

BAT TRAIL-3

A walk around Branscombe



Photo: View of the beach

Branscombe sits in the bottom of a series of narrow river valleys with woodland on the steeper slopes and a patchwork of small fields surrounded by big Devon hedges. This attractive landscape is ideal for the rare greater horseshoe bats which live here. These fascinating bats need landscapes with lots of connected hedges, streams and woodland edges so they can easily find their way in the dark using echolocation to get around; they prefer not to fly out in the open where they can easily get lost.

These traditionally-farmed woodlands and open fields are ideal for bats. There are important roosts of greater horseshoe, lesser horseshoe and brown long-eared bats in the valley. There are also Bechstein's, Barbastelle and Daubenton's bats as well as all three pipistrelle species.

Look out for bats if you do this walk on a summer's evening, some bats come out at dusk, like the noctule, but others including the greater horseshoe bat wait until dark. This walk will take you through some great 'batty' places, so look out for the different things described in the directions along your walk.

**DEVON
GREATER
HORSESHOE
BAT PROJECT**



ROUTE INFO	
Start:	Branscombe Village Hall
Distance and timings:	2 miles (approximately 1.5 hours)
Circular Walk:	Yes
Terrain & Description of paths	Steep slopes, not suitable for wheelchairs
Obstacles and Gradients:	Steps and stiles
Public Transport:	Bus service 899 Sidmouth - Axmouth
Toilets:	Village Hall/Branscombe Mouth
Refreshment Facilities:	Café/Pubs in Branscombe Café at Branscombe Mouth
OS Map:	Explorer 115 and 116 or Landranger 192
Grid Reference and postcode:	SY 197 886 EX12 3DB



Photo: Branscombe barn



Photo: Phil Richardson



Photo: Frank Greenaway



Photo: Cattle grazing



Photo: Orchard trees

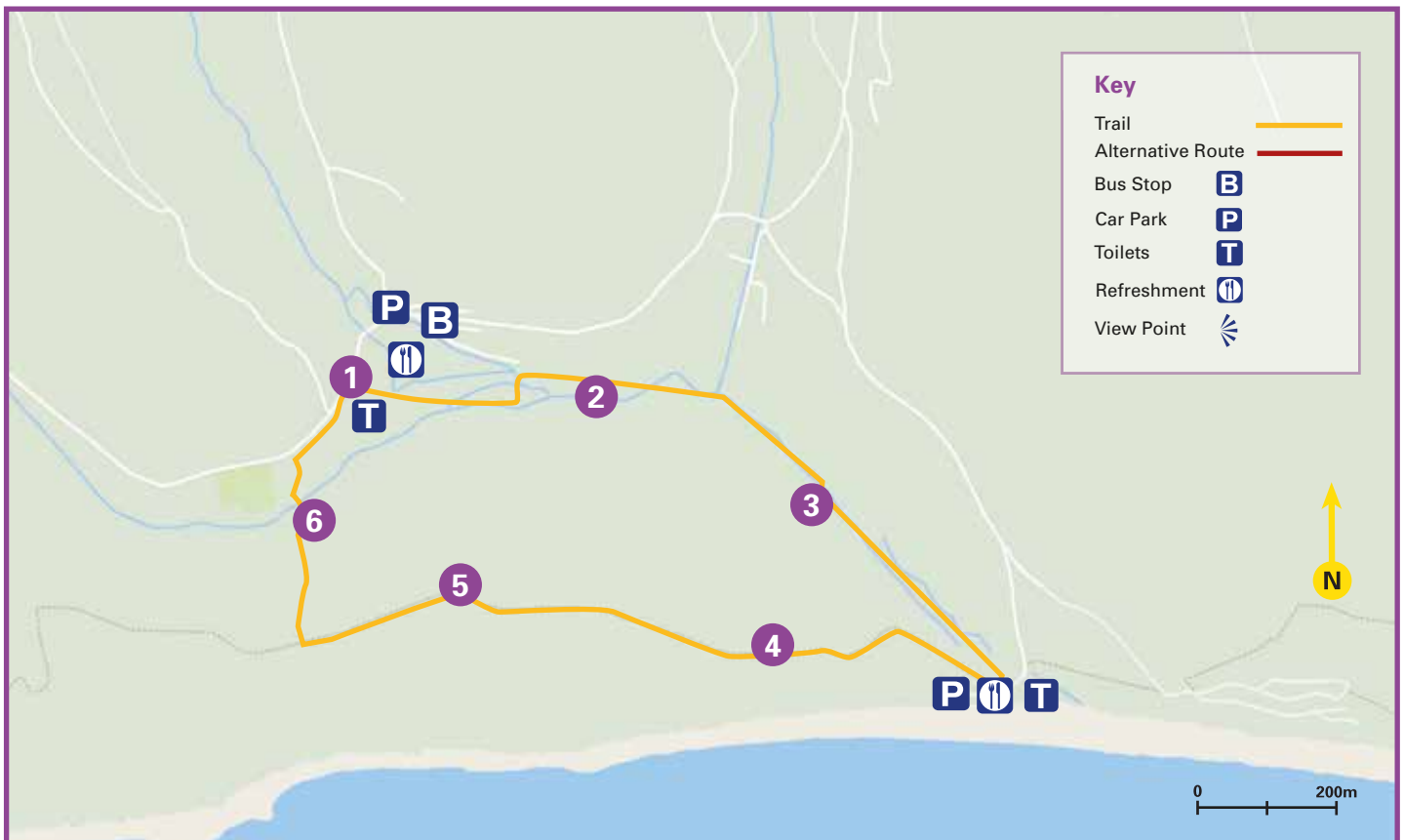


Devon
Wildlife Trust



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DIRECTIONS

- 1** Park at Branscombe Village Hall and turn right along the road to start your walk by the Old Bakery Café. Enter the orchard by the cafe and walk to the Water Mill. On your right is a dilapidated open barn, perfect for roosting bats. Turn left past the buildings and down to the road.
- 2** Turn right down the footpath, past the farm buildings and walk alongside the water meadows with grazing cattle and sheep and high hedges on the left. Greater horseshoe bats rely on cow pats to provide a home for one of their favourite foods – dung beetles! They will use the hedges for navigating through the landscape, but they will also perch on the lower branches while they eat their prey. Cross the bridge and continue towards the sea.
- 3** Take the path leading off to the right across a steep field. At the top sit on the bench and admire the views across the valley to the cliff edges which contain cracks and caves that bats might roost in. Beer Quarry cave, a bit further inland from here, is an internationally important roost for hibernating bats. They like to overwinter in caves as they generally have a constant temperature and humidity allowing the bats to expend minimal energy, and not dry out whilst they hibernate.
- 4** Go through the gate onto the National Trust land and follow the path to the right as it slopes upwards through woodland. This path is fairly steep with wooden steps in places. Woodland edges also provide good feeding grounds for bats. Insects congregate in sheltered areas, almost like a bat buffet! At the top the trees overhang the path making a dark tunnel. Continue until you come to a gate, ignoring the stile to the right.
- 5** Go through the gate and continue along the path. After approximately 1/4 mile take the narrow path on the right, this can be difficult to see. This path leads down a gentle slope, cross over a stile and as it gets steeper take the wooden steps going down, winding among the trees.
- 6** Follow the hedge on the left and at the bottom of the field cross the bridge over the small stream and take the stile into the churchyard. Churches and old buildings can be perfect bat roosts for many bat species. Greater horseshoe bats need to be able to fly straight into their roost and hang upside down, meaning that they can't roost in trees or bat boxes. But churches, barns, caves and mines make great homes for them. Come out of the churchyard and walk right along the road back to the Village Hall.