

Off the Cuckoo Trail

Circular Cycle Rides



Welcome to Circular Cycle Rides – Off the Cuckoo Trail, an opportunity to explore by bike the varied landscape and interesting history of the heart of East Sussex.

How to use this guide

There is a map for each ride, with notes and directional tips marked on it. The rides are circular so can be ridden in either direction, but a recommended direction is shown. Some rides overlap so you can link them up to make longer rides if you wish to be more energetic. Short cuts are also shown for those who have bitten off more than they can chew! The rides are mainly on-road with some off-road sections, generally along bridleways with a good surface; in winter these sections may not be suitable and alternative on road routes are recommended. Approximate distances and estimated time for each ride are shown, but weather, fitness, speed, map reading ability and puncture stops must be taken into

account when planning your day.

We recommend that you use this guide in conjunction with OS Landranger 199; 1:50000, (or you will need four of the 1:25000 Explorer maps).

Please note that there is no specific waymarking of the rides on the ground, although some of the rides do follow the National Cycle Network (NCN) for some sections. Look out for route 2 and route 21 NCN waymarks.

Getting there

Polegate railway station has good regular services to London, Brighton and Hastings and is just a quarter of a mile from the Cuckoo Trail. Buxted station is 2½ miles from Hadlow Down on Ride 3, and Stonegate station is 1 mile from Ride 4. Please take advantage of this and leave your car at home. Bikes are carried free on trains throughout the Southern region (at the time of writing).

Cycle hire


Bikes are available for hire from Cuckmere Cycle Company, Seven Sisters Country Park, Exceat, Seaford: telephone 01323 870310. They also hire out rear cycle carriers for cars.

Cycle shops

Parts, accessories and repairs available from Cycle Revival, Hailsham Rd, Heathfield 01435 866118, M & S Accessories George St, Hailsham 01323 845409 and Kontour Cycles, Station Rd, Polegate 01323 482368



Will I make it?

The rides are graded Easy, Moderate and Hilly. They have been chosen to use safer, quieter roads as far as possible but there are certain sections and crossings where extreme caution is required. These are indicated on the maps by a red warning triangle . It may be appropriate to get off your bike and use the footway where available.

Use of narrow country lanes – cyclists are advised to ride in single file, plan the ride to avoid poor light or bad weather, wear conspicuous clothing and be prepared to avoid oncoming motorists. We recommend that an adult accompanies children under 16.

Good cycling code

- Wear bright clothing
- Wear a helmet
- Do not race and warn of your approach
- Be courteous and considerate to others
- Be self-sufficient and make sure your bike is safe to ride
- Off-road give way to walkers and horse riders
- Follow the country code

Can I use a "road" bike on the rides?

Rides 1 & 2

The off-road sections along Ogg's Lane and Hempstead Lane can be muddy.

Rides 3, 4 & 5

Some off-road sections that are not suitable for road bikes have an alternative on-road route (the off-road sections are typical bridleways with soft or loose ground in places).

Public Rights of Way



Bridleways (often waymarked in blue) can be used by walkers, horseriders and cyclists



Byways (often waymarked in red) can be used by walkers, horseriders, cyclists and motor vehicles



Footpaths (often waymarked in yellow) can be used by walkers, but cycling is NOT allowed

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Ride 1 – Abbots Wood and Arlington

To start the ride, leave the Cuckoo Trail at Hawks Road bridge. Turn right at top of ramp, then straight on at mini roundabout into Hempstead Lane.

Abbots Wood (Forestry Commission)
360 hectares of mixed woodland gifted by Henry I to Battle Abbey and once overseen by the Abbott (hence its name). Ancient ditches and banks can still be seen. The coppice areas support rare dormice and pearl-bordered fritillaries. Cycling is permitted on all surfaced paths through the wood. There is a picnic area, lake and two waymarked walks.

Arlington Bluebell Walk & Farm Trail
Only open during the Bluebell flowering season – normally end April to mid May. There are eight different walks over three farms and ancient woods to enjoy. See the cows milked from 3–5pm daily. Light refreshments available. Tel: 01323 485152. Admission charge.

Arlington Church
Very old church dating from Saxon times, with pieces of a Roman building in the walls. Excavated items on display inside. Remains of sunken village site immediately adjacent to west.

Arlington Reservoir
The peaceful area surrounding Arlington Reservoir has been managed with conservation in mind since it was built 30 years ago. It is now an award winning Local Nature Reserve. Its tranquillity is preserved by allowing only fishing, walking, birdwatching and picnicking as recreational activities. The 4km Osprey Trail around the perimeter has waymarkers providing facts and information about the surrounding habitat and wildlife.

Charleston Farmhouse (between Firle and Selmeston)
Home of Vanessa Bell (sister to Virginia Woolf) and Duncan Grant from 1916 until Grant's death in 1978. This farmhouse was frequented by their friends, who came to be known as The Bloomsbury Set. These artists, writers and intellectuals created their own ceramics and textiles and decorated the farmhouse with their own designs, influenced by Italian fresco painting and post-impressionist art. Tel: 01323 811265. Admission charge.

Berwick Church – has murals by the Bloomsbury Set.

Drusillas Park – (Alfriston)
Award-winning and highly acclaimed Drusillas is widely regarded as the best small zoo in Britain. A fun day out for all the family with low-level viewing and disabled access throughout. Zoolympics trail, Panning for gold, Thomas & Friends™ train rides, Wacky Workshop, Jungle Adventure Golf and Adventure Playgrounds. Tel: 01323 874100. Admission charge.

English Wine Centre – (Alfriston)
Historic Barn and Wine Museum and shop stocking a large range of English wine, fruit wines and ciders. Also sells 'Taste of Sussex' regional produce. Tastings available. Tel: 01323 870164. Free admission.

Old Loom Mill
See Ride 6.

Ride 1

18 miles (about 3 hours) - Easy



Leave the trail at Hawks Road bridge. Turn right at top of ramp, straight on at mini roundabout into Hempstead Lane.

The off-road sections along Ogg's Lane and Hempstead Lane can be muddy.

Turn left into bridleway at farm

Turn right at farm crossing towards Lakeside Farm

Follow to Cuckoo Trail

Dismount and use pavement

SOUTH DOWNS

MAP NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

	Route of Ride		Attraction		Pub
	Off-road section		Toilets		Shop
	Alternative route		Tourist Information		Tea shop
	National Cycle Network (NCN)		Car park		
	Ride follows NCN Route		Church		
	Caution				

Ride 2 – Michelham Priory and Low Weald

Leave the Cuckoo Trail at Horam High Street. The ride passes through some lovely villages (with excellent pubs!) and undulating hills between Chiddingly and Horam.

Michelham Priory

England's longest water-filled moat guarded by a 14th-century gatehouse encloses the remains of an Augustinian Priory. The Priory incorporates a Tudor mansion, gardens, working watermill, physic herb and cloister gardens, smithy, rope museum and an Elizabethan Great Barn. Special events and children's workshops. Restaurant. Open Easter to October Wed – Sun from 10.30 am. Tel: 01323 844224. Admission charge.

Chiddingly Church

Marvellous memorial to the Jefferay family, important nationally for its quality of carving and in a unique style. 130 feet high stone spire said to be the best in Wealden.

Mohair Centre – (Brickfield Farm, Laughton Road, Golden Cross) Children's farm with Angora goats and other farm animals. There is a holiday club and adult craft classes. Tel: 07901 595789

Horam Manor

Farm Museum houses fascinating farming by-gones. Tearoom, horse riding, fishing and four marked nature trails between 1 and 2.5 miles. Tents/caravans welcome, 90 pitches. Open March 1st to October 31st. Tel: 01435 813662. Admission charge.

Hidden Spring Vineyard – (Horam)

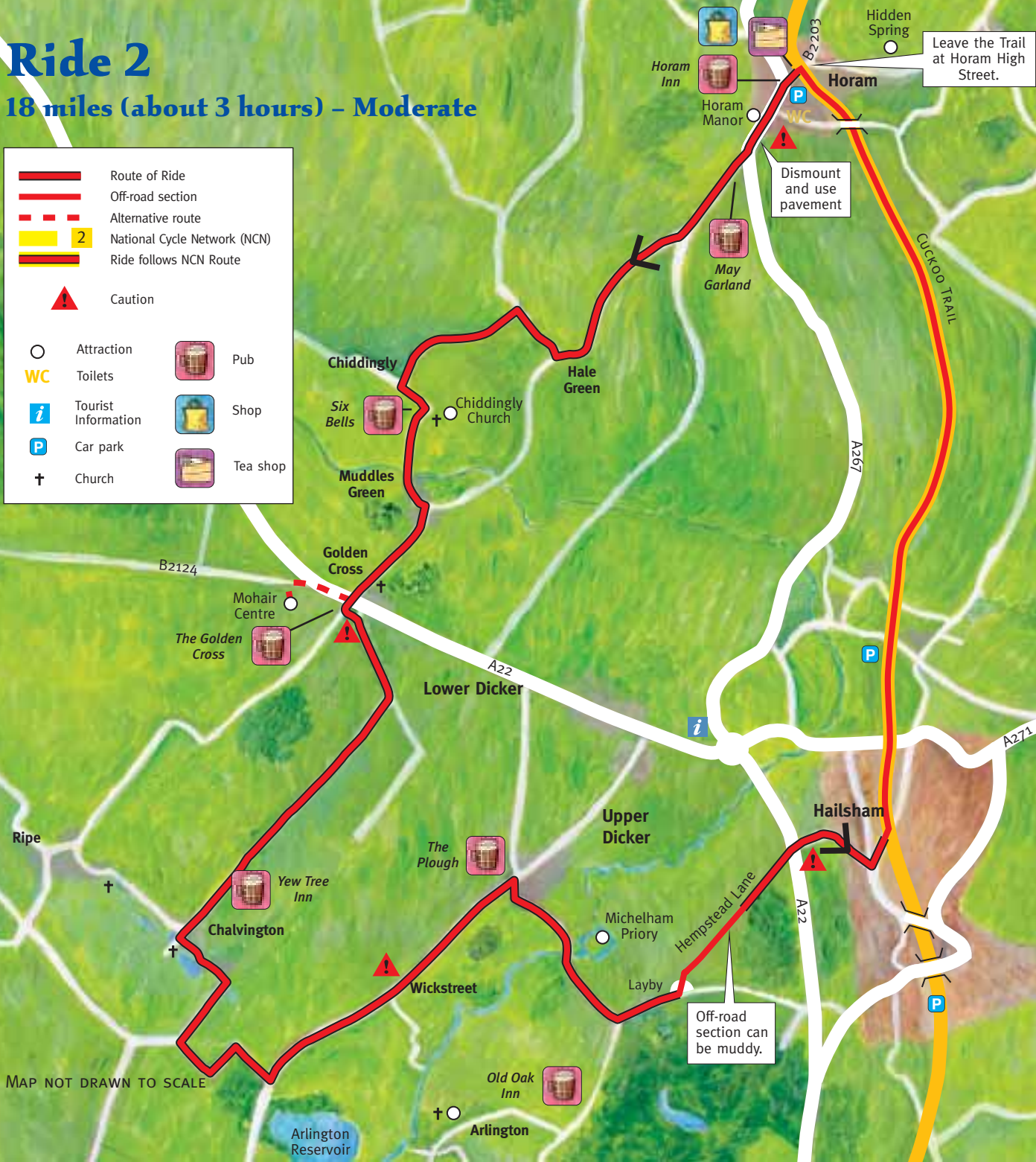
Organic orchard walk and vineyard shop. Picnics welcome. Saturdays only April to September. Caravan pitches. Tel: 01435 812640. Free admission.

Ride 2

18 miles (about 3 hours) – Moderate

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	Route of Ride
	Off-road section
	Alternative route
	National Cycle Network (NCN)
	Ride follows NCN Route
	Caution
	Attraction
	Toilets
	Pub
	Shop
	Tourist Information
	Car park
	Church
	Tea shop



MAP NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

Ride 3 – Wilderness Wood and High Weald

Leave the Cuckoo Trail at Heathfield car park. The High Weald rides are considerably hillier than the Low Weald. This ride passes through leafy lanes and right past two woods open to the public.

Selwyns Wood – Sussex Wildlife Trust,
11 hectares

Follow a sign at the entrance to the track off Fir Grove Road, (leave bikes here as only access on foot is permitted). At this nature reserve much of the woodland is sweet chestnut coppice, typical of East Sussex. In open areas, acid soil loving flowers including heather, tormentil, goldenrod and broom can be found. Areas of oak, hazel, hornbeam and cherry were planted after the 1987 storm; here dormice scamper through the understorey looking for honeysuckle – a favourite food.

Wilderness Wood – (Hadlow Down)
25 hectares of beautiful working woodland with walking trails, exhibition, childrens' play area, shop & teas. Tel: 01825 830509. Admission charged to woodland.

Cabbages and Kings – (Hadlow Down)
Contemporary garden developed by designer Ryl Nowell to demonstrate the art of garden design and to realise the full potential of their own gardens. Tel: 01825 830552. Admission charge.

Mayfield

This charming village is set in the beautiful High Weald and is one of the most ancient in Sussex. It offers a good range of tearooms, shops and pubs.

Ride 3

15 miles (about 3 hours) - Hilly



Rose & Crown
Carpenters Arms
Middle House Hotel

Mayfield †
Fir Toll Close

Butchers Cross
Five Ashes

Five Ashes

New Inn

Hadlow Down

Cabbages and Kings
Wilderness Wood

Off-road section.

The Crown

Prince of Wales

Beacon Down

Roser's Cross

Selwyns Wood

Heathfield

Heathfield Leisure Centre

Runt-in-Tun

Waldron

The Star

Maynard's Green

Lions Green

Hanging Birch Lane

Horam

	Route of Ride
	Off-road section
	Alternative route
	National Cycle Network (NCN)
	Ride follows NCN Route
	Caution
	Attraction
	Toilets
	Tourist Information
	Car park
	Church
	Pub
	Shop
	Tea shop

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MAP NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

Ride 4 – Brightling and High Weald Hills

Leave the Cuckoo Trail at Heathfield car park. The longest of our rides takes you along some lovely long narrow lanes. But beware as the route is hilly and there are no pubs or shops on the section between Heathfield and Burwash.

Heathfield Town (Market Charter granted by Edward II in 1316) Old Heathfield was the original location of the village, which became well known in 16th and 17th centuries for its iron industry. The new town developed with the railway in the 19th century. Banks, shops, antiques, supermarkets, tearooms, public houses and restaurants are all available. Twice-weekly market Tuesday and Saturday. Cuckoo Fair (April), Tour de Heathfield Cycle event (June/July) and Le Marche (the Anglo-French street market August Bank Holiday Monday).

Mayfield

See Ride 3.

Bateman's – (Burwash)

Home of writer Rudyard Kipling, this 17th century Ironmaster's house contains many manuscripts and personal possessions of the author. A restored watermill sits at the bottom of the beautiful garden. Light refreshments available. Tel: 01435 882302. Admission charge.

Brightling Needle

One of Fuller's follies, constructed during the early 19 Century by John Fuller, squire of Brightling. The Needle is 65 feet high and stands at one of the highest points in East Sussex at 646 feet above sea level. It is believed it was built to celebrate Wellington's victory over Napoleon in 1815. As the Needle is on private land, please view only from the roadside.

Hidden Spring Vineyard – (Horam)

Organic orchard walk and vineyard shop. Picnics welcome. Saturdays only April to September. Caravan pitches. Tel: 01435 812640. Free admission.

Warbleton Church – 13th to 15th century. Ironwork by and monument to Richard Woodman, later burnt at the stake at Lewes. Excellent Squire's Pew on pillars above rest of church.

Sugar Loaf – Another of Fuller's follies. Reputedly built one night to win a drunken wager that Fuller could see Dallington church from his lawn, the Sugar Loaf replicates the spire of the church.

Ride 4 24 miles (about 5 hours) - Hilly



	Route of Ride		Attraction		Pub
	Off-road section		Toilets		Shop
	Alternative route		Tourist Information		Tea shop
	National Cycle Network (NCN)		Car park		
	Ride follows NCN Route		Church		
	Caution				

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MAP NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

Ride 5 – Herstmonceux and Cowbee

Leave the Cuckoo Trail at Horebeech Lane, Horam. This ride follows some lovely lanes to Herstmonceux with its castle and Science Centre.

Herstmonceux Castle

This breathtaking 15th-century moated castle is set within 500 acres of parkland and gardens (including an Elizabethan Garden) and is ideal for picnics and woodland walks. Gift shop and tearooms. Tel: 01323 833816. Open April to November. Admission charge.

Observatory Science Centre

With more than 100 indoor and outdoor exhibits, Herstmonceux's

hands-on approach puts the emphasis on doing and finding out for yourself and is one of the country's leading science centres. It is located in the grounds of Herstmonceux Castle and is the former home of the Greenwich Observatory. Holiday and half-term activities for children and viewing evenings. Tel: 01323 832731. Open daily. Admission charge.

Herstmonceux church – Impressive church with splendid views through trees to Pevensy Levels.

Herstmonceux trug makers – View the craftsmen at work making these famous trugs. Unique to Sussex, these unusual boat shaped baskets come in a range of designs. The workshops are usually open for viewing. The Truggery tel: 01323 832314.

Park Wood – (Hellingly)

A peaceful, semi-natural woodland covering 60 hectares, this beautiful wood offers something of interest all year round: bluebells in the spring, a sheltered haven in the summer and a feast of fungi in the autumn. Woodland walks. Tel: 01273 482670.

Hellingly Church – Large church on circular ancient mound towering over surroundings. Fine roof.

Ride 5 19 miles (about 3 hours) – Moderate

	Route of Ride		Off-road section		Alternative route		National Cycle Network (NCN)		Ride follows NCN Route		Caution		Toilets		Pub
	Attraction		Tourist Information		Car park		Church		Shop		Tea shop				

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Leave the trail at Horebeech Lane
Bridleway to North Corner

Caution along main road

Off-road section with steps – not suitable for road bikes.

Follow the 1066 Country Walk from the old car park beyond the turn off to the castle. A bridleway with steps and rough in places can be followed for 1km to the church where you rejoin the road.



Ride 6 – Pevensey and the Levels

Leave the Cuckoo Trail at Station Road, Hellingly. This ride crosses the levels to Pevensey where the castle is well worth a visit.

Pevensey Levels

This area was formed by a build up of shingle across a wide bay, which was reclaimed in the Middle Ages to create a broad plain of pasture land with dykes and isolated farms. Now an internationally important wetland for wildlife.

Old Mint House

A 14th-century mint house, on the site of which coins were minted as long ago as 1076. Now an antiques showroom. Open all year Mon-Fri 9.30-5. Sat 10.30-3.30. Tel: 01323 762337. Guided tours. Admission charge.

Pevensey Castle

Remains of a large Roman Saxon shore fort within which the Normans built a castle. Extensive remains including the towers, dungeon, keep and chapel remain. Special events are organised in the summer.

Tel: 01323 762604. Free admission except to the Keep.

Old Loom Mill – Hailsham

Situated on the B2104 just outside Hailsham and on the Cuckoo Trail midway between Hailsham and Polegate, the mill offers wool and material for sale all year round. There is also a craft hall. Teashop open seven days 10-4.30.

Tel: 01323 848007.

Chilley Farm, Farm Shop – Rickney.

See the pigs, lambs and wildfowl. Local produce and cafe. Toilets. Open Tues-Sat 10-4, Sun 10-1. Tel 01323 768836.

Hailsham Town (Market Charter granted by Henry III in 1252) Small, prosperous market town famous for its rope industry. Farmers produce and craft market held on 2nd Saturday of each month. Livestock Market every Monday & Tuesday 9am-1pm. (One of the few remaining livestock markets in the south). General market Fridays. All major banks and building societies, shops, public houses, tearooms. Award winning Hailsham Old Pavilion, restored cinema and theatre.

Freedom Leisure Centre – Hailsham

Situated near the town centre, the leisure centre offers a variety of activities including leisure pool and waterslide, aerobics classes, bowling, soft play and fitness centre. There are also activities for children of all ages and a holiday club. Tel: 01323 846755.

Hellingly Church and Park Wood – see route 5.

Ride 6 19 miles (about 3 hours) - Easy



	Route of Ride		Caution
	Off-road section		Attraction
	Alternative route		Toilets
	National Cycle Network (NCN)		Tourist Information
	Ride follows NCN Route		Car park
			Church
			Pub
			Shop
			Tea shop

PEVENSEY LEVELS

MAP NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

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*The Smugglers
The Royal Oak & Castle
The Pevensey Castle
Priory Court Hotel*

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View from Wood's Corner