

Weekend ride

THE DOWNS LINK

• **Start/finish:** Guildford station (joining the Downs Link at Peasmarsh) to the beach at Shoreham-by-Sea • **Maps:** OS Landrangers 186, 187, 198 • **Ride length:** 63.1km [39 miles] • **Climbing:** 270m going south or 310m going north • **Bike type:** Any except road bikes • **Ride level:** beginner • **GPX file:** cyclinguk.org/weekender-downslink

1 Guildford

The county town of Surrey, which has repeatedly tried to be designated a city, famously features in HG Wells cycling novella, the Wheels of Chance. Many features mentioned remain, like the cobbled high street and castle. Motor traffic can be heavy. Careful navigation is required to exit this less-than-cycle-friendly town.

2 NCN 22 steps

You can follow the canal out of Guildford but most will ride NCN 22 and encounter steps near the pumping station in Shalford. Good news: the council has approved campaigners' plans for this to be fixed. For now, push along the pavement by the A281 at St Mary's Church, rejoining the NCN just before the Dolphin pub.



3 BRAMLEY & WONERSH STATION

The first of several former stations you pass, this one has a more tragic history than most. During World War II a train was machine gunned and bombed, killing the driver, the guard and several passengers. The village has a train-orientated playground, two pubs, a café, a shop and a butcher with freshly baked snacks. So it's ideal for a refreshment stop.

4 The Wey and Arun Canal

Along the way (excuse the pun) between Guildford and Cranleigh you'll frequently glimpse the River Wey. The length between Bramley and Cranleigh has seen much done by a volunteer body, the Wey and Arun Canal Trust, to restore and open its 23-mile course through Surrey and Sussex to the public.

5 The Milk Churn and Firebird Brewing

Just north of Rudgwick, after the only climb (and steep descent), stop for cheese on toast and craft beer at this converted farm site. The Milk Churn serves locally made speciality cheddar, Sussex Charmer. Firebird's range of beers can be decanted into a growler for easy carrying.

6 Partridge Green

Stop off for lunch and the playground at the Partridge or grab a quick bite from Mary's Café (formerly where Stan's Shack was). It's at this point that the avenue of trees you've ridden down recedes and the South Downs begin to dominate. The different scenery makes a welcome change!

7 SHOREHAM-BY-SEA

Shoreham was a settlement before the Romans arrived. It is reached at the end of a wide multi-user path that follows the River Adur and its mudflats. The imposing chapel of Lancing College, where novelist Evelyn Waugh went to school, sits prominently on the far bank as you ride in. Head for the shingle beach if you fancy a dip.

