



Above: Bridleway near Ipsden, in the Chiltern Hills, South Oxfordshire

It proved too lumpy, so I broke away from its traffic-free roughness and took narrow, unclassified roads. To the north I could see the Devizes White Horse at Roundway Hill. It's the eighth and latest Wiltshire white horse, and at 45m long resembles the original Snobs Horse, which was cut by shoemakers from the town in 1845. Opposite the long barrow near Bishops Cannings, the road and the fields were quiet. Wheat heads were heavy, waiting to be harvested.

Traffic was down to one car per minute. The peel of church bells led me towards a tall spire, barely visible behind taller trees. At Honeystreet, near Alton Barnes (where there's yet another white horse on the hillside above), I dropped in at the Crop Circle Visitor Centre. Here you can ruminate over whether it was indeed aliens who had left their artistic imprint on our crop fields.

Up the Downs, down the Thames

I rode into Marlborough along a back road past its eponymous college. Further on, I passed by Ramsbury Manor. Designed by polymath Robert Hooke in the 17th century, it was described in a 1966 edition of the Guinness Book of Records as being the most expensive domestic building in Britain. In the nearby village of Ramsbury, a woman approached me over the village green.

"I know you," she said, "I saw you in a cycling magazine."

"It is a secret pleasure to have a journey recognised," I said to this lady. "It's the electric cycling. Everyone should give it a go."

We sat chatting amicably about e-cycling and riding around the world. I told her that cycling here was just as enjoyable as riding in the Himalayas.

At Hungerford, I had a choice: take the Kennet and Avon canal to Reading, via Newbury and Thatcham; or head north to join the Ridgeway, which would take me to Goring and the Thames Path. I took the northern option, climbing up to the chalk downs to enjoy expansive views and, incidentally,

join King Alfred's Way

At Reading, it was easy to find the Thames Cycleway, NCN4, and the signs to Wargrave. I had coffee in Sonning, then took the utilitarian cycleway alongside the A4. From Knowl Hill I continued to Maidenhead on NCN4, which then took me to the delightful Braywick Nature Park.

Soon I was back beside the River Thames, where regular signs pointed me towards London. To my surprise, riding into the capital on a riverside route was as interesting as the start had been Wales. Filtering through the lives of people living by water, I cycled past narrowboats, cheery pubs, businesses and houses getting increasingly grander. London at last! It was time for another coffee. ☀

"I could see the Devizes White Horse at Roundway Hill – the eighth and latest Wiltshire white horse"

Nick made a video of his trip. Watch it here: bit.ly/cycle-mach-to-london

Baggage check

Using Ortlieb and Restrap luggage*, my kit list comprised:

Clothing

- 1 pair of socks
- 1 pair of underwear
- 1 pair of shorts
- 1 T-shirt
- 1 spare riding jersey
- 1 waterproof top

Camera equipment

- Insta 360 camera
- DJI Osmo pocket camera
- Fuji XT3 mirrorless camera with 50mm & 150mm lenses
- DJI Mini 4 Pro drone
- Røde wireless microphones

Camping gear

- Micro tent
- Sleeping bag & mat
- Camping stove & 7in frying pan

Tools & spares

- Bike tools & puncture kit
- Spare e-bike battery

(*Members get a 10% discount with Ortlieb and Restrap – cyclinguk.org/benefits.)