



a half-timbered pub, and ate our fill at the Indian restaurant around the corner.

Day three: more ups than downs

The final day highlighted how hilly the route is in places. With constant undulations up and down, it felt like we were riding across rolling waves in the landscape. It was exhausting but satisfying.

We passed through another National Trust estate, Hughenden Manor, pedalling beneath quiet beech woods, where ferns were already turning the burnt orange of autumn. Royal Chilterns Way takes in a lot of historic buildings and estates, offering beautiful backdrops and interesting places to stop if you have the time.

Spectacular chalk trails took us to Turville, a picturesque 15th-century village where The Vicar of Dibley was filmed. The day was very hot by this time, so we had a breather in the shadow of Turville's church to cool down. In stifling 30°C heat, we coasted down and sweated up some serious hills back towards Reading. At last we reached the Thames,

“Beneath quiet beech woods, ferns were already turning the burnt orange of autumn”

where we finished our ride with a gloriously cooling dip.

Royal Chilterns Way is a gem. I was impressed by how many lovely trails were linked together. Even though we were never far from towns and cities, much of the

ride felt rural and remote. Because it incorporates long sections of the Ridgeway and the Chilterns Cycleway, you spend only about a third of the distance on road.

Even though the route feels off the beaten track, it's been designed to pass by lots of local businesses. You'll encounter thatched pubs with flower-filled gardens, farm shops full of local produce, cafés and restaurants with good food and proper coffee, and lots of places to stay. A tent and cooking gear are strictly optional. There are plenty of National Trust properties, vineyards and cycle shops along the way, too.

I can see this route becoming a classic, like King Alfred's Way. It has a little something for everyone. A word of warning, however: you probably won't have time to stop at every coffee shop along the way! 🍷

Adventures for all

Royal Chilterns Way is one of the routes in Cycling UK's Adventure Series, which was launched this August. The others are Marcher Castles Way, Traws Eryri, King Alfred's Way, West Kernow Way, Cantii Way and Rebellion Way.

All seven are long-distance bikepacking routes that invite people to explore Britain's stunning countryside and national landscapes. The series promotes domestic adventure tourism and supports local economies. It also offers an affordable and healthy way to explore the countryside, while boosting mental wellbeing.

Each route is free to download from the Cycling UK website as a GPX file, ready to use with a cycle computer or smartphone. For more information to help plan your trip, get the guidebook: they're £19 each from shop.cyclinguk.org. The shop also has A3 art prints (£23) for every route, produced in conjunction with Ordnance Survey. So you can display your bikepacking achievements on your wall at home.

For more information about all routes in the Adventure Series, visit cyclinguk.org/adventure-series.



Top: Aylesbury Vale from the Coombe Hill monument, which was built to commemorate casualties from the Boer War