

Safety for the walker

Military training on Dartmoor and access implications

Military Ranges and Training Areas

The Ministry of Defence has a training area on northern Dartmoor which comprises three live firing ranges (Okehampton, Merrivale and Willsworthy ranges). **The public has access to these moorland areas except when the ranges are in use for live firing.** The boundaries of the three Range Danger Areas are marked on the ground by a series of red and white posts with warning notices.

When wishing to use these areas, the firing times must be checked and warning signals (red flags by day and red lamps at night) heeded.

Dartmoor has been used for military training since the early 1800s. There is always a risk you could come across unexploded ordnance *anywhere* on the moor. Please do not touch or tamper with any strange or metal object, it may be dangerous. Leave it alone, mark and note the location, and inform the Commandant, Okehampton Camp, or the police.



Range Danger Areas - Firing Programmes

The public has guaranteed access to the Ranges at certain times of the year including public holidays and 1 - 31 August inclusive. At other times, the public has access when firing is not programmed. The firing programme for the following week is published in local newspapers, at Information Centres, and is available on freephone 0800 4584868 and www.dartmoor-ranges.co.uk BBC Radio Devon broadcasts daily updates.

If the red flags are not hoisted by 0900 hours from April to September inclusive, and by 1000 hours from October to March inclusive, no live firing will take place that day.

When there is no live firing, users are welcome and share with the military Dartmoor's rugged terrain and challenging climate. The military endeavours not to inconvenience other users.

Any sounds of firing you may hear will be blank ammunition and pyrotechnics.

On post July 2005 Ordnance Survey Dartmoor Explorer Maps the Range Danger Areas are depicted as follows:

- **even though public access may be available at times**, there is no yellow tint (which is used on the maps to depict access land) within the Range Danger Area boundaries
- each of the three Range Danger Areas is shown individually. Each is symbolised by inward facing solid red triangles but where they share a boundary there are two lines of red triangles, one facing in each direction
- each Range Danger Area is labelled as follows:

Name of Range Danger Area
Access may be restricted
For information visit
www.mod.uk/access
or tel: 0800 458 4868

General safety advice

If you are planning to walk in areas of open country preparation is essential to help you cope with sudden changes in the weather, to find your way in poor visibility and to know how to avoid suffering from exposure. If you do lose your way, or if you hurt yourself, it may be some time before anyone finds you.

Before you go

- Check the weather (see page 12).
- Check the firing times for the Range Danger Areas if walking on north Dartmoor (see page 17).
- Plan your route carefully and estimate how long it will take. Remember that much of high Dartmoor is boggy, especially at the heads of rivers and streams. Such areas may be impassable, especially during winter months.
- Dartmoor's rivers rise very rapidly after heavy rain and can be dangerous to cross. When planning your route, take into account that river crossings may not be possible.
- Eat a good breakfast - it is the most important meal of the day. Walking uses a lot of energy; ensure that you take sufficient provisions, and stop to eat and drink regularly.



- Wear and carry the right equipment. Make sure you know how to use a large-scale map and compass - and have both with you.
- Proper footwear is essential. Most of the moorland terrain is uneven. Some slopes around tors are strewn with rocks, which may or may not be covered with vegetation, and are particularly hazardous.
- Remember that most rucksacks are not waterproof. Use a plastic liner inside the rucksack and put your spare dry clothes in a plastic bag.
- Leave details of your route, destination and estimated time of arrival with a responsible person. Don't forget to report your return.
- Unless you are experienced, do not walk alone in very remote country.

On the ground

- Mist is a frequent hazard on Dartmoor. When walking, know at all times exactly where you are.
- If the weather deteriorates do not hesitate to turn back.
- Use stiles and gates to cross boundaries - do not climb walls or fences.
- Do not pick up any strange or metal objects especially in or near a Range Danger Area. Report the location of anything suspicious to the Police.
- Keep away from all moorland livestock which can be unpredictable in their behaviour.
- If in doubt about crossing a river find a bridge or crossing point, or go upstream to a position where the river is easier to cross, or walk down off the moor.
- Heed all signs, e.g. advice to avoid hazards and sensitive habitats.
- Litter is not only unsightly - it can cause fires and may injure people, livestock and wildlife. Take your litter home.