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## Long Mynd

<b>Starting point and OS Grid reference</b>	Church Stretton, National Trust pay and display car park (SO 445944)
<b>Ordnance Survey map</b>	OS Explorer 217 The Long Mynd and Wenlock Edge
<b>Distance</b>	7.5 miles
<b>Traffic light rating</b>	

**Introduction:** The Long Mynd is a heather covered ridge high above the town of Church Stretton, rising to 1693 ft (517 metres) at Pole Bank. It is part of the Shropshire Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Its name means Long Mountain in Welsh. From its top are tremendous views stretching as far as the Brecon Beacons (90 miles away) and the Malverns (43 miles away) on a clear day. It has some of the best thermals in Europe so is popular for airborne activities such as gliding, paragliding etc.

Along its summit runs The Portway, a track used 5000 years ago by Neolithic traders to avoid the wet wooded valleys below. This is now part of the Shropshire Way.

My Long Mynd walk starts from Carding Mill Valley, at Church Stretton, a very popular spot with walkers, picnickers and school parties alike. On the plus side, it is an exceptionally pretty valley and there is plenty of parking, albeit of the pay and display variety (National Trust). If possible, park just after the little bridge over the stream when it switches from the left to right side of the road. The return path will then deliver you exactly back to the car. Please note that at peak times, even with the ample parking, it actually gets full!

The walk is not difficult. The initial ascent is a moderate climb. Most of the last section is easy but there are one or two sharp climbs and descents towards the end which might cause you to curse!

**Start: From** the parking (SO 445944), walk up the road past the Chalet Pavilion, National Trust office etc. As you get to the area designated for residents parking, cross the stream via the bridge to avoid having to ford the stream a hundred yards further on.

Continue to walk along the valley, passing the last rough car park. The path does split into two but they join up later and the only difference is that the right hand one involves fording the stream a couple of times.

At a three way fingerpost (SO 436951), fork right for "Shooting Box 30 mins". The broad stony path now climbs steadily to the top of the Long Mynd. There are great views back down Carding Mill Valley as you climb. This section of path is evidently known as Motts Road, after a local doctor who improved it to make access to outlying patients easier.

The path joins a broad track, more like a road, The Portway, at a post indicating it is also part of the Shropshire Way (SO 427958). Turn left heading towards Pole Bank,

which a vertical sign on the side of the post indicates is 1¼ miles away. To the left is Calf Ridge and you soon pass a small tarn on the right.

After a quarter of a mile, you reach a marker post (SO 424596) with many footpath arrows and a pink line round its top (an indicator for one of the National Trust walks). You want the middle path bearing slightly right off the main track, still part of the Shropshire Way.

You arrive at a car park with a post indicating you have arrived at Shooting Box (SO 421953), though there is no longer any sign of a shooting box. There is a Bronze Age burial mound.

Cross the road and continue straight ahead on the Shropshire Way.

Not long before reaching Pole Bank and its trig. point, you come to a crossroads of tracks (SO 417956) and a marker post indicates a left turn will take you to Boiling Well. It is about a quarter of a mile down this track, where it meets the road. I was quite excited by the name "Boiling Well" on the map so diverted for a look. Clearly someone had turned the gas off! A damp patch of ground with a tiny trickle was all there was to see. To be fair, I did this walk after a dry spell but frankly I would not bother unless copious recent rains give you cause for optimism.

The descending path from Boiling Well takes you down the valley bottom (Ashes Hollow) to Little Stretton, should you want to shorten the walk but this misses out on superb views further on.

Back to the Shropshire Way, continue to Pole Bank (SO 415944). Alongside the trig. point is an impressive orientation table (described as a "Toposcope" on its plaque) which indicates the main points of the 360° panorama. This was erected to mark the diamond jubilee of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) in 1986.

From the trig. point, continue straight ahead, again, on the Shropshire Way.

Turn right at the road and pass the copse of trees and a car park. Just past this, look out for a grassy path going off to the left at about 30° (SO 413937). A short distance along this, join a path coming from the road (which you can see) and turn left. If you missed the 30° path, a marker post at the road here shows where you should turn left.

You now approach Round Hill. A path goes over its top but I took the left fork to follow the top of the Ashes Hollow valley. In practice, the two paths meet up.

The path bends right then anti-clockwise round another hill and leads down to Little Stretton. This section of path round the hill has a truly lovely view.

Pass a pretty cottage which is also the admin. for a small campsite (SO 440920) and cross the footbridge. Here I surrendered to the lure of the Green Dragon pub and if you are similarly inclined, after the footbridge, turn right and follow the road round to the main road (B4370). Right again and the pub is but a few yards further on.

The continuation of the walk is straight ahead at the above mentioned footbridge climbing a short steep bank.

The path follows the top of the valley through the trees, initially looking down on the campsite. At the end of the trees, cross a stile and keep straight ahead following the fenceline on the right. The precise line of the path may be a little indistinct to start with but soon becomes clear.

The path starts to follow the line of a wood on the right and eventually the wood spreads to both sides and the path descends.

Follow the path just to the road (SO 446930) then turn immediately left to climb once again on a bridleway with the wood on the left and the rear of houses on the outskirts of Church Stretton on the right.

The path comes out of the wood at some bungalows (SO 448936). Next to the last bungalow, turn left to climb a long flight of steps. A fingerpost indicates "Public Footpath to Townbrook Hollow".

At the top of all the steps, turn right to go round the edge of trees, eventually descending quite steeply to a small reservoir. Cross the footbridge and keep straight ahead climbing the path at the other side of the little valley.

On reaching a road by a cattle grid, go straight ahead across the road and left along the gently descending track. If you have parked where I suggested, you will now be at your car.

