

Title:

Dartmoor: England's Last Great Wilderness

Word Count:

406

Summary:

Given National Park status in 1951, Dartmoor sits in the south of county Devon, southwest England, and covers an area of 365 square miles. Almost half the park is swampland, a haven for wildlife and those wishing to escape the rigours of city life.

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Keywords:

dartmoor, dartmoor prison, exmoor pony, exmoor trim, exmoor hotels, dartmoor hotels, dartmoor inn

Article Body:

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Dartmoor Forest, owned by the Duchy of Cornwall since 1307, is a former royal hunting ground and makes up the vast majority of the region. The grass and heather moors are littered with hefty granite boulders scattered amongst the rolling hills. Wild ponies graze among the barren hills; despite running wild, all have human owners and are gathered annually each autumn.

Approximately 10% of the moor is woodland, much of it running along the tranquil river valleys. Stone circles and burial chambers are testament to Dartmoor's historic and enigmatic past. Indeed, Dartmoor is famous not only for its beautiful landscapes. It was within the little village of Grimspound that Sherlock Holmes found himself investigating the hound of the Baskervilles.

Dartmoor was one of Europe's biggest tin mining areas back in the 12th century. The stone built homes of the miners can still be found along many of the regions streams and rivers.

Abbot's Way runs across the southern part of the moor, racing across wild country and moorland bogs. The region is thought to be named after the abbots who are thought to have used this path when travelling between Buckland Abbey and Buckfast Abbey. Man's presence over the ages is evident in this barren land. Hut circles dating back to the Bronze and Iron ages remain today.

South of Abbots Way sits Harford Moor. The Middle Ages drew tin miners from far and wide seeking riches below the surface. Today visitors are drawn by the vast wilderness and wildlife. A medieval cross adorns Harford Church, one of many in the area which once served as signposts for those travelling across the moors.

Becky Falls Woodland Park first opened to the public in 1903. Some of the most enjoyable walks in England's southwest can be had here amongst the delightful waterfalls and huge granite.

To the west is Upper Plym Valley and a beautiful array of plants and wildlife. The tracks in these parts are somewhat easier to navigate than many others in the moors and provide much of interest along the way. The spectacular moorland scenery is interspersed with abandoned tin mines dating back over a century and various prehistoric relics including stone and hut circles.