hart Tor Stone Rows

**REFRESHMENTS:** There are none on the walk, so it's a good idea to bring a picnic. Nearby in Princetown is the Plume of Feathers pub, where you can also camp or stay in their bunkhouse (01822 890240, PL20 6QQ).

Another excellent option is the Fox Tor café in Princetown, legendary for its cake and friendly welcome, which also has a bunkhouse, and you can hire bikes (01822 890238, PL20 6QS).



Clazywell. It is an absolutely magical place to swim. The water is clean, the pool is huge, and the sense of isolation is breathtaking. In this vast spread of water, you can laze as the larks sing overhead, or else put your head down and do some serious lengths.

After your dip, as you head north you'll get to Devonport Leat, which was built in the 1790s to take water down to the docks at Devonport in Plymouth. It's a great example of human ingenuity, channelling water by using gravity to divert it from the freshwater rivers on the high moor, and taking it down to the settlement where it was needed. Just before the leat starts to drop downhill, you can see the clear outlines of the Raddick Hill prehistoric huts enclosed by a perimeter wall, just down the slope to the left. There are two really clear hut circles right by the leat, and it is easy to imagine the Bronze Age village of small thatched huts surrounded by its protective wall.

As you start to descend down the leat, note the distinctive tor on the valley side opposite. It's Black Tor, though we've rechristened it 'Barbara Hepworth Tor' as the stones are reminiscent of her famous sculptures. There is a logan stone on top, which can be rocked. There are various logan stones on Dartmoor, which are naturally occurring due to weathering in the rock. There are various legends around them, including that the Druids used them in their worship.

The next stop on the walk is a charming small waterfall on the Hart Tor Brook ⑤. It's a perfect place for a picnic and a plunge. Surrounded by small trees, and in a little hollow, it feels like an enchanted spot. Five minutes further uphill, and across the Brook, there are the Hart Tor stone rows and circles ⑥, a good example of a Bronze Age monument. There are two stone rows, one double and one single, each with a circle at the end containing a cairn. The rows were first mentioned by Samuel Rowe in his *Perambulation of Dartmoor* in 1848, where he describes them as a









"pair of avenues...about two and a half feet high", and observes: "It is somewhat remarkable that these avenues have escaped entire demolition, as they are intersected diagonally by an old stream work." The stream work he mentions refers to tin mining, which undoubtedly led to the destruction of parts of this ancient monument. It is still quite shocking today to see how those tin miners were quite happy to drive their course right through the middle of the stone row. Nevertheless, it is much visited, and has been much discussed in archaeological literature, although no one really knows why our forefathers built these fascinating stone rows.

After exploring the rows, you head back to the leat passing the aqueduct which is known locally as the Iron Bridge. Follow it down through the plantation and past ruined Leather Tor Farm ⑧. The farm – which dates back to the medieval period – was abandoned in the 1920s because it was in the catchment area for the then new Burrator Reservoir, and the owners did not want any farming in the area. It's a reminder of just how much influence man has had on Dartmoor; we tend to think of it as a wild, untamed place, but creations like the reservoirs have had a major effect on the landscape.

Just after the farm, as you turn left and start walking downhill towards the bridge, look out for a cave on the left that looks rather like a Hobbit hole. The cavern extends back over thirty feet, and may originally have been dug by tinners to store their tools. More recently it was used by the occupants of Leather Tor Farm to store potatoes.

The final water crossing of the walk is over Leather Tor Bridge, the last clapper bridge to be built on Dartmoor, in 1833. There has been a crossing here since Bronze Age times, when there was (and still is) a ford and stepping stones, a few of which are still in the river.

# DIRECTIONS

1 Take the well-defined track uphill to the north east from Norsworthy Bridge and keep bearing right at the first and second forks in the track. After about 20 minutes you leave the forest behind and the track continues onto the open moor. After another 5 to 10 minutes, you will see a stone cross – Cazywell Cross – on the ridge in front of you.

**1.2 miles**

2 Then you will see a very large ditch to your left, with a stream running through it and across the path. Turn immediately left here and follow the ditch uphill to Cazywell Pool.

**0.1 miles**

3 After a cold swim, head north up hill and you will hit Devonport Leat. Cross the leat (there are several small bridges) and follow it to the west, eventually dropping sharply down the hillside.

**0.8 miles**

4 Halfway down the hill, take an indistinct path to the right, walking north with the River Meavy in the valley below to your left.

**0.1 miles**

5 After about 10 minutes you will reach the Hart Tor Brook Waterfall. Cross the brook via the top of the waterfall, or a little metal bridge slightly further up, and head north for about 180 metres until you reach the stone rows.

**0.1 miles**

6 From the stone rows, head south by the Meavy until you pass the aqueduct on your left, and follow the leat all the way to the plantation.

**0.6 miles**

7 At a gate, join the forest track signposted Crossgate and Yennadon which continues to follow the leat. After about five minutes, take the path branching off to the left downhill, signposted Leather Tor Farm.

**0.7 miles**

8 At the farm, go through the gate ahead and turn left down the track, signposted Older Bridge. In fact the first bridge you come to is Leather Tor Bridge. Cross the bridge and then turn right, signposted Norsworthy Bridge.

**0.1 miles**

9 Follow the track as it runs parallel to the River Meavy down-stream. Re-join the track you set out on at the start and turn right to come back to the car park.

**0.4 miles**

