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## Edinburgh Dawn Patrol



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Bikepacker, route designer and guidebook writer

**Route name:** Edinburgh Dawn Patrol (road route)  
**Start/finish:** St Andrew Square/ Cairngorm Coffee  
**Maps:** OS Landranger 66  
**Ride length:** 30.9km (19.2 miles)  
**Climbing:**

250m **Bike type:** Any. There are access barriers on the Portobello Promenade from Seafield Road and Little France Park from The Wisp but they are wide enough for trikes and trailers **Ride level:** Regular – some features on the route like tramlines and trafficked roads require previous cycling experience  
**GPX file:** [cyclinguk.org/weekender-edinburgh-dawn-patrol](http://cyclinguk.org/weekender-edinburgh-dawn-patrol)

**01**

### Starbank Park

Once the grounds of Starbank House, the park is a charming Victorian walled garden set on a steep slope. It's one of my favourite green spaces, offering sweeping views across the Firth of Forth and having plenty of quiet corners. The descent beside its walls on Laverockbank Road is a favourite of Ed's. Try your brakes beforehand!

**02**

### The Royal Yacht Britannia & Fingal

Two ships docked in Leith make for great photo opportunities. The Royal Yacht Britannia served as the floating palace of the British royal family for over 40 years, welcoming dignitaries and world leaders. Nearby, the majestic Fingal, an historic Clyde-built ocean liner, recalls the golden age of transatlantic travel. It's now a luxury hotel.

**03**

### Portobello Promenade

For Geo, Portobello Promenade is where "smiles look extra nice in the light of the rising sun". For Bob, it's the best place in Edinburgh to watch the sunrise, "unobstructed over the Forth, in all its glory". With plenty of space to spread out, it's also perfect for riding together in a group – particularly at this time of day.

**04**

### Little France Park & Craigmillar Castle

For Richard, this is where "bike meets slalom skiing and great views". Nicknamed the 'swoopy bit', the park links The Wisp with Craigmillar Castle and offers a mix of cycle paths, making it the highlight of each ride. Craigmillar Castle itself is a well-preserved mediaeval fortress on the edge of Edinburgh. In the 16th century it was a refuge for Mary, Queen of Scots.

**05**

### The Innocent Railway & Holyrood Park

Opened in 1831 to carry coal from Dalkeith to Edinburgh, the Innocent Railway earned its name because its horse-drawn wagons were thought safer than steam engines. For Dawn Patrol riders, the highlight is the infamous 'lung-buster ramp' (Ed) or the alternative woodland track. The effort is well worth it, with great views at Edinburgh's iconic Arthur's Seat as a reward.

**06**

### The Mount & National Gallery of Scotland

For Zoë and Holly, The Mound, a historic hill connecting Old and New Town, is the final highlight: "All green lights lining up for a quick tramline cross, before a final left onto Hanover Street and on to our coffee mecca." En route, we pass the National Gallery of Scotland's neoclassical façade.