



Vixen Tor

Although not so high above sea-level, Vixen Tor is one of the tallest tors on Dartmoor. Unfortunately, its recent purchaser has declared it out-of-bounds to the public. So, for the time-being, admire it from afar.

Merrivale Quarry

Opened in 1875. This was the last of the large quarries on the Moor. At its peak in the early 1900's it employed around 150 men. Before it closed a few years ago its main activity had switched from quarrying to preparing high quality facing stone imported from all over the world for use in prestigious commercial buildings. Its last jobs included the war memorial on the Falkland Islands and the granite to repave Trafalgar Square.

WILDLIFE

Damselflies

Seen from June to August, they flutter rather than dart like the larger Dragonflies. In flight their slender bodies glint like metal.

Dwarf Oaks

Grazing animals could not get at the seedlings growing from the crevices between the rocks of Hucken Tor. The prevailing winds stunted the young trees' growth and, over the years, these dwarfed oaks became the area's natural form of oak.

Whortleberries

Or Bilberries or lots of other local names carry greenish pink flowers in late spring followed by delicious purple fruit in early autumn.

Birds

As you cross the river at Ward Bridge watch for Dipper, Grey Wagtail and, possibly, Kingfisher. The woods near here are home to the Greater Spotted Woodpecker. On the open moor by Pew Tor and Vixen Tor you may see Wheatear and perhaps a Kestrel.

The wooded area around Hucken Tor is ideal habitat for Jay, Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Blue Tit, Great Tit and Coal Tit.



Walk No.7 EGGWORTHY / WITHILL, SAMPFORD SPINEY, MERRIVALE CIRCULAR



Pew Tor

Distance	5 miles
Time	3 hours

Description This walk includes quiet country lanes, ancient trackways, and footpaths over open moorland and farmland.

Difficulties? The only steepish climb is that along the road out of the valley from Ward Bridge. The "optional extra" ascent to the top of Pew Tor is gradual and relatively painless (and well worth the effort!).

Crossing the stream by Vixen Tor involves no more a longish stride or, in the case of those with very little legs, a small jump.

Toilets, refreshments The Dartmoor Inn at Merrivale has the usual facilities at the usual times of the day.

Start point Start the walk at whatever point on the route is convenient for you. To avoid complicating the walk directions it is assumed that the starting point is the crossroads between Withill and Eggworthy. There is space to park cars 200 yards or so from the crossroads on the open moorland towards Cripotor.



Walk Directions

From the crossroads between Withill and Eggworthy go downhill to Ward Bridge. Follow the road across the bridge and proceed uphill past cottages on the left-hand side. After crossing a cattle grid turn immediate right uphill along a rough-surfaced lane.

At the end of this lane, at the junction with the road you have a choice of route.

Either

Route A. If you have had enough road walking, turn right through the gate next to the drive to "Stoneycroft" and go along the enclosed lane (signed "footpath" and waymarked yellow). Go through the gate at the end of the lane into a field. Walk alongside the left-hand side of the field and go ahead through the next gate. Continue in the same direction and cross a high stile into the next field. Go diagonally left across this field to another stile. Go across this field to a gate in the opposite corner, turn left past the farmhouse (Gees Farm) and turn right into the road.

Or

Route B

If you do not mind another half mile on the road and would like to see Sampford Spiney church and the ancient manor house turn right along the road in front of "Stoneycroft". Ignore the road going downhill on your left. The church, green and manor house are on your left. Continue along the road and after sharp right and left bends you will pass Gees Farm and the exit from Route A.

As the road reaches open moorland and bears left, turn right along the minor road and then immediately left up the track signed "Pewtor Cottage only". Follow this broad track as it passes Pewtor Cottage on the left and climbs alongside **Pew Tor**.

As the track starts to bear right, away from Pew Tor, decide if you are going to visit the top of the tor. If so, turn left along the clear path that goes directly to the top. Having reached the top admire the rocky mass and the views while getting back your breath before returning downhill along the path to regain the track.

Continue along the track as it winds gradually uphill before descending alongside the wall to cross the stream issuing out of the mire on your left.

Shortly after crossing the stream a stile once gave access over the wall on your right to **Vixen Tor**.

(Regrettably, the enclosed land which includes the tor has recently changed hands and the new owner has prohibited access. However, in the hope that she may have a change of heart, the following directions are still included)- A visit to the tor is worthwhile. This time, however, no climbing is needed as the view of the tor itself rather than the view from its top is the attraction. It has a unique atmosphere.

From the stile continue in your original direction keeping the wall to your right until you reach the road. Turn right downhill past the entrance to the **Merrivale Quarry** (now disused). Pass, or call in at, the Dartmoor Inn and, after crossing the road bridge over the River Walkham, turn right through the gate into the signed track alongside "Hillside".

Continue along the track as it crosses a small bridge across a stream. Watch out for a scintillating display of **damsel flies** here during the summer. This ancient track then climbs slightly through the trees before reaching a gate alongside huge boulders. This is Hucken Tor whose granite mass, described by William Crossing (1909) as "so delightfully shrouded in **dwarf oaks** and mountain ash, tufts of heather, and patches of the bright green **whortleberry plants**, that they present an appearance that cannot fail to enchant the beholder".

Through the gate the track descends giving beautiful views of the Walkham Valley to your right. After going through a series of three gates you arrive at Daveytown and the metalled road which will take you back to the crossroads where you turn left towards Criptor and your transport.