A cyclist wearing a blue shirt, dark shorts, and a red helmet is riding away on a gravel path. The path is flanked by tall grasses and leads into a green, rolling landscape under a blue sky with light clouds. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

# **TRAFFIC-FREE CYCLE TRAILS**

## **SOUTH EAST ENGLAND**

**The essential guide to over 100 traffic-free  
cycling trails in South East England**

**NICK COTTON &  
KATHY ROGERS**





**TRAFFIC-FREE  
CYCLE  
TRAILS  
SOUTH EAST  
ENGLAND**

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KATHY ROGERS



Vertebrate Publishing, Sheffield  
[www.adventurebooks.com](http://www.adventurebooks.com)

# Traffic-Free Cycle Trails South East England

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352 Cemetery Road, Sheffield S11 8FT.  
[www.adventurebooks.com](http://www.adventurebooks.com)

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Front cover: Near the Egrets Way, Sussex. Photo: Simon Eldon Photography.

Back cover: Newport to Sandown on the Isle of Wight; the Egrets Way from Monk's House to Newhaven © SDNPA/AndrewPickettPhoto; Hayling Billy Cycle Trail © Sue Underwood; Cycle Hayling and the Basingstoke Canal from Mytchett Visitor Centre to Byfleet.

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

ISBN 978-1-83981-164-7 (Paperback)

ISBN 978-1-83981-165-4 (Ebook)

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Edited by Jess McElhattan; cover design, layout and production by Rosie Edwards, Vertebrate Publishing.  
[www.adventurebooks.com](http://www.adventurebooks.com)

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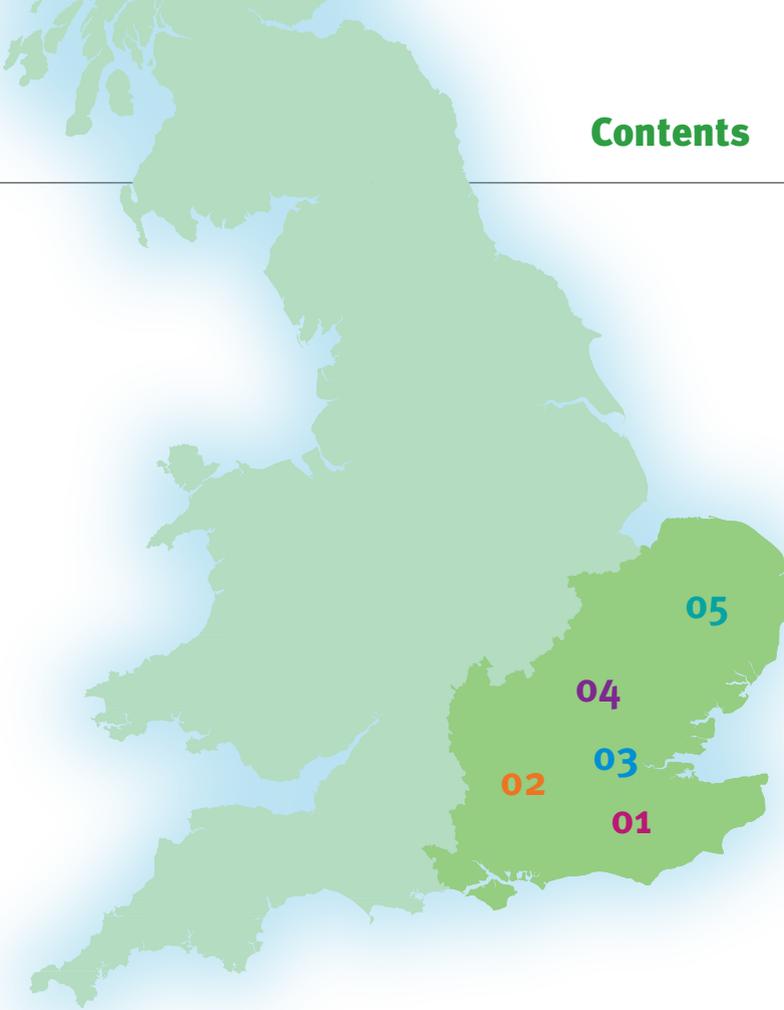
### TRAFFIC-FREE CYCLE TRAILS

While every attempt has been made to include the vast majority of traffic-free cycle trails in South East England, 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 edition of *Traffic-Free Cycle Trails South East England* please contact Nick Cotton, c/o Vertebrate Publishing at the address listed, or email [info@adventurebooks.com](mailto:info@adventurebooks.com)

Printed and bound in Europe by Latitude Press.

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## How to use this guide

### How do I find a trail near me?

The South East has been divided into five 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, maps and websites. Information about bike hire, shops, public transport and parking is also provided.

### 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 Hayling Billy Cycle Trail, Wandle Trail or Downs Link, 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 p7. Most buses in the UK will not transport bicycles; some coach

companies do, but it is space dependent and often requires a bike bag or similar. Most trains will carry bicycles, but space is often very limited (sometimes only two bikes per train); arrangements are different on different trains, even on the same route, and pre-booking is often essential.

### What sort of bike should I use?

Each trail description provides information on the trail type, and if a trail is particularly suited to a type of bike, this is mentioned in the introduction. A few are suitable for any bike type. Many are ideal for gravel or hybrid bikes. 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. Children's bikes are normally built to withstand knocks and will cope with many of the easier trails.

### 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



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## How to use this guide

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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.

### What should I take with me?

These are short rides and generally not remote, so you do not need to ride with a lot of kit. We would recommend taking a first aid kit, tyre levers, a spare inner tube and puncture repair kit, a chain tool, a multitool, a bike pump, snacks and water. A cable lock and D-lock are useful, and it is worth considering bike lights, particularly in winter. Cable ties and bungee cords are versatile; wrap a short length of gaffer tape around your water bottle for emergency repairs.

### 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 horse riders, and you should slow down when there are other users around. Most people of average fitness should cover five to nine 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, tea room or cafe along the trail then we have mentioned it. Forestry routes and trails around National Trust estates or country parks often start at a visitor centre where you can usually buy hot drinks and light meals, or at least snacks. It is always worth carrying a bar of something and a bottle of water, particularly when riding with children.

### What if I break down?

None of these rides are 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. Many cycle hire companies offer a repair or rescue service as part of the rental.

In an emergency, you should call 999. In Great Britain, the emergency services can also be contacted by SMS text – useful if you have low battery or intermittent signal. Although primarily aimed at deaf and speech impaired people, EmergencySMS is available to anyone, if your service provider supports it, but it requires registration; you can register by sending an SMS message, ‘register’ to 999 (the UK) or 112 (Ireland). It is particularly useful in areas of the countryside where mobile signal is too

## Useful information

weak to sustain phone contact but a text message might be sent. **EmergencySMS should only be used when voice call contact with emergency services is not possible.**

### Does the book include trails on the National Cycle Network?

The National Cycle Network (NCN) is a mixture of cycle lanes, quiet streets, country lanes and traffic-free trails. Many NCN traffic-free sections over three 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 (p16), 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 South Downs Way from Winchester to Eastbourne. Bear in mind that the National Cycle Network often updates its routes, which may impact the title, cover or routes in the maps mentioned. The best place to find the most up-to-date information is the Sustrans website – [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

### What about mountain biking?

Most of the forestry rides are tougher than railway paths and some areas have purpose-built singletrack mountain bike trails. There are also long-distance trails such as the Ridgeway, South Downs Way or Peddars Way, which are more of a challenge. This introduction includes a map with details of good mountain biking areas or centres (p15). 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 (p19).

### 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 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 the book (p13). What used to be the Forestry Commission has now split into three: Forestry England, Forestry and Land Scotland, and Natural Resources Wales. In England, you may not cycle on open access land (except on bridleways and byways, or if permission is granted by the landowner).

### 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. In this introduction 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.



## 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). There are fewer but bigger squares on Explorer maps, but each one also represents one square kilometre.

**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 railway 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 (south–north), the last set of three numbers gives you a line running across the map (west–east). 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.

## Useful information

### The Towpath Code

#### 1. Share the space

Towpaths are popular places to be enjoyed by everyone. Please be mindful of others. Keep dogs under control and clean up after them.

#### 2. Drop your pace

Pedestrians have priority on towpaths so cyclists need to be ready to slow down. If you're in a hurry, consider using an alternative route for your journey.

#### 3. It's a special place

Waterways are living history with boats, working locks and low bridges, so please give way to waterway users and be extra careful where visibility is limited.

For more information about towpath cycling, visit: [canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/cycling](http://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/cycling)



### The Forest Cycle Code

#### Before you travel

- Don't rely on others.
- Ensure you can get home safely.
- Carry the right equipment and know how to use it.

#### For your safety

- Wear the right safety clothing: a helmet and gloves.
- Cycle within your abilities.
- Look first: only tackle jumps and other challenges if you are sure you can do them.
- Train properly, especially for difficult and technical routes.

#### On- and off-road

- Expect the unexpected: watch out for other visitors.
- Stay safe: always follow warning signs and other information you are given.
- If a vehicle is loading timber, always wait for the driver to let you past.

**In an emergency, dial 999.** Once you are safe, please let the local forest centre know by telephone.

For more information about forest cycling, go to: [www.forestryengland.uk/cycling](http://www.forestryengland.uk/cycling)

#### KEY

-  Public transport
-  Parking
-  Refreshments
-  Toilets
-  Bike hire
-  Challenging riding

## Useful information

## Bike types

<b>Road</b>	Road bikes have a lightweight frame, dropped handlebars and slick, or smooth, tyres and are designed to be ridden at speed over tarmacked or paved surfaces. Road cyclists often cycle in a crouch position using the bottom of the drop handlebars.
<b>Touring</b>	Touring bikes are similar to road bikes, but are designed to cover long distances on the road. They have a frame strong enough to withstand luggage carrying, and adaptations such as luggage mounts and mudguards. They have a longer wheelbase (the horizontal distance between front and back wheels) than road bikes.
<b>Hybrid</b>	Hybrid bikes are a blend of road and mountain bike and are designed to tolerate riding over a wide range of terrains and in different weather conditions. They tend to have the mountain bike's flat handlebars and upright cycling position but the narrower wheels of a road bike and luggage mounts of a touring bike.
<b>Gravel</b>	Gravel bikes are a road/mountain bike hybrid, designed to facilitate long-distance riding over varied terrains, both on- and off-road. They usually have drop handlebars, a road-style frame but wider, knobblier tyres and a longer wheelbase, and the front wheel is further forward to provide better stability. They have much wider tyre clearance than road or hybrid bikes.
<b>Mountain</b>	Mountain bikes are designed to ride over rough terrain, and generally have wider, stronger wheels with knobbly tyres, flat handlebars and up to 27 gears. They may have suspension on both the front and back wheels (full suspension), front suspension (a 'hardtail'), or no suspension (rigid). Fat tyres are all-terrain bikes with extremely wide, often low-inflated, tyres (in excess of 3.8 inches/97mm). You generally cycle in an upright position on a mountain bike.
<b>Ebike</b>	Any type of bike can be an e- or electric bike. An ebike has a battery and a motor; ebikes are either pedal assist (they provide power when the pedals are turned) or power on demand (controlled by a throttle). Ebikes can be ridden without a licence or registration but the UK places restrictions on the maximum speed and motor power on ebikes. An ebike can be a good choice for a longer cycle trail as they 'flatten' the hills, compensate for riding with heavy loads and can enable longer distances. However, particularly with off-road routes, it may be hard to find recharging points and ebikes are heavier than their conventional equivalents, limit your luggage-carrying options and are more difficult to pedal with a dead battery.
<b>Other</b>	Tandem bikes are built for two or more people, and recumbent bicycles are ridden in a laid-back rather than seated position. Tricycles have a pair of wheels (usually at the back) and a single wheel, and unicycles have a saddle above a single wheel. Handcycles are cycles, usually tricycles, powered by movement of the arms and hands rather than legs and feet.

## Useful information

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### Tyres

One simple adaptation you can make to your bike to improve your trail experience is to choose the right tyres for your ride.

**Width** – tyre widths range from 20mm (road tyres) to 100mm (fat tyres). Although the width of your wheel and tyre will be constrained by your bike choice, even a few extra millimetres on a road tyre can make your bike more stable, while a slightly narrower mountain bike tyre will help you make faster progress on tarmac sections.

**Tread** – switching slick road tyres for those with slightly more grip will give you more stability on a bicycle. Consider the best tread for mountain bike tyres based on what types of surface you will encounter on the trail, the time of year (in winter it is usually muddier) and weather conditions you will face and how far you will travel on hard surfaces.

**Tubeless** – most wheels use a thin rubber inner tube, filled with air, and a thicker outer tyre. Tubeless tyres seal under the wheel rim to provide an air cushion with no need for an inner tube. Tubeless tyres are less susceptible to flat tyres, as this is generally a result of punctures to the inner tube, and small holes in tubeless tyres can be sealed with liquid sealant. Tubeless tyres can also be ridden at lower pressures than conventional tyres, which offers better traction over rough terrain. Tubeless tyres are difficult to repair when they do acquire a large puncture and can be heavier than tyre and inner-tube combinations.

### Cycling organisations

**Sustrans** ([www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)) is a charity formed in 1977, whose aim is to create and promote better walking and cycling routes. It is the custodian of the National Cycle Network.

**Cycling UK** ([cyclinguk.org](http://cyclinguk.org)) is a charitable membership organisation, founded in 1878 and formerly known as the Cyclists' Touring Club. It promotes and enables cycling for everybody by promoting flagship routes, organising local events and rides, offering practical support to cyclists and lobbying for safer cycling environments.

**British Cycling** ([www.britishcycling.org.uk](http://www.britishcycling.org.uk)) is the sports governing body for most competitive cycling in the UK. It also promotes leisure cycling, through initiatives such as Breeze and Let's Ride.

The **National Cycle Network** (NCN) is a signposted network of national cycle trails, developed by Sustrans, since the 1980s. The network consisted of waymarked routes on well-maintained, well-surfaced paths and trails and roads. However, Sustrans reviewed the network in 2018 and removed or reclassified approximately a quarter of its 25,000-kilometre network. It is in the process of removing all signage from 1,200 kilometres of road that once formed part of the network but are now deemed too busy or dangerous to form part of the network.

## Forestry

For such a densely populated area, the south-east of England has, surprisingly, more woodland than either the South West or the Midlands. The largest forestry holding is the New Forest but there are also large swathes of woodland along the South Downs. North of London, there is a small, densely forested centre on the sandy soils around Thetford, and two reasonable-sized holdings (Tunstall and Rendlesham) to the north-east of Ipswich, near the Suffolk coast. The Forestry England website ([www.forestryengland.uk/cycling](http://www.forestryengland.uk/cycling)) is a good starting point to find places to ride.

### Forests and woods with waymarked trails

#### The New Forest (shown as 2 on the map overleaf)

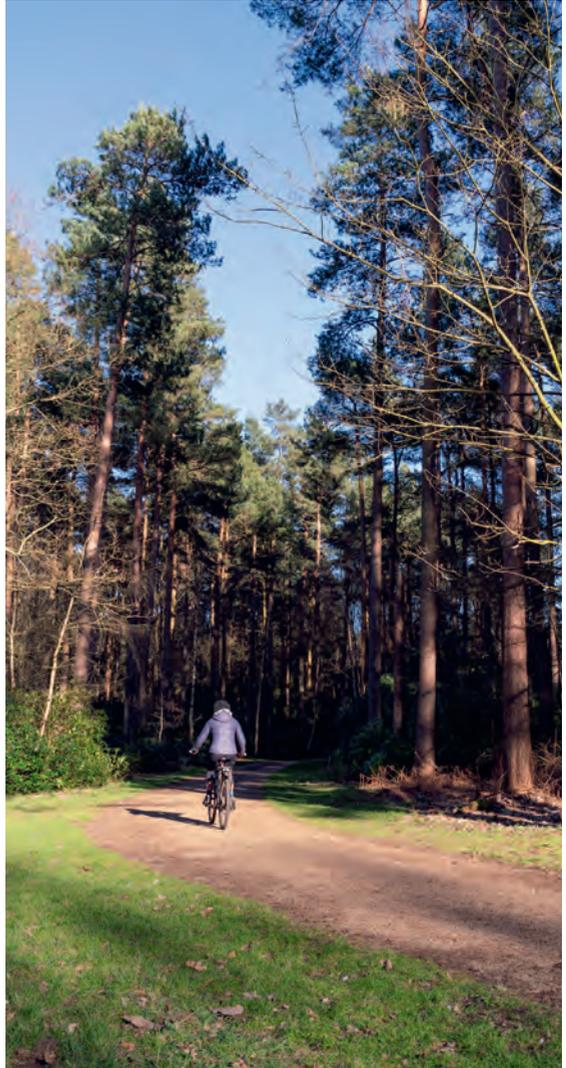
Although this is by far the largest forest in the South East, there is no set list of waymarked circular rides; instead, you will find a large network of excellent, broad, gravel-based trails waymarked with green and white disks that enable you to make up your own rides. Key to this is the map produced by Forestry England called New Forest Cycle Routes Map.

#### 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](http://www.forestryengland.uk/forest-planning) or [www.forestryengland.uk/search-forests](http://www.forestryengland.uk/search-forests) for an A–Z list of England's forests.



© CHRIS COLES

## Forestry

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 purple small square icon with two trees. There is nothing to distinguish Forestry England woods from other woods on Ordnance Survey Explorer mapping (1:25,000); the woods are depicted without a symbol but with a pale orange border.

The following woodlands correspond with the numbers on the map:

1. **Brighstone & Parkhurst Forests**, Isle of Wight (OS Explorer Map OL29)
2. **New Forest**, Hampshire (OS Explorer Map OL22, p53)
3. **Farley Mount**, west of Winchester (OS Explorer Map 132)
4. **West Walk**, north of Fareham (OS Explorer Map 119)
5. **Queen Elizabeth Country Park**, Petersfield (OS Explorer Map OL33, p56)
6. **Alice Holt Forest**, Farnham (OS Explorer Maps 144 & 145, p63)
7. **Charlton Forest & Eartham Wood**, south-east of Midhurst (OS Explorer Map 121)
8. **Rewell Wood**, west of Arundel (OS Explorer Map 121)
9. **Friston Forest**, Eastbourne (OS Explorer Map OL25, p32)
10. **Wilmington Wood & Abbot's Wood**, south-west of Hailsham (OS Explorer Map 123)
11. **Bedgebury Forest**, Hawkhurst (OS Explorer Map 136, p39)
12. **Hemsted Forest**, east of Cranbrook (OS Explorer Maps 125 & 137)
13. **King's Wood**, north of Ashford (OS Explorer Map 137)
14. **West Wood**, Elhampark & Covert Wood, east of Ashford (OS Explorer Map 138)
15. **Denge Wood**, north-east of Ashford (OS Explorer Map 137)
16. **Clowes Wood**, north of Canterbury (OS Explorer Map 150)
17. **Shabbington Wood & Waterperry Wood**, east of Oxford (OS Explorer Map 180)
18. **Wendover Woods**, Aylesbury (OS Explorer Map 181, p107)
19. **Rendlesham Forest**, north-east of Ipswich (OS Explorer Maps 197 & 212, p158)
20. **King's Forest & Mildenhall Woods**, south-west of Thetford (OS Explorer Maps 226 & 229)
21. **Thetford Forest**, north-west of Thetford (OS Explorer Map 229, p163)
22. **West Harling Heath**, east of Thetford (OS Explorer Map 230)

## Forestry



- 23. Swaffham Heath & Cockleycley Heath**, south-east of Swaffham (OS Explorer Map 236)
- 24. Coldharbour Wood & Shakers Wood**, south of Swaffham (OS Explorer Maps 229 & 236)
- 25. Shouldham Warren/The Sincks**, south of King's Lynn (OS Explorer Map 236)
- 26. Horsford Woods**, north of Norwich (OS Explorer Map 238)
- 27. Swanton Great Wood**, east of Fakenham (OS Explorer Map 251)
- 28. Woodlands** between Holt and Sheringham (OS Explorer Map 252)

## Mountain biking

South of London, mountain biking is almost exclusively on the chalk and flint tracks that abound in the area. These are best enjoyed in the summer months (from May to October) when the trails are drier and easier to ride: they can become impassable in the depths of winter. The main exception to the chalk is the area lying just south of the North Downs, where there are many sandy tracks – often easier when they are wet and harder packed (compare riding on a wet sandy beach or a dry sandy beach). This sandy area extends east from Alton in Hampshire across towards Dorking, Reigate and Oxted in Surrey, and on to Maidstone and Ashford in Kent.

To the north of London, there are several mountain biking options including Thetford Forest (p163), the Suffolk coast forests (p158), Epping Forest (p100) and rides along the Icknield Way (p108) and Peddars Way (p172). The latter is a long-distance trail that runs as a byway or bridleway for around 50 miles from Lackford, south-west of Thetford, to the north Norfolk coast at Holme next the Sea. Although maps show that there are plenty of bridleways and byways in Essex and Hertfordshire, these are predominantly very rough and very muddy in the winter, and baked hard into bumpy corrugations in the summer.

For forest trails, see the South East forestry section (p11) and visit the Forestry England website.

### 1. Isle of Wight

There are many miles of excellent tracks on the Isle of Wight, particularly the Tennyson Trail (p50) on the western half of the island between Freshwater Bay and Newport.

### 2. Hampshire Downs

As with Wiltshire and Dorset, Hampshire is blessed with many hundreds of miles of chalk and flint byways and bridleways. Some of the waymarked long-distance trails (such as the Wayfarer's Walk and the Test Way, both of which start on Inkpen Hill to the south of Hungerford) have long bridleway and byway sections. Winchester is also the start of the South Downs Way, one of the premier long-distance bridleways in the country that runs east for 100 miles to Eastbourne.

### 3. King Alfred's Way

King Alfred's Way is a 220-mile, circular, off-road adventure route, launched by Cycling UK in 2020. It includes sections of the Ridgeway, South Downs Way and Thames Path and takes in Stonehenge, Winchester and the Devil's Punch Bowl. There are occasional road sections, but it generally follows off-road trails best suited to gravel or mountain bikes.

### 4. Berkshire Downs (Ridgeway)

There is a plethora of fine tracks to the south of the Ridgeway and to the north of the M4 through west Berkshire and south Oxfordshire. Lambourn is an excellent base with tracks radiating off in every direction.

### 5. Chiltern Hills

The beechwoods of the Chilterns offer splendid woodland rides on well-maintained and well-waymarked bridleways and byways. The best tracks lie to the west and north of Henley-on-Thames.

### 6. North Downs

Unlike the South Downs Way or the Ridgeway, where you are allowed to cycle from one end to the other, the

## Mountain biking



North Downs Way – running along the chalk ridge from Farnham to Canterbury and Dover – is mainly a footpath (you are not permitted to cycle on footpaths).

There are, however, several long bridleway and byway sections that are open to cyclists, easily found by looking at the relevant Ordnance Survey map. There are many good bases from which to explore the North Downs bridleway and byway network: Gomshall, Peaslake, Leith Hill, Walton on the Hill, Limpsfield and Wye.

### 7. South Downs

The South Downs Way is a 100-mile linear bridleway from Winchester to Eastbourne. A few miles either side of the trail there are many other bridleways and byways, enabling you to devise all sorts of circular rides. The South Downs tracks are very definitely best ridden in summer after a

few dry days; the chalk and clay can be depressingly sticky in winter.

### 8. Icknield Way

The Icknield Way Path is part of the Greater Ridgeway footpath, an ancient route that runs across England from Dorset to Norfolk. As some of the trail cannot be cycled, an alternative Icknield Way Trail route for horse riders and cyclists has been created; this sometimes follows roads where there is no off-road alternative. It is a challenging route, but is a good starting point for those looking for off-road routes between Buckinghamshire and Norfolk. It connects with the Peddars Way.

## National Cycle Network

The following long-distance National Cycle Network routes are covered by maps that can be purchased from Sustrans via their shop ([www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)). Bear in mind that the National Cycle Network routes are often updated, which may impact the title, cover or routes in the maps mentioned here. The best place to find the most up-to-date information is the Sustrans website.

### The Varsity Way Cycle Route Map

(Route 12/51) Oxford to Cambridge  
– 124 miles

### London to Brighton Cycle Route Map

(Route 21/20) – 58 miles

### Shakespeare Cycleway Cycle Route Map

(Route 4/5) Stratford-upon-Avon to London – 167 miles

### South Coast East Cycle Route Map

(Route 2) Brockenhurst to Dover  
– 178 miles

### Great Western Way Cycle Route Map

(Route 4) Bristol to London  
– 167 miles

### The National Cycle Network in the south-east of England is covered by the following maps:

6. Hampshire & Isle of Wight Cycle Map
7. Central Sussex & South Surrey Cycle Map
8. Kent Cycle Map
9. Essex & Thames Estuary Cycle Map
10. Thames Valley Cycle Map
17. South Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire & North Hertfordshire Cycle Map
18. Suffolk Cycle Map
19. Norfolk Cycle Map
20. The Fens Cycle Map
53. London Cycle Map



## National Cycle Network

### Good areas for lane cycling

From a cyclist's point of view, much of the South East has a high population density and high levels of car ownership, filling many of the roads with traffic. The concept of 'quiet lane networks' is somewhat alien in this region. The best rule of thumb is that the further away you go from London, the quieter the roads will become – for example, try **west or north Oxfordshire** with good bases at Burford or Hook Norton; **north Buckinghamshire** from **Winslow** or **Buckingham**; **south Hampshire** has networks of lanes between the M3 and the A3; in the **eastern half of Kent** it is worth exploring lanes **south-west, south and south-east of Canterbury**.

**East Anglia** has hundreds of miles of quiet lanes with gentle gradients linking

small villages. As the weather tends to be much drier here than on the west side of the country, you have a set of excellent conditions for enjoyable cycling for day rides or longer touring. The southern part of the region is fairly densely populated but there is a lot less traffic north of an imaginary line drawn from Luton to Colchester – i.e. **north Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk**.

There are many attractive villages that would make good bases in Norfolk, such as Castle Acre, Little Walsingham, Burnham Market, Reepham or Aylsham. Elsewhere, Thaxted in Essex or Lavenham, Framlingham and Beccles in Suffolk are all wonderful bases around which there is a delightful network of lanes to explore.



## Other routes in brief

The best starting place to discover the latest information about cycling infrastructure is usually the main council website, for example, in Norfolk, go to [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk) and search for 'Cycle routes' or 'Cycling'. In popular tourist areas, there is often a tourist-orientated website which may provide useful information on leisure cycling routes (for example, [www.visitisleofwight.co.uk](http://www.visitisleofwight.co.uk)).

### Bedfordshire

Try this website for cycling information in and around Bedford: [www.travelbedford.co.uk](http://www.travelbedford.co.uk) and click on 'Cycling' then 'Maps & Routes'.

### Berkshire

Maps are available to download on this website: [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk) and search 'Cycling'.

### Cambridgeshire

There is a series of useful maps to download on the county council website. Go to [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk) and search 'Cycle maps'.

### East Sussex

The council website is a useful starting point to find rides in the area. Go to [www.eastsussex.gov.uk](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk) and search 'Cycling maps'.

### Essex

The county council website is a good source of information: [www.essexhighways.org/getting-around/cycling.aspx](http://www.essexhighways.org/getting-around/cycling.aspx)

### Hampshire

Details of 750 miles of off-road cycle routes and urban cycle paths can be found at [www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryside/cycling](http://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryside/cycling) or [www.visit-hampshire.co.uk/cycling/cycle-routes](http://www.visit-hampshire.co.uk/cycling/cycle-routes) and click on 'Car free trails'.

### Hertfordshire

Try the county council website for cycling ideas: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk) and search 'Cycling routes'.

### Isle of Wight

A good website to get an overview of cycling possibilities on the island is: [www.visitisleofwight.co.uk/things-to-do/cycling](http://www.visitisleofwight.co.uk/things-to-do/cycling)



## Other routes in brief

**Kent**

The ‘Explore Kent’ website is a good place to start for ride ideas: [www.explorekent.org/activities](http://www.explorekent.org/activities) or try [www.visitkent.co.uk/see-and-do/active-and-outdoors/cycling](http://www.visitkent.co.uk/see-and-do/active-and-outdoors/cycling)

**London**

There is a lot of useful information about cycling in the capital on the Transport for London website: [tfl.gov.uk/modes/cycling/](http://tfl.gov.uk/modes/cycling/)

**New Forest National Park**

There are plenty of ride suggestions on the national park’s website. Go to [www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/todo/cycling](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/todo/cycling)

**Oxfordshire**

For routes and maps in and around Oxford go to [www.oxford.gov.uk](http://www.oxford.gov.uk) and search ‘Cycling routes’.

**South Downs National Park**

There are many ideas for cycle rides on the national park’s website. Go to [www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/cycling](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/cycling) and click on ‘Cycle routes’.

**Suffolk**

Try the county council website for cycling information – go to [www.discoversuffolk.org.uk](http://www.discoversuffolk.org.uk) and search ‘Cycling’. Try also [www.suffolkonboard.com/cycle](http://www.suffolkonboard.com/cycle)

**Surrey**

For ride suggestions in Surrey and useful maps you can download, go to [www.surreycc.gov.uk](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk) and search ‘Cycling routes’.

**West Sussex**

For a cycling overview go to [www.westsussex.gov.uk](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk) and search ‘Cycling maps’.

**Other useful websites with cycling information**

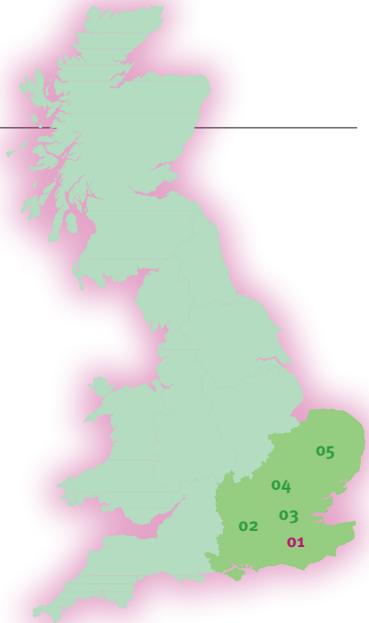
- [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk)
- [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cycling](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cycling)
- [www.sustrans.org.uk/national-cycle-network](http://www.sustrans.org.uk/national-cycle-network)
- [www.forestryengland.uk/cycling](http://www.forestryengland.uk/cycling)
- [www.moredirt.com](http://www.moredirt.com)
- [www.trailforks.com](http://www.trailforks.com)
- [www.komoot.com](http://www.komoot.com)
- [www.essexhertsmtb.co.uk](http://www.essexhertsmtb.co.uk)
- [www.surreyhillsmountainbiking.co.uk](http://www.surreyhillsmountainbiking.co.uk)
- [www.visit-hampshire.co.uk/cycling/cycling-types/mountain-biking](http://www.visit-hampshire.co.uk/cycling/cycling-types/mountain-biking)
- [www.b1ke.com/b1keparks/rogate](http://www.b1ke.com/b1keparks/rogate)



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# Southern Counties

- 1 Centurion Way, Chichester
- 2 Wey Navigation: Guildford to Godalming
- 3 The Hurtwood
- 4 Downs Link: Bramley to Cranleigh
- 5 Downs Link: Cranleigh south to Slinfold
- 6 Downs Link: Southwater to Bramber
- 7 Downs Link: Bramber to Old Shoreham
- 8 Brighton Promenade
- 9 Ditchling Beacon on the South Downs Way
- 10 Egrets Way: Monk's House to Newhaven
- 11 Friston Forest
- 12 Cuckoo Trail
- 13 Deers Leap Park



## 01

## Southern Counties

- 14** Worth Way, west of East Grinstead
- 15** Forest Way, east of East Grinstead
- 16** Tudor Trail: Tonbridge to Penshurst Place
- 17** Bewl Water, Lamberhurst
- 18** Bedgebury Forest
- 19** Rye Harbour Nature Reserve Loop
- 20** The Medway Towpath
- 21** North Downs Way: Lenham to Charing
- 22** Hythe Seafront
- 23** The Great Stour Way
- 24** Crab and Winkle Way: Canterbury to Whitstable
- 25** The Oyster Bay Trail: Whitstable to Hampton Pier
- 26** The Viking Coastal Trail: Reculver to Margate



## Ride 1 Centurion Way Chichester

- Start** Junction of Park Lane and A286, West Dean (50.9035, -0.7833, SU 856123)
- Finish** Westgate, Chichester (50.8360, -0.7969, SU 848047)
- Distance** 6 miles/10km.
- Category** Railway paths.
- Other facilities**
- P** **X**

The railway path between Chichester and West Dean passes some extraordinary metal sculptures of Roman centurions and 'surveyors'. The route runs through woodland and arable land with a profusion of wildflowers along the verges. The name Centurion Way was suggested by a local schoolboy and is based on the fact that the path crosses the course of a Roman road. From the southern end of the path it is easy to visit Chichester Cathedral, to link to a short section of the Chichester Canal towpath or to the longer route known as the Salterns Way, which is a mixture of quiet lanes and traffic-free sections. The Chichester to Midhurst railway was opened in 1881 and was finally closed in 1991. In 1994 the county council purchased the railway line and the old railway line was converted to recreational use.

### On your bikes!

#### From West Dean, heading south

1. Turn left on to the cycle path alongside the main A286 road. After 1 mile, at the end of the cycle path, with a red letter box set in a brick wall ahead, turn left downhill on a rough track, soon joining the railway path running along the valley.
2. At the houses in Mid Lavant, aim for the far-right-hand corner of the 'green' then turn left. Continue in the same direction, ignoring turns to the left. Pass between concrete bollards and as the road swings right, bear left on to Churchmead Close, signposted 'Chichester'. Take the next left on Warble Heath Close, signposted 'Chichester', to rejoin the railway path for a gentle descent over almost 3 miles to

**Refreshments:** The Selsey Arms pub and tea room at Village Store in West Dean; the Earl of March pub in Mid Lavant. Lots of choice in Chichester.

**Bike hire and repairs:** Spares and repairs from BIKESquared, Barreg Cycles, Hargrove Cycles, Geared Bikes in Chichester.

**Public transport and bike links:** Fishbourne and Chichester stations, 1 mile from end. National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 2 (which links Kent to Cornwall) passes through Chichester.

**Parking:** Limited free on-road parking in West Dean and near end in Chichester.

**Maps and guides:** OS Landranger 197, Explorer OL8.

**Website:** [www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-community/walking-horse-riding-and-cycling/centurion-way-railway-path/](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-community/walking-horse-riding-and-cycling/centurion-way-railway-path/)

Chichester. You may wish to turn around at the end of the traffic-free section, but if you want to go into the centre of Chichester, turn left and follow Westgate and West Street to the cathedral.



## 2

## Wey Navigation: Ride 2

### Godalming to Guildford

Two sections of the Wey Navigation are suitable for cycling – both are described in this guide (see also p82). The canal was part of a series of waterways connecting London to Portsmouth via the River Arun and Chichester Harbour. Barges transported large quantities of government stores and ammunition to Godalming, from where it was taken on to the naval arsenal at Portsmouth. The 1830s were the highpoint of the waterways, when tonnage carried was at its highest. Competition from the railways began to take away trade from the waterways from the 1840s onwards. The quality of the towpath is variable and mountain or gravel bikes are recommended. It is easy to link this ride to the Downs Link at a point close to where the railway crosses the canal to the west of Shalford. Look out for the extraordinary cliffs of yellow sand at the northern end of the trail.

#### On your bikes!

1. From the south end of Millmead in Guildford (by the council offices and the Britannia pub), cross the river into the park and follow the path alongside the Wey Navigation, keeping the water to your left, soon passing the Guildford Rowing Club.
2. The quality of the towpath varies. After about 1.5 miles, pass under a railway bridge.

*If you wish to join the Downs Link, about 100m after the railway bridge keep an eye out for an old World War II pillbox up to your right. This is the start of the Downs Link. The surface quality improves after about 1/2 mile.*

3. Stay on the towpath and cross the busy A248 (**take care**), then after a further mile cross the next road by Farncombe Boat House and Hector's on the Wey.
4. The towpath ends near the Godalming United Church just north of the bridge over the river in Godalming.

**Refreshments:** Lots of choice in Guildford. Hector's on the Wey cafe at Farncombe. Lots of choice in Godalming.

**Bike hire and repairs:** Electric bike hire from Electric Bikes Guildford; several bike shops in Guildford.

#### Public transport and bike links:

Guildford station, 1/2 mile from start. Godalming station, 1/2 mile from end.

**Parking:** Millmead car park at start. Paid car parks in Godalming town centre.

**Maps and guides:** OS Landranger 186, Explorer 145.

**Website:** [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/river-wey-and-godalming-navigations-and-dapdune-wharf](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/river-wey-and-godalming-navigations-and-dapdune-wharf)

**Start**  
Britannia pub,  
Guildford (51.2331,  
-0.5758,  
SU 995492)

**Finish**  
Godalming United  
Church, Godalming  
(51.1882 -0.6082,  
SU 973441)

**Distance**  
4.5 miles/7.5km.

**Category**  
Canal towpaths.

#### Other facilities



## Ride 3 The Hurtwood

# 3

**Start/finish** YHA Holmbury St Mary Surrey Hills, Dorking (51.1935, -0.4214, TQ 104450)

**Distance**  
3 miles/5km.

**Category**  
Forestry trails.

**Other facilities**



The Hurtwood is a woodland area of common land in Surrey; in 1926 local mayor Reggie Bray signed a deed of dedication, granting public access to the land for 'quiet enjoyment'. With its towering Scots pines, purpled heathland and cloudy ponds, the woods offer some of the best off-road cycle trails in Surrey. Such is the proliferation of trails through the Hurtwood and its neighbouring woodlands that it is possible for the enthusiastic endurance cyclist to ride from Guildford to Dorking off-road. The route described below is a shorter loop around the Hurtwood; there are miles and miles more of trails and bridleways to explore.

### On your bikes!

1. Enter the woods via Telegraph Road; just behind the car park, turn right. At a junction of 3 tracks, take the left trail to enter the woods rather than continuing around the edge. The trail now climbs.
2. Go straight across the first crossroads (after 400m); after 500m, turn right at another track crossroads – ignore the fifth track forking right from the crossroads.
3. Turn right near the car park. You can follow this new bridleway for 500m to reach the viewpoint at the top of Holmbury Hill; there is also a hill fort at the summit. If you take this detour, you will have to retrace your steps. If you do not choose to climb Holmbury Hill, turn almost immediately left. After 400m, take the right fork.
4. At the track crossroads, you can continue straight on if you wish to visit

**Refreshments:** Hurtwood Cafe at youth hostel at start. Pub and cafe at Holmbury St Mary, slight detour from route.

**Bike hire and repairs:** Hire from Surrey Hills Mountain Biking, Peaslake.

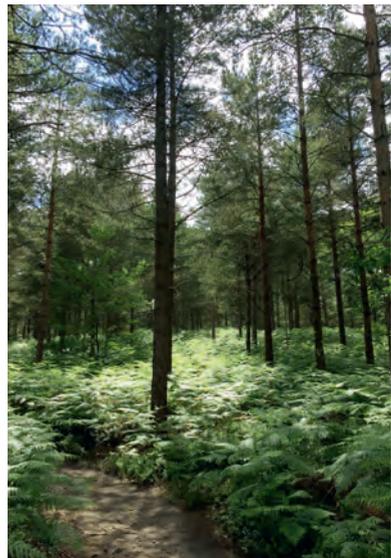
**Public transport and bike links:** Gomshall station, 2.5 miles from start, largely on bridleways.

**Parking:** Free car park at start.

**Maps and guides:** OS Landranger 187, Explorer 145 & 146.

**Website:** [foth.co.uk](http://foth.co.uk)

the village of Holmbury St Mary; there is a pub and a cafe. If you want to explore further, this is a good point at which to turn right and then left to remain on the Greensand Way and follow it through the neighbouring woods to Leith Hill Tower. To complete your loop instead, turn left and follow the trail back to the start.



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## 4

## Downs Link: Ride 4 Bramley to Cranleigh

As its name suggests, this railway path route links the North Downs Way with the South Downs Way. The Downs Link, which is over 30 miles long, has been split into several sections. There is a short one-mile railway path stretch to the north of Bramley, as far as the A281, but the trail described here heads south from Bramley to Cranleigh. This section of the trail is owned and managed by Surrey County Council. Small areas of trees are periodically cut back (coppiced) to diversify the woodland structure and encourage the growth of wildflowers. This also benefits butterflies, small mammals and bird life. The railway was built in two sections: the southern part, from Christ's Hospital to Shoreham-by-Sea, was completed in 1861 and the northern part, from Guildford to Christ's Hospital, was built in 1865. The railways served the local communities and industries like the Southwater Brickworks but were not profitable and were shut in 1966.

### On your bikes!

1. Join the bridleway where it crosses Station Road, at the site of the old Bramley and Wonersh station (next to the Bramley Business Centre). It is signed 'NCN 22'; follow the finger post pointing towards Shoreham and Cranleigh.
2. Follow the route for 6 miles until it emerges on John Wiskar Drive in Cranleigh, just behind the High Street. This is a family friendly route as the trail tends to cross under roads.

**Refreshments:** Pub in Bramley. Lots of choice in Cranleigh.

**Bike hire and repairs:** Repairs from the Fettleing Room (cycling hub and cafe) and Cycle Wizard in Cranleigh; more bike shops in Guildford.

**Public transport and bike links:** Shalford station, 1.5 miles from start (Downs Link can be followed much of the way).

**Parking:** Free Bramley and Wonersh station car park, near start. Paid car park off Cranleigh High Street.

**Maps and guides:** OS Landranger 186 & 187, Explorer OL34.

**Website:** [www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-community/walking-horse-riding-and-cycling/downs-link](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure-recreation-and-community/walking-horse-riding-and-cycling/downs-link)

### Start

Station Road,  
Bramley (S1.1960,  
-0.5559,  
TQ 010451)

### Finish

John Wiskar Drive,  
Cranleigh (S1.1402,  
-0.4908,  
TQ 057390)

### Distance

6 miles/10km.

### Category

Railway paths.

### Other facilities

