Six great routes in the town and country to the West of Pennine Lancashire

The range of routes provide something for everybody - from beginners to experienced off roaders and families

Hidden surprises and local gems

FREE
Circuit of Darwen

Distance: 20.1km
Height: 540m
Suitable for: Mountain-Bikers – intermediate level
Start & Finish Point: Hoddlesden Village Centre (GR:715222) – in front of Ranken Arms pub
Parking: On-street parking in the village
Arrival by train: Darwen Rail Station (approx 2km from Hoddlesden)
Refreshments: Store & pub in Hoddlesden, various pubs & shops on route
Toilets: None specifically on the route

General description

A ride of changes and contrasts, encompassing bleak and rugged moors and the verges of industry in a circular sweep around and across the Darwen valley. The obvious necessity for climbing is more than matched with some thrilling descents. An equal mix of road and off-road riding.
Route description

1. From the pub turn immediately left into Carus Street and ride straight up to the top. Then continue ahead onto a track between two bungalows. Follow this rough track until it comes out into Blacksnape Village opposite the Red Lion and turn left.

2. Approx. 400m after passing the pub, turn right down a track heading towards a farm (just by the 40mph sign).

3. Pass anti-clockwise around the farm through a series of gates, initially a right turn then a left.

4. Next section is downhill across a field – there is a yellow arrow on a wooden post at this turn dropping into a tree-lined cutting. Then across a railway bridge into a housing estate.

5. Turn right and descend to a T junction. Turn right onto Cranberry Lane then left into Causeway Street with Watery Lane at the next junction. Follow as it climbs slightly up to the A666. Go straight across onto Queen’s Road, passing Darwen Cemetery on the left.

6. Take the next right into Whitehall Terrace (signed to Whitehall Hotel) and then after 50m bear left onto a signed bridleway. This rough track twists and turns a little bit and will bring you out onto Bury Fold. Take a sharp left here and start climbing up to the moor.

7. This is a steady but gruelling 1.2km climb but if you’ve breath to spare and look around you’ll savour the rewards of your efforts. As you pass the West Pennine Moors board, bear right onto a rough track which continues to climb further. After a short distance however, the gradient eases. Make sure you keep heading straight and avoid the track forking off to the left. Soon after this junction you reach the top and can enjoy a recovery roll along this heather-clad moorland track with unbroken views across West Lancashire and to Jubilee Tower.

8. As you reach a gate and track junction turn sharply right and follow the track in the direction of the tower. Although it then appears to sweep left away from the tower, after a short distance it contours back round towards it. Glancing to your left you’ll see how high you still are with Earnsdale and Sunnyhurst reservoirs shimmering below. Your technical skills will then be called upon on the rocky last section up to the tower. You may wish to pause here or even climb to the top of this monument built in 1898 to celebrate Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee. On a clear day you may even catch sight of the Isle of Man, along with many other closer natural attractions such as the Yorkshire Dales and Morecambe Bay.

9. Prepare for an exciting, eye-watering descent on the track that heads down away from the tower in a north-easterly direction down to Sunnyhurst (you will be looking initially towards Blackburn centre). The drainage channels and ruts require full concentration whilst the adrenaline pumps round. Take special care on the final section above the village as the surface loosens, track narrows and there may be walkers about.
10. Turn left heading back into open country. Just past a solitary cottage turn right onto a track that drops down and across the reservoir. On the far side turn left up a steep, rough narrow track. At the next track junction (where the gradient eases), turn sharp right. This bridleway soon levels out passing a few houses and stables before dropping down into the village of Tockholes.

11. Turn right onto Weasel Lane passing Tockholes United Reformed Church. Approximately 400m past the pub, take right onto a bridleway (beside two cottages). This track climbs for approx 400m, then turns 90° left, levels out.

12. Turn right on the new stone track passing between wooden posts heading up to the mast. Continue passing the mast on your left through a couple of gates. 100m past the mast go left through a gate across a field heading towards farm buildings (Winter Hill). Continue on the waymarked track heading downhill. This will pass the golf club house and come out on to Duddon Avenue. Continue down Duddon Avenue and Lynwood Avenue to reach the A666.

13. Turn right and follow the main road for approx 400m before turning left in to Hollins Grove. At the top of the hill turn right in to Goose House Lane. Continue up the lane towards the village of Chapels. As you enter the village and the road levels out turn left into Knowle Lane (signposted to Darwen Moorland High School).

14. At this point you have a choice:

A1 (on road)
Continue along to T junction with Roman Road and turn right following the road towards the TV mast. When opposite TV mast, turn left onto Harwood Lane and follow this onto a rough track for a final, gradual descent into Hoddlesden.

A2 (off road)
Soon after passing the High School where the road turns 90° left, turn right into Hawthorne Drive. Continue straight through the drive onto open ground. Head across, aiming towards the TV / mobile phone mast. When almost level with the mast, by some fir trees, turn left to pass the mast and come out onto a road. Go straight across onto Harwood Lane and follow for a final, gradual descent into Hoddlesden.
Billinge Hill and Pleasington

Distance: 11km
Height: 270m
Suitable for: Mountain-bikers – intermediate (n.b. other tracks around Witton Park are suitable for families and beginners)
Start & Finish Point: Witton Country Park, car-park (GR:661270)
Parking: Large free car-park at Witton
Arrival by train: Cherry Tree station to Witton Park Pavilions is 1.2km, Pleasington station to the Pavilions is 2.5km and Mill Hill station to the Pavilions is 1.5km, each along a signed route
Refreshments: Café at visitor centre in Witton Park, pub in Pleasington
Toilets: Witton Country Park visitor centre

General description

You may not realise you are only a few miles from the centre of Blackburn on this lovely country route through native woodlands, open country and the attractive village of Pleasington. A great mountain-biking route, suitable for all levels. An equal mix of road and off-road riding.
1. Head along the path beside the athletic track (signed to visitor centre), then turn left at the junction, signed to Pleasington. After approx 400m, take the track on the right into the woods (signed to Crow Wood) and enjoy this tough, but pleasant climb through the woods towards Billinge Hill (following the blue bridleway markers). At a tarmac lane, go straight across through an opening in the wall (signed to Billinge Hill). The track continues to climb sharply through the trees in an anti-clockwise circuit towards the top of the hill. Continue to follow the blue waymarkers. Take a good breather at the top enjoying the expansive view south across to the West Pennine Moors and Jubilee Tower.

2. Descend in the same westerly direction but take care to turn right at the first track junction. This takes you back round into an easterly direction on a smooth descent through the trees. At the track cross roads, turn left for a short stretch before passing through a large opening in the wall onto Billinge End Road. Turn left up the lane past some large properties upto a row of cottages. Turn right down Woodgate Road descending on a rough surface. Halfway down the hill take fork on left and follow track beneath the gardens of Billinge End Road to join the road again just short of the Clog and Billycock pub.

3. Turn right and follow the road as it descends gradually through open countryside for approx 2km. Hoghton Tower is hidden a short distance away across the River Darwen valley as you approach Pleasington.

4. There’s a short, sharp climb up into Pleasington Village. Just before the Priory turn left onto the marked National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 6. However it is worth stopping for a look at the beautiful façade of the Priory, and maybe enjoying deserved refreshment at the Butler Arms. There are also some picnic tables by the bowling green.

5. Follow the waymarked National Cycle Route (NCN) route past the duck pond. At the next T junction you have a choice:

   5a. Turn right and follow the NCN (signed to the town centre). After approx 800m, after passing the football pitches, turn left through a small car-park, over a bridge and along a path skirting open parkland on the right and woods to the left. This brings you back to the visitor centre and car-park. (If you carry straight on by the small car-park you come to the A674 close to Cherry Tree station, chip shop, pub and cycle shop).

   5b. Turn left and follow the lane back up into the woods and trails of Billinge Hill via the cemetery. Here you can try out some of the other tracks before descending down the original bridleway you took back to Witton Park Visitor Centre.
Feniscliffe circuit

Distance: 8km
Height: 90m
Suitable for: Families, beginners, improvers
Start & Finish Point: Witton Country Park, car-park (GR:661270)
Parking: Large free car-park at Witton
Arrival by train: Cherry Tree station to Witton Park Pavilions is 1.2km, Pleasington station to the Pavilions is 2.5km and Mill Hill station to the Pavilions is 1.5km, each along a signed route
Refreshments: Café at visitor centre in Witton Park, pub in Pleasington
Toilets: Witton Country Park visitor centre

General description

A nice gentle loop around the outer south-west of Blackburn. A generally flat route, on traffic free paths, canal towpath and a pleasant quiet road through the attractive village of Pleasington.
Route description

1. From the car-park exit Witton Park, the way you drove in. Turn right on the A674, then almost immediately left just past the entrance to Voith Paper onto a shared foot and cycle path (signposted to Ewood & Lower Darwen). Pass between the factory to the left and playing fields to the right.

2. In front of a row of terraced houses turn left following the signs to the Leeds & Liverpool canal. When you reach the canal, turn right onto the towpath and follow in a westerly direction for approx 4km.

3. At bridge 93b, leave the towpath and turn right onto the road. Descend to a junction with the A674. Turn left, then immediately right, signed to Pleasington. This is a very attractive section through countryside crossing a stream before a climb up into the village of Pleasington. Continue through the village past the railway station and two pubs. You may want to stop and have a look at the Gothic façade of the Priory, built nearly 200 years ago by the same architect responsible for Blackburn Cathedral (John Palmer).

4. Just past the Priory, before the road starts to dip down to the left, bear right onto Sandy Lane keeping an eye out for the NCN six signs.

5. At the T junction just past the duck pond, turn right and follow the NCN (signed to the town centre). After approx 800m, after passing the football pitches, turn left through a small car-park, over a bridge and along a path skirting open parkland on the right and woods to the left. This brings you back to the visitor centre and car-park.
**Ramsgreave conquest**

**Distance:** 6km  
**Height:** 100m  
**Suitable for:** Improvers  
**Start & Finish Point:** Ramsgreave & Wilpshire Railway station (Ramsgreave Road) (GR:686307)  
**Parking:** Free on-street parking in the area  
**Arrival by train:** Ramsgreave & Wilpshire Rail Station.  
**Refreshments:** Shops, café and pub by the start / finish area  
**Toilets:** None

**General description**

Perhaps the next step up from the previous ride, in that you’ve a hill to climb offering great views across the town and beyond to the West Pennine Moors. This route combines relatively quiet roads and traffic-free cycle paths.
Route description

1. Leave the station and turn right up Ramsgreave Road. This is a continual climb up out of the residential area and into open countryside. These provide beautiful views to the left across to Billinge Hill and the West Pennine Moors beyond and across the farmland and the Ribble Valley on the right. It is a de-restricted road but is reasonably light with traffic. Before the brow it passes across the line of an old Roman Road that ran down to the camp at Ribchester.

2. At the cross roads on the brow, opposite the Spread Eagle pub, turn left into Barker Lane. A fast descent brings you down to a cross-roads with the A6119.

3. Go straight across at the traffic light controlled junction and continue, past Lammack Junior school, until reaching the Hare and Hounds pub.

4. Turn left onto the cycle track immediately past the pub. Follow this across the sports grounds and past Pleckgate School on your right. When you reach the main road go straight across onto another cycle path across some playing fields. At the end turn left onto a rough track in front of some houses for approx. 20m, then turn right up towards St Gabriel’s Primary School. Turn right again just before the school entrance onto a tarmac path passing in between two metal fences. This leads away from the school, eventually dropping down underneath a railway bridge and out onto Whalley New Road (A666). On Yer Bike Cycles is approx 50m to the right.

5. Go straight across the main road and then left at the T junction at the top into Cornellian Street. This brings you to the A6119 close by a traffic light controlled junction with the A666. Use the pedestrian crossing and head straight across onto Brownhill Road, a back street adjacent to the Post Office. This road runs parallel to the A666 and is much more pleasant to ride along. After approx 600m you reach a T junction with Parsonage Road. Turn left to come back to the A666 right by where you started by the Bulls Head Pub and the railway station.
**The Full Tour of Blackburn**

**Distance:** 25km  
**Height:** 160m  
**Suitable for:** Intermediates upwards – requires a mountain-bike or good hybrid  
**Start & Finish Point:** Can start almost anywhere. It is described here from Witton Country Park.  
**Parking:** Free car park at Witton Country Park  
**Arrival by train:** Cherry Tree station to Witton Park Pavilions is 1.2km, Pleasington station to the Pavilions is 2.5km and Mill Hill station to the Pavilions is 1.5km, each along a signed route  
**Refreshments:** Café in the park, various shops, pubs and cafes at a number of places on the route  
**Toilets:** Witton Country Park

**General description**

This doesn’t really leave a stone unturned in its examination of all aspects of Blackburn. From the wooded, secluded Billinge Hill via the commercial / industrial heart and the residential area, most aspects of the town are given a showing here.
The route utilises a number of sections of the other circuits described in this booklet. Where this is the case abbreviated text is given below.

1. Follow the Billinge Hill & Pleasington route as far as Woodgates Road (2).

2. Turn right at the bottom along Meins Road and follow to a T junction with Preston New Road. Turn left and follow downhill past Beardwood hospital for approx 600m (take care as this can be a busy road).

3. Turn right into Beardwood (there is a traffic island in the middle here) and then second right into Acre Field. Need to then look out for a shrub-bordered path on the left that runs up beside a small beck. At the top of this path turn right - it looks like you are just coming to a dead end but just before the houses follow a path on the left. By the last house you reach a T junction with a stony track running behind the houses, and separated from the golf course beyond by a metal fence. At the end it emerges into a close on the housing estate. Follow it down, to take the first left and then turn right at the subsequent T junction. The road zig – zags a little coming to a junction with Knighton Avenue. Go straight across and up to the main road by the Hare & Hounds pub.

5. Follow the Ramsgreave conquest route (4) from here to Cornelian Street.

6. Turn left into Cornelian Street then next right to come up to Roe Lee Park. Dismount and walk through this small park, following signs for the play area and exit on the other side. Turn right onto the road in front of the houses to ride to a dual carriageway. Turn right and follow pavement for approx. 50m up to a traffic light junction on Emerald Avenue. Use the traffic lights to cross the dual carriageway and continue in the same direction on the shared foot and cycle path. As you approach the brow of the hill, continue on this path as it forks to the left away from the road across open ground and then down through a housing estate.

7. At the T junction, turn right down to dual carriageway. Turn left at the lights here and then immediately right at the next set of lights into Whalley Old Road. After 100m, turn left into Tintern Crescent and then right into Fountain’s Avenue, reaching a T junction after approx 400m.

8. Turn right here, in front of the Philips Road Business Park, and then left (first exit) at a roundabout onto Blakewater Road. This takes you through Glenfields Technology Park.

9. Just after riding past Greenbank Road on your right look out for a cycle path that heads off through some open ground also to the right. There is a distinctive tin tree landmark and information board here to help indicate the path. Follow this path to reach the canal towpath.

10. Turn right onto the towpath and follow to next bridge (Bridge No. 104a). (Should you want to just do half the tour you should turn right and follow the towpath through the town centre to Cherry Tree and then rejoin the route as described further below back to Witton Country Park). Exit onto Gorse Street, turn left passing the Tesco garage entrance, up to Burnley Road. Left then immediately right into Hereford Road and follow to the end at crossroads with Whitebirk Road.
11. Go straight across into Maricourt Avenue. At the end take the street on the right. At the next main road junction turn right reaching traffic lights after 200m. Take a sharp left into St Ives Road. At the end of the houses continue beside a small section of wasteland across a bridge beside a weir.

12. By a small Walker Steel depot turn right passing through some bollards onto Cornwall Avenue. Continue along this avenue and then a track until you reach Haslingden Old Road, with the Church of St Oswald to your left. Turn right and then, just 25m past the Knuzden Brook pub, turn left off the road onto a path across open ground – make sure you take the upper of the two path, which heads to a gate closest to the houses. Pass through the gate and carry on along a tarmac path across the open ground of the Arran trail. This local nature reserve is managed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust and has a permissive cycle path across it, although it is un-surfaced in parts and you may need to watch out for glass. The path crosses a little bridge and gradually moves away from the rear of the houses up towards the industrial units at the top of the hill.

13. When it emerges from the open ground near to Blakewater College turn left and follow the shared cycle path / pavement to a roundabout. Pass straight across to a 2nd roundabout, where you should take the 1st exit and continue along the shared cycle path / footpath beside the A6177. At the Willow Pub roundabout take the 3rd exit and drop down the hill - be careful as this can be a busy road. Keep going straight at Blackamoor lights passing underneath a railway bridge until reaching a mini-roundabout. Go straight here but then after approx 100m turn right off the road onto a marked cycle path at the side of Lower Darwen Village Community Centre. Follow this designated cycle path across the open ground of the Lower Darwen valley. Make sure you follow the signs towards Ewood. After a little distance you will see Ewood Park (Blackburn Rovers F.C. stadium) on your left. This is a nice section twisting and turning through woods beside the river Darwen. Eventually you emerge beside the Aqueduct Inn and opposite Ewood cycle shop – a good place for spares and repairs.

14. Turn left and then right to cross the main road at the traffic lights following the blue cycleway signs for the canal and Witton Park. Ride along Aqueduct Road passing underneath the bridge and then turn left as directed by the signs to join the canal towpath. Once on the towpath simply follow the signs up to Witton Country Park, staying on the canal for approximately 1.5km.

15. Leave towpath at the signpost to Cherry Tree (by the Meltech factory) and follow the signs direct into Witton Country Park.

15b. Alternatively, for a longer way back to the park, continue along the towpath for a further 2km until bridge 93B and follow the Fenisccliffe Circuit through Pleasington and around to the park.

With thanks to Lancashire Wildlife Trust for permission to cycle across Arran trail.
Darwen Moors

Distance: 10km
Height: 400m
Suitable for: Mountain-Bikers – intermediate level
Start & Finish Point: Sunnyhurst, Darwen
Parking: Small, free, Sunnyhurst Woods car-park
Arrival by train: Darwen Rail Station (approx 1km away by road). Sunnyhurst is signed from the centre of Darwen
Refreshments: Pub in Sunnyhurst, café at Tockholes Visitor Centre
Toilets: Tockholes visitor centre

General description

This is a good loop both for someone just starting mountain-biking looking to gain further confidence and ability as well as for regular mountain-bikers after a good training blast or a night ride over the beautiful rugged West Pennine Moors. A varied circuit of rough track, single-track, short testing climbs and a fast downhill finish.
Route description

1. Turn right out of the car-park and follow the track away from Sunnyhurst. Take the right fork by the solitary house to descend and cross the dam. Once the other side of the dam turn left onto loose stone steep track signed to Tockholes. Head straight on at track junction at the top to reach the road. Turn left then right after 25m onto a concessionary bridleway descending through the woods to merge with another track. Continue in the same direction until reaching another track junction. Take the track climbing up to the left, signed to the visitor centre. Follow up to the road with the centre in front.

2. Cross the road and ride up a track towards set of terraced houses (Hollinshead Terrace). Turn right onto the bridleway and climb gently up on a stone-based track. Immediately through the second gate turn right through a further adjacent gate. Ride along this track running parallel to the wall with great views across to the Fylde peninsula, the coast and Longridge Fells.

3. At a solitary farmhouse the track starts to zig-zag up the hill before levelling out for a short way and even dropping a little. At a track junction, turn left for a final climb to a gate at the edge of the top plateau.

4. Pass through a pair of gates to take the middle (of three tracks) now in front of you to cross the plateau – following the footsteps of the 19th century coal miners!

5. Turn left and follow the track towards Jubilee Tower (or take middle track for interesting technical singletrack descent, which then gives you a climb back up on a firm track to the tower).

6. The tower makes for an interesting stop - built in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee it also celebrated the opening of Darwen Moor to the public after a long fight for access. From the top of the tower on clear days you can see as far as the Fylde coast, the Lake District and North Wales. Head north from the tower following the Witton Way signs. A fast descent brings you out at the Sunnyhurst pub.
There are a number of ways you can ride from one circuit to another or from one part of the borough to another to do one of the circuits. You can also use these links to extend your ride length and do more than one circuit.

These links are:

1. **The Full Tour of Blackburn route**
   This utilises sections from all of the circuits except the Darwen based ones.

2. **Leeds – Liverpool Canal towpath**
   This forms a great, traffic-free and flat cycling ‘artery’ passing right through the borough from east to west, which has recently been re-surfaced. Use it to link Feniscowles, Feniscliffe, Witton Park, Blackburn town centre, Eanam Wharf, Whitebirk and Rishton. Marked cycle-ways come off it in many locations enabling easy access to the surrounding districts.

   There is a separate free leaflet to the canal towpath in Blackburn produced by Groundwork which is available from Blackburn Visitor Centre and Groundwork.

3. **River Darwen Parkway**
   This runs traffic-free from Bolton Road by the Aqueduct pub by Ewood Park to Lower Darwen through this local nature reserve. A marked cycle route then continues south to Darwen. It is also signed north from Bolton Road allowing you to soon reach the canal towpath. Therefore you can use it to ride from this central artery to do the Darwen routes.

4. **Eanam Wharf via Corporation Park to Pleckgate**
   Leave the canal at the Wharf and follow the marked cycle way along Barbara Castle Way to the traffic lights at the junction with Preston New Road. Turn right into this and then right into Corporation Park. Follow the main park drive, bearing right between the duckponds to exit onto East Park Road. Continue up to St Mary’s College and turn left to Four Lane Ends traffic lights. Cross the junction to descend Lammack Road to join the Ramsgreave & Full Tour Circuits.

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**Arrival by train information**

Cherry Tree, Mill Hill & Pleasington rail stations are served by the Colne to Blackpool South rail service which runs hourly Mon – Sat and every 2 hours on Sunday.

Darwen and Ramsgreave & Wilpshire rail stations are served by the Clitheroe to Manchester Victoria rail service which runs hourly Mon – Sun.

For full details of all trains and prices visit www.nationalrail.co.uk or call National Rail Enquiries on 08457 48 49 50.
Health benefits of cycling

Inactivity plays a part in the development of many illnesses and is estimated to cause over one-third of all deaths from Coronary Heart Disease (British Heart Foundation, 2003). Regular cycling of just half an hour a day could provide protection against serious heart conditions including Coronary Heart Disease, Strokes, Colon Cancer and Non-Insulin dependent Diabetes. It can also help a weight control or weight loss programme and improve self-esteem.

Further information

**Ordinance Survey Map.**
The OS Explorer 19 map (West Pennine Moors) covers all of the routes in this booklet and can be used to further aid these navigation notes. You can also go to [www.blackburn.gov.uk/cycling](http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/cycling) for detailed OS maps of all these routes.

**Blackburn with Darwen Cycle Strategy.**
This sets out how the local authority will continue to develop a network of appropriate on and off-road routes, facilities, cycle training and promotion, improving the quality of life for all in the area.

To download/view this document please visit [www.blackburn.gov.uk/cycling](http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/cycling)

**Queries or more detailed route notes.**
This booklet has been compiled by Pennine Events. If you want additional advice or more detailed navigation notes on any of these routes; please email: info@pennineevents.co.uk or call: (01282) 814738.

**Lead Cycle rides.**
A programme of led cycle rides from Witton Country Park is provided by the Council. Each route is graded and offers the opportunity for those of all ages and abilities to participate. A range of bicycles are available to cater for most needs.

For further information contact the Council’s health & fitness office on (01254) 694503

**West Pennine Moors – Pennine Bridleway Link.**
This is an on-going and ambitious project being led by Lancashire Countryside Services to develop an off-road link between the West Pennine Moors bridleway network and the Mary Towneley loop and hence onto the Pennine Bridleway. It will run east-west across the borough to the south of Darwen. The work includes creating new bridleways as well as utilising existing ones (the Darwen Moors and circuit of Darwen routes use the Link where it presently exists.

For more information go to: [www.lancashire.gov.uk/Environment/countryside](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/Environment/countryside)

**School cycle training.**
For further information concerning local school cycle training courses please contact the Council’s road safety unit on (01254) 273496.

**Types of Bike.**
Where the route is described as suitable for mountain-bikers / good hybrids then obviously that type of bike should be used, otherwise any standard adult or child bike will be suitable.