



6 walks with cosy pubs

Check out these walking routes
with cosy pubs en route

WORDS: Simone Stanbrook-Byrne

The days are growing shorter and the elements are not always encouraging for a walk, but getting out there into the weather for a good yomp makes the winter feel far more manageable. And having somewhere at the end of the walk which offers refuge from the weather, and perhaps good food by an open fire, is all the more enticing.

I believe all these inns are dog-friendly, but if you're taking Fido, just check to make sure that that's still the case.

The walk suggestions are précised, so be sure to have the correct map along with stout boots and spare socks. Pick a pub and off you go.

**THE QUEENS ARMS,
CORTON DENHAM**
DT9 4LR

MAP: OS EXPLORER 129 YEOVIL
& SHERBORNE 1:25 000

The first time I visited this place, with grimy boots and a very wet dog, I feared I'd be too grubby for such a smart venue – but was greeted with a 'muddy boots and dogs welcome'. What joy! Dogs of every conceivable shape and size carpeted the stone-flagged floor.

A region of history and mighty hills, the village is well-placed for paths up to both Corton Ridge, to the west, and Corton Hill, to the east. The views are tremendous, and the OS map shows plenty of options for planning a circular walk, or you can simply enjoy a there-and-back yomp to these high airy places, stroll along the expansive tops and return to the pub for a warm-up. You could also head north, beyond Parrock Hill to the remarkable Cadbury Castle, which boasts one of the longest records of human occupation of any hillfort in the country. ▶

LEFT: Cosy at The Queens Arms, Corton Denham

‘Wellow and Combe Hay are delightful villages of mellow-coloured stone houses’

THE DEVONSHIRE ARMS, LONG SUTTON

TA10 9LP

MAP: OS EXPLORER 129
YEovil & SHERBORNE
1:25,000

It was a joy to discover this lovely pub, temporarily styled within a historic hunting lodge. Friendly, welcoming – and if you come back in summer it has good places to sit outside.

Set in the Somerset Levels, the area is well-supplied with footpaths and far-reaching views. For a four-mile circuit, follow the track (Ilchester Lane) from Sutton Cross, then join the first footpath heading east to Knole. From here follow the path steeply up and over Knole Hill and then continue west to Little Load. From Load Bridge follow the path beside the River Yeo heading north-west (river to your left so you’re on the correct side!). After a mile join the footpath going right that runs alongside Main Lake Drain, which is far more picturesque than it sounds. This will bring you back to Long Sutton.

THE NOTLEY ARMS, MONKSILVER

TA4 4JB

MAP: OS EXPLORER OL9
EXMOOR 1:25 000

A really delightful pub with open fires, delicious food and a great ambience. There are various options on footpaths – the village is surrounded by possibilities. For a four-and-a-half mile circuit head east to Stogumber and then west back to Monksilver (you can choose different paths and lanes so you’re not retracing too much). Enjoy tremendous views – you can see Wales on a clear day – and in Stogumber you also have the option of The White Horse Inn, TA4 3TS.

THE FOX & BADGER, WELLOW

BA28QG

MAP: OS EXPLORER 142
SHEPTON MALLET & MENDIP
HILLS EAST 1:25,000

Another well-placed pub for walkers situated right at the southern end of the Cotswolds. This is one of those routes that, as soon as I’d walked it, I wanted to do it all over again. Wellow and Combe Hay are delightful villages of mellow-coloured stone houses surrounded by tranquil countryside and linked by lovely-to-walk footpaths.

A suggested four-mile route is to follow footpaths north-east to Middle Twinhoe, then the bridleway heading west to Combe Hay. Walk along the road through the village then take the footpath heading south to Underdown Wood. Bath Hill brings you back down to Wellow.

THE CANDLELIGHT INN, BISHOPSWOOD

TA20 3RS

MAP: OS EXPLORER 128
TAUNTON & BLACKDOWN
HILLS 1:25 000

Another great inn, and this one has a footpath running right through its garden. This walk is three miles of lovely views and farmland footpaths – but it does require concentration and careful map-reading. The walk heads north, through the Jan Hobbs Nature Reserve, to South Hill and Cross Hill Farms, then continues north towards Blindmoor. Before reaching it, join the footpath heading through Lower Colley and Colley Farms. Cross the road then continue past Moorseek Farm. Follow the footpath heading south-east, back towards the Candlelight Inn and a short retrace back to the start point. ▶



RIGHT:
The Devonshire Arms, Long Sutton

BELOW:
A warm welcome at The Notley Arms



Photos: Simone Stanbrook-Byrne



Photo: Simone Stanbrook-Byrne



FAREWELL....

It has been a pleasure to share walks with you for the past nine years. Together we have wandered waterways, plodded paths, ambled up hills and soaked up the atmosphere of fields and forests. I've also spent nine years of intermittently battling with the council to try and encourage

better maintenance of Somerset's footpath infrastructure, a battle which, to put it gently, has sometimes been a bit of a struggle - so often paths disappear into impenetrable hedges or are blocked to thwart walkers; stiles have collapsed and signage is mysteriously missing. It's

now time to hand over the boots to someone else. But I'm pleased to say that I'll still be appearing from time to time in the pages of *Somerset Life*. So, see you anon - and thanks for all the lovely feedback I've had over the years. Simone
Editor's note: Somerset Life will still be running its walks section.



High Exmoor paths around Winsford

‘It’s at the heart of a tranquil Exmoor village, a great hub for walking and lots of choice of routes’

**THE ROYAL OAK,
WINSFORD**

TA24 7JE

MAP: OS EXPLORER OL9
EXMOOR 1:25 000

This is a lovely pub, restored to its old-world charm after substantial fire damage on three separate occasions: 1984, 1995 and 2001. It’s at the heart of a tranquil Exmoor village, a great hub for walking and lots of choice of

routes – some will require open-moorland navigation.

A five-and-a-half mile walk heads west out of Winsford on the road, joining the footpath heading across Withycombe Farm and then climbing to the rim of the Devil’s Punchbowl. Bridleways, and then Halse Lane, bring you back to the village (for a short cut) or, for the full-length walk, follow

tracks to Folly, then take the footpath that eventually runs back to Winsford via secretive Yellowcombe – ancestors of a friend of mine once lived in remote Yellowcombe Cottage.

An alternative five-miler ambles beside the young River Exe to Nethercote Farms, then follows bridleways and footpaths back over Bye Common and Bye Hill. ♦