



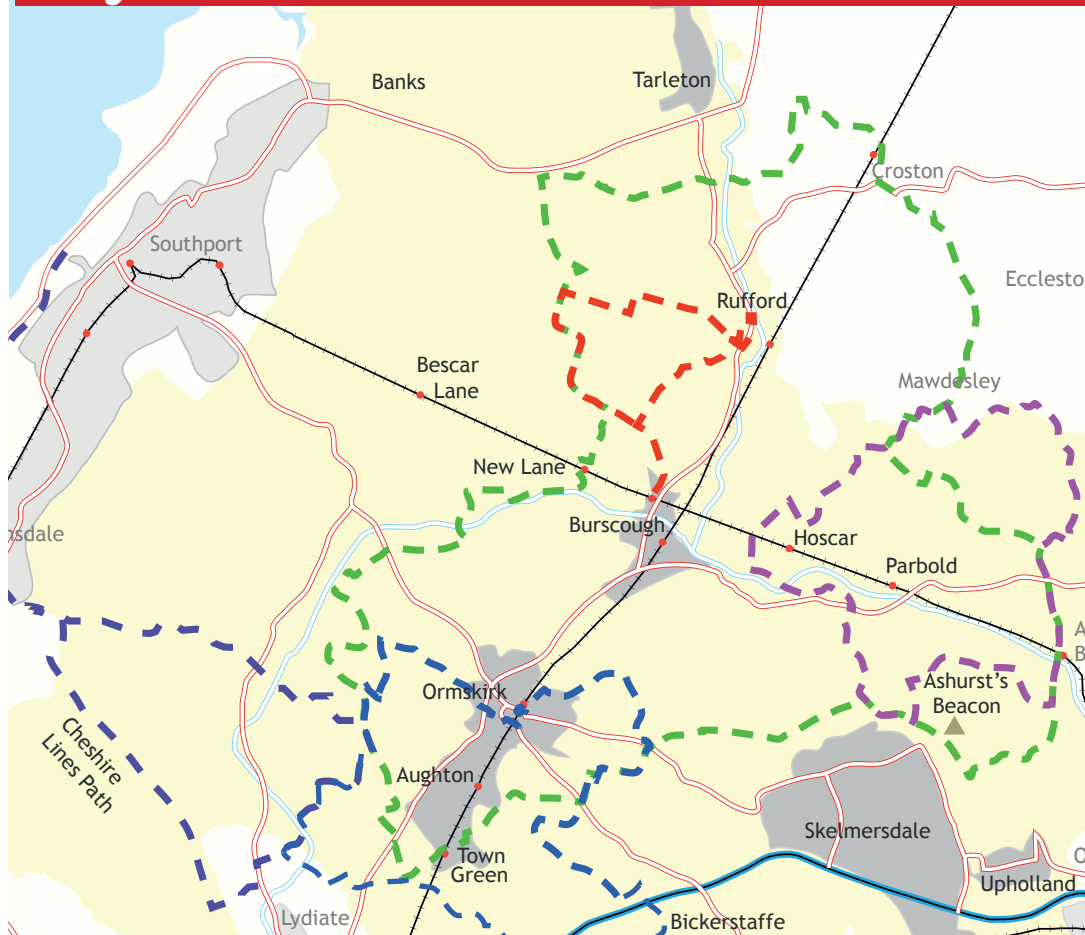
Cycle Rides



in West Lancashire



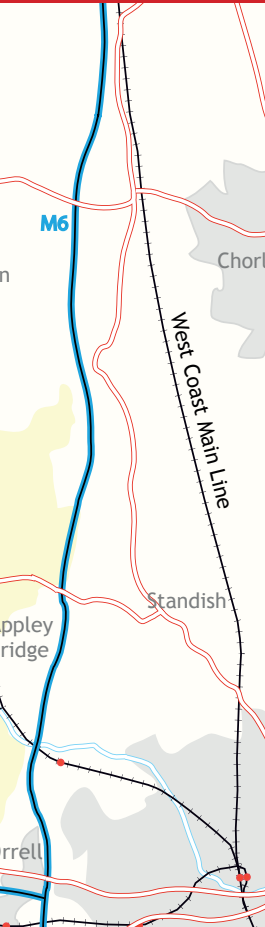
Cycle Rides in West Lanc



In the 19th century, the Industrial Revolution brought spectacular growth to the towns and cities of eastern Lancashire. The west of the county became the main source of food for these growing urban areas, and West Lancashire remains predominantly rural to this day, with just two main towns, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale, and a scattering of smaller towns and villages. Most of the district is flat. Large areas have few trees or hedges and the land

stretches almost uninterrupted to the horizon. It makes for easy cycling (except when there's a breeze against you!) There's variety in the east, where the two ridges of High Moor and Ashurst's Beacon flank the Douglas valley, and the landscape is more pastoral.

The district is easily reached from surrounding urban centres like Liverpool, Wigan, Chorley and Preston, and good rail links add to the options.



Bikes by train

Bikes and trains are natural partners; better for the environment and, often, more convenient than using a car. Rural stations allow you to start a ride without battling with urban traffic. West Lancashire is criss-crossed by rail lines, giving many options for place-to-place rides as well as circular routes. Bicycles are carried free of charge on all these routes.

Wigan - Southport (Northern Rail)

Half-hourly service, hourly on Sundays

Ormskirk - Preston (Northern Rail)

Hourly service, no Sunday service.

Liverpool - Ormskirk (Merseyrail).

Every 15 minutes Mon - Sat, every 30 minutes Sun. Avoid peak periods if possible.

Ribble Coast and Wetlands

Much of West Lancashire, west and north of Burscough, lies in the projected Ribble Coast and Wetlands regional park. Its meres, mosses, dunes and estuaries are internationally important for wildlife, especially migrating birds. New cycle trails and a guide leaflet are planned.

Southport – Cycling Demonstration Town

Southport was designated a Cycling Town in 2008, marking a new drive to improve facilities and participation. Its existing cycle network already links to routes in this leaflet (see pp 6-7) and many new routes will be added, particularly around the Seafront and along the Sefton Coast. There will also be a cycle hire scheme, led rides and cycle training. www.Southportcycletown.gov.uk



Attractions by Bike

Distance approx. 14.4 km/ 9 miles

Several of the area's most important visitor attractions can be visited on a short ride from Burscough, including the rich nature reserves at Martin Mere and Mere Sands Wood as well as Rufford Old Hall, a magnificent sixteenth-century house where a young William Shakespeare is believed to have performed; it's now in the care of the National Trust.

Arriving by trainBurscough Bridge station (on the Wigan–Southport line) is the most convenient starting point but you can also use Burscough Junction (Preston-Ormskirk Line)

Arriving by carPark in Burscough

Exit the station, either by Station Approach or by steps from the platform up to the A59. Turn left on the A59 then left again on Red Cat Lane. Follow this as it swings right and heads out into open country. Take the first lane on the right (Curlew Lane), about 1.5km from Burscough. Follow this to a T-junction and turn right, then follow the road round right as it reaches houses (Brick Kiln Lane) on the edge of Rufford.

Follow this to its end, meeting the B5246. Turn right then first left on Flash Lane. Follow this to the A59. This is busy and there's no cycle-lane, but it's only about 200m to Rufford Old Hall (café).

Retrace down the A59; unfortunately Flash Lane is one-way, so continue on the A59 past a left turn on the B5246 (this leads to Rufford's two canal marinas, both of which have cafés). Turn right on the B5246, Holmeswood Road.

After 1.3km turn left on a signed, stony track to Mere Sands Wood. This nature reserve is owned by The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside. Its mixed woodlands, meres and wetlands are a haven for wildlife – in the summer it's a great place to see several species of dragonfly, for instance. There's a small visitor centre with toilets and drinks vending machines.

Return up the access track to the road and turn left. Where the road makes a sharp right turn, turn left on Sandy Way, then second right on Cross Meanygate. This provides a peaceful interlude before meeting another busier road at a T-junction, opposite Homstad Farm (café). Turn left and follow the road through several bends,

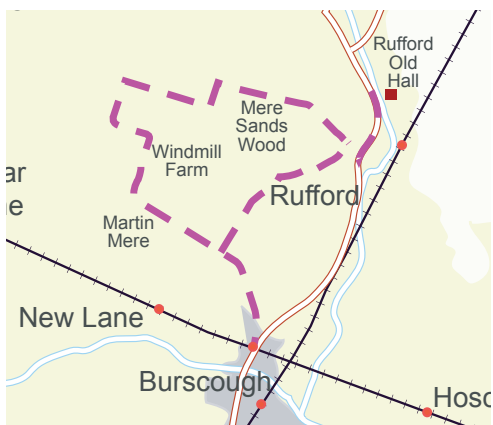


passing Windmill Animal Farm (familiar and exotic animals, miniature railway, café) before arriving at the entrance to Martin Mere.

Once much of this land lay under the waters of a vast lake, of which the present Martin Mere is but a tiny remnant. Now run by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Martin Mere is one of the most important wildlife sites in the UK; as well as many passage migrants and familiar resident species, look out for the flamingos. Martin Mere is also home to a breeding pair of European beavers, recently reintroduced to Lancashire after an absence of 500 years.

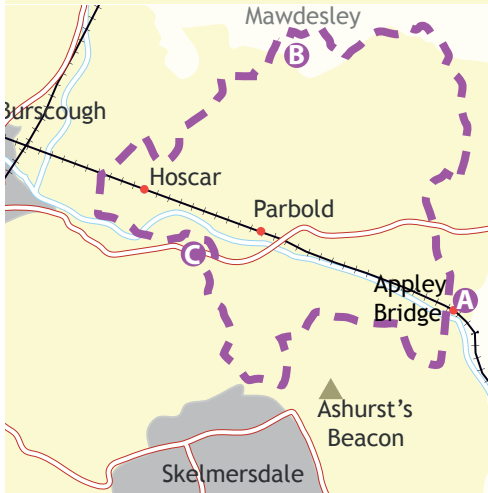
Leaving Martin Mere, continue along the road and it will lead you in about 3km back to Burscough.

Cycle Hire is available from Jack Parker Cycles in Burscough 01704 892442



A Circuit from Appley Bridge

Distance approx. 27.4 km/ 17 miles



A fine varied circuit, taking in the rolling hills and valleys in the east of the area as well as a taste of the flatlands of the west. If it isn't hilly enough, Ashurst's Beacon can conveniently be added to the agenda.

Arriving by train Appley Bridge is on the Wigan - Southport line. The route also passes close to Hoscar, on the same line.

Arriving by car Parking by the canal, just below the start. You could also start from Skelmersdale.

Start (A) Follow the station approach out to the road and turn R, up the hill. Climb steadily for about 1km, levelling out shortly before the A5209 (pub on the corner). Go straight across and soon climb some more, then follow the road as it swings round to the R. Turn L into Courage Low Lane. Follow this and its continuation as Toogood Lane into Andertons Mill, then turn L on Bentley Lane. Take the next R on Moody Lane, keep L at a fork then go L at T junction, into the outskirts of Mawdesley, and SA to Cedar Farm (excellent cafe).

B. Take the next L on Back Lane and into Bispham Green, emerging next to the pub.

Go L and immediately R into Green Lane. At T junction go the L on B5246 then 1st R. After 2km take 1st R on Wood Lane and follow it round L into Bleak Lane, which leads to a level crossing. Just after this fork L. At a 5-way junction go R and then L into Hollowford Lane. Follow this to a swing bridge over the canal and then bear L on Back Lane. Follow this into Newburgh and a junction with the A5209 at a mini-roundabout. Turn R. (Post office and Newburgh tea-rooms at this junction). In 50m turn L into Tabby's Nook.

C. Turn R at T junction and begin a steady climb. Just over the top turn L on Beacon Lane by the Skelmersdale boundary sign. At a large roundabout take the 1st exit into the continuation of Beacon Lane and climb to T junction opposite St Michael's Church in Dalton. Turn L on Higher Lane and descend, then turn 1st R on Hillock Lane. After a steep descent turn R at T junction and follow the lane for about 2.5km to another T junction. Turn L and descend to Appley Bridge; the station entrance is a short way up the hill ahead.

Enjoy your cycling

Cycling is meant to be fun. Many people, however, don't enjoy it as much as they should, because they are riding bikes that are the wrong size or aren't correctly set up for them. Any decent bike shop should help you set your bike up properly. Growing children must have their saddles raised regularly, perhaps every month

Of course, safety is equally important. Wear bright-coloured or reflective clothing. Ride in single file on narrow or busy roads: keep left but not right in the gutter. Take particular care at right turns: if necessary stop on the left and wait for a break in traffic. And it's always wise to wear a helmet: adults should set a good example.

Out from Southport: Clieves Hills and Plex Moss

Distance approx. 37.6 km/ 23.5 miles (from Trans-Pennine Trail start) or 37.6 km/ 23.5 miles (from Ainsdale railway station).



Southport isn't just a Cycling Demonstration Town; it's also significant as the start (or finish) of the Trans-Pennine Trail, a 346km (215 mile) route for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. Its eastern end is at Hornsea on the Yorkshire coast. The opening stages of the TPT follow the Cheshire Lines Path, part of a former railway line between Liverpool and Southport. This offers a well-marked route, sheltered from traffic, out of Southport's bustle and into the wide empty spaces of Plex Moss. The route then makes the modest but satisfying climb onto Clieves Hills; a few minutes effort are rewarded (on a clear day) by far-reaching views.

Arriving by train: the best station to start from is Ainsdale, on the present-day Liverpool - Southport line; pick up the description at Point B.

Arriving by car: various parking opportunities along Coastal Road; the description starts at the official start (point A) of the Trans-Pennine Trail, which is close to Southport's main Park and Ride car-park.

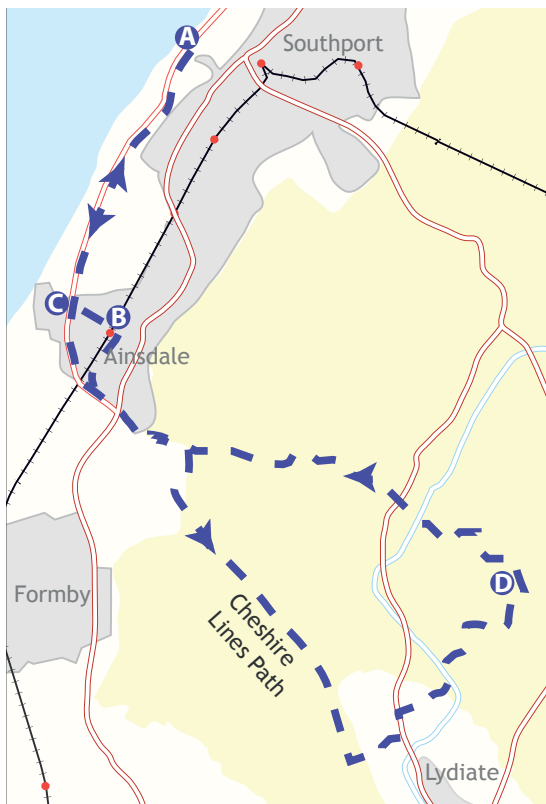
Public Toilets: None on the route.

Refreshments: Numerous pubs and cafes near the start/finish, but only the Scotch Piper at Lydiate on the route itself; maybe take a picnic to enjoy on Clieves Hills.

Start (A.) Trans-Pennine Trail start, on Southport beach-front

Follow the signed Trans-Pennine Trail route, at first on the seaward side of the Marine Drive. At the next roundabout cross to the landward side and continue on the cycle-track beside the road (now Coastal Road). The road is flanked by sand-dunes; those on the left conceal the famous Royal Birkdale golf course. At the next roundabout turn left along Shore Road for a short distance and cross at the marked point.

Start (B.) Ainsdale station Exit the station and turn left along Shore Road for approx. 1 km. Just before reaching a



roundabout, meet the main Trans-Pennine Trail route where it crosses Shore Road.

C. The route becomes a narrow path through woodland. This brief single-track episode will please mountain-bikers, but all too soon emerges alongside Coastal Road again. Continue over the railway and then to traffic lights and the A565. Follow the marked route across the junction into the road opposite, which soon changes from smooth suburban street to a narrow, bumpy lane across open country. After a few twists and turns a large sign guides you down a track on the right.

Follow the track as it bears right and go straight across a crossroads of byways. Soon turn left onto the course of the old railway – the Cheshire Lines proper. Follow the track easily for approx. 6km/4 miles. Go under a road (Moss Lane), pass the end of a branch route (the Barton Spur) and under

another road (Wood Lane), before passing a barrier into a small car-park on the site of Lydiate Station.

Leave the track and follow the access road to a junction. Turn left and immediately right into Punnell's Lane. At a T-junction turn left and follow the road to the A5147. Turn left for approx 500m, passing the Scotch Piper pub. Turn first right onto Hall Lane. At a triangle of grass turn left on Eager Lane. Follow this to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal at a low swing bridge (Rimmer's Bridge).

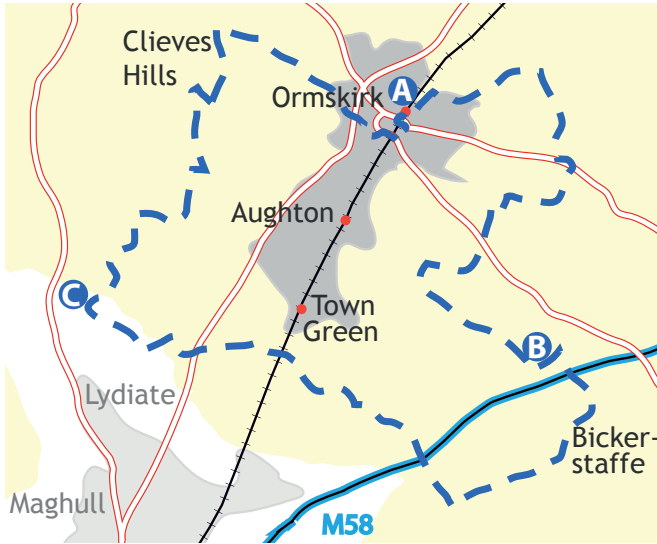
Continue along the lane to a T-junction and turn right on a busier road. Turn first left and climb *Clieves Hills Lane*; it's neither very long nor very steep, but even so the views expand dramatically. To the left lie the levels of Plex Moss, Ainsdale, Southport and the sea. Look back as you reach the top to see the skyline of Liverpool, including the two cathedrals; beyond, on a clear day, you can see the Clwydian Hills, in Wales. To the north you may see the craggier outlines of the Lakeland Fells.

D. Follow the road to a T-junction and turn left. Ride along the ridge, with a view east to Lancashire's hill country: the Forest of Bowland, Pendle Hill and Winter Hill. Turn first left and swoop down Shepherd's Lane. As it levels out keep right on Halsall Lane, then go left on Small Lane South. At a T-junction turn right (unsigned, but it is Plex Lane). Follow this to the A5147 and go straight across into Plex Moss Lane.

Follow this – wiggly and bumpy – until you pass the Cheshire Lines sign and rejoin your outward route. Retrace this back to the start. (If you're heading for Ainsdale station you can bear right before the railway bridge; follow Kendal Way then bear left and follow Easedale Drive. Cross Kenilworth Road and continue almost straight across along Chesterfield Road back to the station).

A Circuit from Ormskirk

Distance approx. 33.8 km/ 21 miles



There are no major climbs on this circuit, though Clieves Hills can feel surprisingly testing. However, there are plenty of undulations and twists and turns to keep up the variety and a couple of places where the views are remarkably extensive.

Arriving by train Ormskirk can be reached by trains from either Liverpool or Preston. In case of mechanical problems, or bad weather, it's easy to bale out at Town Green, on the Liverpool- Ormskirk line.

Arriving by car Parking in Ormskirk is difficult, with many car-parks limited to 2 hours, and it might be better to start from Town Green.

Public Toilets In the centre of Ormskirk.

Refreshments Pubs at regular intervals; cafe at garden centre near end.



Start (A) Follow the cycle path down the side of the station car park. Keep straight ahead at the 1st fork then R at T junction. The path emerges to a suburban street by the gates of a residential home. Go L up the street to T junction and turn L again. Follow the road downhill and out into open country. Turn R into Lathom Lane then R again into Castle Lane. Follow this to the A577 at Westhead. Go L, then 1st R into School Lane. After 1km go R on Vicarage Lane then 1st L (Wellfield Lane). At its end go R then 1st L, climbing gently past a prominent 'flying saucer' (actually a water-tower). Go straight across the A570, then immediately fork L. Go R at Cropper's Lane and follow it to T junction. Go L (Long Lane) and follow it straight ahead to reach the A506. 10.5km/ 6.5 miles.

B. Turn L and then 1st R, passing a converted windmill and over the M58 into Bickerstaffe. Just past the church follow the road round R then steadily downhill with views ahead over Liverpool to the Welsh hills. As the road levels out bear R into New Way, signed 'Unsuitable for Heavy Goods Vehicles'. Continue, with a slight dog-leg where New Way crosses Back Lane, to T junction. Turn R and re-cross the M58 to reach a cross-roads. Go

straight ahead into Bowker's Green Lane and follow this to another crossroads on the B5197, and the Derby Arms pub at just over half-distance.

Go SA at the crossroads into Mickering Lane and follow it, passing under the railway, to the outskirts of Aughton. Bear L here (not sharp L into Beech Road). At a crossroads by a large pub, the West Tower (currently derelict), go SA into Swan Lane. Cross the dual-carriageway A59 into the continuation of Swan Lane.

Follow the road round R where it becomes Back Lane then swing L on Sudell Lane. At T junction turn R on Pygon's Hill Lane. Go up to a bridge over the canal. 500m further on bear R at a junction with triangles of grass into Eager Lane. 22.5km/ 14 miles

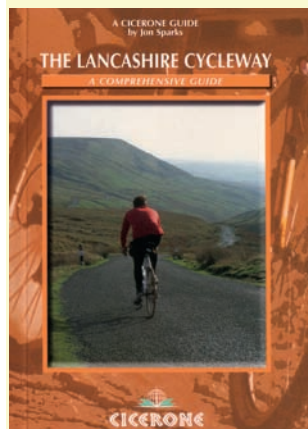
C. Pass some old sluices and up to a swing bridge over the canal. Continue to T junction with the B5195. Turn R then 1st L on *Clieves Hills Lane, which gives the biggest climb on the route. Panoramic views encompass the Lake District as well as the Welsh hills.* Turn L at T junction onto Fir Tree Lane. Go straight ahead at a crossroads then descend, now with views of the Lancashire moors. As the road levels out turn R onto Narrow Lane. Continue to T junction and turn



R. Primrose Hill Garden Centre and coffee shop (closed Mon, Tues) is 100m along. Follow the road into the outskirts of Ormskirk. Look for Brighthouse Close on the L and just after passing it take the next narrow, apparently unnamed road on the L. From its end come out to a pedestrian crossing on the A59. On the far side is Coronation Park. Follow the marked cycle route through the park, skirting the pond, to run alongside the exit from Morrison's supermarket car-park. Join the exit lane and go R at the traffic lights. Follow the road over the railway (NB public toilets a short way down Moorgate, just before the railway bridge) and at the next set of traffic lights go L. At the next junction go L again, re-crossing the railway, then follow the one-way system R along Railway Approach. At its end go R, crossing the railway a third time, and then L into Station Approach to finish.

The Lancashire Cycleway

This figure-8 route takes in much of the best cycling the county has to offer. The northern and southern loops, which meet at Whalley in the Ribble Valley, are each around 225 km/ 140 miles in length.



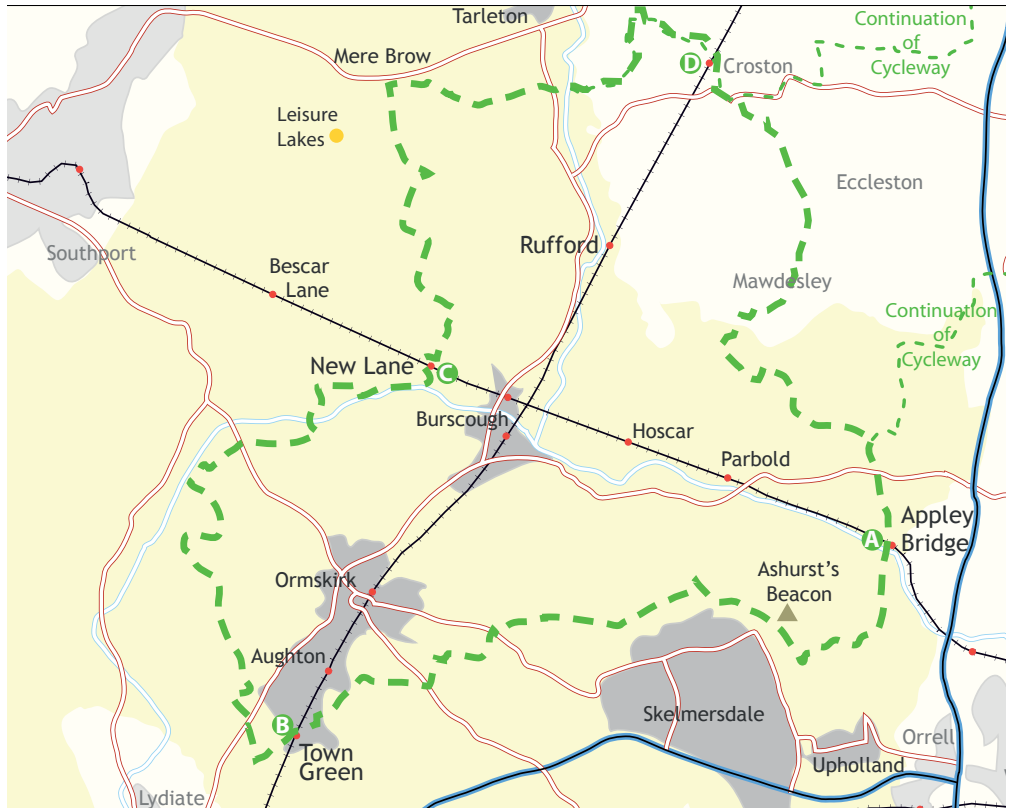
There is a guidebook by Jon Sparks, published by Cicerone Press.

For a West Lancashire ride based on the Cycleway route see the following pages of this leaflet.

A Grand Tour of West Lancashire

Distance approx. 65.5 km/ 40.7 miles

This tour, based on the route of the Lancashire Cycleway, takes in most of West Lancashire, from the hills in the east to the levels in the west. It passes the stations at Croston, Appley Bridge, Town Green and New Lane so can be started at whichever is most convenient and is described in corresponding sections.



Arriving by train Appley Bridge and New Lane are on the Wigan - Southport line. Town Green is on the Liverpool- Ormskirk line and Rufford is on the Ormskirk - Preston line.

Arriving by car There is a car-park at Ashurst's Beacon (west of the summit) and informal parking opportunities at many places along the route.

Public Toilets None on the route.

Refreshments There are numerous pubs and several cafes along the route.

A. Appley Bridge to Town Green 18.1 km/ 11.2 miles

From the station cross the canal and river and begin the climb to Roby Mill – pub at half-height. Follow the road round then turn R into Farley Lane and resume climbing, finishing on a sunken lane through woods. Turn R at T-junction and follow the road along the crest of the Ashurst's Beacon ridge, with views over Skelmersdale, Liverpool, the Wirral and the Clwydian Hills – and past two pubs.

Make a fast descent to a sharp R bend then turn immediately turn L, and descend more

gently to a roundabout. Take the fourth exit, then at T-junction turn L towards Skelmersdale. Just before the next main junction turn R onto a narrow lane and follow it to its end near a large roundabout. Continue in the same direction, then at T-junction turn R into Spa Lane.

At the next crossroads, by the Plough Inn, go straight ahead into Dick's Lane. At Westhead village turn R onto A577 then 1st L into School Lane. After 1km go R on Vicarage Lane then 1st L (Wellfield Lane). At its end go R then 1st L, climbing gently past a prominent 'flying saucer' water-tower.

Go straight across A570, then bear R (sign to Aughton Park). Follow this road, keeping straight ahead at a crossroads on the outskirts of Aughton Park. Go L on B5197 on the edge of Town Green, then 1st R into Town Green Lane, reaching Town Green Station in about 500m.

B. Town Green to New Lane 16.6 km/ 10.3 miles

Cross over the railway and continue into Aughton (pubs). Turn R at the village green, pass the church and follow the lane to the dual carriageway A59. Cross, turn R along cycle track for a short distance then go L. At T-junction go R on B5195, then 1st L into Fir Tree Lane. Continue SA for 3km *along the ridge of Clieves Hills*, swinging L near the bottom of the descent.

At a 'Give Way' on a bend turn R, then R again into Summerwood Lane. Turn L at end into Northmoor Lane, then next R just before a canal bridge. Go R again at T-junction into Morris Lane and on to Pinfold. Cross A570 into Smithy Lane and follow it to Heaton's Bridge. Turn L at T-junction onto the B5242, over the canal then 1st R into Drummersdale Lane.

Take the next R into Merscar Lane. After two R-angle bends (The Farm – café) this runs parallel to the canal. At T-junction turn L into New Lane and over the level crossing just by the station.



C. New Lane to Croston 17.2 km/ 10.7 miles

Follow the road north-east from the station (Marsh Moss Lane). At T-junction turn L on Tarlscough Lane. *Pass the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Centre at Martin Mere, Homestead Farm (café) and later Windmill Animal Farm (café)* Continue to T-junction with B5246, and go L. At Mere Brow, on sharp L, bend, turn R into Mere Brow Lane. After 1km take a minor road on R, marked 'unsuitable for wide vehicles', just before some glass-houses.

Follow the lane to its end. Go straight across A59 into Sollom village, turn L and then R by the post-box. Cross over the canal. After the bridge the road becomes unsurfaced for 100m; those on light road tyres might want to walk. Continue over the River Douglas and into a quiet lane. At a T-junction turn right, then right again down a narrow lane marked 'No motor vehicles except for access'. Follow this to a T-junction and turn right on B5249.

Go over a railway bridge and bear right past Croston station.

D. Croston to Appley Bridge 13.6 km/ 8.5 miles

Continue to a T-junction with the A581. Follow the main road round left and pass the much-photographed packhorse bridge and St Michaels Church. Where the main road bends left, fork right on Grape Lane. At a T-junction by the pub go right and continue 1km before turning left on Dark Lane. Fork right on Bradshaw Brow then continue on Back Lane, winding past *Cedar Farm craft centre (café)*. Keep following the twists of Back Lane into Bispham Green and turn left at the T-junction (pub). Follow the lane to another T-junction. Turn L and soon follow the road round R and begin the climb onto High Moor - welcome pub (Rigbye Arms) at top. Continue to T-junction and turn R. Continue to meet the A5209.

Cross and begin a long descent into Appley Bridge. Just before the bottom, a lane on the L leads to Appley Bridge station. The next stage goes straight ahead

Cycle Connections



Crossing The River Douglas near Sollow

Further Information

Ormskirk, Skelmersdale and Southport all have networks of dedicated cycle routes. Cycle network maps for Ormskirk and Skelmersdale are available from www.lancashire.gov.uk/cycling Tel 0800 3281635. For Southport from www.sefton.gov.uk Tel 0151 3301253 or information offices.

Ormskirk

Cycle paths across Coronation Park and serving the railway station are used in the Ormskirk ride (pages 8-9).

Skelmersdale

Skelmersdale's cycle network has links to Beacon Country Park and to Dalton, allowing connections to the Lancashire Cycleway (pp10-11) and the Appley Bridge circuit (p5).

Southport

Southport's developing cycle network links to Plex Moss (p6). For detailed information and a downloadable map see <http://tinyurl.com/rdo3yc>

Towpath Cycling

Cycling is permitted on the canal towpath east of Burscough; for more information see www.waterscape.com/things-to-do/cycling

Cycle Hire

Jack Parker Cycles, Burscough
01704 892442

Acknowledgments

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