

Dartmoor: Tors & Hidden Valleys

Naturetrek Photography Tour

Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Meet Exeter; transfer Dartmoor
-
- Day 2/3** Photography excursions around Dartmoor
-
- Day 4** Return to Exeter after lunch
-

Departs

October

Focus

Day and night time landscape photography

Grading

B. Moderate day walks.

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code GBR55)

Highlights:

- Based in a comfortable hotel in the heart of Dartmoor National Park
- Spectacular scenery including tors, waterfalls and the mysterious Wistman's Wood
- Prehistoric and medieval monuments
- Landscapes and astrophotography under the night sky (weather permitting)
- Led by expert wildlife and landscape photographer Robert Harvey



From top: Great Mis Tor, looking to Great Staple Tor; Hawthorn trees and Sheeps Tor; East Dart River, Dartmeet.
All images © Robert Harvey)



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Introduction

This tour will enable photographers at all levels to make outstanding images of one of the wildest and most evocative parts of southern England. Based in a comfortable hotel in the heart of Dartmoor National Park, we will enjoy a full programme of photographic excursions, from early in the morning until after sunset.

The high granite Tors, the little-known valley of Tavy Cleave, mysterious Wistman's Wood, Medieval clapper bridges and prehistoric stone rows all make excellent photographic subjects, and as landscape photography can be productive in a wide variety of weather conditions, our itinerary will be flexible to make the best use of the conditions we encounter.

The tour is timed to coincide with early autumn colour and the possibility of early morning autumn mist in Dartmoor's valleys. Weather permitting, the holiday will also include an opportunity for a little astrophotography on one evening. Dartmoor benefits from some of the darkest skies in southern England and the holiday is timed to coincide with a gibbous moon which will provide foreground light without overwhelming the stars. Using one of the most spectacular and accessible Tors as foreground, we hope to make images of the stars, Milky Way and star trails.



Wistman's Wood (Robert Harvey)

Photographer-leader: Robert Harvey

Robert Harvey is a zoologist and professional photographer. In 2010 he was awarded the Associateship of the Royal Photographic Society for his work on coastal landscapes. In 2015 he gained the Excellence award of the Fédération Internationale de l'Art Photographique for his portfolio of 115 wildlife and landscape images that have been accepted in international exhibitions around the world. Robert joined Naturetrek in 2016 to share his passion for the natural world with aspiring photographers. He plans trips carefully, in order to optimise lighting, time of day, seasons, tides and the positions of the sun and moon. All his tours provide opportunities to learn new photographic techniques, for example making share images of birds in flight, capturing mammalian behaviour, stitching panoramas, high dynamic range, focus stacking and post-processing. For more information on Robert's photography and to view some of his stunning image galleries, visit www.naturalworldphotography.net.

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

We meet at Exeter St David's railway station today at around midday, before transferring by minibus to the Two Bridges Hotel set in the heart of Dartmoor. This afternoon, we will visit Wistman's Wood, an ancient oak woodland of gnarled and twisted trunks, granite boulders and luxuriant moss. This intriguing landscape presents unusual photographic challenges but with perseverance there are great compositions to be found. Back at our hotel this evening, we will enjoy a presentation on photographing the Dartmoor landscape and astrophotography techniques.

Day 2

We will start this morning before dawn with a visit to Great Mis Tor to catch the best light around sunrise, returning to our hotel for breakfast.

The main part of the day will then be devoted to exploring Tavy Cleave in west Dartmoor, a hidden heather-clad valley with a stream and delightful waterfalls. On our return to base we will stop to photograph Merrivale stone row and stone circle, one of Dartmoor's most accessible prehistoric sites.



Tavy Cleave (Robert Harvey)

After a late afternoon meal, we will ascend Great Staple Tor for sunset and, provided the sky is clear, our first try at a little astrophotography. Please note that our success will be very much dependent on the weather, and so if cloud cover is mixed during our stay in Dartmoor, we will pick the clearest night for our astrophotography excursion.

Day 3

We begin this morning with a gentle exploration of a Medieval Clapper Bridge before breakfast. We will then head to the western fringes of Dartmoor to hike into Lydford Gorge, to photograph Whitelady Waterfall and the Devil's Cauldron. In the afternoon we will explore Brentor, an outlying tor with a beautifully-placed church on its summit. We will photograph Brentor from both the summit and its base.



Left: Church of St Michael de Rupe, Brentor. Right: Staple Tor and the Milky Way (both by Robert Harvey)

Day 4

On our final morning we will hike into a well-hidden gorge to photograph Venford Falls (please note that the route into and out of the gorge is fairly steep). Though modest in size, these twin falls tumble into a gorge of luxuriant ferns and mosses which makes an especially pleasing composition. After reviewing the group's images, we return to Exeter after lunch.

Tour grading

Grade B – Moderate day walks. Photography on Dartmoor requires some ascents and we will be traversing rough terrain at times. We travel by minibus most days, but will spend plenty of the time exploring on foot, expecting to cover up to 5 km each day. Enjoyment of this tour, therefore, demands a reasonable level of fitness and an enjoyment of walking. All walks will be taken at a leisurely pace, and a built-in flexibility will take account of the overall abilities of the group.

Focus

This is a specialist photography holiday aimed at competent amateur photographers. We will spend time on foot reaching inspiring landscapes in order to provide excellent photographic opportunities.



Photographing Venford Falls (Robert Harvey)

Food & accommodation included in the price

This holiday is based at the Two Bridges Hotel in Dartmoor, where all rooms have en-suite facilities. All food is included in the cost of the tour, except for lunch on Day 1.

Weather

We hope for pleasant sunny days but like the rest of Britain, Dartmoor is subject to unpredictable weather. A mixture of sunshine and showers might produce the most atmospheric conditions for photographing tors and moorland landscapes. Valleys and waterfalls photograph well on overcast days. It would be prudent to be prepared for the possibility of rain, possibly heavy on occasions. We can also expect cold temperatures during our evening excursions. You should therefore bring a mixture of clothing including warm fleeces, jackets, hats and gloves. Walking boots will also be required.

Equipment to bring

- Digital single lens reflex camera
- Lenses ranging from wide angle to short telephoto for landscape photography
- Tripod (essential)
- Lockable cable release
- Water-proof camera cover
- Neutral density and polarising filters
- Hiking boots
- Cold and wet weather clothing
- Warm hat and gloves
- Head torch
- Hand torch
- Walking poles
- Thermos flask

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests, at the time of booking.

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