



Winchester Cathedral, where Jane Austen is buried

Our novelist ride

Where: Hampshire
Who: Gill & Graham Butler
When: Summer 2025

We live in Hampshire, we love *Pride and Prejudice*, and it's 250 years since the birth of Jane Austen. So we decided to cycle to visit all the places in the county where she lived.

We started the trip by catching the train down to Southampton. There we visited the site of her former home in Castle Square, then the Dolphin Hotel, where she celebrated her 18th birthday.

The route up to Winchester largely followed NCN23. It was our least favourite part of the journey as it ran close to busy roads. Were we to repeat the journey, we'd look for a more

scenic route. Winchester is where Jane died in 1817. She spent her final weeks at 8 College Street, having travelled there to seek medical attention. She is buried in Winchester Cathedral.

Leaving Winchester, we followed the South Downs Way for much of the journey to Alresford, our overnight stay (no association with Austen).

First stop on day two was Chawton, Jane's home from 1809. Her brother was adopted by a childless member of the family, and when he moved into Chawton House he offered a cottage in the village to his mother and sisters. It was here that Jane had the opportunity to devote her time to writing, and where she revised and published *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

We then cycled to nearby Alton, a town Jane visited often. Then on to Steventon, where she was born in 1775, and finally to Overton, a town frequented by Jane. That's on the mainline railway, so it was the end of our journey.



Taiwan touring

Where: Taiwan
Who: Crispin Dunne
When: March 2025

The Portuguese named Taiwan *Ilha Formosa* ('Beautiful Island'). A young country with a mix of Chinese, Japanese and Western influences, Taiwan produces most of the world's bicycles and semi-conductors. It is a land of forested mountains, volcanic springs, billiard-table-smooth roads, delicious food, Daoist temples and friendly people.

Sue and I departed with five friends for a guided trip of the island. Stephen Chen, our local ride leader, took us on a bike tour of Taipei, which included the National Palace Museum and dumplings at *Din Tai Fung*.

Next day our cycling began in earnest with an ascent up the magnificent Taroko Marble Gorge and later ending at AnTong hot springs. The pothole-free roads down the coast were quiet and had bike lanes. Drivers were very considerate. We cycled through paddy fields down the east Rift Valley.

Joining the coast road, we enjoyed a Taiwanese tea ceremony before reaching the southern tip of the island in Kenting National Park. There we explored the botanical gardens and swam in the Strait of Taiwan, before visiting the ancient capital, Tainan.

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