

Access Opportunities on the Defence Estate

Dartmoor Devon



A unique opportunity to explore the wild, rugged moorland of Dartmoor.

Dartmoor is an area where the wildness of remote moorland remains undiminished. The MOD supports the National Park Authority's promotion of the understanding and enjoyment of Dartmoor's special qualities. The moorland's open expanse invites walkers to choose their own routes. The following therefore gives a general description of the area and access opportunities, rather than specific walks.

Grade: 

(Dependent on the walk undertaken. Generally the high moorland terrain is rough, heather moorland with boggy areas, granite outcrops and steep valleys.)

OS map sheet(s)

OS Landranger Sheet 191 (1:50,000)
OS Outdoor Leisure Sheet 28 (1:25,000)

Starting Grid Reference: Meldon Parking Area
GR 562 917



Site description / history

Dartmoor has a unique beauty and wildness quality that is justly famous. The landscape is dotted with many dramatic granite tors and other geological features. The climate of Dartmoor is dominated by south westerly winds, which are cool and wet, with the high moorlands of the north west being more susceptible to severe climatic conditions.

There are many prime examples of archaeological features, which record the history of man's use of the moor, spanning time from Bronze Age burial mounds through medieval field systems to tin working remains and military structures. Farming remains the principal

land use. Commoners grazing sheep, cattle and ponies continue to contribute to Dartmoor's outstanding landscape.

Military training has taken place on Dartmoor since the early 1800s, being used intensively for exercises with live ammunition during the Second World War. Today the MOD uses (by freehold, lease or licence) approximately 12,760 hectares of the National Park's 94,400 hectares designated in 1951. The Dartmoor Training Area is used for light forces' exercises, mostly for Royal Marines and other units based in the south west.

The Dartmoor Commons Act 1985 allows public access by foot or horse for recreational purposes over all unenclosed common land on Dartmoor. In addition, the National Park Authority has negotiated access agreements with landowners on most other unenclosed moorland including MOD's freehold land at Willsworthy. The public therefore has access rights over the Dartmoor Training Area except when the Ranges are notified for live firing.

Parts of three Training Areas are used for live firing: Okehampton, Merrivale and Willsworthy. (See map).

When this land is not in use for live firing, it is used for dry training with blank ammunition and although the noise of training may be heard, no restrictions are placed on the public roaming over the open moor. There are smaller Training Areas at Cramber and Ringmoor, which lie to the south east of Tavistock, used for dry training that does not affect public access.

Walk description

Dartmoor offers endless opportunities for walkers. No specific walks have been recommended as you can wander freely across expanses of open moorland except when live firing is notified.

The Dartmoor National Park Authority organises an extensive and varied programme of guided walks throughout the year. A large proportion of the guided walks starting points are accessible by public transport and walks are free if you show your local public transport travel ticket to the guide.

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Points of interest

- As you roam across the moorland you will encounter many rich wildlife habitats, in addition to the dramatic granite features characteristic of Dartmoor's landscape. These granite features include tors and clitter slopes, which have been formed through the weathering of the granite over the last ten million years. There are over 160 tors on Dartmoor, of which the highest are High Willhays (2,038 ft/621m) and Yes Tor (2,027/618m).
- Other popular areas, which lie within the Range Danger Areas are Cranmere Pool (Okehampton); Tavy Cleave (Willsworthy); and Cut Hill (Merrivale) (See map).
- Black Tor Copse, National Nature Reserve, a high altitude oak woodland is accessible from the car park at Meldon Reservoir.
- Archaeological remains are to be found, including Bronze Age burial mounds, prehistoric standing stones, stone circles, medieval field systems, tinworking remains and military structures.
- There are many unusual species of wildlife including Bogbean and Sundew amongst the moorland flora. The barren conditions of Dartmoor support arctic bird species on the southern edge of their range, eg Dunlin and Golden Plover.
- The famous activity of 'letterboxing' is also unique to Dartmoor and you may see evidence of letterboxes when out walking, the most wellknown one being at Cranmere Pool.

Restrictions / access times

Merrivale, Okehampton and Willsworthy Training Areas may be used for live firing on a limited number of specified days each year. When live firing is not notified, the public has access over the three Range Danger Areas even though other forms of training may be taking place. Firing times need to be checked and warning signals heeded when wishing to walk within these Ranges.

The perimeter of each Range Danger Area is marked on the ground by warning notices on red and white posts. When firing is in progress (on either one, two or all three Ranges) warning Signals - red flags by day and red lamps by night - are displayed at certain points appropriate to each range. Entry into the Range Danger Areas displaying warning signs is prohibited and is of course dangerous. Please note that the Range Danger Area boundaries abut each other. If firing occurs on two or three Ranges there is no safe passage between those Ranges. When no warning signals are displayed it is quite safe to enter the Danger Area of that specific Range.

Firing times are notified in the local press on the preceding Friday. Notices are displayed in neighbouring police stations, information centres, libraries and most public houses and camp sites. Information is also available on Freephone 0800 4584868. Updated information is broadcast daily, every morning on BBC Radio Devon.

Firing may be cancelled at short notice, after the publication of the firing notices, even if the red flags are not flying by 9:00 am from April to September inclusive, and by 10:00 am from October to March inclusive, no live firing will take place that day.

Dry training involves various forms of tactical training, sometimes with vehicle and helicopter support. Exercises often use blank ammunition and other simulators to represent the noise of battle. As no projectiles are fired, you are free to roam. The Servicemen will try not to inconvenience you but, if an attack or defence is taking place, you may be asked by a sentry to avoid a particular area.



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Safety

- Merrivale, Okehampton and Willsworthy Ranges are used by the Armed Forces for live firing in limited periods. During these notified periods public access to a Range Danger Area is prohibited for your own safety.
- Notices on red and white poles indicate the Range Danger Area boundaries.
- Use of the Ranges is indicated by warning signals (red flags by day and red lamps by night) hoisted on prominent physical features, not necessarily on the boundaries.
- There is unexploded ordnance on Dartmoor as most of the moor was used in the past for live firing. Do not touch any military debris, it may be dangerous. If you encounter suspicious objects, mark the area, note the location and inform the police. (Tel: 08705 777444)
- Because of the danger from unexploded munitions, you are not allowed to dig or search for munitions or remove any projectile.
- Due to the rugged terrain and the changeable weather conditions on Dartmoor, walkers and riders should be well prepared and take appropriate precautions before setting out.
- Visitors are asked to comply at all times with the instructions contained on the Ministry of Defence Information Boards, and the Military and National Park byelaws. These are located at popular access points to the Training Areas.

How to get there

Dartmoor is well serviced by public transport. A detailed Dartmoor Discovery Guide is produced annually by Devon County Council and provides information on bus services to and around Dartmoor as well as details of walks that are accessible by public transport, and places to stay in the area. For other travel information contact Traveline on 0870 608 2608 (local call rate) or www.traveline.org.uk

Local facilities

There are car parking facilities in Okehampton, Belstone, Meldon, Lydford, Tavistock, Princetown and Postbridge, and two car parks on the B3357 to the east and west of Merrivale.

Information is available from:

- High Moorland Visitor Centre, Princetown 01822 890414
- Haytor Information Centre 01364 661520
- Postbridge Information Centre 01822 880272
- Ivybridge Tourist Information Centre 01752 897035
- Okehampton Tourist Information Centre 01837 53020
- Tavistock Tourist Information Centre 01822 612938
- Village Information Points, which operate from some shops, Post Offices, cafes and pubs within the National Park.

Useful contact details

For further information on the military's interest in Dartmoor, please contact the Commandant Dartmoor Training Area at Okehampton Camp on 01837 650010. The firing programme is available at www.dartmoor-ranges.co.uk and on Freephone 0800 458 4868.

Information about Dartmoor and the publications below is available from www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk or Dartmoor National Park Authority's High Moorland Visitor Centre.

Other useful publications

Dartmoor National Park Authority Dartmoor Walks Booklet and Walking on Dartmoor. **A Guide for Walkers and Riders on Dartmoor's Military Ranges and Training Area** A joint DNPA / MOD leaflet. Available from Commandant Dartmoor Training Area and Information Centres in the National Park.

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ACCESS AT ALL TIMES

Roads

WARNING SIGNS

FLAGS - Day

LAMPS - Night

MOD LANDS

Training Area

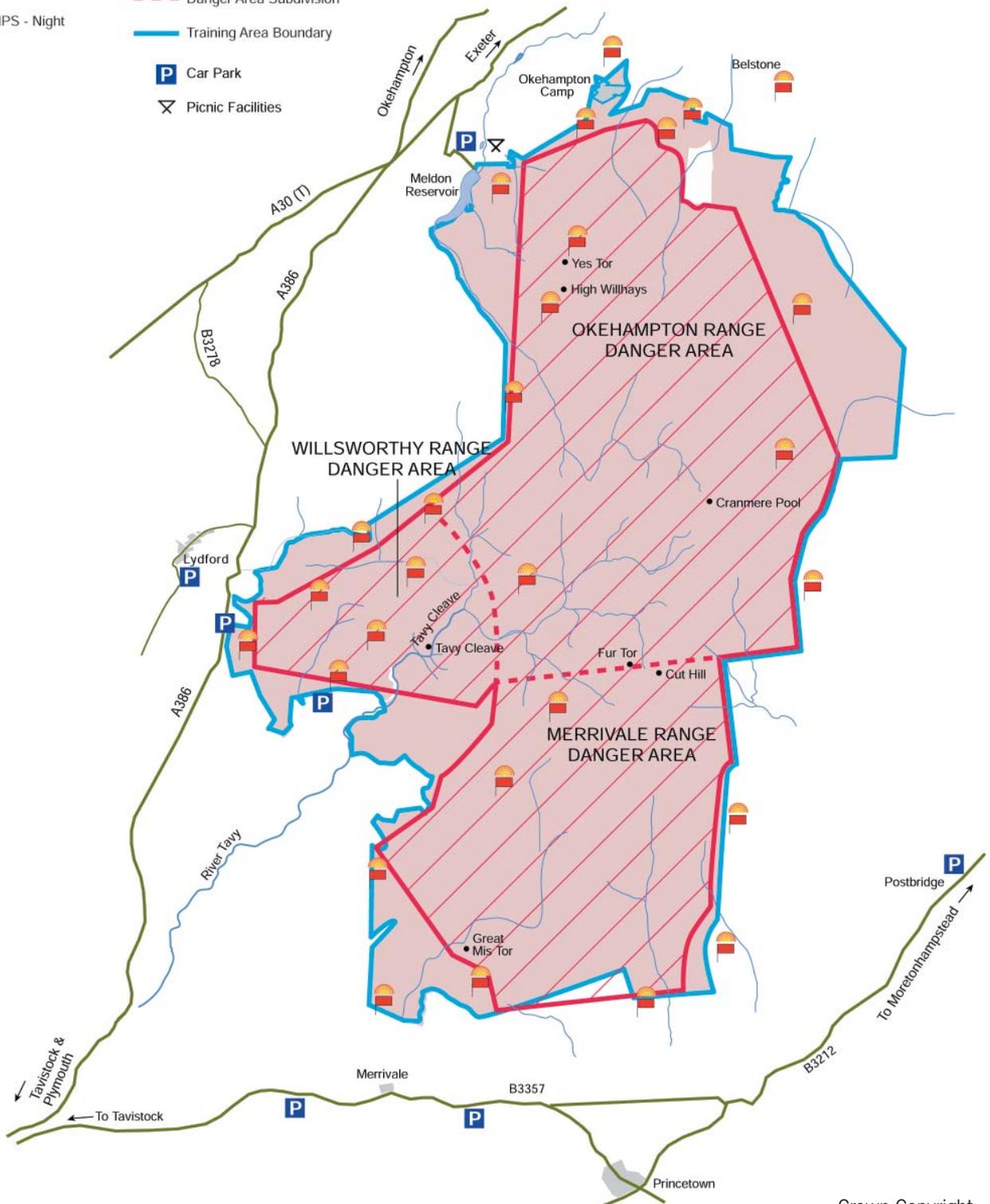
Live Firing Range
Danger Area

Danger Area Subdivision

Training Area Boundary

Car Park

Picnic Facilities



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