Travel Writing & Walking in Exmoor



Trip style:
Small group holidays

Destination:
Exmoor

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Fancy yourself a practising Michael Palin or Portillo? A budding Bill Bryson? Perhaps the next Nan Shepherd? Then why not combine a travel writing workshop with a walking holiday and let the landscape inspire your words. These breaks are ideal for both complete beginners and aspiring writers looking to build confidence and develop their style in the beautiful surrounds of Holnicote House. Mornings are spent in guided workshops; afternoons on relaxed, scenic walks that spark ideas and stories along the way.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Expert-led morning workshops with your writing tutor
- Improving your writing in a relaxed and friendly environment
- Being surrounded by the stunning landscape of Exmoor
- Exploring the local area on foot with optional guided walks
- Staying in the comfort of our country house

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All workshop-related materials
- Daily optional walks with an experienced HF Walks Leader
- Comfortable en-suite accommodation in our country house
- Cream tea on arrival day
- Cooked or continental breakfast every morning
- Daily packed lunches
- Three-course evening meals, plus tea & coffee
- Easy-to-follow routes, maps, and information in our Discovery Point if you want to explore independently

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Day 1 **Arrival Day**

Check-in at the hotel is available from 16:00. If you are a member you can arrive at the house from 14:00. Enjoy a complimentary cream tea at 16:30 and meet other guests.

Day 2 **Bringing Your Travels to Life**

Morning

Travelling is one of life's most extraordinary experiences and so often we want to record everything we have seen and done – either for ourselves or for others. This first session looks at what makes a great piece of travel writing, using examples such as William Dalrymple, Jan Morris, and Paul Theroux. How can we make a place really come off the page? How best to describe the sights, sounds, scents – and perhaps most importantly those small moments that we always remember?

Afternoon

Each afternoon, your HF Leader will offer an optional guided walk. Today, your walk will be:

Above Selworthy

Distance: 3 miles (5km)

Ascent: 700 feet (220m)

In summary: This walk leaves from the house with the opportunity to take in Afton Park and Nature Reserve, before reaching the Golden Hill Country Park and its fort with extensive history. This walk also takes in both sides of the River Yar and a chance to walk part of the Freshwater Way. There may even be the possibility to visit Freshwater parish church on this walk with the grave of Lady Tennyson.

Highlight: Golden Hill country park has extensive views are the surrounding area.

Day 3 **Places & People**

Morning

Today's workshop drills down further into the two things that are integral to travel writing: the places we go, and the people we meet. How do we describe that perfect view, the feeling of history while visiting an ancient site, the sense of camaraderie often struck up with complete strangers – whether an unforgettable evening with a friendly restaurant owner, a guide who brings a place to life, or the breakfast waiter who shares an unexpectedly fascinating life story?

Afternoon

Each afternoon, your HF Leader will offer an optional guided walk. Today, your walk will be:

A Stroll around Holnicote

Distance: 4 miles (6.5km)

Ascent: 550 feet (180m)

In summary: We explore the Holnicote Estate, taking in the villages of Allerford, Bossington and West Luccombe before returning back to the country house.

Highlights: Exploring the charming village of Bossington

Day 4 Travel Writing in Fiction

Morning

In our final workshop, we look at the role of travel writing in fiction and how so many books take us places, immersing us in other worlds, traditions, and cultures. From Gatsby's New York to Victoria Hislop's Greece, many novels allow us to travel the world from the comfort of our own armchairs. Together, we'll explore how we use our travels to create unforgettable fictional moments.

Afternoon

Each afternoon, your HF Leader will offer an optional guided walk. Today, your walk will be:

Pop to Porlock

Distance: 5½ miles (8.5km)

Ascent: 750 feet (230m)

In summary: This is a relaxed circular walk across fields and minor roads to visit Porlock and then back along the coast and through the charming villages of Bossington and Allerford.

Highlights: Visiting the much photographed packhorse bridge at Allerford.

Day 5 Departure Day

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making your way home.

ACCOMMODATION

Holnicote House

There's plenty to look forward to at this beacon of Somerset hospitality near the impossibly pretty village of

Selworthy. The location couldn't be more perfect; within rolling-out-of-bed distance from Exmoor National Park and an easy drive from Dunster Castle, Coleridge Cottage, the twin villages of Lynton and Lynmouth, and the sandy delights at Porlock and Minehead. The walking opportunities here are standout, too, not least for the trails around the Quantock Hills, Dunkery Beacon, Bossington, and a section of the England Coast Path that takes you on a glorious journey along the county's coastline.

About

· 32 well-appointed guest rooms · Exclusive occupancy: 43 guests minimum · Check in from 4:00pm · For members check in from 2:00pm · Free Wi-Fi · Free on-site parking · Boot room and drying room · Travel cot & high chair · Discovery Point offering a wide range of local area maps, route guides, and information for self-guided walks · Books and games to borrow · Licensed bar · Two lounges · Garden with croquet lawn · Well-behaved dogs welcome on self-guided holidays · Electric vehicle charging point - Please note, you will need to bring your own cables to use this EV charging point

Then & now

Mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, there have been at least four successive houses of varying sizes built at the manor of Holnicote over a 500-year period. Until the 20th century, it was owned by the Acland family who saw it though a few fires, rebuilds, and restorations during their almost 200-year occupancy. They built the present Holnicote House in 1861 and it remained in the family thereafter (minus its thatched roof that was destroyed by yet another fire in 1941 and replaced with tiles from another estate building). In 1944, Sir Richard Acland, 15th Baronet, and his wife, Lady Ann, donated the entire Holnicote Estate (along with Killerton, their Devon ancestral home) to the National Trust in a bid to keep them 'safe and unspoiled for all time'. The combined value of both estates was estimated at £250,000, making this the largest single acquisition in the organisation's history.

Used as a nursery and nursery nurse training school during the 1940s, Holnicote House has been part of our HF Holidays line-up since 1952. Set right at the heart of the Holnicote Estate – a 12,500-acre landscape of heather-covered moorland, ancient woodland, and rocky coastline – it comes with 150 miles of footpaths and bridleways and plenty of sublime grounds which offer free rein to wander. You'll find 32 well-appointed guest rooms in three categories (Classic, Premium, and Superior), two comfortable lounges, peaceful gardens, a croquet lawn, books and games to borrow during your stay, plus a handy boot and drying room. There's also a Discovery Point offering a wide range of local area maps, route guides, and easy-to-follow information for self-guided walks. Equally worthy of your attention is the licensed bar and the dining room for a wide range of dishes made with fresh and seasonal ingredients.

Check-In & Check-Out

You are welcome to check in from 4pm at the earliest. HF Members can check in earlier, from 2pm. On arrival, you'll enjoy a complimentary cream tea and get to meet your fellow guests, our HF Holidays Leaders, and the rest of the friendly team. Check out 10am.

FOOD & DRINK

Dining

Seasonal dining, tailored for you

Our team of skilled chefs design our dinner menus to showcase the best of each season, from warming winter comfort food to vibrant summer dishes, including vegetarian, vegan and high-protein options. We also source fruit and vegetables within a 40-mile radius of each house, open every break with a Chef's Special menu inspired by dishes and flavours of the local area, and are able to adapt dishes to suit special dietary requirements.

Welcome Cream Tea

What better way to start your stay than with a cream tea, served fresh on arrival to make you feel instantly at home. A quintessentially English tradition, our scones are baked in-house and served with preserves and clotted cream, providing the perfect opportunity to meet fellow walkers.

A hearty breakfast to start the day

Start the day with a freshly-prepared cooked breakfast and a wide choice from our continental buffet, including hot drinks, juices and fresh fruit. Our team offer a quick and friendly service, leaving you fuelled and ready for your day's adventures.

Our famous picnic lunch

Our personalised picnic lunches are perfect for a day out walking, ready to enjoy when hunger strikes. Choose from a large selection of fresh sandwiches and salads, freshly baked cakes and snacks, including the ever-popular Freddos chocolate bar! Everything is designed to fit neatly into your rucksack, and all of the packaging we provide is recyclable or compostable.

3-course evening meals

Our à la carte evening menus feature a wide choice of starters, mains, and desserts, made with seasonal ingredients and, wherever possible, herbs and vegetables from our own gardens. Shared around sociable tables, dinners are relaxed occasions, with drinks available to order at the table or from the bar, and a traditional Sunday roast to round off the week.

ROOMS

Your room at Holnicote House

Designed with your comfort in mind, Holnicote House has 32 well-appointed guest rooms available in three categories: Classic, Premium, and Superior.

Classic Rooms are comfortable en-suite guest rooms, ideal for a peaceful night's sleep. Amenities include free Wi-Fi, tea and coffee-making facilities, toiletries (hand wash, shampoo, and shower gel), and a TV.

Premium Rooms are more spacious en-suite guest rooms*. Amenities include free Wi-Fi, tea and coffee-making facilities, toiletries (hand wash, shampoo, body lotion, shower gel), and a 32-inch TV. Extras include bathrobes, slippers.

Superior Rooms are even more spacious en-suite guest rooms offering upgraded views of the surroundings*. Amenities include free Wi-Fi, tea and coffee-making facilities, toiletries (hand wash, shampoo, body lotion, shower gel), and a 32-inch TV. Extras include bathrobes, slippers.

We love: The rooms in the main building or the thatched grounds, especially Rooms 1 and 4. The first floor rooms have fabulous views across Crawter Hill and Dunkery Hill.

The **Choose Your Room** service is available at our UK country houses, allowing you the option of choosing and confirming a specific room for an extra charge of £30 per room. This is subject to availability. Upgrade supplements apply.

Room supplements

Superior	Premium single	Premium double/twin	Choose your room
£25 pppn	£20 pppn	£20 pppn	£30 per room

*Views and layout reflect each properties unique character and location

ACCESSIBILITY

For accessibility and assistance information, please contact our expert team on 020 3974 8865 or view the accessibility information online for Holnicote House

ABOUT YOUR STAY

A warm welcome
We want you to feel comfortable from the moment you arrive. You'll find a welcome pack in your room with guest registration forms, menus, order forms for dinners and picnic lunches, the Wi-Fi password, and the front door code. Our houses are locked at night, so we recommend noting the Duty Manager's number on arrival in case of an emergency (or getting locked out).

Evening entertainment

While evening entertainment varies from house to house, HF Holidays Inter-House Quiz night held after dinner on Wednesdays is a weekly staple. Your HF Holidays leader may be around for tips on guided and self-guided waking routes as well as visit-worthy local attractions.

Helping you enjoy the Great Outdoors - A natural focus on walks

Walks talks and Discovery Points
Our founder, country pastor turned social innovator, Thomas Arthur Leonard, was passionate about encouraging people to explore the countryside. His legacy continues in HF's continued focus on walking. Many guests choose to travel with us on guided or self-guided walking holidays, and as such, evenings at our houses are often busy with walk leaders hosting various briefings and talks. On guided walking holiday arrival days, there are walking information briefings before dinner, and for the duration of any guided walking holiday there will be a Walks Talk before (or on occasion after dinner), to go through the following day's walk options. Self-guided walking guests, and those on special interest holidays (where there is free time to explore independently), are of course welcome to also join in these Walks Talks - please talk to the team locally if you have any queries. Our Discovery Points are filled with handy maps and route notes, designed to ensure everyone, not just those booked on a guided walking holiday, can enjoy the beautiful countryside settings that our HF houses enjoy.

The walking day
Prior to setting off on guided walks, our HF Holidays Leaders run through a short safety briefing. There's also an up-to-date weather forecast on display at the house to ensure walkers have appropriate clothing and footwear. If you choose to do your own walks or are on a self-guided walking holiday, we ask that you please complete an Independent Walker Card each day. These can be found near the Discovery Point in the house.

TRAVEL DETAILS

Address

Holnicote House
Selworthy
Minehead
Somerset TA24 8TJ

Tel: +44 (0)1643 862013

By train

The nearest station is Taunton.

Check National Rail for train times and routes.

By taxi

From Taunton train station it's a 27-mile journey taking 1 hour.

For pricing, please contact Minehead Taxis directly.

Minehead Taxis
You can pre-book a taxi from our recommended company, Minehead Taxis*. We recommend booking your taxi at least seven days in advance by contacting:

Tel: +44 (0)1643 704123

A return journey can be arranged on your behalf by the HF Holidays House Manager at Holnicote House.

*Minehead Taxis is not owned or managed by HF Holidays.

By bus

The number 28 bus runs between Taunton station and Minehead, taking around one and a half hours. At Minehead, change to the number 10 bus to the Selworthy turn (at the end of Holnicote House drive). A two-minute walk along the drive will bring you to the house.

For bus times, check Traveline.

By car

There's free car parking at Holnicote House if you decide to drive.

From Bridgwater take the A39 though the southern outskirts of Minehead towards Porlock. You'll find Holnicote House on the left about four and a half miles out of Minehead.

By air

The nearest airport is London Heathrow.

Take the train to London Paddington station where there are direct trains to Taunton. It's a relatively straightforward journey that'll should take around 2.5 hours.

Bristol Airport is also an option. From here, you can take the bus and train to Taunton.

Check National Rail for routes and train times.

LOCAL AREA

Places to visit in Exmoor

Whether you're enjoying a guided or self-guided walking holiday, there's always the opportunity to linger for longer. Here's our pick of the very best things to see and do within easy travelling distance of Holnicote House.

Selworthy

Less than a mile away, this charming village delights with well-preserved thatched cottages as well as the All Saints church with its painted nave ceiling and 18th century gallery. There are several footpaths leading from the village up to Selworthy Beacon.

West Somerset Railway

As the longest heritage line in England, this true country branch line of the old Great Western Railway has 10 stations on its 20-mile scenic journey from Minehead to Bishops Lydyard. Minehead station is just a 10-minute drive away.

Dunster Castle

A medieval castle transformed into a stately home for the Luttrell family, this characterful dwelling assures fabulous views over Exmoor, Somerset, and the Bristol Channel. Not-to-be-missed interiors include a 17th century carved staircase and rare leather wall hangings.

Lynton & Lynmouth

Located on the spectacular North Devon coast, the small rural town of Lynton and coastal village of Lynmouth are the twin resorts connected by a historic cliff railway. The short walk from Lynton to the Valley of Rocks is a definite highlight.

Coleridge Cottage

A 45-minute drive away, this was the humble home of poet Samuel Coleridge and his wife Sara for three years from 1797. Acquired by the National Trust in 1909, it was here that he wrote The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan, and Frost at Midnight.

Hestercombe Gardens

An hour's drive away, this 50-acre landscape is home to three historic gardens spanning three centuries of design. Coplestone Warre Bampfylde laid out the Landscape Garden while Sir Edwin Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll collaborated on the Formal Garden.

Arlington Court

Belonging to the Chichester family for 11 generations until it was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1949, this Regency house is an hour's drive away. In addition to the gardens and grounds, there's a museum in the stables with an interesting collection of over 40 carriages.

Minehead Beach

Also known as The Strand, this mile-long expanse of sand is perfect for sandcastle-building, beach games, and organised activities such as canoeing and paddleboarding. Please note there is a dog ban in force on the entire beach from 1 May to 30 September.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Kit List for Travel Writing & Walking

For Writing

- Paper, pens and/or laptop (and charger) for writing and taking notes during your workshops
- Any source or reference material you may require or from which you can take inspiration

For Walking

To enjoy your walking comfortably and safely, it is essential that your footwear, clothing and equipment are suitable for the conditions likely to be encountered. Britain is famous for its changeable weather, so our advice is to come prepared for all eventualities.

Bring a rucksack, a thermos flask for a hot drink, a water bottle (at least 1 litre) and spare high-energy food such as a chocolate bar, a small torch (in spring, autumn and winter) and first aid kit – your leader's first aid kit doesn't contain any medication or blister kits (such as Compeed). Many guests find walking poles useful, particularly for descents. Insect repellent, sun hat, sunglasses and protection cream and a camera are all optional extras you may choose to bring.

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

Document produced: 4 November 2026