



Above: Almost 400 riders take part in the Devon Dirt
Below: Much of it is on green – well, brown – lanes
Bottom: Finishers get a medal

Weekender

The Devon Dirt

Organiser **Graham Brodie** describes off-road Challenge Ride on the edge of Dartmoor



GRAHAM BRODIE

Devon Dirt organiser
 Retired engineer and long-term Cycling UK volunteer

The Devon Dirt is an off-road ride on the edge of Dartmoor that takes place every April. Inspired by the rough-stuff competition that Devon CTC used to run, it's similar to the autumnal Dorset Dirt. It's not a race or an enduro, just a fun day out on sometimes muddy tracks linked by country lanes. It's grown from a small local event to one with almost 400 riders, and it's now part of Cycling UK's Challenge Ride Series.

The 37-mile course features two loops in a figure of eight; you can enter the Lite version and just ride the first 17 miles. Both loops start from Ashburton. The longer moorland loop takes you over South Dartmoor to Manaton and into a steep wooded valley. Riders are mostly self sufficient but there are busy feed stations and some mechanical and medical support.

Most of the ride is not very technical; you could easily get round on a cyclocross bike. In 2018 we created a new Buzz category for e-bike riders. As well as refreshments, all entrants get a souvenir T-shirt at the finish – along with a Challenge Ride medal! This year's event is on 14 April.



Get off-road

Cycling UK has lots of advice on riding off-road. Visit cyclinguk.org/mtb for more



Weekend ride

THE DEVON DIRT

• **Start/finish:** BigPeaks, Linhay Business Park, Ashburton • **OS grid reference:** SX766706 **Map:** OS Landrangers 202 and 191 • **Ride length:** 37 miles (17 for Lite option) • **Climbing:** 1,550 metres • **Bike type:** MTB, eMTB, CX Ride **6** **level:** Regular or experienced **GPX:** cyclinguk.org/devondirt



1 Event HQ

The event HQ is at BigPeaks, just off the A38. Parking is available. When you check in here, you can get a coffee and a bite to eat. There are bike trade stands and displays, as well as toilets.

2 Riverford Farm

The first loop is mainly muddy green lanes. Here you cross a tributary to the River Dart at 'Wash', passing Riverford Farm, a pioneer of the organic veg box movement.

3 Back through Ashburton

At the end of the first 17-mile loop, you can get refreshments at the HQ. It's also an opportunity to make any bike tweaks, and to take a breather before the long climb up to the moors.

4 Simms Hill

This is an old county road, widely used for hill-climbs and scrambles. We go down it. It's a very steep and loose descent, so there are marshals here. Walk this bit if you are not confident.

5 BLACK HILL

Now on the moors proper, there are glorious views over to Hound Tor of 'The Hound of the Baskervilles' fame. You're not far from 'Hairy Hands' territory too – where ghostly hands supposedly grab cars' steering wheels or bikes' handlebars and force the victims off the road. Hold on tight!



6 Manaton

Near Black Hill is Manaton, where there's a control and refreshment point. Then it's largely downhill back to Ashburton for the final stamp on your route card – hopefully before 5.30pm.

Challenge yourself

The 2019 event is on 14 April. For Cycling UK members, entry is £14 for adults and £10 for juniors.

- devondirt.co.uk
- cyclinguk.org/challenge-rides-2019