

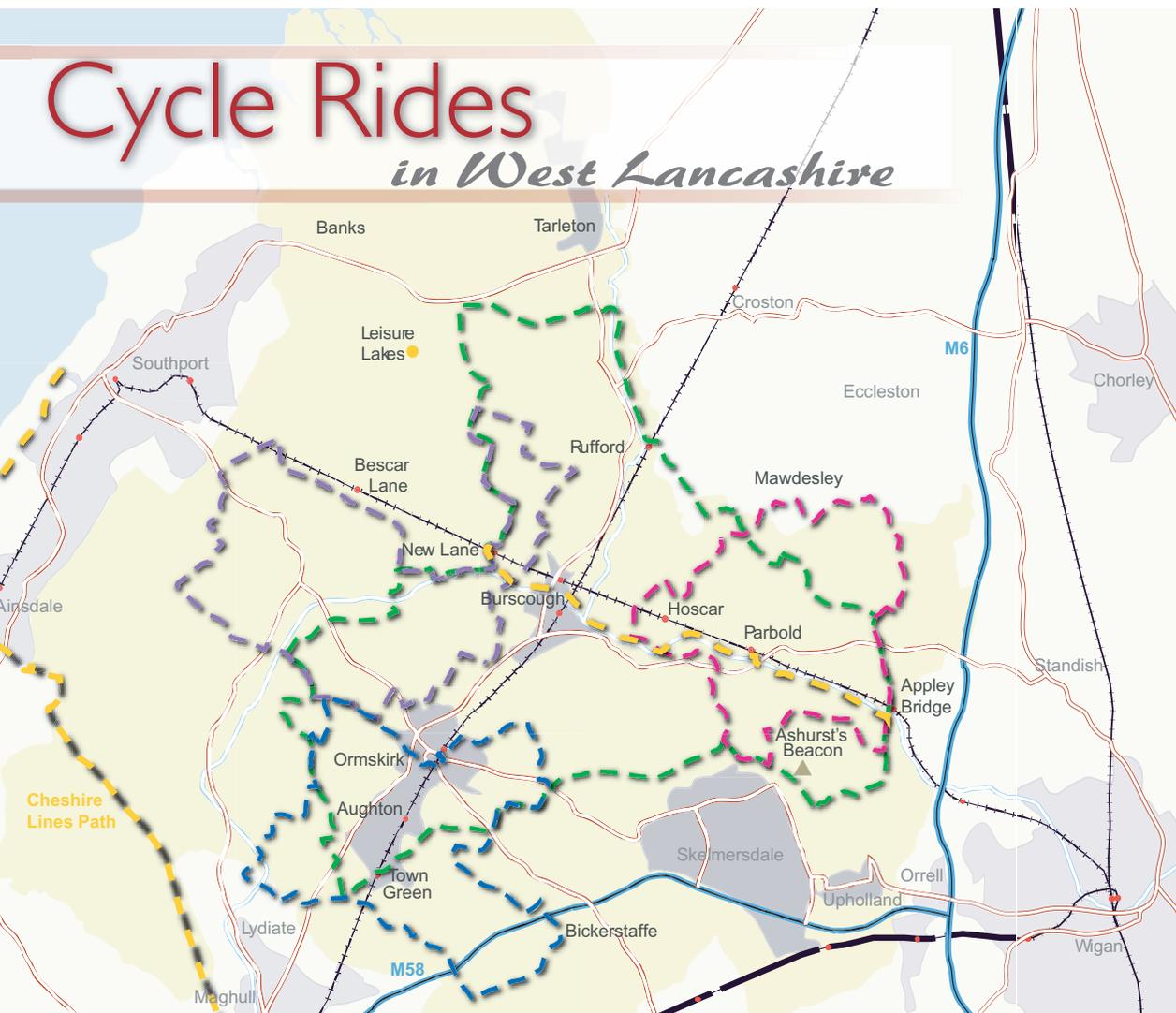
Cycle Rides

in West Lancashire



All rides start from
Railway Stations

Cycle Rides in West Lancashire



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.



Travelling by Train.

Bikes and trains are natural partners; better for the environment and, often, more convenient than using a car. This is certainly true in West Lancashire. The area is criss-crossed by rail lines, giving many options for place-to-place rides as well as circular routes. Many of the stations are in rural locations, allowing you to start a ride without doing battle with urban traffic. They also offer 'bale-out' options on planned longer rides, e.g. in case of mechanical problems or bad weather. There are three main routes. Bicycles are carried free of charge on all these routes.

Liverpool - Ormskirk (Merseyrail).

Trains run every 15 minutes Monday - Saturday and every 30 minutes on Sundays. There is no need to reserve cycle spaces but customers are requested to try to avoid travelling on busy peak hour services, if possible. For further information telephone 0151 236 7676 or visit www.merseyrail.org

Manchester - Wigan - Southport (Northern Rail)

Trains run approximately every 30 minutes Monday - Saturday and hourly on Sundays. (Northern Rail). All trains continue to Manchester. There are also connections at Wigan to the West Coast Main Line.

Ormskirk - Preston (Northern Rail)

Trains run approximately every hour Monday - Saturday. No Sunday service. For further information telephone 0845 6001159 or visit www.northernrail.org

The National Rail Enquiry number is 0845 748 4950 or visit www.nationalrail.co.uk



-  A Circuit from Appley Bridge
-  A Circuit from New Lane
-  A Circuit from Ormskirk
-  A Grand tour of West Lancashire
-  Canal Towpath (Burscough-Appley Bridge)

Traffic-free Cycling

The main routes in this leaflet follow quiet lanes as far as possible but busier roads still have to be crossed and occasionally followed for a short distance. For those who would prefer completely traffic-free routes there are several possibilities.

Towpath Cycling

The Leeds-Liverpool Canal runs through the area and its towpath offers some fine cycling opportunities. For more information visit www.waterscape.com/cycling. The best route starts from Appley Bridge. If you get the train back from Burscough Bridge or New Lane it's downhill at the start and there's no corresponding uphill later.

As a one-way ride it's about 10.5 km/ 6.5 miles to Burscough Bridge.

From the station emerge to the road and turn left, down the hill. Cross the canal and turn immediately right (parking here for those arriving by car) to join the towpath. Follow it past some locks. At Parbold it's necessary to cross the canal on a road bridge. The towpath resumes on the other side.

Continue along the towpath. After approx 9km (5.5 miles) the towpath rises sharply on a steep little hump-backed bridge over the Tarleton branch of the canal. Continue straight ahead into Burscough Bridge. Just after passing under the A59 there's access into a side-street; the train station is just about 300m further up the main road.

Alternatively, continue along the towpath approx another 1.5km to a swing-bridge by a pub. Turn right and New Lane station is approx 500m up the lane.



The Cheshire Lines Path

The Cheshire Lines Path follows part of a former railway line between Liverpool and Southport, giving traffic-free riding across the wide open spaces of the mosslands. For those arriving by train, the best station to start from is Ainsdale, on the present-day Liverpool - Southport line, from where the

route is well-signed (follow Trans-Pennine Trail signs) on suburban streets and cycle paths before joining the Cheshire Lines proper. You can make a one-way ride of it by catching another train from Old Roan back into Liverpool. For those arriving by car there are several access points, notably Downholland Moss and the former station site at Lydiate.

Leisure Lakes

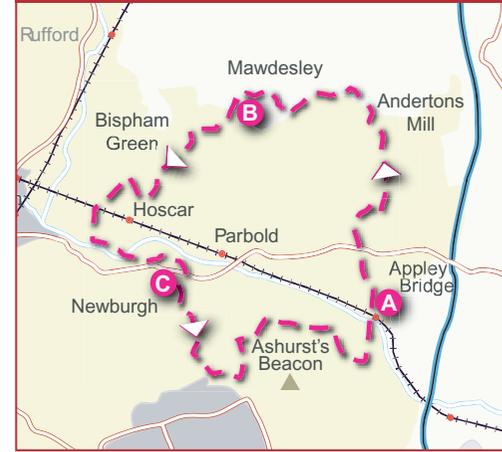
Leisure Lakes, at Mere Brow, near Tarleton, has a permanent off-road circuit which hosts mountain bike races during the winter months. There are races for all categories including novices. There is also a large bicycle shop on site. Follow signs off the A565/ B5426. For more details visit www.leisurelakesbikes.com or phone 01772 813446.

Maps

Most of West Lancashire is shown on OS Explorer 285 Southport and Chorley 1:25,000. The map shows some road names in rural areas.

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.

Start **A**

Follow the station approach out to the road and turn right, up the hill. Climb steadily for about 1 km, 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 right. Turn left into Courage Low Lane. Follow this and its continuation as Toogood Lane into Andertons Mill, then turn left on Bentley Lane. Take the next right on Moody Lane, keep left at a fork then go left at T junction, into the outskirts of Mawdesley, and straight ahead to Cedar Farm (excellent cafe).

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

C Turn right at T junction and begin a steady climb. Just over the top turn left 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 left on Higher Lane and descend, then turn 1st right on Hillock Lane. After a steep descent turn right at T junction and follow the lane for about 2.5km to another T junction. Turn left and descend to Appley Bridge; the station entrance is a short way up the hill ahead.



Wide Open Mosslands: A Circuit from New Lane

Distance approx. 37.6 km/23.5 miles



If it's a flat ride you're looking for, this is the one. It is worth saving for a calm day, however, as there's little shelter from the wind that sometimes scours across the wide open mosslands. Once much of this land lay under the waters of a vast lake, of which the present Martin Mere is but a tiny remnant. For most of the way the surroundings are rural, but there is a short section through an industrial estate, which isn't pretty but is preferable to the busy A59. Just after this there's a possible short-cut back to New Lane station, which brings the total distance down to 26.4 km/ 16.5 miles.

Arriving by train: New Lane is on the Wigan - Southport line. The route can also easily be reached from Ormskirk or Burscough.

Arriving by car: Informal parking opportunities at many places along the route.

Public Toilets: None on the route.

Refreshments: Several pubs and cafes along the route.

Attractions: Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Martin Mere; Windmill Animal Farm (familiar and exotic animals, miniature railway)

Start A

From the station cycle south (lined with houses) then turn first right (sign for Martin Inn, Cycleway sign). Follow the lane to a T junction and turn right (Bescar). Keep straight ahead at a crossroads then go right at a T junction (Churchtown). Cross a level crossing. The road narrows to single track with passing places. Take 1st left, go over another level crossing and on to Pool Hey and a T junction with A570 (6 miles)

B Turn left; there are separate cycle tracks alongside the busy main road. In 500m turn right onto Turning Lane. Go right at a T junction on the B5243 then 1st left and round into the small village of Shirdley Hill. As the road bends left turn right onto Renacres Lane. At a T junction turn left on New Cut Lane (signed to Ormskirk). A bridge over an old railway here is probably the biggest climb of the route. At a T junction turn left on the A5147 for 200m then 1st right. Take great care at this junction, stopping if necessary, as much of the traffic moves far too fast through the village. Cross a steep little hump-backed bridge then keep straight ahead, passing turnings to right and past a garden centre (tea-room).

C Where the road bends right just past Asmall Hall, take the lane on the left. At a T junction turn right onto the A570 for 400m then take 1st left, just past a petrol station, into Talkin Lane. Go straight ahead at the next crossroads into Blackacre Lane. Turn right at a T junction onto Pippin Street. Turn left at a roundabout and wind through Burscough Industrial Estate.

After 1km turn right at a crossroads where the main route initially appears to go straight ahead, and after another 500m turn right again on Langley Rd. At the next crossroads go straight ahead into Crabtree Lane (shortcut to New Lane Station goes left here). Cross a swing bridge by the Slipway PH and keep straight ahead to a T junction where turn left. 17.1 miles.

D Turn 1st right into Curlew Lane. The landscape here is very open. Turn sharp left into Mere Lane (marked as Unsuitable for Heavy Goods Vehicles). Follow it across pancake-flat country, all once part of Martin Mere. Take the 1st left just after a '40' sign onto another bumpy but ruler-straight lane, to a T junction at its far end, where a sign discloses that it's called Cross Meanygate. Turn left past Windmill Farm and then Martin Mere Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust centre (both have cafes). Soon after this turn right (Cycleway sign) and New Lane Station is about 1km away.



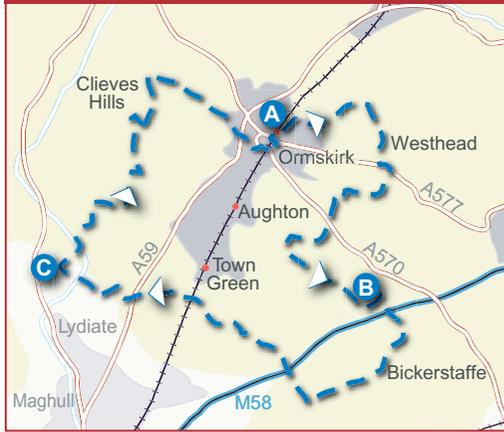
Enjoy your cycling

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 will need to 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 here.



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

B Turn left and then 1st right, passing a converted windmill and over the M58 into Bickerstaffe. Just past the church follow the road round right then steadily downhill with views ahead over Liverpool to the Welsh hills. As the road levels out bear right 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 right 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 straight ahead at the crossroads into Mickering Lane and follow it, passing under the railway, to the outskirts of Aughton. Bear left here (not sharp left into Beech Road).

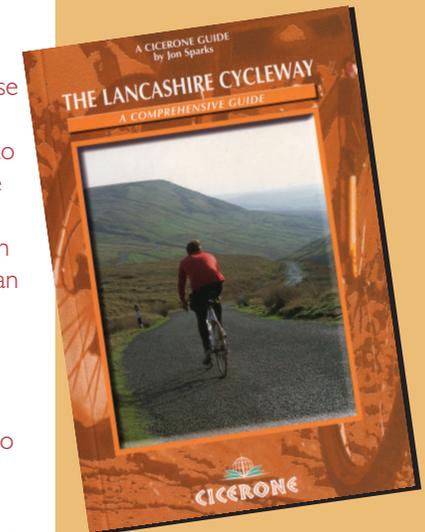
At a crossroads by a large pub, the West Tower (currently derelict), go straight ahead into Swan Lane. Cross the dual-carriageway A59 into the continuation of Swan Lane. Follow the road round right where it becomes Back Lane then swing left on Sudell Lane. At T junction turn right on Pygon's Hill Lane. Go up to a bridge over the canal. 500m further on bear right 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 right then 1st left 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 left 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 right onto Narrow Lane. Continue to T junction and turn right. 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 left and just after passing it take the next narrow, apparently unnamed road on the left. 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 right 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 left. At the next junction go left again, re-crossing the railway, then follow the one-way system right along Railway Approach. At its end go right, crossing the railway a third time, and then left into Station Approach to finish.



The Lancashire Cycleway

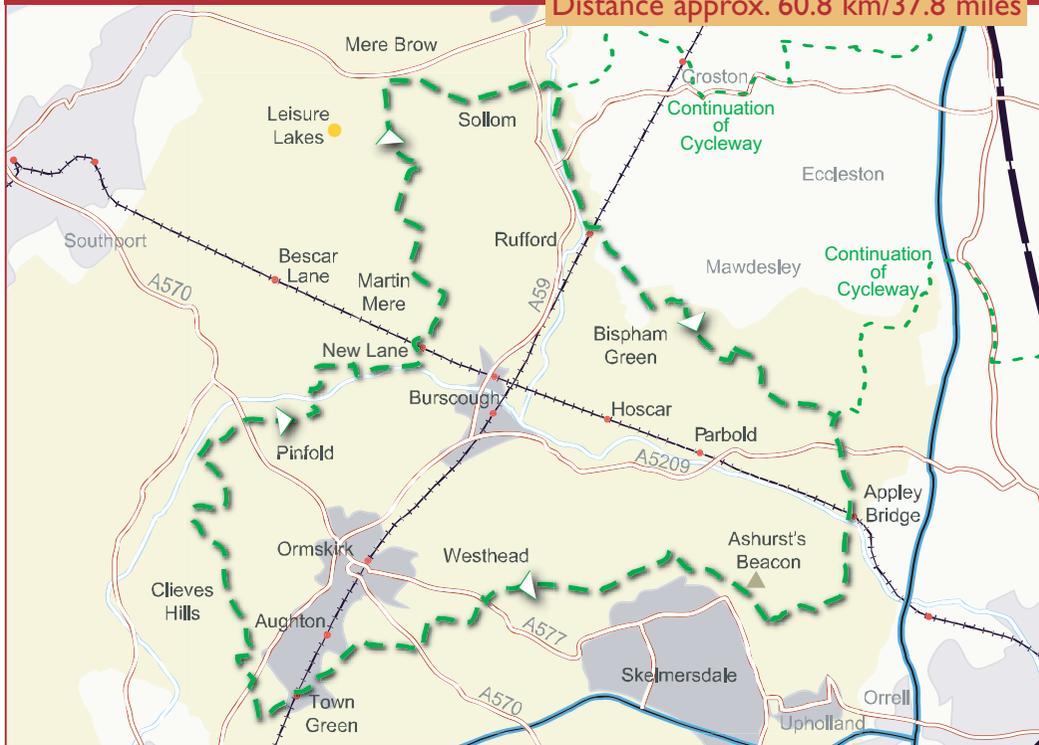
This figure-8 route takes in much of the best cycling the county has to offer. The northern and southern loops, which meet at Whalley in the Ribble Valley, are each around 225 km/140 miles in length.



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. 60.8 km/37.8 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 Rufford, 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: As mentioned above, there are several stations on the route. 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. Many of these will be mentioned at the appropriate point.

Attractions: Ashurst's Beacon (country walks, panoramic views); Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Martin Mere; Windmill Animal Farm (familiar and exotic animals, miniature railway); Rufford Old Hall (magnificent sixteenth-century house).

Rufford - Appley Bridge

~10.7 km/6.6 miles

Follow the B5246 east from the station. Turn left on Daub Lane (tea-room at junction). Go right at T junction and right again at the next. Follow lane through Bispham Green (pub) to its end at T-junction.

Turn left and soon follow the road round right and begin the climb onto High Moor - welcome pub (Rigbye Arms) at top. Continue to T junction and turn right. Continue to meet the A5209.

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

Appley Bridge to Town Green

~18.1 km/11.2 miles

From the station cross the canal and river and begin a long climb to Roby Mill. PH (Star Inn) as the road levels out briefly. Follow the road round then turn right into Farley Lane and resume the ascent, finishing on a sunken lane through woods. Turn right at T junction and follow the road more easily along the crest of the Ashurst's Beacon ridge, with views over Skelmersdale, Liverpool, the Wirral and the Clwydian Hills, in Wales. There are two pubs along the summit stretch.

A fast descent leads to a sharp right-hand bend. Immediately after this turn left, and descend more gently to a roundabout. Take the fourth exit, then at T junction turn left towards Skelmersdale. Just before the next main junction turn right onto a narrow lane and follow it to its end near a large roundabout. Continue in the same direction, then at T junction turn right into Spa Lane. At the next crossroads, by the Plough Inn, go straight ahead into Dick's Lane. At the village of Westhead turn right onto the A577 then 1st left into School Lane. After 1km go right on Vicarage Lane then 1st left (Wellfield Lane). At its end go right then 1st left, climbing gently past a prominent 'flying saucer' water-tower.

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

Town Green to New Lane

~16.6 km/10.3 miles

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

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

Take the next right into Merscar Lane. After two right-angle bends this runs parallel to the canal. At T junction turn left into New Lane and over the level crossing just by the station.

New Lane to Rufford

~15.4 km/9.6 miles

Follow the road north-east from the station (Marsh Moss Lane). At T junction turn left on Tarlscough Lane. Follow it past the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Centre at Martin Mere and, about 1km further on, Windmill Animal Farm. Continue to T junction with the B5246. Go left for another 2km to Mere Brow, where the road makes a sharp bend left. Turn right into Mere Brow Lane. After about 1km take a minor road on the right, marked 'unsuitable for wide vehicles', just before a group of glass-houses. Follow the lane to its end at the A59.

Go straight across into the tiny village of Sollom, turn left and then 1st right by the post box. Now cross over the canal: this is the Tarleton branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Follow the towpath past Rufford Old Hall and at next bridge come up to the road and turn left to Rufford station.

Cycle Routes in Ormskirk and Skelmersdale



Both Ormskirk and Skelmersdale have a number of dedicated cycle routes and there are plans to improve them further.

Ormskirk

New cycle paths have been opened across Coronation Park and serving the railway station. Both of these are used in the Ormskirk ride (pages 8-9). There are plans to improve cycle access in the town centre.

Skelmersdale

A comprehensive network of cycle routes is being developed, radiating out of the town centre, and including links to Beacon Country Park and to Dalton, which allows connections to the route of the Lancashire Cycleway (pages 10-11) and to the Appley Bridge circuit (p5).

Merseyside

For free leaflet on cycle rides from Merseyrail Stations "Merseytravel Rideabout" guide ring 0151 330 1066

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Not to scale, not all roads are shown.*



Please follow the British Waterways Cycling Code when riding on canal towpaths