



## Fact file Royal Chilterns Way

**Distance:** Total distance is 280km. I recommend riding it over four days of approximately 70km each.

**Route:** It starts in Reading and winds a helix shape around the Chilterns, calling in at several towns and cities. Each of its three loops ranges from 70km to around 100km.

**Nearest stations:** The route officially starts and finishes at Reading Station. But you could start anywhere. There are 13 railway stations close to or on the route.

**Accommodation:** We stopped at The Kings Arms Hotel in Amersham and at Missenden Abbey.

**Bikes & gear:** Gravel bikes are perfect for this route. To make the route more comfortable, use tyres wider than 40mm and lower gearing. There are campsites along the way, but enough places to eat that you don't need cooking equipment.

**Maps/guides:** The guidebook is £19 from the Cycling UK shop: [shop.cyclinguk.org](http://shop.cyclinguk.org). The GPX file can be downloaded from the Royal Chilterns Way web page (below).

**I'm glad I had...** Variable-light sunglasses, as you spend much of the route switching between shaded woodland and bright, open hills.

**Next time I would...** Take an extra day. There is loads to see, and with only three days, we often had to ride past interesting-looking places without stopping.

**Further info:** [cyclinguk.org/royal-chilterns-way](http://cyclinguk.org/royal-chilterns-way)



have ridden from Great Missenden up to the northernmost point of the route, then back to Amersham. We ended up shortening the route around Ivinghoe Beacon. Luckily, it's quite easy to factor in shortcuts on Royal Chilterns Way. The route loops over itself a few times, so you can

cut off sections as you need to. There are also lots of stations nearby if you need a rail-assisted solution.

Our first incident occurred only a few miles into the day. Sven's chain snapped. Luckily, it happened almost next door to OTEC Bikes and the Buckmoorend Farm Shop. The bike shop's mechanic whipped a new link into the chain in minutes, while the rest of us petted the farm sheep and enjoyed the farm-shop coffee. It's a great place to stop, with a commanding view of Chequers, the Prime Minister's country estate. We imagined every helicopter flying overhead had Keir Starmer aboard.

The next mechanical came just a short ride later, on a quiet section of towpath beside the Grand Union Canal. Harry's aged pannier fell apart at the seams. We spent a lot of time patching it with tape. Behind schedule, I suggested we take what

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looked like a shortcut. This turned out to be a bad decision: the shortcut I'd spotted headed deep into spiky thorn trees.

Soon we were literally bushwhacking. Half an hour later, we emerged from the brambles, covered in scratches and sporting several

punctures. My lesson from this was to stay on the route!

It was 3pm and we'd managed a paltry 20 miles. We had a late lunch at Ivinghoe and decided to shorten the day's ride. Instead of going all the way to Dunstable Downs, we crossed the Chilterns to Little Gaddesden instead. I'm glad we did or we would have been out riding until dark.

Happy with our detour over Beacon Hill, we were treated to spectacular views as far as the white chalk lion of Whipsnade Zoo. We then re-joined the path in the resplendent Ashridge Estate. The section of bridleway here was fun, fast and dusty. We passed through lovely villages like Latimer, with gorgeous mediaeval cottages and tiny churches. Rolling into Amersham old town as the sun was setting, we were wowed by the ancient high street. We stayed in the 15th-century Kings Arms Hotel, —>

**Opposite page, top:** Bridleway near Goring-on-Thames. Dry and dusty conditions meant that the extensive off-road sections were fast-rolling and fun

**This page, top:** Climbing up from the village of Turville, near High Wycombe, in the Chiltern Hills