



LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

LEICESTER

Smack bang in the middle of England, Leicester may not be a renowned cycling destination, but don't let that put you off. A compact city, the countryside is never more than five miles away and offers an enjoyable mix of quiet lanes, pretty villages and rolling hills. And in August there's the Ride Leicester Festival featuring the Castle Classic Elite Race and the ever popular Sky Ride.

ROUTE ONE

Rutland and beyond 65 miles *Three counties in one ride*
This is the route of the Leicester Forest CC winter audax, but makes a great ride at any time of year. Heading east, it skirts around Rutland Water and dips into Northamptonshire before coming back through the Welland Valley and over the short, sharp hills of East Leicestershire. No big climbs, but almost 1300m of uphill to test your legs.
Get the route tinyurl.com/cplus-rutlandwater

ROUTE TWO

Bridges and ridges 38 miles

Who said canals were flat?

This ride loosely follows the Grand Union Canal, crossing it several times as it heads south. Things get interesting past Saddington, with a series of steep ridges including a climb locally known as Heart Attack Hill. An enjoyable detour passes the viewpoint from where Prince Rupert led the unsuccessful Royalist army into the Battle of Naseby. The return to Leicester takes in the rolling hills either side of the Welland Valley.

Get the route tinyurl.com/cplus-grandunioncanal

ROUTE THREE

My kingdom for a bike! 17 miles

Horrible histories on two wheels

This route takes in Bosworth Battlefield, where Richard III met his end before being buried under a car park in Leicester. You'll pass a real roadside gibbet, too, though it's 200 years since it was last used. It's hard to imagine the area's gruesome past on the quiet roads, with their gentle gradients and inviting pubs. At Shenton, you could detour along the Ashby Canal towpath and come back on a steam train from Shackerstone.

Get the route tinyurl.com/cplus-bosworth

5 INSIDER TIPS

Have breakfast here...

Wistow Café

Just seven miles from the city, this rural café does all-day breakfasts and great coffee. Plenty of room for bikes.

Where Wistow Rural Centre, Kibworth Road, Wistow
wistowcafebistro.co.uk

Stop for cakes here...

Welton's

PO, village store, deli, teashop and travel agent, Welton's sells just about anything, including excellent cakes.

Where 28 The Green, Great Bowden
Tel: 01858 465433

Get spare tubes here...

South Wigston Cycle Centre

This small but perfectly formed shop stocks all the essentials, with an eclectic mix of bike brands.

Where 60 Blaby Road, South Wigston
Tel: 0116 247 7900

Fancy a pint?

The Black Horse Inn

This lovely pub does excellent food and provides the venue for the Velobici Tour de France barbecue in July.

Where 17 Market Place, Market Bosworth
01455 290278

Dump the family here...

The National Space Centre

Real rockets, a 3D space simulator and the UK's biggest planetarium. Great for budding astronauts!

Where Exploration Drive, Leicester
spacecentre.co.uk