



GRAVEL RIDES PEAK DISTRICT

15 gravel bike adventures
in the Dark & White Peak



HETTY KINGSTON

GRAVEL RIDES PEAK DISTRICT



**15 gravel bike adventures
in the Dark & White Peak**

HETTY KINGSTON



Vertebrate Publishing, Sheffield
www.adventurebooks.com

GRAVEL RIDES PEAK DISTRICT

15 gravel bike adventures in the Dark & White Peak

First published in 2024 by Vertebrate Publishing.



Vertebrate Publishing

Omega Court, 352 Cemetery Road, Sheffield S11 8FT, United Kingdom.

www.adventurebooks.com

Copyright © 2024 Hetty Kingston and Vertebrate Publishing Ltd.

Hetty Kingston has asserted her rights under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 to be identified as author of this work.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-83981-231-6 (Paperback)

ISBN 978-1-83981-232-3 (Ebook)

All rights reserved. No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means – graphic, electronic, or mechanised, including photocopying, recording, taping, or information storage and retrieval systems – without the written permission of the publisher.

Front cover *Stanage Causeway at sunset (route 15).* © Callum Howard.

Back cover *Classic White Peak gravel (route 02).*

Opposite *Views from Brough Lane (route 08).*

Photography by **Hetty Kingston** unless otherwise credited.



All maps reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of His Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright. AC0000809882.

Edited by John Coefield, design and production by Jane Beagley.

www.adventurebooks.com

Printed and bound in Bulgaria by Pulsio.

Vertebrate Publishing is committed to printing on paper from sustainable sources.

Every effort has been made to achieve accuracy of the information in this guidebook. The authors, publishers and copyright owners can take no responsibility for: loss or injury (including fatal) to persons; loss or damage to property or equipment; trespass, irresponsible behaviour or any other mishap that may be suffered as a result of following the route descriptions or advice offered in this guidebook. The inclusion of a track or path as part of a route, or otherwise recommended, in this guidebook does not guarantee that the track or path will remain a right of way. If conflict with land-owners arises we advise that you act politely and leave by the shortest route available. If the matter needs to be taken further then please take it up with the relevant authority.

PLEASE GIVE WAY TO HORSES AND PEDESTRIANS.





CONTENTS

Introduction	ix
Acknowledgements	x
How to use this book	x
Rights of way	xii
Sustainability	xii
Bikepacking	xiii
The bike	xiii
Recommended kit list	xiv
General safety	xv
In the event of an accident	xvi
Rules of the (off) road	xvi
Planning your ride	xvii
Maps & symbols	xvii

SECTION 1 – EASY ROUTES

01 ■ Dore & Ringinglow – 18.3km	3
02 ■ Parsley Hay & Monyash – 20.2km	9
03 ■ Ladybower & the Upper Derwent Valley – 36.1km	15
04 ■ Thorpe & the Manifold Valley – 42km	21

SECTION 2 – STRAIGHTFORWARD ROUTES

05 ■ Bakewell & Chatsworth – 26.8km	29
06 ■ Ringinglow & Totley Moor – 27.8km	35
07 ■ Eyam & Calver Peak – 28.2km	41
08 ■ Mam Tor & the Broken Road – 29.4km	47
09 ■ Rivelin Valley & Ughill Moors – 30.3km	53
10 ■ Wirksworth & Pikehall – 30.8km	59
11 ■ Hope & the Hucklows – 31.5km	65
12 ■ Millers Dale & the Monsal Trail – 33.3km	71

SECTION 3 – CHALLENGING ROUTES

13 ■ Linacre & Shillito Woods – 25.6km	79
14 ■ Hathersage & the Eastern Edges – 42.2km	85
15 ■ Stanage & Big Moor – 60.8km	93
16 ■ Bonus Route: Dark & White – 105km	101

Appendix	106
----------	-----



Download the Gravel Rides
Peak District GPX files from
www.adventurebooks.com/GRPD-GPX

Route grades

- Easy ■ Straightforward
- Challenging



Introduction

Welcome to *Gravel Rides Peak District* – your go-to guide for exploring the Peak District on two wheels! Writing this book has been a joy as it combines my love of maps, cycling and community. I've poured my heart into creating routes that showcase my favourite parts of the Peak and I couldn't be happier to share them with you now.

In these pages, you won't find the advice of a Lycra-clad seasoned pro, but rather the genuine excitement of someone who simply loves riding their bike off-road. Truth be told, I stumbled upon gravel biking by accident years ago when I was looking for a more interesting off-road alternative to my daily commute, and quickly fell head over heels for it. Why? Because there's something about this playful kind of riding that brings me pure, childlike joy – it puts a smile on my face and makes me feel alive. Over the years, exploring all the bridleways and trails close to home has reshaped my perspective on adventure and fuelled my never-ending curiosity to see what the lines and features of a map look like with my own eyes.

But enough about me – this guide is about you and your next adventure, and the Peak District is the perfect playground for it! I am biased, but these hills hold a special place in my heart, and I feel lucky to call them home. We may not have endless miles of smooth tracks like the New Forest, or the remote, rugged landscape of Scotland, but what we lack in size, we make up for in character. Riding in the Peak District is adventurous in its own way – it's surprising, playful and sometimes challenging. But, above all, it's fun!

It also has something for everyone – whether you're a regular rider or just getting to grips with gravel, I encourage you to get out there and give it a go. Embrace the terrain, the weather and the conditions. Don't rule something out before trying it – perfection is overrated, and the real fun lies in letting go and embracing the journey.

With a whole host of routes to explore, use this guide as your source of inspiration, the starting point for your adventure. Mix and match loops, ride short sections, freestyle – there is so much to play with. One of the biggest challenges has been narrowing the route selection down; now that's done, the only difficult task left is picking which route you're going to ride first.

Whichever you choose, I hope this book brings you as much joy as I've had putting it together. Happy riding!

Hetty Kingston



HOUNDKIRK IN THE HEATHER.

01 DORE & RINGINGLOW

18.3km/11.4 miles

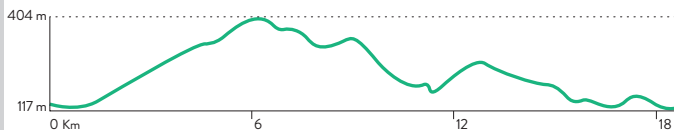
Introduction

Despite being on the outskirts of the city, what I love about this route is how beautiful it is, especially in late summer. Cycling through lush woodland on to the purple moorlands when the heather is in bloom feels special. Even though this route is short, adventurous terrain keeps things interesting and playful. Don't be put off by brief technical sections – you can always see what's coming, and it's wide enough that you can pick your line. There are plenty of cafes along the way for breaks, and remember it's perfectly fine to walk the tougher parts! It's also adaptable, making it a good choice for both seasoned cyclists and those newer to gravel.

From Dore station, you soon escape the urban landscape as you disappear into Ecclesall Woods. The climb out of the city is gradual but sustained, first on a track through the woods, and then on

small roads as you make your way to Lady Canning's. Pick up a track through the middle of the plantation to the route's high point, where you have the option of a lap of the purpose-built mountain bike trails.

As you descend towards the ancient Roman road, Houndkirk, the terrain transforms, becoming rockier and more rugged. The route circles back to the road at Ringinglow and connects to a playful descent into the city – this starts off as fast and loose gravel before transitioning to solid but substantial rocks. Smoother paths run towards the parks before your second climb up Clough Lane. A short, fun singletrack leads to Ringinglow Road and a tempting detour to Hidden Gem Cafe. Energy restored, wiggle your way along the roads back into Ecclesall Woods, where you can pick up some speed and enjoy a scenic off-road finish.



DISTANCE 18.3km/11.4 miles — ASCENT 400m/1,310ft — HIGHEST POINT 404m/1,325ft — START/FINISH Dore & Totley railway station — START/FINISH GRID REF SK 323812 — SATNAV S17 3LB — GPS 53.3275, -1.5156 — GRADE ■ — TERRAIN Forest tracks; gravel; quiet roads; some smooth singletrack — PUBLIC TRANSPORT Dore & Totley railway station — PARKING Dore & Totley railway station car park — MAP OS Landranger 110, Sheffield & Huddersfield (1:50,000)



1



2



3

1 EXPLORING ECCLESALL WOODS. © CALLUM HOWARD. 2 ESSENTIAL FUEL – HIDDEN GEM CAFE.
3 PLAYING AROUND IN LADY CANNING'S. © CALLUM HOWARD.

Directions

- ③ Leave the station car park and turn **R**, taking care on this brief stretch of busy road. After 400m turn **L** into Ecclesall Woods, opposite Beauchief Gardens; this path can be hard to spot and has a sizeable kerb! Go through the gate and veer **L** following the bridleway signs to *Limb Lane*. Continue on the pretty tree-lined path as it winds uphill through the woods. When it forks, turn **L**, cross a small bridge and turn **R**. Keep pedalling alongside the stream as you make your way out of the city.
- ② Turn **R** on to Limb Lane, then take the first **L** on to Ash House Lane. At the end of the lane, turn **L** on to the busy Hathersage Road, then almost immediately turn **R** on to Long Line. Looking ahead you can see the road continues to climb; it's never too steep, but it certainly warms the legs up! At the next junction, turn **R** along Sheephill Road.
- ③ At a right-hand bend in the road, you'll spot a wide, stony track on the **L** leading up to Lady Canning's car park. Take this and enter the woods through the first gate on your **R**. Stay on the gravel path until it opens out and you reach a gate. Before the gate, you can add some adventure by riding a loop of one of the two crowd-funded purpose-built MTB trails. Both are designed for mountain bikes but are drop-bar friendly with no big drops or jumps, and they're a lot of fun!
- ④ Adrenaline fix sorted, turn **L** through the gate at the top of the plantation on to a rough track. Continue **SA** through the next gate down a fun, teeth-chattering descent to a crossroads. It might seem a little intimidating, but once you've spotted your line it's easier than meets the eye. This is Houndkirk, a beautiful expanse of open moorland on the outskirts of the city. Pause for a moment to take in the classic Peak District landscape, then turn **L** picking your way through sizeable rocks up a short climb. Bump your way along the track, through another gate and then downhill to return to Lady Canning's car park. Turn **L** on to the road.
- ⑤ Turn **L** opposite the Norfolk Arms (or pop in for chips, beer or cake to keep you going!) then immediately turn **R** on to Fulwood Lane. Shortly after a sharp bend in the road, turn **R** on to Greenhouse Lane. Freewheel down the road, admiring the city below. At the point where it bends left, head **SA** on to the gravel path. This section is steep, twisting and loose, with a cut-up, rockier section at the bottom that adds to the fun.*



*If you'd like to avoid this, you can follow Greenhouse Lane round the left-hand bend, then turn **R** down Foxhall Lane and then **R** again on to Mark Lane, turning **L** to rejoin the main route at ⑥.

Adaptability

You're always near a road, making it easy to skip any of the lumpier sections.

Coffee and food

The Norfolk Arms or Hidden Gem Cafe, Ringinglow Road; Joni,

Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet; Forge Dam Cafe, Whiteley Woods; Woodland Coffee Stop, Ecclesall Woods.

Bike shops

A Different Gear, Pedal and Peak Bike Services, Sheffield.

- 6 Upon rejoining tarmac continue **SA**, keeping an eye out for the cycle path on your **L**. Take this and carefully cross the road. Follow the smooth, gravel path as it rises and then drops steeply to Forge Dam (another cafe stop) on to a road. Head **SA** and shortly take the first **R** up a roughly surfaced climb. Extra points if you can spot the hidden door in a tree!
- 7 At the next junction, bear **R** on to Common Lane. Shortly after, turn **R** on to a bridleway to the left of some gates. This section can be muddy during the wetter months, however, in the dry it's a short-but-sweet cut-through of enjoyable singletrack. At the road, cross straight over, continuing on the somewhat hidden bridleway on the other side.
- 8 This pops you out on Ringinglow Road. Turn **L** and ride for 800m (passing the turn-off for my favourite cafe stop of the route, the aptly named Hidden Gem) before turning **R** on to Bents Drive. Turn **L** on to Broad Elms Lane and **R** on to Bents Road. Afterwards, zigzag **L** and **R** to cross the busy Ecclesall Road on to Dobcroft Road.
- 9 As you savour the smooth road descent, watch out for a narrow alleyway on your **R** leading into the woods; it's at a pedestrian crossing across from Silverdale Road and is easy to miss! Ride into Ecclesall Woods and follow the bridleway over a bridge. Opt for the lower **L** fork when the bridleway splits and follow it across Whirlowdale Road. It's easy to take a wrong turn on this section as there are a lot of paths (both on and off the map): if that happens, don't panic; it's easy to reorient yourself from the road.
- 10 Carefully cross Abbey Lane and continue along the wide forest track through the woods. Stick to the bridleway and keep **L**, ignoring other paths off to your right. At the junction, take a **L** and swoop down one final descent back to Abbeydale Road South. From here, turn **R** on the road back to the station.



NARROW TREE-LINED TRAILS DEFINE THIS ROUTE. © CALLUM HOWARD.

13 LINACRE & SHILLITO WOODS

25.6km/15.9 miles

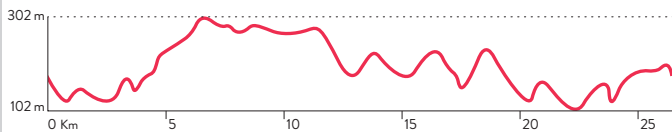
Introduction

Tucked away on the edge of the national park, Linacre Wood is underrated. This area is a playground for gravel bikes with long stretches of off-road and awesome singletrack. The highlight for me is the descents – they always put a smile on my face. Racing through narrow tree archways, the terrain gets more technical the faster you ride it. But don't be fooled: on paper this route looks easier than it is – the elevation is deceptive, and there are a few muddy surprises that cross into mountain biking territory. That in mind, it's best enjoyed by more experienced riders, and on a dry day.

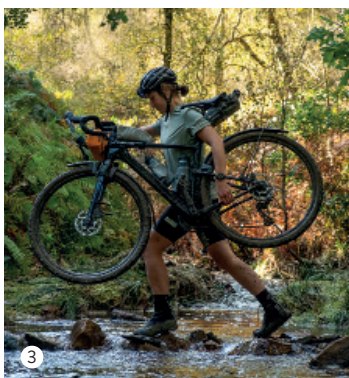
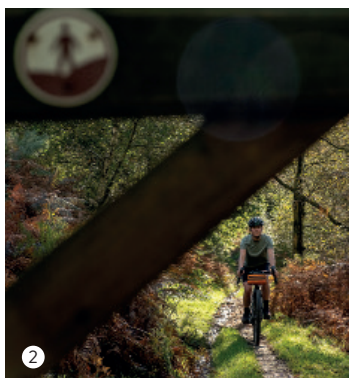
The gravel starts straight away through the old woodland on a wide forest track. Taking the path less-travelled, other than the occasional road crossing, you're far from the crowds and cars on scenic byways and bridleways, pedalling towards

the high point of the route. A brief stint on the road leads you to one of the most technical sections of riding in this book. Perhaps better suited to wider tyres and suspension, it can be tough going, especially in the wet. Over the next few kilometres, you'll encounter narrow singletrack, rocky terrain, intrepid river crossings and moments of hike-a-bike thrown in for good measure. But don't be put off – it's all part of the adventure (or can be detoured around).

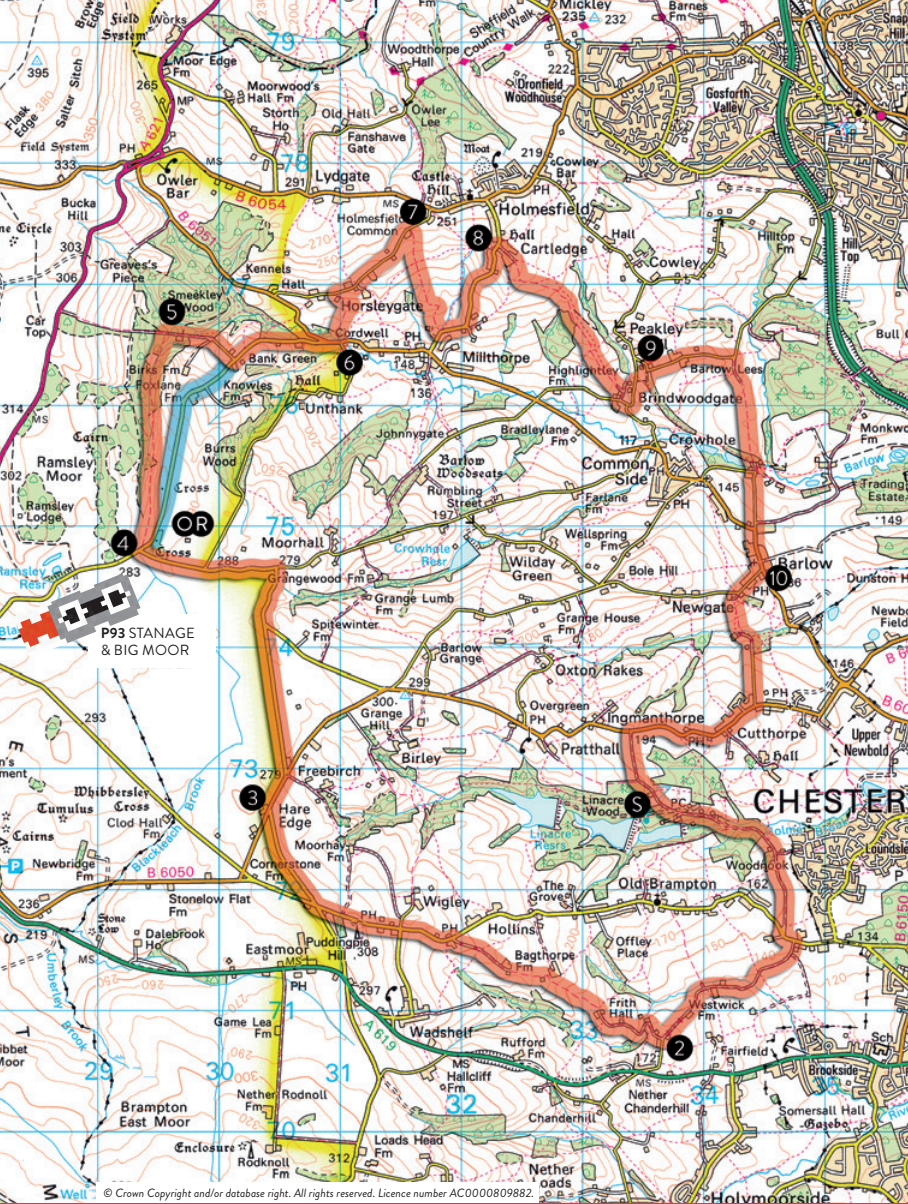
Back on tarmac, there isn't much respite as a series of climbs link up some excellent descents. Narrow, flowy and fast-paced, following ribbons of singletrack through tree archways, you'll have a grin on your face by the time you reach Barlow, and be ready for a cuppa and cake. A final down and up bring you out in Cutthorpe, from where you cruise back to the start.



DISTANCE 25.6km/15.9 miles — ASCENT 510m/1,675ft — HIGHEST POINT 302m/990ft — START/FINISH Linacre Wood — START/FINISH GRID REF SK 335727 — SATNAV S42 7JW — GPS 53.2502, -1.4975 — GRADE ■ — TERRAIN
Wide gravel tracks; quiet byways; rocky climbs; singletrack; some MTB sections — PUBLIC TRANSPORT Chesterfield railway station 6km off route — PARKING Linacre Reservoirs & Wood pay & display car park — MAP OS Landranger 119, Buxton & Matlock (1:50,000)




1 SMOOTH SINGLETRACK AND SUNNY SKIES. **2** A SLITHER OF SINGLETRACK NEAR FOXLANE PLANTATION. © CALLUM HOWARD. **3** INTREPID RIVER CROSSINGS. © CALLUM HOWARD. **4** ROUGH ROADS JUST ADD TO THE FUN! © CALLUM HOWARD.



© Crown Copyright and/or database right. All rights reserved. Licence number AC0000809882.

Directions

- S** Turn out of the car park on to the wide gravel track and freewheel down the hill. When you reach the bottom, ignore the bridleway on your right and continue **SA** along the tree-lined track. Make your way along the rutted but rideable track until you reach a road junction. Turn **L** then after 100m turn **R** on to a rough singletrack road signed *Public Bridleway*. Once tarmac, the surface has seen better days (making it more fun for bikes) and the views up ahead are particularly pretty. Shortly after passing the first farm, you'll notice a bridleway on your right. **Ignore** this and continue **SA**, making your way up the long, steady climb to the high point of the route.
- 2** Keep riding until you come to another **R** turn: take this on to Frithhall Lane and enjoy a brief and bumpy interlude down around a steep bend. In heavy rain, this section can become rocky and washed out. Around the next corner, the climb resumes – it's a manageable gradient with good views. Keep going along this long stretch of traffic-free riding until you reach a road junction. Turn **L** past the Royal Oak pub; continue for just over 1km and take the second road on your **R**, signed *Old Brampton*.
- 3** At the next junction, turn **R** on to the B6050 and, shortly after, turn **L** on to Slatepit Lane. When you arrive at a junction, turn **L** and keep riding until you reach the T-junction by Shillito Wood.
- 4** Cross **SA** directly on to the bridleway through the gate, leaving the tarmac behind.* The next section is arguably mountain biking, and is challenging when muddy. I encourage you to give it a go: it's a lot of fun, and it doesn't matter if you walk parts. Follow the ribbon of singletrack, keeping **R** where the trail forks. Keep your wits about you as you drop down to the river; the trail narrows to a deep rut, can be muddy and has a natural step right at the bottom. Shoulder your bike to cross the river and pick up the singletrack on the other side.
-  *If you'd prefer to skip this section, turn **R** on to Fox Lane and rejoin the main route after about 1.5km.
- 5** Upon reaching a wide rocky track, turn **R** downhill. The track turns to tarmac and climbs to a T-junction with a road (Fox Lane – optional route rejoins here). Turn **L** and descend to a junction with Horsleygate Road, the B6051.
- 6** Turn **R** and soon after turn **L** on to a signed *Public Bridleway* opposite Unthank Lane on the right. Climb for about 500m and at the top turn **R** on to Horsleygate Lane.

Adaptability

The hardest section can be avoided by taking minor roads, and overall it can be made shorter, however, it's still hard to escape the climbs!

Coffee and food

The Peacock at Barlow or Hackney House Cafe, Barlow; The Peacock Inn, Cutthorpe.

Bike shops

JE James Cycles, Chesterfield.

- 7 After about 800m, keep your eyes peeled for a brideway sign on your right by Little Orchards house, just before the tennis court – it's easy to miss. Turn **R** here for a beautiful section of fast, fun singletrack through a narrow archway of trees – it's mega! This brings you out on Millthorpe Lane: turn **L** and cycle up the road.
- 8 After around 1km, turn **R** on to Cartledge Lane, picking up the brideway at the end of the lane. This signals the start of another excellent stretch of singletrack through the trees. It's slightly more technical than the last but smooth enough that you can pick up speed (please be mindful of walkers and horse riders!). Rejoin the road, turn **L**, and then keep **L** at the next junction. Follow the road around the sharp bend and take the rocky track on your **R** signed *Unsuitable for motor vehicles*, up a tough (but brief) ascent.
- 9 Turn **R** at the top and continue on the road. When it bends around to the left, look out for the brideway on your **R**: take this. The playful singletrack leads to a brief section through the fields before a short, steep and technical descent to a bridge. Continue **SA** up the narrow lane until you reach the main road. Turn **L** and ride into Barlow, where it's time for a well-earned stop at either the charming little cafe or the pub.
- 10 After coffee and cake, turn **R** by the pub to ride up Wilkin Hill. When the road bends right, turn **L** on to the signed *Public Byway* leading down to the river. Drop to your lowest gear, cross the river and power up the other side. Kudos if you clean it! Turn **L** on to the lane and cycle into Cutthorpe. When you reach the junction, turn **R**, following the road past the pub and school out of the village. After around 1km, turn **L** on to the signed lane to Linacre Wood and roll back to the start.