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TRAFFIC-FREE CYCLE TRAILS

Written by **Nick Cotton**

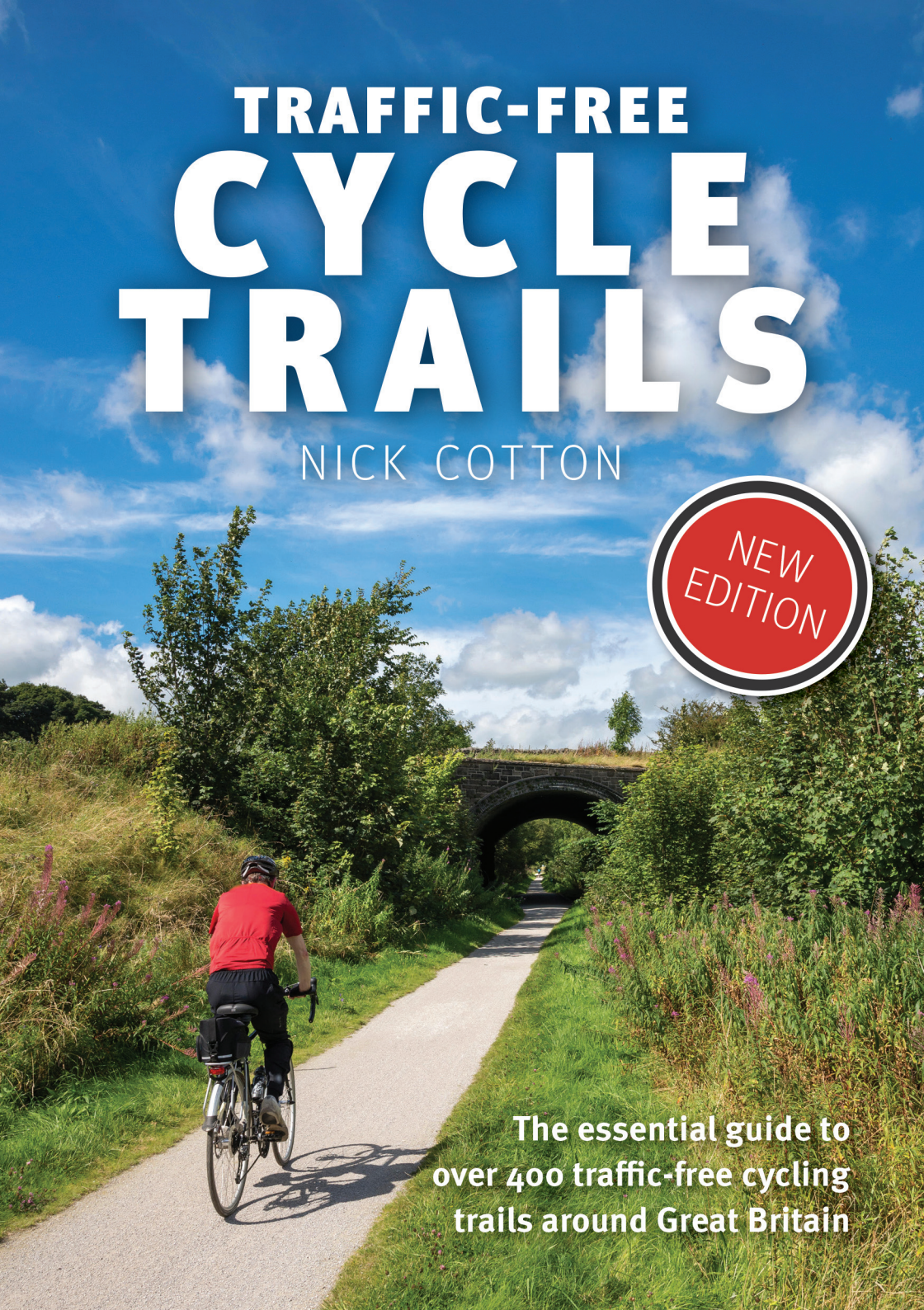
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TRAFFIC-FREE CYCLE TRAILS

NICK COTTON



The essential guide to over 400 traffic-free cycling trails around Great Britain

Traffic-Free Cycle Trails

Traffic-Free Cycle Trails

First published in 2004 by CycleCity Guides. This fourth edition first published in 2020 by Vertebrate Publishing.

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TRAFFIC-FREE CYCLE TRAILS

While every attempt has been made to include the vast majority of traffic-free cycle trails in mainland Britain, there will inevitably be omissions. We apologise if we have missed your favourite ride. Please tell us if this is the case, letting us know details of start and finish and cafes and pubs along the way, and we'll try to include it next time. Likewise, if you know of any other routes not listed in this fourth edition of Traffic-Free Cycle Trails please contact Nick Cotton, c/o Vertebrate Publishing at the address listed.

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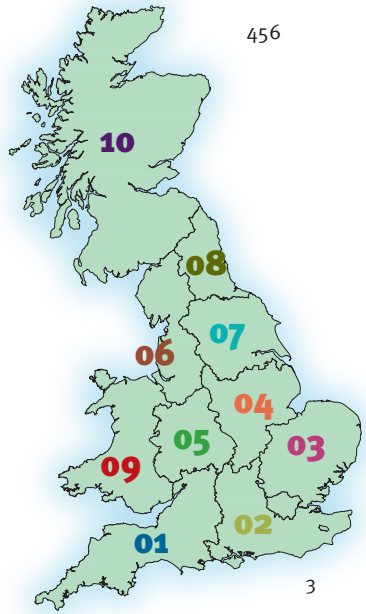
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How to use this guide

In this book, you will find more than 400 traffic-free trails from Cornwall to the Scottish Highlands, including railway paths, forestry routes, canal towpaths, round-reservoir routes, purpose-built cyclepaths and some easier ridge rides on byways and bridleways.

How do I find a trail near me?
The country has been divided into ten regions, each with a map showing all the trails in the area. So simply look at the map then look up the numbers of the trails nearest to you. Under the entry for each ride number, you will find details of starting point, distance, refreshments and useful publications such as leaflets, maps and websites. The nearest Tourist Information Centre is also mentioned, enabling you to find out about nearby bike shops, bike hire or accommodation.

What if I know the name of a trail but don't know where it is?
The index at the back will help you to find the Granite Way, the Phoenix Trail or the Innocent Railway, for example. Then look up the entry.

How do I get to the start of the ride?
We have included details of the closest railway station and of convenient car parking places (including grid references). A grid reference pinpoints on an Ordnance Survey map exactly where a trail starts. To find out how to use these, see page xx.

What sort of bike should I use?
Few of the trails have sealed surfaces so it is best to use mountain or hybrid bikes. Children's bikes are normally built to withstand knocks and will cope with all of the easier trails. A small number of the trails are out-and-out mountain bike rides and may get quite muddy in winter. Be prepared for this, or enjoy them after a dry spell in summer.

Do I need special clothes?
Ordinary clothes are fine for all the easier rides. Waterproofs are always useful, and gloves and a hat will stop your hands and ears getting cold (a common problem on a bike). If you discover you really love cycling, it is worth investing in cycling shorts and padded gloves, which make riding more comfortable. A top made of 'wicking' fabric will help prevent you getting too clammy.

How long will each trail take to ride?
We have deliberately avoided giving a time as there are so many variables, the most important of which is YOU! A ride that takes a fit cyclist half an hour could take all day with a group of children. Other variables are the quality of the surface, hills, wind and type of bike. These rides are for enjoyment! Indeed, many of the trails are shared with walkers and horseriders, and you should slow down when there are other users around. Most people of average fitness should cover 5 to 9 miles in an hour, discounting any stops (this type of cycling is two or three times as fast as walking).

Are all the rides 100 per cent traffic-free?
Most of the trails have long sections of traffic-free cycling but inevitably, many have to cross roads, and some routes also use quiet lanes. You are given a warning if there are any busier roads to cross.

Will I find somewhere to eat?
If there is a convenient pub, teashop or cafe along the trail then we have mentioned it. This is more likely on canal towpath rides and round-reservoir routes. Forestry routes

are the least likely to have refreshments along the way, but many start from visitor centres where you can buy a snack. It is always worth carrying a bar of something and a bottle of water.

What if I break down?
None of these rides is so long or remote that you couldn't walk back to the start or somewhere where your bike can be fixed. The usual problem is a puncture, so carry a spare tube and a pump. Multitools, with screwdrivers, allen keys and spanners, can be used to tighten up nuts, bolts and screws that rattle loose, and can adjust saddle height.

Does the book include trails on the National Cycle Network?
The National Cycle Network is a mixture of cycle lanes, quiet streets, country lanes and traffic-free trails. Traffic-free sections over 3 miles are included. You will know you are on the National Cycle Network by the red and white route number signs. You will find a section on the National Cycle Network in each region, listing the maps that cover the area. These maps highlight all traffic-free sections and – who knows? – you may be tempted to do an entire long-distance route, such as the famous Sea to Sea (C2C) from Cumbria to the North Sea coast.

What about mountain biking?
Most of the forestry rides are tougher than railway paths and some areas have purpose-built singletrack mountain bike trails, particularly in Wales and Scotland. There are also long-distance trails such as the Ridgeway, South Downs Way or Peddars Way, which are more of a challenge. At the beginning of each section there is a map with details of good mountain biking areas or centres. Most good bookshops will stock a range of cycling guides, including ones covering mountain biking and there is a lot of information on the internet – we have listed useful websites.

Where else can I ride, traffic-free and legally?
You have a right to ride on bridleways and byways, all shown on Ordnance Survey maps, but these are a bit hit-and-miss in terms of quality. You are NOT allowed to ride on footpaths. The majority of canal towpaths are too narrow, rough, muddy or overgrown to be much fun. The best option is to go to the nearest Forestry Commission holding where you can explore the broad stone tracks (forestry operations permitting). There is a map of the Forestry Commission holdings at the start of each regional chapter.

What about riding on lanes?
After you have built up your confidence there is no reason why you should not explore Britain's fantastic network of quiet country lanes by bike. At the start of each region there are details of good areas, with suggested bases from which to start. Many of the waymarked long-distance routes on the National Cycle Network are also good options for longer rides. The best option is to go to the nearest public-owned forestry holding where you can explore the broad stone tracks (forestry operations permitting). There is a map of the forestry holdings at the start of each regional chapter. What used to be the Forestry Commission has now spilt into three: Forestry England, Forestry & Land Scotland and Natural Resources Wales.

Useful information

Finding a Grid Reference

What is a grid reference?
A grid reference is a number that allows you to pinpoint a place on a map. It looks and sounds technical, but is easy to learn. Grid references can be enormously helpful, saving the need for heaps of directions you would otherwise require.

Why is it called a grid reference?
If you look at any Ordnance Survey map there are numbered blue lines running across and down the map – these form a grid. In the case of the Landranger maps, which we refer to a lot in this book, there are 40 vertical and 40 horizontal lines, creating 1,600 squares on each map, each of which represents one square kilometre (just over half a mile by half a mile).

So how does it work?
There are times when you want to direct people to a point in one of the squares formed by the grid to find a feature (a pub, a train station etc) contained in that square. Within the six-figure grid reference, the first set of three numbers gives you an imaginary line running up and down the map (north–south), the last set of three numbers gives you a line running across the map (east–west). Where these imaginary lines cross is the place on the map you want to pinpoint.

How do you work out the first three figures of a grid reference?
The first two numbers of the six-figure grid reference refer to the vertical line on the left of the chosen square. These double-digit numbers can be found along the top and bottom edges of the map. For the third number in the series, imagine the chosen square, the one to the right of the vertical line, divided into ten vertical strips, numbered from '1' on the left to '9' on the right. The third number locates one of these strips so, for example, '2' would be towards the left of the square and '8' would be towards the right.

What about the last three numbers?
These refer to the horizontal lines. Instead of starting at the left of the chosen square, start from the bottom and work towards the top. (To find the numbers, look at the left- or right-hand edges of the map.) The line at the bottom of the chosen square gives you the fourth and fifth numbers in the six-figure grid reference.

To calculate the sixth number, imagine the chosen square above the horizontal line split into ten horizontal strips, numbered from '1' at the bottom to '9' at the top. The sixth and final number of the six-figure grid reference locates one of these strips. For example, '2' would be towards the bottom of the square and '8' would be towards the top.

Put the vertical numbers together with the horizontal and you have a six-figure grid reference, and can locate a point on the map to a high degree of accuracy. To help you remember which set of numbers goes first, always remember the saying 'Along the corridor and up the stairs' – i.e. work along the map from left to right, then up the map from bottom to top.

Greenways Code for Towpaths

- **Share the space** Consider other people and the local environment whenever you're on a towpath. Remember some people may move less predictably, for example young children or those with visual or mobility impairments.
- **Drop your pace** Considerate sharing of the limited towpath space is the key. Jogging and cycling are welcome, but drop your pace in good time and let people know you are approaching by ringing a bell or politely calling out before waiting to pass slowly.
- **Pedestrians have priority** Towpaths are 'Greenways' or shared use routes where pedestrians have priority and vehicles are generally excluded.
- **Be courteous to others** A smile can go a long way. Abusive or threatening behaviour is not acceptable and should be reported to the Police.
- **Follow signs** They are there for the safety of everyone. Cyclists should dismount where required and use common sense in busy or restricted areas, recognising that pedestrians have priority.
- **Give way to oncoming people beneath bridges** Whether they are on foot or bike and be extra careful at bends and entrances where visibility is limited.
- **When travelling in large groups** especially if you are running or cycling, please use common sense and give way to others.
- **Try to avoid wearing headphones** as this makes you less aware of your surroundings possible hazards and others sharing the same space.
- **Keep dogs on a short lead** and clean-up after them. Dog fouling is very unpleasant and is a health hazard.
- **Keep children close to you at all times** and encourage them to learn and follow the Greenway Code for Towpaths.

For more information about towpath cycling visit: *www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/cycling*

Forestry Code

1. **Don't rely on others:**
- Can you get home safely?
- Carry the right equipment and know how to use it.

2. **For your own safety:**
- Always wear the right safety clothing, at least a cycle helmet and gloves.
- Only cycle within your abilities.
- Only tackle jumps and other challenges if you are sure you can do them – have a look first!
- Train properly, especially for difficult and technical routes.

3. **On and off-road:**
- Expect the unexpected – watch out for other visitors.
- For your own and others' safety always follow warning signs and any advice you are given.
- If a vehicle is loading timber stop and wait for the driver to let you pass safely.

4. **Cycle carefully and come back soon!**

For more information about forest cycling go to:
- *www.forestryengland.uk/cycling*
- *www.naturalresources.wales/days-out/things-to-do/cycling?lang=en*
- *www.forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/activities/cycling*



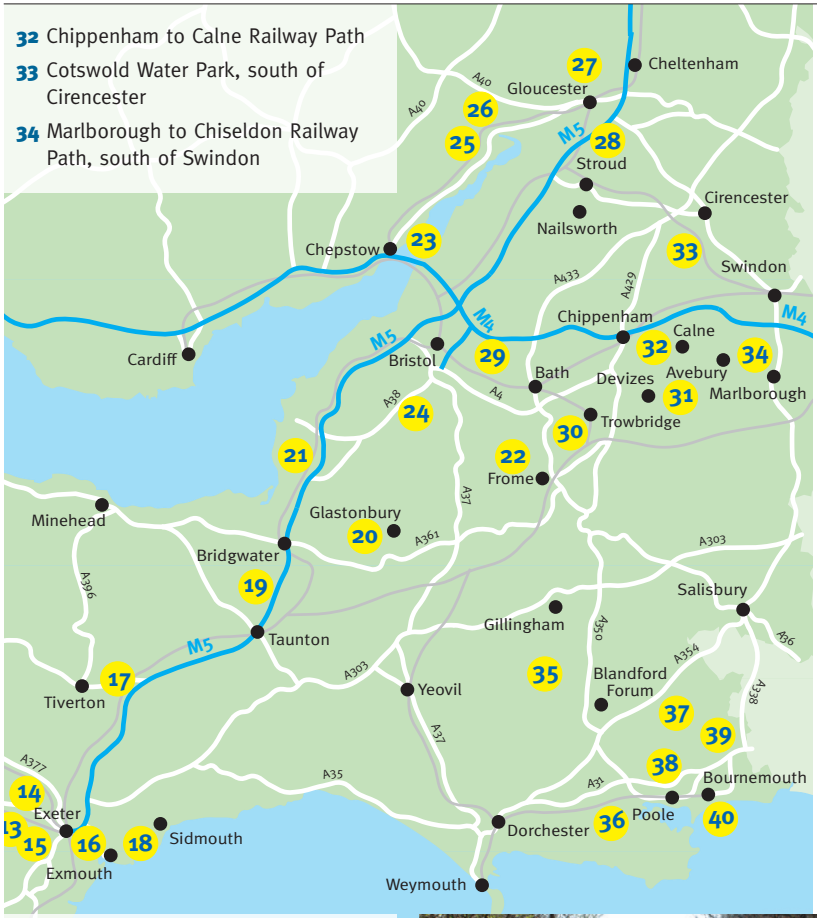
South-West Trails

1 Flat Lode Trail, Camborne
2 Cornish Mineral Tramways Coast to Coast Trail
3 Camel Trail: Padstow to Wadebridge and Bodmin
4 Pentewan Valley, St Austell
5 Clay Trails, Bugle
6 Cardinham Woods, Bodmin
7 Tarka Trail: Braunton to Barnstaple
8 Tarka Trail: Barnstaple to Bideford
9 Tarka Trail: Bideford to Meeth
10 Granite Way, south of Okehampton
11 Drakes Trail, Plymouth
12 Princetown Tramway, Dartmoor
13 Wray Valley & Stover Trail, Bovey Tracey
14 Exe Estuary Trail: Dawlish – Exeter – Exmouth
15 Haldon Forest, south-west of Exeter
16 Exeter along the River Exe
17 Grand Western Canal, east of Tiverton
18 Exmouth to Budleigh Salterton
19 Bridgwater & Taunton Canal
20 Willow Walk, west of Glastonbury
21 Strawberry Line: Yatton to Cheddar
22 Colliers Way: Radstock to Frome
23 Severn Bridge Cyclepath
24 Bristol to Pill Riverside Path
25 Forest of Dean Family Trail, south-west of Gloucester
26 Coleford to Parkend & Cannop Wharf, Forest of Dean
27 Gloucester & Sharpness Canal, south of Gloucester
28 Stroud Valleys Cycle Trail, south of Gloucester
29 Bristol & Bath Railway Path
30 Kennet & Avon Canal: Bath to Bradford-on-Avon
31 Kennet & Avon Canal: Bradford-on-Avon to Devizes





32 Chippenham to Calne Railway Path
33 Cotswold Water Park, south of Cirencester
34 Marlborough to Chiseldon Railway Path, south of Swindon



35 North Dorset Trailway from Sturminster Newton
36 Sika Trail, near Wareham
37 Castleman Trail: Stapehill to Ringwood
38 Castleman Trail: Upton Country Park to Merley, near Poole
39 Moors Valley Country Park, west of Ringwood
40 Bournemouth Promenade



South-West 01

South-West Mountain Biking

The South-West is blessed with a wide mixture of mountain biking possibilities on bridleways and byways. Dartmoor, Exmoor and the Quantocks can be ridden pretty much all year round as the underlying soil tends not to get too sticky. By contrast, the trails in the Cotswolds and on the chalk downlands of Wiltshire and Dorset are much better enjoyed from May to October, when the trails are drier and easier to ride; they can become impassable in the depths of winter. For forest trails see the Forestry England website in the list opposite.

1. Dartmoor

Although Dartmoor is much larger than Exmoor, it is not nearly so well provided with legal, rideable tracks. Some of the bridleways shown on Ordnance Survey maps run across the open moorland and are barely visible on the ground. The best areas for mountain biking are around Princetown in the centre of the moor, and on the east of the moor around Lustleigh.

2. Exmoor

Despite being one of the UK's smaller National Parks, Exmoor is one of the best in the country for mountain biking with a plethora of well-waymarked and generally well-maintained trails. For a taster, try the 11-mile descent from Dunkery Beacon down to Winsford via the Exe Valley. Most of the best tracks lie within a circle drawn 10 miles around Exford.

3. Quantock Hills

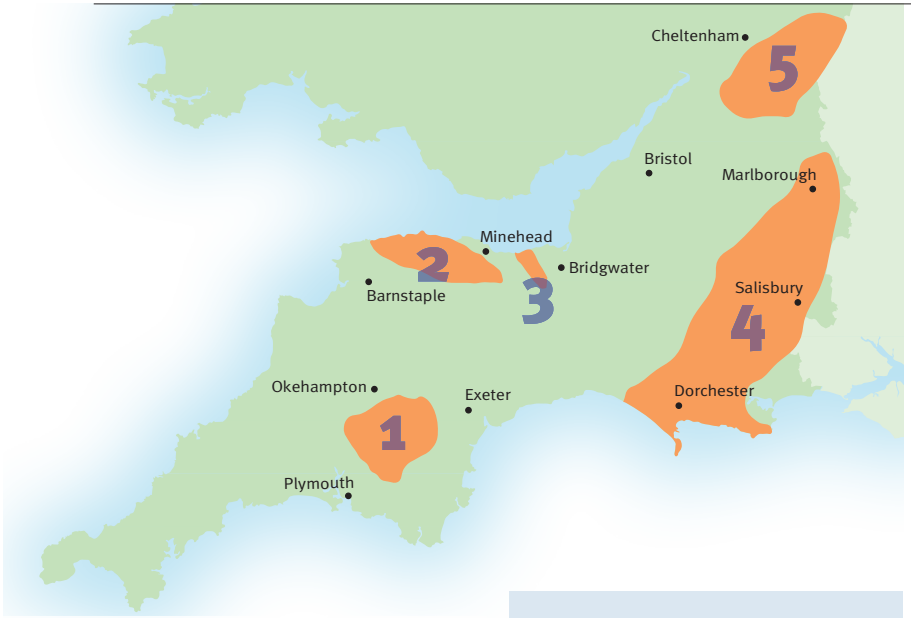
For a range of hills that is only 10 miles long by 5 miles wide, the Quantock Hills boast an astonishing range of mountain bike rides, from the broad, undulating track along the ridge to some very testing technical singletrack down through the combes.



1 Dartmoor

South-West 01

South-West Mountain Biking



4. Chalk downlands of Wiltshire, Salisbury Plain & Dorset

Wiltshire and Dorset have a higher proportion of bridleways and byways than anywhere else in the country. The most well known of all is the Ridgeway. It can be ridden along its whole length from West Kennet (near Avebury) to Goring on Thames, a distance of 43 miles. Further south in Wiltshire the village of Wilton, to the west of Salisbury, is a good base from which several excellent ridge tracks can be followed for many miles. In Dorset the finest tracks are found in the triangle formed by Bridport, Blandford Forum and Weymouth.

5. Cotswolds

There is a surprising quantity of rideable tracks in among the picturesque honey-coloured villages of the Cotswolds. The best riding lies in a 20-mile arc to the north-east, east and south of Cheltenham.

Websites:

- *www.forestryengland.uk/cycling* and zoom in on the map.
- *www.bristoltrailsgroup.com/local-trails* and for routes near Bristol.
- *www.moredirt.com* and follow links to 'South West' region.
- *www.trailforks.com/trails/map*
- *www.betterbybike.info/maps-and-rides/mountain-biking*
- *www.komoot.com/plan/*



5 Cotswolds

South-West 01

South-West Forestry

The Forest of Dean is the only large forestry holding in the region (the New Forest is described in the South-East section). The Forestry England website, *www.forestryengland.uk/cycling*, is a good starting point to find places to ride.

Forests & woods with waymarked trails
These are shown with a corresponding ride number and page reference:

- **3 Cardinham Woods**, Bodmin (see Ride 6, page 24)
- **9 Haldon Forest**, south-west of Exeter (see Ride 15, page 35)
- **16 Wareham Forest**, north-west of Wareham (see Ride 36, page 59)
- **18 Moors Valley Country Park**, west of Ringwood (see Ride 39, page 62)
- **21 Forest of Dean**, east of Coleford (see Ride 25, page 46)



Forestry England woodlands
There are other woodlands owned by Forestry England where there are no waymarked routes, but you are free to explore the tracks as long as it is safe to do so (i.e. no tree harvesting is taking place). The relevant Ordnance Survey map is mentioned. It is highly recommended that you take a map or a phone with mapping loaded on it for the larger woods as it is very easy to get lost. To find the location of these woodlands see *www.forestryengland.uk/forest-planning*, or *www.forestryengland.uk/search-forests* for an A-Z list of England's forests.

These woodlands are shown on Ordnance Survey Landranger mapping (1:50,000) with a purple highlight around the boundary of the forestry holding and a small purple square icon with two trees.

The woodlands below correspond with the numbers on the map:

1. **St Clement Woods**, north of Truro (OS Explorer Map 105)
2. **Great Grogley & Hustyn Woods**, north-west of Bodmin (OS Explorer Map 106/109)
4. **Halvana Plantation,** north-east of Colliford Lake on Bodmin Moor (OS Explorer Map 109)
5. **Halwill Moor Plantation,** east of Holsworthy (OS Explorer Map 112)

South-West 01



6. **Cann Wood**, north of Plymouth (OS Explorer Map 108)
7. **Soussons, Bellever & Fernworthy**, north-east of Princetown (OS Explorer Map OL 28)
8. **Abbeyford Woods**, north of Okehampton (OS Explorer Map 113)
12. **Great Wood** (Quantocks) south-west of Nether Stowey (OS Explorer Map 140)
13. **Several small woodlands** south of Taunton, either side of the B3170 (OS Explorer Map 128)
14. **Blandford Forest**, west of Blandford (OS Explorer Map 117)
15. **Affpuddle Heath**, east of Dorchester (OS Explorer Map OL 15)
17. **Cannon Hill Plantation**, West Moors Plantation and Hurn Forest north of Bournemouth (OS Explorer Map OL 22)
19. **Savernake, West Woods & Collingbourne Wood**, south-west and south-east of Marlborough (OS Explorer Map 157)
20. **Wye Valley** between Chepstow and Monmouth (OS Explorer Map OL 14)

South-West National Cycle Network



The following long-distance National Cycle Network routes are covered by maps (£9.99) that can be purchased from Sustrans via their shop – go to *www.sustrans.org.uk* and click on 'Shop', then 'Maps and Guides', select 'Maps' and tick the 'South West' box. These might offer ideas for multi-day cycle tours.

Bath to Bournemouth Cycle Route Map
(Route 24/25)
85 miles

South Coast (West) Cycle Route Map
(Route 2)
Dawlish to Brockenhurst
136 miles

Devon Coast to Coast Cycle Route Map
(Route 2/3/27)
Ilfracombe to Plymouth
99 miles

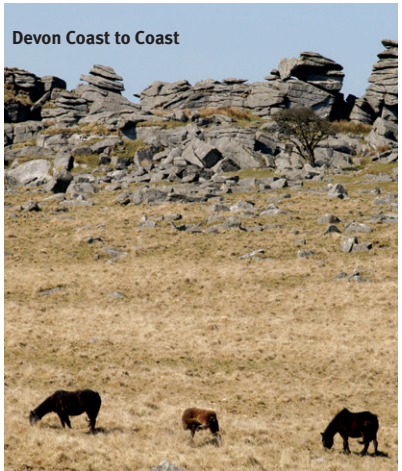
Great Western Way Cycle Route Map
(Route 4)
Bristol to London
167 miles

The National Cycle Network in the South-West is covered by the following maps:

1. *Cornwall Cycle Map*
2. *South Devon Cycle Map*
3. *North Devon Cycle Map*
4. *Somerset Levels Cycle Map*
5. *Dorset Downs Cycle Map*
11. *Severn & Thames Cycle Map*

Good areas for lane cycling

For such popular tourist areas there is very little good, easy cycling on the lane networks of Cornwall, Devon and Dorset: the narrow, hilly lanes are often set between high hedgerows with poor visibility. The exceptions are those right on the top of Exmoor and Dartmoor.
By contrast, the Somerset Levels offer some very easy cycling alongside the rhynes (drainage ditches) bordered by weeping willows. There are good bases at Somerton, Glastonbury and Mark.
The Severn Vale is bypassed by both the A38 and the M5, and there is a gentle charm to the network of quiet lanes that run north from Thornbury to Gloucester, linked at times by the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal towpath. Try starting from Berkeley or Frampton on Severn. As for the Cotswolds, think of them like a wedge of cake on its side: the outer edge of the cake represents the steep escarpment overlooking the Severn Vale where the cycling is strenuous; east from here (the flatter part of the cake!), the land slopes gently down towards the Thames and there is a wonderful network of quiet lanes linking together the honey-coloured stone villages and towns. Northleach, Malmesbury, Bourton-on-the-Water and Burford are all good starting points.


Devon Coast to Coast



Other Routes in Brief

Local authority websites change frequently, so if the links listed below do not take you straight to the cycling information indicated, do not despair! Go to the main council website, for example for Cornwall go to *www.cornwall.gov.uk* – locate the 'Search' box (often with a magnifying glass icon) and search for one of the following: 'Cycling', 'Cycle routes', 'Cycle trails', 'Cycle maps' or 'Family cycling'. This will normally take you to the information you need.



Bristol & Bath

Try the following website for ride ideas in and around Bristol and Bath: *www.betterbybike.info/maps-and-rides/rides*

1. Two Tunnels Cycle Route
- Railway path through atmospheric Combe Down Tunnel.
- 5 miles.
- Starting Point: Fielding's Road, Locksbrook, Bath or Hope & Anchor, Midford.
- Website: *www.twotunnels.org.uk*

Cornwall

For a general overview of cycling options in Cornwall go to *www.cornwall.gov.uk* and search 'Cycle Routes and Trails'.
Or, go to *www.getactivecornwall.co.uk* and click on 'Map My Activity' then 'Cycle Routes and Trails'.

2. Redruth & Chacewater Trail
- Railway path.
- 7.7 miles (one way).
- Starting Point: The trail runs east and west from Lanner, which lies on the A393 to the south of Redruth.Website: *www.cornwall.gov.uk/mineral-tramways*

3. Goss Moor Trail
- Circular trail in National Nature Reserve.
- 7-mile circular trail.
- Starting Point: Screech Owl Sanctuary, 2 miles east of Indian Queens (north of A30).
- Website: *www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/3628638/GossMoorTrail_WelcomeMap.pdf*

4. Lanhydrock
- Several short trails (up to 1.5 miles) in grounds of large National Trust property.
- Starting Point: Lanhydrock National Trust, southeast of Bodmin.
- Website: *www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lanhydrock/features/cycling-at-lanhydrock-cornwall*

Dartmoor National Park
There is plenty of cycling information on the National Park's website, including details of routes near Princetown, the Granite Way, Drake's Trail and the Wray Valley Trail. Go to *www.dartmoor.gov.uk/enjoy-dartmoor/outdoor-activities/cycling*





Devon
For a general overview of cycling options in Devon go to these websites:
- *www.traveldevon.info/cycle/cycle-routes/cycle-trails*
- *www.exploredevon.info/category/activities/cycle/*

5. Tamar Trails
- Several short trails starting from the activity centre.
- Starting Point: Near Gulworthy, off the A390 to the west of Tavistock.
- Website: *www.tamartrails.co.uk/biking/*

6. Dart Valley Cycleway, Totnes
- Two 4-mile trails to the north and south of Totnes.
- Starting Point: Totnes Railway Station or Totnes Leisure Centre.
- Website: *www.exploredevon.info/activities/cycle/dart-valley-cycleway*

7. Willingcott to Ilfracombe
- Railway path.
- 3 miles.
- Starting Point: Junction of Georgeham Road and Willingcott Hill, Willingcott.
- Website: *www.visitilfracombe.co.uk/item/the-old-railway*



Dorset
The Dorset County Council website is a good source of cycling in the county. Go to*www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk* and search 'Cycle Trails'.

8. Portland Trail/Rodwell Trail (Route 26), Dorchester to Weymouth and Portland
- Railway path & cycle path.
- 8 miles.
- Starting Point: Herringston Rd south of Dorchester.
- Website: Go to *www.visit-dorset.com* and search 'Portland Trail Cycle Route'.

Gloucestershire
A large variety of cycling maps of Gloucestershire are available at *www.thinktravel.info/bike/cycle-maps/*

9. Symonds Yat Cycle Trails
- Woodland trails.
- Three short rides.
- Starting Point: Symonds Yat car park on the B4432.
- Website: Go to *www.forestryengland.uk/symonds-yat-rock/symonds-yat-rock-cycle-trail* and download the map.

Somerset
There are a whole series of Somerset cycling maps available to download here: *www.somerset.gov.uk*. Search 'Cycling Maps'.

10. Highbridge to Weston super Mare and Brean Down
- Coastal trail on National Cycle Network Route 33.
- 11 miles.
- Starting Point: Clocktower in Highbridge or the Pier in Weston super Mare.
- Website: *www.sustrans.org.uk/national-cycle-network*

11. Chard to Ilminster
- Railway path.
- 4 miles.
- Starting Point: Chard Reservoir or Ilminster Recreation Ground.
- Website: Go to *www.somerset.gov.uk/waste-planning-and-land/walking-and-cycling-maps* and click on 'Ilminster'.

Wiltshire
For a fine overview of cycling options in Wiltshire go to *www.connectingwiltshire.co.uk*. Click on 'Getting Around' then 'Cycling', 'Cycling maps & routes' and then 'Leisure cycling routes'.

Other Useful Websites with Cycling Information
- *www.forestryengland.uk/cycling* and scroll down to the map.
- *www.canalrivertrust.org.uk*
- *www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cycling*
- *www.sustrans.org.uk/national-cycle-network*



Ride 1 Flat Lode Trail Camborne

1

Category
Linked mineral tramways, quiet lanes.

Distance
8-mile circuit.

This well-waymarked circuit is a real celebration of the area's mining heritage and at every turn it seems there is another atmospheric ruin, characterised by the typical tall chimney. The trail is predominantly on improved gravel tracks with occasional short sections of lane. There are one or two short, steep climbs where you may wish to push, rewarded with fine views out into the surrounding countryside, dotted with clumps of yellow gorse and even the occasional glimpse of the sea.

Starting point & parking

The main car park for the trail is on the minor road south-west of Carnkie, a hamlet lying 3 miles **south-west of Redruth** (grid reference SW 681395). There are a few much smaller parking spots around the course of the route.

On your bikes!

There are too many junctions to describe in detail but the route is very well waymarked, either as 'Flat Lode Trail' or with a black icon of a mining chimney. There are several short climbs, two of them quite steep.

Station: Camborne.
TIC: Redruth, 01209 219048.
Other nearby trails: Cornwall Coast to Coast (Portreath to Devoran). There is a link between the Flat Lode Trail and the Coast to Coast Trail via the Redruth & Chacewater Trail (see website below for details).
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Map 203. Go to *www.cornwall.gov.uk/mineral-tramways* and click on 'Mining Trails Guide' for a map, or try *www.visitcornwall.com* and search 'Cycle routes'. See also *www.cornwalltrails.net/main-trails/the-great-flat-lode*
Refreshments: Brea Inn, Carn Brea. Lots of choice in Camborne and Redruth.



Ride 2 Cornish Mineral Tramways Coast to Coast Trail

2

Category
Railway path, mineral tramways and quiet lanes.

Distance
12 miles each way.

***NB** There are a few climbs and a few rougher sections so this is a tougher ride than a railway path like the Camel Trail. The easiest bit is between Devoran and Bissoe.*

The Mineral Tramway route, which runs from the north coast of Cornwall at Portreath to the south coast at Devoran, is one of Cornwall's most popular cycle trails. The result of many years of patient negotiation, the trail uses several sections of old tramroad that once served the mines that are scattered around this part of Cornwall. Many of the old ruins and chimneys are still visible. The route climbs gradually from the attractive seaside resort of Portreath through Cambrose to Wheal Rose and Scorrier. From this highpoint the trail drops down into the Poldice Valley and along the Carnon River down to Devoran, passing beneath the soaring railway viaduct. The route is generally well waymarked with handsome granite stones, but there are a couple of places (particularly in Scorrier) where you should keep a sharp eye out for signposts.

Starting points & parking

1. The car park by the beach in **Portreath**, on the B3300 to the north of Camborne/Redruth (grid reference SW 655454).

2. The car park by **Bissoe Cycle Hire**, about 5 miles south-west of Truro (grid reference SW 772415).

3. The car park by the village hall on Quay Road in **Devoran**, just south of the A39 between Truro and Falmouth (grid reference SW 792393).



Ride 2 Cornish Mineral Tramways, Coast to Coast Trail

2

On your bikes!

1. Exit the car park by the beach in Portreath and follow the B3300 towards Redruth. At the Portreath Arms, bear left onto Sunnyvale Road signposted 'Portreath Tramroad'. After 1/2 mile, just before rejoining the B3300, bear left uphill onto the start of the traffic-free trail. Continue in the same direction on a generally level track at several minor junctions.

2. The route is well signposted in both directions, with 'Devoran' or 'Portreath' as destinations. Also look out for the granite cairns with a black symbol of an old mining chimney. Go past the Plume pub in Scorrier and descend into the Poldice Valley, passing Bissoe Cycle Hire.

3. If you continue on the quiet lane through Devoran you will come to the estuary (Restronguet Creek), and a chance of refreshment at the Old Quay Inn (just up the hill from the water).

Station: Perranwell Station.
TIC: Falmouth, 01326 312300.
Other nearby trails: The Flat Lode Trail. There is a link to the Flat Lode Trail via the Redruth & Chacewater Trail – see website below for details.
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Maps 203 & 204. Various leaflets about cycling in Cornwall are available as downloads at *www.visitcornwall.com* if you search 'Cycle routes', or go to *www.cornwall.gov.uk/mineral-tramways* and click on 'Mining Trails Guide'.
Refreshments: Pubs in Portreath, Scorrier and Devoran. Cafe at Bissoe Cycle Hire.

Ride 3 The Camel Trail Padstow to Wadebridge & Bodmin

3

Category
Railway path.

Distance
Wenfordbridge to Bodmin: 7 miles each way.

Bodmin to Wadebridge: 5 miles each way.

Wadebridge to Padstow: 6 miles each way.

The most popular recreational ride in the country, visited by just less than 500,000 people a year, the Camel Trail runs along the course of a dismantled railway. From Wenfordbridge and the wooded countryside of the upper Camel Valley, the trail runs down past Bodmin to Wadebridge and alongside the picturesque Camel Estuary as far as Padstow. The route is very busy in July and August. There are many cycle hire centres in Padstow, Wadebridge and Bodmin with a huge variety of bikes to cater for every combination imaginable, many of which you will see on your way along the ride!

Starting points & parking

There are several possible starting points and car parks. The car parks are free at the north-east end of the trail, and Pay & Display in the towns:

1. Wenfordbridge, 7 miles east of Wadebridge (grid reference SX 085751).

2. Poley's Bridge, 6 miles east of Wadebridge (grid reference SX 083742).

3. Bodmin, Scarlett's Well Road, near the Jail (grid reference SX 061675).

4. Wadebridge (grid reference SW 990723).

5. Padstow (grid reference SW 920751).

Ride 3 The Camel Trail, Padstow to Wadebridge & Bodmin

3

Station: Bodmin Parkway Station, 6 miles south-east of the trail.
TIC: Padstow, 01841 533449 and Bodmin, 01208 76616.
Other nearby trails: There are several miles of forest tracks in Cardinham Woods, east of Bodmin. The Clay Trails start at Bugle, 8 miles south-west of Bodmin.
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Map 200. Go to *www.cornwall.gov.uk* and search 'Camel Trail' or try *www.visitcornwall.com* and search 'Cycle routes'.
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Bodmin, Wadebridge and Padstow. Camel Valley Tea Garden near Poley's Bridge.

***NB** There is a 3/4-mile section on roads through Wadebridge and you will need to use roads from the western end of the trail to get into the heart of Padstow.*



Ride 4 Pentewan Valley & Mevagissey near St Austell

4

Category
Railway path and specially-built cyclepath.

Distance
London Apprentice to Mevagissey: 4 miles each way.

London Apprentice to Pentewan: 2 miles each way.

London Apprentice north towards St Austell: 1.5 miles each way.

This route forms part of the Cornish Way (National Cycle Network Route 3), the 180-mile cycle route that runs from Land's End to Bude. The traffic-free section starts on a cycletrack parallel with the B3273 just south of St Austell, and follows the river valley down towards the seaside village of Pentewan. At a footbridge over the river you have the choice of continuing on the flat down towards the beach, or climbing for 300ft up past the Lost Gardens of Heligan and down the other side of the hill to the popular fishing village of Mevagissey. The descent to Mevagissey is quite steep so you may well prefer to walk up the hill on the way back. As you are surrounded by wildflowers and fine views this hardly constitutes hardship!



Ride 4 Pentewan Valley & Mevagissey, near St Austell

4

NB If you wish to go right into the heart of Mevagissey or visit the Lost Gardens of Heligan, you will need to use roads for about ½ mile.

Starting points & parking

1. London Apprentice: the car park in Shepherdshill Woods about 2 miles south of St Austell (grid reference SX 008498). Follow the B3273 towards Mevagissey. Just after London Apprentice turn left at the 'Retail Leisure Warehouse' signpost. Follow the lane round to the right and park in the woods.

2. Mevagissey: park in the main car park on the B3273 just north of Mevagissey (grid reference SX 011455) and once on your bikes follow the road towards St Austell. Shortly after passing a park on the left, turn left by a 'Heligan Bike Trail' signpost. The gradient steepens soon after the start of the traffic-free section.



On your bikes!

1. From the start point in London Apprentice follow the tarmac lane through the woods. As the road swings left uphill, bear right onto the lower, broad woodland track soon running alongside the river. After 1 mile, at a bridge and a Millennium signpost, you have a choice: straight on for Pentewan (1 mile) or turn right across the bridge for Mevagissey (3 miles).

2. (Towards Mevagissey). After crossing the bridge, turn left at the B3273 along the shared-use pavement, cross the road via the traffic island and continue as the track swings right away from the road and begins to climb. At a junction of tracks shortly after passing under the road bridge, turn left for Mevagissey (or go straight ahead for the Lost Gardens of Heligan).

3. Descend, climb, then descend again. At the T-junction (with a footpath to the left), turn right. There is a steep descent to the road on the edge of Mevagissey. Turn right to visit this popular fishing village. Retrace your steps.



4 Pentewan Valley & Mevagissey, near St Austell Ride 4

Station: St Austell.
TIC: St Austell, 01726 879500. Truro, 01872 274555.
Other nearby trails: The Clay Trails run north from St Austell via the Eden Project to Bugle. The Camel Trail runs from Padstow through Wadebridge to Bodmin and Wenfordbridge.
Useful publications & websites:
OS Landranger Map 204. Go to *www.claytrails.co.uk*/pentewan-valley-trail or try *www.cornwall.gov.uk* and search 'Coast & Clay Trail'. The Cornwall Cycle Map produced by Sustrans shows this and several other traffic-free routes in Cornwall. It costs £7.99 and is available from *www.sustrans.org.uk*
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Mevagissey and in Pentewan.

5 Clay Trails Bugle to St Austell Ride 5

At every point on this ride you get the impression of man shaping nature – either scooping out great white clay pits, or creating volcano-shaped hills and deep green lakes or, more recently, tree-planting on a massive scale to cover the mining scars. It is a quite extraordinary landscape, at times almost lunar, at times reassuringly wooded. There are several hills to climb but these give you ever better views of the massive reworking of the landscape. The highpoint (660ft/200m) is reached as you contour around the rim of Baal Pit, to the south of Penwithick.

Category
Mineral tramways, quiet lanes.

Distance
10 miles each way.

Starting points & parking

1. Bugle: the car park at the start of the trail is about 1/2 mile from the centre of Bugle along the B3374 Rosevean Road towards Penwithick, on the left-hand side by a white sculpture of a horse lying down (grid reference SX 020586).

2. The China Clay Museum (Wheal Martyn), **Ruddlemoor**, on the B3274 north of St Austell (grid reference SX 005554).

3. A road called Tremena Gardens to the west of St Austell railway station (grid reference SX 011529). Follow Market Hill from the centre of **St Austell**, climb steeply and turn left after crossing the railway line.



Ride 5 Clay Trails, Bugle to St Austell

NB This is not a ride for young children as there are many climbs, some steep.

On your bikes!

1. (Starting from Bugle). The trail is well-signposted as 'Clay Trails' or with an elongated red triangle carved into large boulders located along the course of the trail. Follow signs for 'Eden Project' on track and lane for almost 4 miles, then just before arriving at the Eden Project turn right following a sign for 'Trethurgy'.

2. Follow signs for 'Wheal Martyn' and 'St Austell' up hill and down dale for a further 4.5 miles, ignoring the 'Sky Spur' to the right. The China Clay Museum (Wheal Martyn) is reached by crossing the footbridge over the B3274 and climbing north for $^{2}/_{3}$ mile.

3. For St Austell, do not descend to cross this footbridge but continue south on a wide smooth trail, ending at Tremena Gardens on the west side of St Austell (near the railway station). A long descent via Market Hill takes you into the heart of the town.

Station: St Austell.
TIC: St Austell, 01726 879500.
Other nearby trails: St Austell to Mevagissey, Camel Trail at Bodmin, Cardinham Woods near Bodmin.
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Map 200. Go to *www.cornwall.gov.uk* and search 'Coast & Clay Trail' or visit *www.visitcornwall.com* and search 'Cycle routes'. Also try *www.claytrails.co.uk*
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Bugle and St Austell. Cafe at the China Clay Museum on the B3274 in Ruddlemoor (north of St Austell).

Ride 6 Cardinham Woods Bodmin

Category
Forest trails.

Distance
8-mile circuit (Blue grade).

There are few Forestry Commission holdings of any real size in Cornwall. With the exception of Idless Woods to the north of Truro there is only a scattering of small holdings along the A389 and A38 between Wadebridge, Bodmin and Liskeard. Of these, Cardinham Woods is the largest (650 acres)and there is an 8-mile waymarked Blue grade trail called the Bodmin Beast. The Forestry Commission bought Cardinham Woods in 1922. Today their fertile soils produce fine timber, saw logs for house building from the impressive old Douglas Firs, and pulp for newsprint from the younger thinnings. Nearly 80 years of careful management has created a varied and attractive forest. Each age of tree is home to a different range of wildlife. Look out for ravens and buzzards soaring above the forest. Catch the occasional glimpse of grey squirrels, rabbits or foxes. Red and roe deer are here but melt away into the forest at the first hint of danger.

Starting point & parking

The car park in **Cardinham Woods** (grid reference SX 100666). From Bodmin take the A38 towards Liskeard for 2 miles. Cross the bridge over the A30 dual carriageway then after 1/4 mile turn left along a road signposted 'Cardinham, Fletchersbridge'. Shortly after a sharp right-hand bend, turn left and follow signs for the Cardinham Woods car park.

Cardinham Woods, Bodmin Ride 6

On your bikes!

The Beast of Bodmin route is well waymarked starting from the car park/cafe. There are also tougher (Red grade) alternatives called Dialled-in Dave and Hell's Teeth.

Station: Bodmin.
TIC: Bodmin, 01208 76616.
Other nearby trails: The Camel Trail starts west of Bodmin. There are some short easy trails at the nearby National Trust property at Lanhydrock: see *www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lanhydrock* and scroll down to 'Pedal Power at Lanhydrock'.
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Map 200. Visit *www.forestryengland.uk* and search 'Cardinham'.
Refreshments: Woods Cafe at the far end of the car park, near the start of the trails (01208 78111).



NB There are also some short easy trails at the nearby National Trust property at Lanhydrock: see www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lanhydrock and scroll down to 'Pedal Power at Lanhydrock'.



Ride 7 Tarka Trail from Braunton to Barnstaple

7

Category
Railway path.

Distance
6 miles each way.

Forming part of Sustrans' West Country Way (Padstow to Bristol), the Tarka Trail is one of the longest railway paths in the country. Running north from near the edge of Dartmoor down to the coast, it then follows the estuaries of the Rivers Torridge and Taw through Bideford, Barnstaple and Braunton. The trail has been split into three easily-managed sections. The section described below runs right alongside the estuary and links Braunton to the handsome town of Barnstaple with its famous Pannier Market, passing brightly painted boats and yellow RAF Rescue helicopters on its way.

Starting points & parking

1. Braunton: the trail starts by the Police Station at the far end of the main car park in the centre of Braunton, signposted 'Museum, Countryside Centre' (grid reference SS 487366). Braunton is on the A361 to the west of Barnstaple.

2. Barnstaple: the old bridge in the centre of town (grid reference SS 558330). The trail is signposted along the north side of the River Taw. There are car parks on the north side of the river off The Strand/ Castle Street/North Walk.

On your bikes!

Exit the Braunton car park following signs for 'The Burrows, Barnstaple'. Briefly join the road past Otter Cycle Hire then turn right onto Station Close and left onto the cyclepath.

Station: Barnstaple.
TIC: Barnstaple, 01271 346747.
Other nearby trails: The Tarka Trail continues west from Barnstaple to Bideford then south to Great Torrington and Meeth.
Useful publications & websites:
OS Landranger Map 180. Go to *www.tarkatrail.org.uk* or *www.traveldevon.info*
Visit *www.exploredevon.info* for a more general overview of what is happening in Devon.
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Braunton and Barnstaple.



8

Tarka Trail from Barnstaple to Bideford Ride 8

This ride forms part of the longest railway path in the South-West, running over 30 miles from Braunton to Meeth. In its entirety the trail encompasses a range of vistas from the broad flat expanses of the Taw/Torridge estuary to the intimacies of wooded riverbanks. The trail threads its way alongside the River Torridge, passing the port of Instow where there is a fine sandy beach and a ferry across to Appledore on the western banks of the Torridge. It continues to East-the-Water, the settlement opposite Bideford. There is plenty of wildlife along the route and a good cafe at the cycle hire centre at Fremington Quay. Barnstaple is famous for its Pannier Market.

It would be easy to extend this ride in both directions, i.e. to continue west from Barnstaple to Braunton on the north side of the River Taw, or south from Bideford towards Meeth.

Starting points & parking

1. Barnstaple: the old bridge in Barnstaple (grid reference SS 558329). There is a convenient large car park by the Leisure Centre to the south-east of the old bridge.

2. Bideford: the Old Bideford Station on the east side of the River Torridge in East-the-Water, just east of the A386 bridge (grid reference SS 457263).

Category
Railway path.

Distance
9 miles each way.

***NB** Care should be taken if you cross the (busy) road bridge over the River Torridge into Bideford or if you go north into Barnstaple itself, which also involves crossing a busy road bridge.*

Station: Barnstaple.
TIC: Barnstaple, 01271 375000.
Bideford, 01237 477676.
Other nearby trails: The Tarka Trail continues south from Bideford to Great Torrington and Meeth, and west from Barnstaple to Braunton. You can use the cyclepath on the new bridge if you are cycling from Bideford to Braunton but you will miss out Barnstaple town centre.

Useful publications and websites:
OS Landranger Map 180. Go to *www.tarkatrail.org.uk* or *www.traveldevon.info*
Visit *www.exploredevon.info* for a more general overview of what is happening in Devon.

Refreshments: Lots of choice in Barnstaple, Instow and Bideford. Cafe at Fremington Quay (adjacent to the cycle hire centre).



Ride 9 Tarka Trail from Bideford to Meeth

9

Category
Railway path.

Distance
15 miles each way.

NB *Care should be taken if you cross the (busy) road bridge over the River Torridge from East-the-Water into Bideford.*

The final ride on the Tarka Trail runs south from Bideford to Meeth, on the A386 near Hatherleigh. There is a steady 400ft (120m) climb on the stone and gravel railway path over 5 miles from the Puffing Billy pub, west of Great Torrington, to the highpoint near to East Yarde. The railway used to carry clay from the quarries at Petrockstowe down to the ships at Bideford. The trail runs past the pretty village of Weare Giffard, near where Tarka the Otter was born and fought his last battle, and on to Meeth. There is a very different feel to the ride compared to the other two sections described as it is largely wooded with several river crossings. Keep an eye out for the wooden and mosaic sculptures on this stretch of the trail.

Starting points & parking

1. The Old Bideford Station in East-the-Water near **Bideford** (grid reference SS 457263).

2. The Puffing Billy pub on the A386 to the west of **Great Torrington** (grid reference SS 480197).

3. In **Meeth** on the A386 to the north of Hatherleigh (grid reference SS 547079). There is limited parking in Meeth in the layby opposite the start of the trail – if full follow signs to Petrockstowe car park (grid reference SS 507105).

Station: Barnstaple or Eggesford.
TIC: Bideford, 01237 477676.
Other nearby trails: The Tarka Trail continues from Bideford to Barnstaple and Braunton. The Granite Way, Okehampton.
Useful publications & websites:
OS Landranger Maps 180 & 191. Go to *www.tarkatrail.org.uk* or *www.traveldevon.info*
Visit *www.exploredevon.info* for a more general overview of what is happening in Devon.
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Bideford. Puffing Billy pub to the west of Great Torrington. Bull & Dragon pub in Meeth.





Ride 10 Granite Way south of Okehampton

10

Category
Railway path.

Distance
8.5 miles each way.

The Devon Coast to Coast Route (part of the National Cycle Network) offers long sections of traffic-free cycling all the way from Ilfracombe on the north coast down to Plymouth on the south coast (with one missing section between Meeth and Okehampton). The ride described here forms part of the middle section, along the course of an old dismantled railway linking Okehampton station via the magnificent Meldon Viaduct to Lydford. There are superb views into the heart of Dartmoor and across to the west over the rolling patchwork of fields and hedgerows so typical of Devon. A steam train runs between Okehampton station and Meldon Viaduct, so it would be easy to combine the bike ride with a trip on the wonderfully restored old train.

Starting point & parking

Okehampton station car park (grid reference SS 593944). Follow signs for the station from the traffic lights at the crossroads in the centre of Okehampton. There is also a car park beyond the railway bridge near the station, on the left-hand side.

On your bikes!

Exit Okehampton station car park and cross onto the minor road opposite, signposted 'National Cycle Network Bike Route 27. Tavistock'. Shortly afterwards, turn sharp left to join the path running alongside the railway line. Follow this for 8.5 miles to Lydford (the last ½ mile is on-road). The highest point of the railway is about halfway along.

Station: Okehampton (seasonal).
TIC: Okehampton, 01837 53020.
Other nearby trails: The Tarka Trail starts from Meeth, a few miles to the north on the A386 (north of Hatherleigh). There is a mountain bike trail on the old tramway at Princetown.
Useful publications & websites:
OS Landranger Map 191. Go to *www.visitdartmoor.co.uk* or *www.traveldevon.info*
Alternatively, go to *www.exploredevon.info* and search 'Granite Way'.
Refreshments: Cafe at Okehampton railway station. The Bottleneck Inn, Sourton Down (just off the route). The Highwayman Inn, Sourton (just off the route). The Bearslake Inn, Lake (just off the route). Lots of choice in Lydford.



Ride 11 Drakes Trail Plymouth to Tavistock (Plym Valley Trail)

11

Category
Railway path.

Distance
17 miles each way.

NB *North from Clearbrook to Tavistock the trail uses a mixture of road and off-road sections.*

This popular railway path climbs steadily as it runs north from Plymouth (Laira Bridge) over a series of spectacular stone viaducts through the Plym Valley to Tavistock on the edge of Dartmoor. The ride follows the course of the old Great Western Railway, which started its life as the South Devon & Tavistock Railway – yet another engineering project of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. In addition to the magnificent viaducts mentioned there is also the 300-yd Shaugh Tunnel towards the northern end of the ride. It is the southern start of the Devon Coast to Coast Cycle Route, a National Cycle Network (NCN) route that runs north from Plymouth to Ilfracombe on the north coast.



Starting point & parking

The ride starts at Laira Bridge, Plymouth, where the A379 crosses the River Plym (grid reference SX 502543). You can park at:

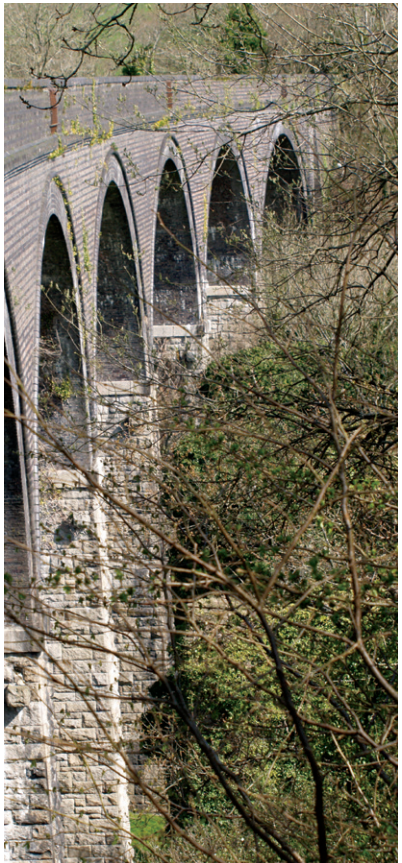
1. Coypool Road by B&Q near **Coypool Park & Ride** (SX 520569)

2. Plym Bridge (SX 524587)

3. Clearbrook (SX 525656)

4. Yelverton at the roundabout at the junction of the A386 with the B3212 (SX 521679)

5. Abbey Bridge in the centre of Tavistock (SX 482743)



On your bikes!

1. From the east side of Laira Bridge (A379) head north along the road passing static caravans and through a gate into woodland. Follow the estuary path (Route 27) onto the bridge over the railway line. At the end of the railings, turn sharp right under the A38 viaduct aiming towards a narrow stone path running parallel with the railway line.

2. Cross a road and continue in the same direction, rejoining tarmac and passing alongside the Coypool Park & Ride car park (keep this to your left).

3. Leave behind houses and factories, cross Plym Bridge Woods car park to climb up to the railway path and follow this as it climbs steadily for 4 miles to the end of the tunnel.

4. At the end of the tarmac, bear left and follow up to the Skylark pub in Clearbrook.

5. Beyond Clearbrook the route follows a mix of roads and traffic-free sections for 8 miles as far as Tavistock, always signposted as Drakes Trail, passing close to Yelverton, Horrabridge, Grenofen and Whitchurch. There are more hills on the section from Clearbrook to Horrabridge, at which point the course of the old railway is rejoined.

Station: Plymouth.
TIC: Plymouth, 01752 306330. Tavistock, 01822 612938.
Other nearby trails: The Granite Way starts from near Lydford, to the north of Tavistock. See *www.tamartrails.co.uk/maps/* for details of mountain bike trails to the west of Tavistock (near Gulworthy).
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Map 201. Go to *www.drakestrail.co.uk*, *www.traveldevon.info* or *www.exploredevon.info* Also try *www.visitdartmoor.co.uk* and search 'Drakes Trail'.
Refreshments: Skylark pub in Clearbrook.

12 Princetown Tramway Dartmoor Ride 12

Category
Rough railway path, only suitable for mountain bikes.

Distance
6 miles each way.

The trail uses a remote stretch of dismantled railway (formerly part of the Yelverton to Princetown line) in the heart of Dartmoor, running around King's Tor and past old granite quarries where vast blocks of granite were taken to build bridges, including the widening of London Bridge in 1903. The ride starts from near the infamous Dartmoor Prison, which was originally built to house French prisoners of war in Napoleonic times. The trail is also known as the Tyrwhitt Trail, after Thomas Tyrwhitt who founded Princetown and built the prison. The stone and gravel path drops 500ft (150m) as it meanders west and south-west from Princetown to the suggested turn-around point at the stile just before the junction of the railway with the B3212 (just east of Dousland), so be aware that the return part of the journey will take far longer than the first half.
As the going is fairly rough and because of the drop, this is not a ride for the unfit or for young children. Princetown is also one of the best bases for mountain biking on Dartmoor, with a wide variety of bridleways leading off in all directions. These tend to be strenuous and should not be undertaken by the inexperienced, particularly if visibility is poor.

Ride 12 Princetown Tramway, Dartmoor

12

Starting point & parking

Princetown lies in the heart of Dartmoor, at the junction of the B3357 and the B3212. The ride starts from the main car park (with an honesty box) in the **centre of Princetown** and leaves the car park by the Fire Station signposted 'Disused Railway' (grid reference SX 589734).

On your bikes!

1. At a three-way fork of tracks after about 1.5 miles, take the left-hand of the three tracks to go around King's Tor.

2. After a further 4.5 miles of gentle downhill you will come to a stile. It is suggested you turn around here. The alternative is to go over the stile and follow the ever rougher tramway to the B3212 and turn left, climbing back to Princetown. This road can be busy.

Station: Nowhere nearby.
TIC: Tavistock, 01822 612938.
Other nearby trails: Drakes Tail (Plym Valley Trail) from Plymouth. Granite Way, Okehampton. There is another, tougher ride south of Princetown – go to *www.dartmoor.gov.uk* and search 'Granite Way'. Click on 'Cycling', then 'Granite & Gears Princetown & Burrator Route'.
Useful publications & websites: OS Explorer Map OL 28 (or three OS Landranger maps – 191, 201 & 202). Go to *www.visitdartmoor.co.uk/dbimgs/FAMILY-CYCLE-RIDE-WALK.pdf* or *www.foxtorcafe.com/cycles/history-and-trail-maps/* and click on 'Princetown old railway route'. Also try *www.exploredevon.info*, click on 'Cycling' then scroll down to 'Princetown railway'.
Refreshments: Several options in Princetown.



Ride 13 Wray Valley Trail and Stover Trail from Bovey Tracey

13

This recent addition to Devon's traffic-free cycling trails links Bovey Tracey to Moretonhampstead in the north-eastern section of Dartmoor National Park. Much of the route follows the old Great Western Railway Newton Abbot to Moreton-hampstead Branch Line, which opened in 1866 and closed to passengers in 1959 and freight in 1964 before the track was lifted in 1970. The new trail includes a £500,000 bridge over the A382 at Moretonhampstead. There is a short section on lanes in the middle part of the ride, near to Lustleigh. The ancient market town of Moretonhampstead is known as the gateway to the High Moor. Its market charter was granted by King John in 1207 at a rent of one sparrowhawk per year. There is also the option of extending the ride southeast towards Newton Abbot on what is known as the Stover Trail. Created as a part of the 'Granite and Gears' project, this route passes alongside the beautiful woodland, heathland, lake and marsh of Stover Country Park, which also features a poetry trail celebrating the works of Ted Hughes. It also runs alongside the Stover Canal which was used for almost 150 years to transport granite from Dartmoor to the docks at Teignmouth.

Starting points & parking

1. **Bovey Bridge**, Bovey Tracey (grid reference SX 814782)

2. **Pound Street**, Moretonhampstead (grid reference SX 752858).

On your bikes!

The route is well signposted as the Wray Valley Trail. Close to Lustleigh there is a section of the route on lanes.

Station: Newton Abbot.
TIC: Bovey Tracey, 01626 832047. Moretonhampstead, 01647 440043
Other nearby trails: Exe Estuary, Princetown Tramway.
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Map 191. Try *www.dartmoor.gov.uk/enjoy-dartmoor/outdoor-activities/cycling*, or go to *www.traveldevon.info/cycle* and click on 'Cycle Trails' (under 'Cycle routes and maps'), then scroll down to 'Stover Trail'. Alternatively, search the internet for 'Wray Valley Trail Map'.
Refreshments: Bovey Tracey, Lustleigh and Moretonhampstead.

Category
Dismantled railway.

Distance
7 miles each way. The Stover Trail adds another 3.5 miles each way.



Ride 14 Exe Estuary Trail Dawlish – Exeter – Exmouth

14

Category
Estuary ride on a mix of traffic-free paths and quiet roads.

Distance
17 miles each way (with shortcut options using ferries).

Forming part of the National Cycle Network Route 2, which runs along the South Coast of England, this flat ride has wonderful views of the Exe Estuary and passes through several pretty villages such as Starcross and Topsham. The latter has a long maritime history and was once a larger port than Exeter. The Exe Estuary is one of the most important estuaries in Europe for wildlife, especially for wintering waders and other wildfowl and the ride passes close to several RSPB sites and Nature Reserves. Over 600 flowering plants have been recorded on the dunes and grassland of Dawlish Warren.

Starting points & parking

Dawlish, Starcross, Bridge Road (Exeter), Topsham, Exton, Lympstone, Exmouth.

On your bikes!

The route is well signposted as the 'Exe Estuary Trail'.

Station: There are several stations along both sides of the Exe Estuary. There are also ferries across the estuary enabling you to create shorter loops.
TIC: Exeter, 01392 665700.
Other nearby trails: Haldon Forest, Exeter along the River Exe, Exmouth to Budleigh Salterton.
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Map 192. Go to *www.traveldevon.info/cycle/cycle-routes/cycle-trails* and click on 'Exe Estuary Trail'. Or try *www.exploredevon.info/activities/cycle/exe-estuary-trail* and *www.dawlishwarren.info/things-to-do-at-dawlish-warren/exe-estuary-cycle-trail*
Refreshments: Lots of choice along the route.



Ride 15 Haldon Forest south-west of Exeter

15

Category
Waymarked forest trails.

Distance
1.5 to 6 miles.

There are several options in Haldon Forest – the easiest is the 1-mile Discovery Trail (Green grade), which is also popular with walkers. There are two Blue grade trails: the Spicers Trail (3.5 miles) and the slightly more challenging Kiddens Trail (4 miles) offer a variety of surfaces and gradients, including lengths of single track. There are tougher challenges on the 6-mile Ridge Ride Trail (Red and Black grades). A Skills Area and Pump Loop complete the picture.

Starting point & parking

Haldon Forest Park From Exeter follow the A38 towards Plymouth. Turn off for the racecourse and Dunchideock, then follow signs for 'Haldon Forest' and 'Gateway' (grid ref SX 883847).

Station: Exeter.
TIC: Exeter, 01392 665700.
Other nearby trails: Exe Valley through Exeter, Exe Estuary Trail.
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Map 192. Visit *www.forestryengland.uk/haldon-forest-park* and scroll down to 'Cycling and mountain biking trails at Haldon Forest'.
Refreshments: The Ridge Cafe at the Visitor Centre (01392 832531). The nearest pub is at Kennford, 3 miles to the north-east.



Ride 16 Exeter along the River Exe

16

Category
Riverside path and specially-built cyclepath.

Distance
7 miles each way.

A traffic-free route starts in the very heart of Exeter, and follows a combination of the River Exe and the Exe Canal down past the Double Locks Inn to the wide expanse of the Exe Estuary at Turf Locks. The River Exe and its tributary, the River Culm, drain much of Exmoor and the Blackdown Hills, making Exeter prone to flooding: weirs and defence works have reduced the risk, creating at times a bewildering amount of water channels and possible paths to follow. All paths lead south to Turf Locks! The section through the town centre passes the attractive marina where brightly coloured dinghies tack and jibe. Further south there is an option of following the river or the canal, the latter passing the popular Double Locks Inn. Beyond the major road bridge the cyclepath drops down onto a tarmac path parallel with the towpath as far as the Turf Locks.

Ride 16 Exeter, along the River Exe

16

Starting point & parking

Station Road car park, Exeter, just across the river from St David's railway station, off the Cowley Bridge Road (the A377 on the north-west side of Exeter).

On your bikes!

1. From the car park off Station Road, follow signs for 'Exe Bridges, City Centre'. The route passes beneath a railway bridge then rejoins the river. Keep the river to your left.

2. At the start of the canal (just past the Maritime Museum) you have a choice of following a route through the Riverside Valley Park or alongside the canal. The canal route will take you past the Double Locks Inn.

3. Both routes rejoin at Bridge Road (A379) where there is a pelican crossing to enable you to follow the canal towpath further south.

4. The path drops down onto a wide tarmac path parallel with and below the canal towpath. Continue on under the M5 bridge to the Turf Hotel. Retrace your steps.



Station: Exeter St David's.
TIC: Exeter, 01392 665700.
Other nearby trails: Exe Estuary Trail. Exmouth to Budleigh Salterton. There are waymarked trails in Haldon Forest, south-west of Exeter.
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Map 192. An Exeter Cycle Map is available from *www.traveldevon.info/cycle/cycle-routes/cycle-maps*
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Exeter. The Double Locks pub, halfway between the city centre and Bridge Road (the A379). Turf Hotel, at the end of the canal where it joins the Exe estuary (south-east of Exminster).

Ride 17 Grand Western Canal east of Tiverton

17

Category
Canal towpath.

Distance
12 miles each way.

Built between 1810 and 1814, this section of the Grand Western Canal was part of a grand coast-to-coast scheme to link Exeter (and the River Exe) to Bridgwater (and the River Parrett), thus enabling ships and their cargoes to avoid the treacherous Cornish coast. The scheme was never fully realised and this is one of the fragments that remain. It runs between Tiverton and Whipcott in mid-Devon. The towpath has been brought up to a uniform standard along its whole length. At the eastern end the water is amazingly clear, fed by underground springs. In the distance there are views of the patchwork of red earth fields and green pastures so characteristic of Devon.

17

Grand Western Canal, east of Tiverton Ride 17

Starting point & parking

The Grand Western Canal Visitor Centre, **Tiverton** (grid reference SS 963123). From the A361 North Devon Link Road follow the A396 towards the centre of Tiverton for 1.5 miles. At a sign for 'Police Station, Butterleigh, Grand Western Canal' turn left onto Old Road (leading to Canal Hill). Keep following the brown signs for 'Grand Western Canal'. Start climbing the hill, ignore 'The Avenue' to the left and take the next left signposted 'Grand Western Canal'. Park here and go to the end of the car park to join the towpath.

On your bikes!

From the end of the Grand Western Canal car park bear right onto the towpath. Follow the towpath for up to 12 miles, stopping for refreshments at any of the places signposted from the canal: Halberton, Sampford Peverell, Burlescombe or Holcombe Rogus.

Station: Tiverton.
TIC: Exeter, 01392 665700.
Other nearby trails: The Bridgwater & Taunton Canal.
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Map 181. See also *www.exploredevon.info/activities/cycle/grand-western-canal-3/* or *www.tivertoncanal.co.uk/canal-life/cycling*
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Tiverton. Tea shop at the start of the ride (at the end of the car park). Pubs in Halberton and Sampford Peverell just off the route.

***NB** The towpath under almost all the bridges is very narrow so take great care at these points. Give plenty of warning to walkers with a 'Hello', a ring of your bell, a whistle or talking loudly amongst yourselves!*



18

Exmouth to Budleigh Salterton Ride 18

Starting from Phear Park in the centre of Exmouth, the ride heads east along the course of the railway path towards Budleigh Salterton, climbing gradually up through woodland on a good quality path that then drops down towards Knowle. To visit the attractive seaside town of Budleigh Salterton you will need to use a combination of quiet lanes and residential streets beyond the end of the railway path.

Starting point & parking

The free car park in Phear Park (grid reference SY 007816) to the north-east of the centre of **Exmouth**. If approaching from the north on the A376 you should turn left off the Exeter Road onto Gipsy Lane before reaching the town centre. Gipsy Lane comes shortly after Hulham Road (also on the left).

Category
Railway path.

Distance
4 miles each way.

Ride **18** **Exmouth to Budleigh Salterton** 18

On your bikes!

1. Return past the cafe in Phear Park, go over the bumps and exit the park through the opening with bollards and eagle-topped stone pillars. Turn left on the pavement up Marlpool Hill and shortly first left signposted 'Littleham Cycle Route'. Follow signs for Budleigh Salterton.



2. At the T-junction with the minor lane (Bear Lane), at the end of the traffic-free trail, turn right. Then at the next T-junction (with the busier B3178) turn left then right onto Bedlands Lane. At the T-junction at the end of Bedlands Lane turn right and follow the road around to the left. At the T-junction at the end of Moor Lane turn right and follow this downhill into the centre of Budleigh Salterton.

Station: Exmouth.
TIC: Exmouth, 01395 222299.
Other nearby trails: Exe Valley through Exeter. Exe Estuary Trail.
Useful publications & websites:
OS Landranger Map 192.
Try *www.visitdevon.co.uk/things-to-do*, click on 'Cycling & Cycle Routes in Devon' (under 'Things To Do') then scroll down to 'Exmouth to Budleigh Salterton Circuit'. Also try *www.traveldevon.info/cycle/cycle-routes/cycle-trails/* and *www.exploredevon.info/activities/cycle/exe-estuary-trail/*
Refreshments: There is a cafe in Phear Park in Exmouth. There is plenty of choice in Budleigh Salterton.

Ride **19** **Bridgwater & Taunton Canal** 19

Category
Canal towpath.

Distance
15 miles each way.

Forming part of Sustrans' West Country Way, which runs from Padstow to Bristol, the fine stone and gravel towpath of the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal runs along the western edge of the Somerset Levels and links the two historic Somerset towns of Bridgwater and Taunton. There is plenty of wildfowl to be seen on the water and there is also a series of stone sculptures of the planets set back in the hedgerows. The route starts from Town Bridge, Bridgwater and passes through Huntworth, North Newton, Creech St Michael and Bathpool to reach the County Cricket Ground in Taunton. There are short road sections from the centres of Bridgwater and Taunton to the start of the towpath, and a short stretch on quiet lanes in the middle of the ride.

19 Bridgwater & Taunton Canal Ride **19**

Starting points & parking

1. From **Bridgwater**, the West Country Way (National Cycle Network Route 3), which includes the canal towpath, is signposted from Town Bridge in the centre of Bridgwater (grid reference ST 302368).

2. You may prefer to join the towpath on the outskirts of town at the Boat & Anchor pub, **Huntworth**, just north of the M5 Jct 24 (grid reference ST 313350).

3. From **Taunton**, the ride starts from Coal Orchard car park, right next to Somerset County Cricket Ground in the centre of town, near to the junction of Bridge Street with St James Street (grid reference 227248).

Station: Taunton or Bridgwater.
TIC: Taunton, 01823 336344.
Bridgwater, 01278 436438.
Other nearby trails: The Willow Walk to the west of Glastonbury.
Useful publications & websites:
OS Landranger Maps 182 & 193.
Try *www.canalrivertrust.org.uk* and search 'Bridgwater & Taunton Canal'. Or go to *www.somerset.gov.uk* and search 'Cycling Maps' and follow links through to maps for Taunton and Bridgwater.
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Taunton and Bridgwater. There are pubs at Huntworth, Creech St Michael and North Newton. Cafe at Lower Maunsel Lock.





20

Willow Walk/Bittern Trail west of Glastonbury

Ride **20**

This ride runs through a lovely nature reserve full of swans and other wildfowl. There are glimpses of dark, rich peat fields characteristic of the Somerset Levels. The wildflowers are prolific, and there is a real indication of how the area would return to dense and impenetrable vegetation if left to its own devices for a few decades. The ride starts from the Avalon Marshes Centre, which has recreated some of the wooden huts that people used to live in a few thousand years ago. At the other end of the ride it is easy to go right into the heart of the mystical town of Glastonbury on relatively quiet roads. There is a short road section from the car park at the start to the beginning of the trail. There are two 1/2-mile road sections close to Glastonbury. These can be avoided if you turn around at the end of the traffic-free section.

Category
Railway path.

Distance
5 miles each way.

Starting point & parking

The **Avalon Marshes Centre**, west of Glastonbury. This is located on the minor road between the B3151 at Westhay and the A39 near Ashcott (grid reference ST 426415).

Ride **20** **Willow Walk, west of Glastonbury**

20

On your bikes!

1. Exit the Avalon Marshes Centre car park and turn left along the lane. **Ignore** the first track to the left. Cross the bridge over the drainage channel and turn immediately left into Shapwick Heath Nature Reserve.

2. Follow for 3.5 miles to the end of the traffic-free section (grid reference ST 472392); then if you wish to visit Glastonbury, keep following signs for National Cycle Network Route 3 and Glastonbury town centre for 2 miles on a mix of quiet lanes and a short section of traffic-free trail to emerge in Market Place at the end of Benedict Street.

3. (Start/return from the centre of Glastonbury.) Follow Benedict Street, a continuation of the High Street, to cross the A39 bypass via the toucan crossing. Go past Bradfords Building Suppliers and take the first lane to the right after the timber yard. Shortly turn left following signs for the Avalon Marshes Centre via Nature Reserve.

4. Easy to miss: about 2 miles from Glastonbury, and shortly after passing a peat business on the right, leave the road (and also leave National Cycle Network Route 3) and turn right onto the broad stone track through the nature reserve.



Station: Bridgwater.
TIC: Glastonbury, 01458 832954.
Other nearby trails: Bridgwater & Taunton Canal.
Useful publications & websites:
OS Landranger Map 182.
Visit *www.somerset.gov.uk* and search 'Cycling Maps' or *www.avalonmarshes.org/explore/things-to-do/cycling*
Refreshments: Cafe at the Visitor Centre, Railway Inn, about halfway along the route. Lots of choice in Glastonbury.



21

Strawberry Line
Yatton to Axbridge and Cheddar

Ride **21**

The Strawberry Line gets its name from the fields of strawberries planted around Axbridge and Cheddar on the sunny south side of the Mendips, which have traditionally produced some of the country's finest strawberries. The railway ran for almost a century between 1864 and 1963. The wooded hills of the Mendips form a fine backdrop to the ride as you cycle south from Yatton. The ride passes through a mix of arable land, pasture and cider orchards, climbing to a highpoint near Winscombe and the Shute Shelve Tunnel, where the lights along the trail switch on magically as you pass through. The route into Axbridge itself will involve some time spent on-road but it makes an attractive destination with many fine timbered houses.

Category
Railway path.

Distance
9 miles each way.

Starting points & parking

1. Yatton Station car park (grid reference ST 425660).

2. Winscombe recreation ground (grid reference ST 420574).

3. King John's Hunting Lodge, **Axbridge** (grid reference ST 431546).

4. Valley Line Industrial Park on the west side of **Cheddar** (grid reference ST 450534).

On your bikes!

1. From Yatton station follow the railway path south for just over 1 mile. The trail bears right away from the old railway line and crosses a bridge over the River Yeo. At the T-junction with the A370, turn left along the shared-use pavement then cross via the toucan crossing onto a continuation of the trail.

2. After 3 miles there is a second road section near to the cider orchards. Turn left uphill on the lane and keep an eye out after ½ mile for a right turn onto a track.

3. Cross the A368 via a toucan crossing and follow the railway path past Winscombe and through the tunnel.

4. Shortly after the tunnel you may wish to turn around at the junction with the A38 as there are more road sections after this point. To continue to Axbridge, cross the A38 via the traffic island and bear to the right of the small car park, descending on a lane and following National Cycle Network Route 26 signs into the centre of Axbridge.

5. Another traffic-free section starts at the junction of the road through Axbridge with the A371 and finishes on the edge of Cheddar at the Valley Line Industrial Park.

Station: Yatton.
TIC: Weston Super Mare, 01934 888877.
Other nearby trails: Willow Walk near Glastonbury. Bridgwater & Taunton Canal.
Useful publications & websites:
OS Landranger Map 182.
A Strawberry Line leaflet is available from the *www.thestrawberryline.co.uk* – click on 'Visit' then 'Strawberry Line Map'.
Refreshments: Pubs just off the route in Winscombe. Lots of choice in Axbridge.



Ride 22 Colliers Way from Radstock to Midsomer Norton, Shoscombe Vale & Frome

22

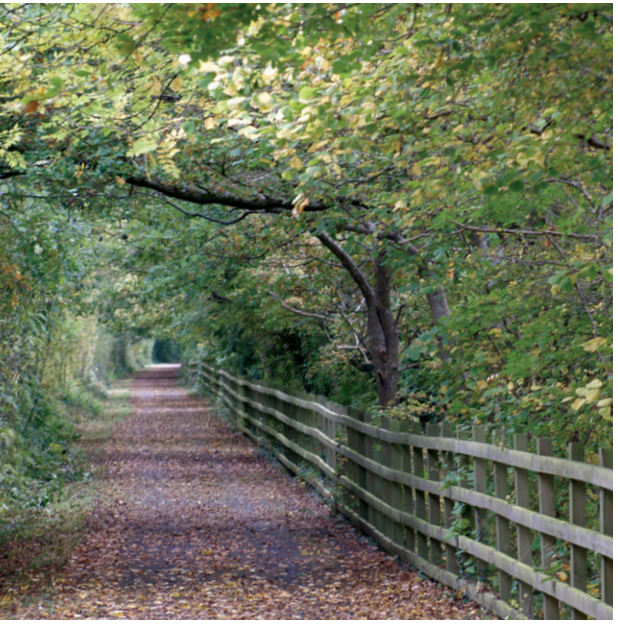
Category
Railway paths.

Distance
Radstock to Midsomer Norton: 2 miles each way.

Radstock to Shoscombe Vale: 2 miles each way.

Radstock to Frome: 6 miles each way.

Known as the Colliers Way, indicating the area's connection with coal mining, the trail uses two old railways – one between Midsomer Norton and Shoscombe Vale, the other between Radstock and Frome – offering some wonderful, easy cycling on good-quality surfaces with views out over the gently rolling countryside to both sides. There are many boulders placed along the course of the trail with plaques showing the names of apple varieties. The old iron tracks of the railway to Great Elm are still in place, now overgrown with brambles and trees. There are signs indicating where to leave the trail for refreshments at Kilmersdon, Vobster and Mells. If you are prepared to use some lanes and tackle the odd hill, the Colliers Way can be followed right into Frome to the south-east and to Wellow, Midford and Dundas Aqueduct to the north-east.



Starting points & parking

1. Car park at Tom Huyton children's play park on the north side of the A362 just west of the centre of **Radstock**, near the Co-op (grid reference ST 688550).

2. For the trail from Radstock to Frome there is a car park in Radstock closer to the start of the traffic-free section on **Fortescue Road**, just past the library on the right. Fortescue Road lies off the A367 Shepton Mallet Road, immediately south of its junction with the A362 (grid reference ST 689547). Turn right out of the car park then left onto Meadow View to join the railway path.

3. Great Elm, 2 miles north-west of Frome (grid reference ST 752498).

NB *There is no parking here, at the eastern end of the trail.*

On your bikes!

From the Radstock start there are three options:

1. Access the trail and turn left (west) to Midsomer Norton. The trail ends somewhat abruptly after 2 miles on the B3355 (grid reference ST 658548).

2. Access the trail and turn right (east) to Shoscombe Vale. Shortly, at the junction with the road by the tall wheel/mining sculpture, continue straight ahead on Waterloo Road for almost 1.5 miles. Just before the start of the hill turn right onto the railway path for 1.5 miles as far as Shoscombe Vale.

3. As per **(2)** above but keep an eye out for a signpost on the 'green' indicating that National Cycle Network Route 24 goes right. Follow NCN 24 signs carefully, crossing roads and dismounting as

necessary to arrive at Victoria Hall/the Public Library. Turn left, go past the church and primary school, and shortly turn left onto Meadow View following signs for Kilmersdon and Frome. Follow the railway path for 5.5 miles to its end at the minor road in Great Elm (grid reference ST 752498).

Station: Frome or Freshford.
TIC: Frome, 01373 465757.
Other nearby trails: Kennet & Avon Canal between Bath and Bradford on Avon.
Useful publications & websites: OS Landranger Maps 172 and 183. A Colliers Way leaflet can be downloaded from *www.colliersway.co.uk*
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Radstock. Pubs off the route in Kilmersdon, Vobster and Mells.



Ride 23 Severn Bridge Cyclepath

23

The first Severn Bridge, opened in 1967, saw its traffic flows slashed with the opening of the Second Severn Crossing, a few miles further south. As a result, as you cycle high above the swirling brown waters of the River Severn, you are more aware of a sense of space and height than noise and traffic fumes. There are cycleways on both sides of the bridge, climbing to a highpoint in the middle. At the Chepstow end these are connected via a conveniently located subway. At the Gloucestershire end it is a bit more complicated! This is a ride best undertaken on a bright sunny day when the wind is not too strong: what may be a gentle breeze elsewhere can be funnelled by the shape of the Severn Estuary into a strong and gusty crosswind.

Starting points & parking

1. (English side, **near Aust**.) Follow the M4/M48 towards Chepstow. At Jct 1, just before the old Severn Bridge, turn left on the A403 towards Avonmouth then first right towards 'St Augustine's Vineyard, Severn Bridge Maintenance Department'. Park along this minor road (grid reference ST 569891).

2. (Welsh side, on the **south-west edge of Chepstow**.) There is a long layby with parking on the east side of the A466, just north of M48, Jct 2. Follow the cyclepath parallel with the A466 towards the Severn Bridge. **Take care** crossing the road at the roundabout. Go to Instruction **(4)**.

Category
Cyclepath on motorway bridge.

Distance
8-mile circuit using cyclepaths on both sides of the bridge.

Ride **23** **Severn Bridge Cyclepath** 23

On your bikes!

1. (Start from Aust.) Climb on the minor road that leads towards Old Passage and take the first right, signposted 'No entry except access. Bridge Maintenance Unit'. After 200yds take the first left signposted 'National Cycle Network Route 4'.

2. Cross the bridge on the cyclepath running along its south side and follow the track downhill away from the motorway.

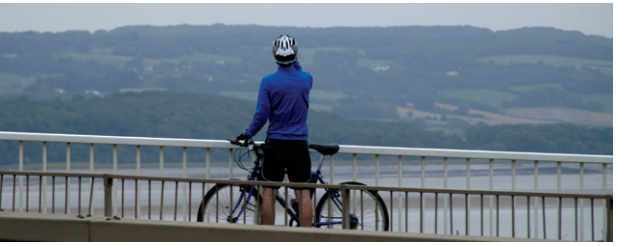
3. At the T-junction turn right through the subway under the M48 signposted 'Caldicot, Usk', then at the end of the tunnel turn left uphill and sharp left* at the top.

** Or if you have started from Chepstow turn right at this point to return to the A466.*

4. Cross the bridge on the cyclepath along its north side. Go past the toll booths and under the footbridge. Descend to the roundabout by Aust Services then turn sharp left uphill (use the pavement/concrete track parallel to the road). Keep bearing left.

5. Go past the services following 'Lodge' signs, then turn left opposite the fuel station and go down the steps that lead to the bridge running across the top of the toll booths, signposted 'Aust, Chepstow'. At the other side of the bridge turn left** signposted 'Aust', then shortly at the T-junction turn right to return to the start.

*** Or if you have started from Chepstow turn right here and join instruction 2.*



Station: Chepstow or Severn Beach (via Bristol).
TIC: Chepstow, 01291 623772.
Other nearby trails: Forest of Dean, Gloucester & Sharpness Canal.
Useful publications: OS Landranger Map 172.
Refreshments: Severn View Services. Lots of choice in Chepstow.

Ride **24** Bristol to Pill Riverside Path

24

Category
Riverside path.

Distance
6.5 miles each way.

Explore the broad riverside path running beneath the Clifton Suspension Bridge, one of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's finest creations. The path runs along the bottom of the gorge. The tidal rise and fall of the Bristol Channel is one of the highest in the world, so do not be surprised to see the river flowing strongly in the wrong direction! The path can easily be linked to the trails in Leigh Woods above the gorge or via quiet lanes to form a circuit returning to Bristol via Ashton Court.

Starting points & parking

1. The Industrial Museum in **Bristol** city centre (grid reference ST 586723).

2. Leigh Woods. Cross the Clifton Suspension Bridge away from Clifton Village then take the first right on to North Road.

24 Bristol to Pill, Riverside Path Ride **24**

Follow this for ½ mile then just after the third turning on the left, the traffic-free trail starts by wooden barriers to the right signposted 'National Cycle Network Route 41' (grid reference ST 555731).

On your bikes!

From Bristol city centre

1. With your back to the Industrial Museum, turn left and follow the docks with the water to your right. After 700yds, opposite a curved grey metal dockside crane, turn left between black and white barriers to cross the railway lines to your left and follow the wide path at the base of a high wall. Pass beneath a road bridge and bear right on the cobbled riverside path.

2. Shortly after passing huge red-brick buildings on your right, turn left to cross the grey steel bridge over the river then turn right along the stone and gravel riverside path for a further 4 miles to Ham Green (Pill).

3. The trail climbs and joins a tarmac lane. At the T-junction at the top of Chapel Pill Lane, bear right onto the gravel path across the 'green'. At the far end jink right then left onto Watchhouse Hill and descend on the cyclepath to Pill, emerging near a red-brick railway bridge and the creek.

From Leigh Woods

1. From the Leigh Woods starting point described opposite, the trail starts with a short, steep climb into woodland. Shortly, at a T-junction near a house, turn right then left following the blue-banded posts and 'NCN 41' signs. After 200yds turn left through a gap in the wall, following signs.

2. At the T-junction with tarmac by a line of copper beeches, turn right. Continue in the same direction as tarmac turns to stone track and descends steeply.

3. Easy to miss: after ¾ mile keep an eye out for a right turn off this broad stone track signposted 'NCN 41'. This will drop you down via a narrow stone path onto the wider riverside path. Turn left for Pill, right for Bristol. If you plan to return to Clifton via Leigh Woods, remember this junction with the riverside path for the return route.

Station: Temple Meads, Bristol.
TIC: Bristol, 0117 9299205.
Other nearby trails: The Bristol & Bath Railway Path starts from the other side of the city from Midland Road. The Kennet & Avon Canal runs from Bath east towards Devizes.
Useful publications & websites:
OS Landranger Map 172. You will find details about several rides in and around Bristol on *www.betterbybike.info/maps*
The maps covering this ride are Bristol City Centre, Bristol and Avonmouth. Also try *www.bristol.gov.uk/streets-travel/cycling*
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Bristol city centre. Cafe at the CREATE Centre. Pubs in Pill, at the end of the path.



Ride 25 Forest of Dean Family Cycle Trail east of Coleford

25

Category
Railway path and forestry tracks.

Distance
11-mile circuit.

The Forest of Dean lies on an area of higher land between the River Severn and River Wye, and provides spectacular views of the borderland of England and Wales. It represents one of the best areas for recreational cycling in the region. A combination of enlightened thinking by the Forestry Commission in their largest holding in the West Country, and co-operation with local authorities and Sustrans, has created an integrated recreational cycling network linking towns with woodland over a large area. The flagship route is the 11-mile Family Cycle Trail which follows disused railway lines for much of its course, providing mostly easy gradients that are ideal for family cycling. There are challenges at all levels in other parts of the forest including the Blue grade Verderers Trail (7 miles) and the Red grade Freeminer Trail (7.5 miles). There is also a dedicated downhill area.

Starting point & parking

PedalABikeaway Cycle Hire Centre in the centre of the Forest of Dean. This lies just north of the crossroads of the B4226 and B4234 **between Cinderford and Coleford**, about 15 miles south-west of Gloucester (grid reference SO 608124).

On your bikes!

1. Facing the PedalABikeAway Cycle Centre go to the right past the Cannop Colliery signpost to join the yellow 'tyre track' bike trail waymarks. Descend, cross the road with care onto the path opposite, go up a short steep climb and turn left. Shortly, at a T-junction by a tall wooden signpost, turn left again signposted 'Drybrook Road Station'.

2. Keep following the yellow tyre track signs in the direction of Drybrook. At a fork, with Lydbrook signposted left, bear right to Drybrook. Long, steady climb up to Drybrook Road Station. Shortly after passing Lightmoor Colliery ruins there is a short, steep climb, then turn left on a long descent. Go past Spruce Ride and Central Bridge.

3. Follow signs for Cannop Wharf and Cycle Centre, at one point turning right where 'Mallards Pike' is signposted straight ahead.

4. After ½ mile, cross a road then after a further ½ mile descend steeply from Three Brothers to Cannop Wharf. At the T-junction at the bottom, turn right for the Cycle Centre. The route runs briefly along a road near to Cannop Ponds then bears off right, soon returning to the Cycle Centre.

Station: Lydney.
TIC: Monmouth 01600 775257.
Other nearby trails: Coleford to Parkend. Sharpness & Gloucester Canal. Severn Bridge Cyclepath.
Useful publications & websites:
OS Landranger Map 162 or better still OS Explorer Map OL 14. Go to *www.forestryengland.uk/ cannop-cycle-centre*. Try also *www.pedalabikeaway.co.uk* and click on 'Trails', or *www.wyedeantourism.co.uk/cyc*
Alternatively, go to *www.fodmtb.com* for mountain biking information. For maps try *www.thinktravel.info/bike* and click on 'Cycle Maps'.
Refreshments: At the Cycle Centre. Otherwise you will need to use a map to find your way to the various pubs located in the villages nearest to the cycle trail. There is an ice-cream van near Cannop Ponds at busy times.

Ride 26 Coleford to Parkend & Cannop Wharf Forest of Dean

26

Category
Railway path.

Distance
5 miles each way.

A 5-mile traffic-free trail leads from Coleford to join the Forest of Dean Family Cycle Trail, running through woodland, between rock cuttings and past the ruins of Darkhill Ironworks, a reminder of the industrial past of the area. Be warned that it is almost all downhill from Coleford to Parkend so almost all uphill on the way back. Starting and finishing at Coleford, together with the Family Cycle Trail, would form a lollipop-shape ride, 21 miles in length.

Starting point & parking

The Railway Museum in the main central car park in **Coleford** (grid reference SO 577105). Coleford lies 15 miles south-west of Gloucester.

On your bikes!

1. From the Railway Museum you will see a bike route signpost with 'Milkwall, Parkend' on it. Cross the road with care and follow the obvious cyclepath now signposted 'Parkend'.

2. After a short climb, descend to cross the road then continue downhill past the ruins of Darkhill Ironworks. At the next road go straight ahead and continue in the same direction through a rock cutting following signs for 'Parkend' then 'Cannop Wharf'.



3. Follow a cyclepath parallel to the road, then turn left along Hughes Terrace for a brief lane section. Cross the busy B4234, go past Coleford Junction and, if you wish, join the Family Cycle Trail at Cannop Wharf. Remember this point if you do the family circuit for your return to Coleford.

Station: Lydney.
TIC: Monmouth, 01600 775257.
Other nearby trails: Forest of Dean Family Cycle Trail, Severn Bridge Cyclepath.
Useful publications & websites:
Go to *www.forestryengland.uk/cannop-cycle-centre*. Try also *www.wyedeantourism.co.uk/cyc* or *www.pedalabikeaway.co.uk* and click on 'Trails'. Go to *www.fodmtb.com* for mountain biking information or try *www.thinktravel.info/bike* and click on 'Cycle Maps'.
Refreshments: Lots of choice in Coleford. Otherwise you will need to use a map to find your way to the various pubs in the villages nearest to the cycle trail. There is an ice-cream van near Cannop Ponds at busy times.

