

Bodmin to Padstow Bike Ride

Length: 17 miles (one way)

Difficulty: Easy

Start: Bodmin Gaol

Finish: The car park next to Padstow bus station

Typical duration: 2-3 hours

Route: National Cycle Network 32: The Camel Trail

Sustrans map: NN3B (Cornish Way)

Route notes

One of the most popular traffic-free routes in the country, the Camel Trail attracts 500,000 visitors a year to this wonderful north Cornwall estuary. And for good reason: cycling under a canopy of trees, you follow the course of an old railway line through the tranquil, wooded valley of the River Camel to the busy market town of Wadebridge. From here, the trail follows the sandy shores of the Camel Estuary with views of creeks, sandbanks and rocky shores. The final destination is the bustling Rick Stein-themed harbour town of Padstow.

Terrain and gradients

The only tricky gradient is the link from Bodmin Parkway (south-east of Bodmin on NCN route 3) to the start of the trail. If you can begin in central Bodmin by the old gaol - now a partially ruined tourist attraction - it's a flat ride on good quality gravel surfaces and tarmac.

Child friendliness

This route is ideal for young children. You do have to cycle through the centre of Wadebridge, but there are so many cyclists on the road that traffic does not pose the normal threats.

How to get back

There's an hourly bus service from Padstow to Bodmin (No 555), which is reduced on Sundays. However, you'll only be able to take your bike on board if the bus has a rack on the boot! Avoid this hassle by hiring bikes in Bodmin or from one of the many bike shops on the trail.

Attractions en route

Sadly no camels, although the estuary is home to widgeons, goldeneyes, herons, oystercatchers and egrets. The Camel Valley Vineyard ("proud to be pushing the boundaries of English winemaking") is situated on the slopes above the river, and offers tasting sessions every Wednesday at 5pm from April to October (www.camelvalley.com). Further information on following pages. We suggest you don't plan much cycling after one of these.

Watering holes

If tea's more your cuppa, enjoy the dappled shade of the Camel Trail Tea Gardens at Boscarne Junction (the Bodmin and Wenford steam railway ends here, too). Padstow, of course, has a lively selection of pubs and restaurants, some of them not owned by Mr Stein - including the ever so pretty London Inn, which serves cheap lobster and a wide choice of local beers.

Warning

This is a busy multi-use trail, so watch out for walkers, horses et al.



Important notes:

Route numbers

The National Cycle Network is made up of numbered national and regional routes, which are all regularly signposted. All signs are blue with a white bicycle, but for national routes the route number sits on a red square background, while for regional routes the number is on a blue square.

Ride times

The estimated ride durations in this guide are based on an average speed of 6 to 15mph and depend on the gradient and surface. Please only attempt rides you are certain you can complete - including the return journey where required!

Maps and information

The National Cycle Network now runs within two miles of 75% of the UK population. When planning your ride, check out the online mapping service on the Sustrans website (www.sustrans.org.uk, then click Get Cycling followed by Online Mapping). This lists any temporary changes to the route that you are planning to ride.

HISTORY

The Camel Trail is a 17 mile traffic free route based on an historic railway track. The Padstow to Wadebridge line was opened in 1899 providing access from Waterloo via Okehampton and Launceston, but the section from Wadebridge to Poley's Bridge is one of the oldest in the world and was opened in 1834. Initially it was intended to bring sea sand from the estuary to farms inland. Bodmin through to Wadebridge was connected to the mainline system and operated until 1967, whilst the line between Bodmin and Poley's Bridge, which was only used for freight, and closed in 1984.

The trail falls into three basic sections each of which is approximately 6 miles long.

The Trail is level and easy going - a gradient designed for steam trains and engineered in the century before last.

The surface generally comprises chippings and coarse sand giving a firm base which is suitable for almost every level of user. Even during the most adverse weather large percentages of the trail will remain in good condition. Maintenance for this free facility involves work which is all year round.

The Camel Trail is managed through a Partnership involving Cornwall and North Cornwall District Councils, together with the local town and parish councils through whose area the Trail passes. These include Bodmin Wadebridge and Padstow Town Councils, and St Breward, Blisland, Helland, Lanivet, Egloshayle, St Breock and St Issey Parish Councils. Day to day management is undertaken by the County and District Councils. Contact Helpline For The Camel Trail: Telephone 01872 327310

ART ON ROUTE

The NCN boasts more than 2,000 artworks to brighten your ride on their network of cycle ways around the country, some practical such as benches and drinking fountains.

Art & The Travelling Landscape



Sustrans has been developing new ways of working with artists which further explore the resources and opportunities which the Network offers. 'Art & the Travelling Landscape' is a programme of projects being developed by Sustrans across the UK in partnership with local authorities and others which all focus on the opportunities for artists to work along extensive sections of the National Cycle Network to create sequences of artworks as permanent installations.

Projects are shaped by local variations and circumstances. In every case artwork is used to create landmarks, celebrate local characteristics, engage with local communities and make for enjoyable and memorable journeys.

WHAT IS SUSTRANS? Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity. Their vision is a world in which people can choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. Every day they are working on practical, innovative ways of dealing with the transport challenges that affect us all

THE NATIONAL CYCLE NETWORK is a great success story. Nearly half of us live within a mile of it. The Network carries over 230 million journeys each year, taking kids to school, workers to work, dogs on walks, shoppers to shops - it even helps the Royal Mail deliver your post.

In the last decade, with the help of many partners, they've seen the completion of the first 10,000 miles of the Network, and currently co-ordinate over 2000 Volunteer Rangers who donate their time to maintain routes in their communities.

Sustrans is leading the way in promoting cycling and walking as healthy forms of transport. Their Active Travel team are persuading governments to promote walking and cycling as a way of combating obesity, heart disease and cancer. Sustrans has also pioneered TravelSmart in the UK - a unique service that gives households the tailor-made information they need to walk, cycle and use public transport more.

Over 33% of kids would like to cycle to school, yet only 2% do

They're working hard to change this. Sustrans is the charity behind Safe Routes to Schools and Bike It - schemes working with young people and schools to make cycling and walking to school both safe and fun.

They're also building hundreds of Links to Schools from the National Cycle Network, giving kids traffic-free routes and parents peace of mind.

ATTRACTIONS ON THE WAY

CAMEL VALLEY VINEYARD



Camel Valley Vineyard is situated on sunny slopes above the River Camel. At Camel Valley, they've been producing award-winning, world-class wines in a beautiful corner of Cornwall for over 18 years. What is it that makes their wines so good? It's really quite simple - an idyllic setting on sun-drenched slopes near the famous Camel River; excellent grapes that perfectly suit the soil and climate; a respect for traditional vineyard practices combined with a modern approach to wine making and, most importantly – a passion for creating wines that provide pure pleasure...

OPENING TIMES

WINE SALES 10AM-5PM

Year round Monday to Friday

Saturday Easter to 30th September

Sundays on Bank Holiday weekends only

Christmas closed from 23 December 2006 to 1 January 2007 inclusive

WINE BY THE GLASS.

Enjoy the view from their terrace with a glass of wine.

2005 International Wine
Challenge Gold Medalist

Annie and I planted the vineyard with our children in 1989, on the family farm. I am passionate about winemaking, and it gives me great pleasure to think of people all over Cornwall and beyond drinking our handcrafted wines. Camel Valley Vineyard is still family run, and together with our superb dedicated team I believe that we continue to produce wines that match the very best. I hope you enjoy them.

Bob Lindo – Camel Valley Estate



CAMEL VALLEY VINEYARD TOURS

Tasting wines and seeing how they are made is great fun at Camel Valley. Our three unique tours are relaxed and friendly and the location is stunning; sitting on the terrace sipping Camel Valley wine on a summer's afternoon is magical. You'll find our attitude refreshingly down to earth - there's no snobbery here, just a deep and enthusiastic love of wine that we hope you'll find infectious. Details for each of the tours are below.

Guided Tour

Our Guided Tours take place at 2.30pm, Monday-Friday between 1st April and 30th September. You'll be shown both the vineyard and the winery, seeing how the grapes are transformed into award-winning wines – and of course, a glass of wine is included! Price: £4.50 per person, including wine.

The Camel Valley Gold Experience

The Gold Experience offers a great day out at Camel Valley exploring the vineyard, tasting the wines and discovering more about wine making. The day begins at 10.30am with coffee followed by an informative and entertaining tour of the vineyards with the vineyard manager, when you'll learn the secrets of producing the best grapes in the English climate.

The wine maker will then take you on a tour of the winery, demystifying the wine making process on the way. A tutored wine tasting will then enable you to experience the Camel Valley wines from a new perspective.

At 1.00pm, we'll serve a delicious buffet lunch, using mainly Cornish ingredients. Informal and relaxed, the lunch is a great chance to chat more with the wine maker and discuss the wines. After lunch, relaxing on the sun terrace with a little more wine is the perfect way to end the day... Price: £33 per person including wine tastings and lunch.

Grand Tour and Tasting

Every Wednesday evening at 5.00pm between 1st April and 30th October, with an additional tour at 5.00pm every Thursday throughout August. A wine maker will personally guide you through the vineyard and winery, answering any questions you may have about the wine making process. Afterwards, there will be a fun wine tasting session, beginning with our most famous wine, Cornwall Brut. The Grand Tour and Tasting is always very popular, so we advise booking in advance.
Price: £6.50 per person, including wine.

CAMEL CANOE AND KAYAKS

<http://www.ccak.co.uk/>

RIDING STABLES



CAMEL TRAIL TEA ROOMS AT BOSCARNE JUNCTION



SILVERSTREAM RESTAURANT & TEA GARDENS AT HELLAND BRIDGE

STEAM TRAIN RIDES AT BODMIN & WENFORD RAILWAY



This railway is Cornwall's only standard gauge railway still operated by steam locomotives and the trains run through some delightful Cornish scenery.

The Railway is typical of a branch line in the 1950's. Great Western steam tank engines are the main locomotives to be seen here but diesel traction is also used, particularly on Saturdays

The main station on the line is at Bodmin General. The engine sheds are here, as well as a Souvenir shop and refreshment room in the restored station buildings.

Boscarnes Junction provides a direct link with the "Camel Trail", the cycle and footpath running to Padstow along the route of the old Bodmin & Wadebridge Railway.

Bodmin Parkway station is on the main rail line from London to Penzance and has a beautiful walk along the old carriage drive to the Lanhydrock House. Trains operate from March to December - daily from 26th May to 30th September and there are lots of Special Events.

Bodmin & Wenford Railway
General Station, Bodmin,
Cornwall, PL31 1AQ tel: 01208 73666

<http://www.bodminandwenfordrailway.co.uk/>



TRESARRETT TEA GADENS NEAR BLISLAND



THE BLISSAND INN



AN ILLUSTRATED JOURNEY

(courtesy of www.destination-cornwall.co.uk)

The Camel Trail - Poleys' Bridge to Dunmere



Close to Blisland and Poley's Bridge

The Camel Trail stays close to the river during its journey from Bodmin Moor to the sea.

If you travel upstream from Poley's Bridge you can reach Camelford by footpath. Just below Poley's Bridge take the hill up to Blisland and then out onto the expanses of Bodmin Moor, different scenery, flora and fauna.

The Camel River always has a presence with the trail and if you pause to look you will find idyllic spots, images of light and shade from the river and the surrounding woodland and forestry.

This is the quietest part of the trail. You should not hear road traffic noise until you cross the main road at Dunmere. Out of the summer season it can be nearly "lonely"! It offers a unique opportunity to achieve solitude.



A section of forestry.



An old railway cutting, now verdant.

The river disappears from view for a while as you enter forestry. There are Sights of Special Scientific Interest here.

History becomes relevant when the trail enters old railway cuttings, these are now hard to recognise because they have become verdant.



Near Helland Bridge. Next stop Dunmere.

It is worth considering how this great facility came about. Rooted in history. Imagine the old steam trains running along the line, the workforce that was needed to undertake the construction. Railways brought high speed travel, synchronisation of time. Opened up new vistas for the average family.

The Camel Trail - Dunmere To Wadebridge



Straight trail and easy walking and cycling.

You can hear the river most of the time and see it often at close hand. Long straight stretches of path mixed with curves as the trail follows the Camel River which becomes increasingly close after Dunmere.

This part of the trail is different again. A change of scenery with accessible woodland and other walks branching off.

Busier, more people. Different leisure activities - riding, more noticeable aspects of river angling and canoe trips.



Peace and easy going.



The heavy traffic!



Polbrock Bridge.

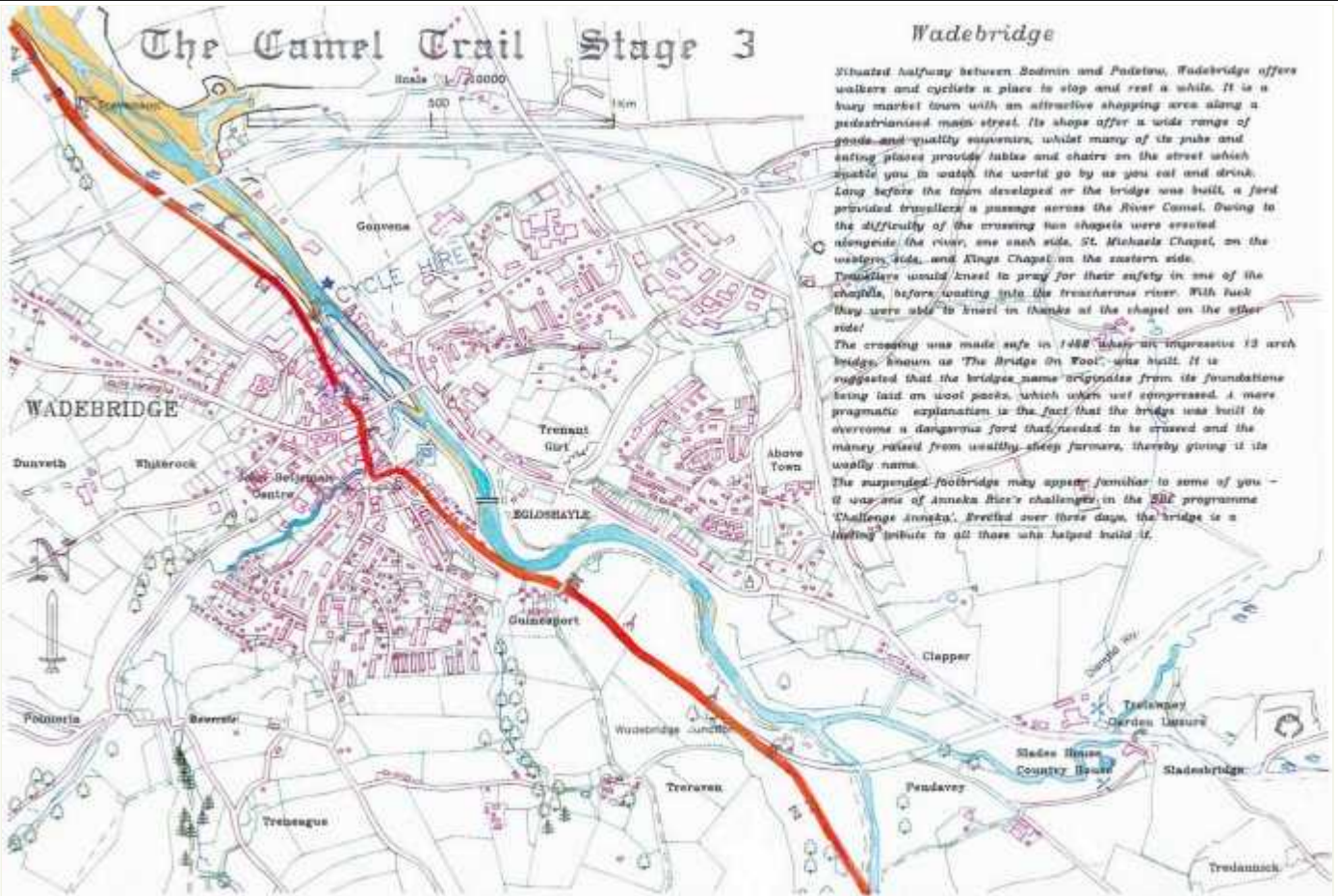


Wadebridge Junction.

After Wadebridge Junction be prepared for contact with the noise and bustle of Wadebridge as the trail enters the town.

Think of stopping or carry on down towards Padstow where the views become very different.

Wadebridge Town



Please note that the section through the town can be busy and care should be taken if you have young family with you.



Just after Wadebridge Junction The Trail becomes tarmac road surface through the town. Just past the John Betjeman Centre, as you reach the library, turn left and use the cycle lane turning right at the mini roundabout by the Regal Cinema.



Follow the cycle lane along the Platt and straight on at the next mini roundabout (next to Barn's Restaurant) along Eddystone Road past Bridge Cycle Hire (cycle repairs and accessories facilities here).



Rejoin the Trail again next to Lidl's Supermarket and Bridge Bike Hire

The Camel Trail - Wadebridge To Padstow



Leaving Wadebridge - the Aqueduct.

From Wadebridge downwards the river becomes an estuary.



There are excellent walks which sprout from the Camel Trail and these give opportunities to become aware of local history - the shaping of the future from the past.

It has a great advantage over the other parts of the trail since it offers the amenities of towns at both ends.

This part of the trail is always changing. Look at a view from one angle and a few minutes later it is different.

When you look across the estuary on your way up or down the trail, it will have changed significantly by the time that you do your return trip as the tide ebbs or flows.



This is a busy section of the trail during the summer and school holidays.



Around The Quarry.



The view from the Quarries looking back



It might be quiet.

Perhaps the biggest section of railway cutting on the old railway line - near Old Town Cove.



A lot of money was spent recently to refurbish the Iron Bridge.

Looking back at the Iron Bridge from nearer Padstow.



Padstow draws closer.



Looking towards Rock.

Once into Padstow park your bike although space can be difficult to find, it can be very busy in Padstow during the main holiday periods.