

Family cycle trail – 10 miles

Plymbridge Woods, Plymouth

THE NATIONAL TRUST

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Have fun with the family on this cycle ride which follows the route of an old Great Western Railway track. From the edge of Plymouth, you plunge straight into glorious oak woodland before emerging out into open countryside. The trail leads you past dramatic industrial remains, including towering quarry faces and across breathtaking viaducts. You'll get the chance for close-up views of nesting wild peregrines (in season) and a taste of invigorating moorland fresh air all year round.

Getting there:

Start location: 5ml NE of Plymouth – grid reference SX 523 585 – OS Landranger map 20

Cycling: NCN27, the Plym Valley Trail starts in Plymouth, in the grounds of Saltram House.

Road: From A38 Marsh Mills exit, head towards Plympton and follow signs to Plymbridge Woods.






Facilities:

Car park with nearby meadows for picnicking although no formal facilities. Closest WC in Plympton, 2ml from the start of ride. Contact us for more information on guided walks or school visits – National Trust estate office – tel: 01752 341377

Cycle distance, terrain and accessibility:

Approx. 10 miles (out and return) along a well surfaced, nearly level disused railway. Can be muddy after wet weather, take care when walking near waterways and the River Plym. Beware that the Leighbeer Tunnel is dimly lit and a torch or bike lights will be handy even in the middle of the day! A variety of other paths offer shorter walks without your bicycle.

Points of interest:

-  **Woodland:** Coppiced oaks have started to reclaim the Victorian industrial remains. They provide a tranquil haven for local wildlife. Spot bluebells, foxglove and primrose in spring.
-  **River:** Flowing down from Trowlesworthy Warren on Dartmoor, the river Plym can really grow in size after rain upstream, turning from a placid, slow trickle to a gushing torrent.
-  **Birds:** Plymbridge Woods are home to a host of woodland and wetland species, like the dipper, grey wagtail, little grebe, grebe, heron and kingfisher. They're particularly famed for the breeding peregrine falcons, raven, kestrel and woodpecker.
-  **Animals:** catch a glimpse of fallow deer or foxes in quiet spots around the estate. Visitors at dusk will also be aware of numerous bats.
-  **Insects:** as well as bees and butterflies, there are many species of dragon and damselflies, living in this area. They are best seen around ponds, the canal and the river.

NT properties nearby:

Saltram House, Plymouth. Buckland Abbey, Yelverton. Trowlesworthy Warren, Dartmoor.



This cycle ride takes you along the Sustrans National Cycle Network 27. Also known as the Devon Coast to Coast trail, actually heads from Plymouth, across Dartmoor, to Ilfracombe, 97 miles away on the north Devon coast. It was the first Sustrans cycle route to be created 40 years ago in 1967.

© NTPL / Chris King

From the Cann Viaduct look down to the river and across to Cann Quarry where peregrine falcons, like the one shown here feeding her chick, can be spotted breeding in early summer. Dedicated bird watching volunteers monitor them to ensure they come to no harm.

© David Palmer



Look out for the remains of Plymbridge's industrial past that you pass on this ride, like the shells of these old quarry workers' cottages. Slate was quarried here during the 19th century and a series of tram and railway lines were built to transport heavy loads down into the city and port.

© NT / South Dartmoor

"Plymbridge Woods is a lovely place to explore the past industrial history and see how nature has now overtaken man to return the woods to solitude"

– National Trust warden

Route and directions:

1. Leave the main NT car park at Plymbridge Woods and cycle up a slope onto the old GWR railway line, now National Cycle Network route 27.

Pause and look left noting the disused Plym Halt station where day-trippers in the 1950s would catch a train from the city for a day out in the Plym Valley. This was known as the 'Woolworths Special' because it cost just sixpence.

Turn right, away from the city of Plymouth.

2. Ride about 1½ miles on to the Cann Viaduct. If you're visiting in spring and early summer, stop off at the peregrine viewing platform for fantastic close-ups of these majestic birds of prey through mounted telescopes. If you're lucky, you might see them tending the chicks at their quarry cliff-ledge nest.
3. Proceed over three more massive viaducts, pausing to look down onto the surrounding woodland and countryside.
4. After about four miles, from the start, you will reach Leighbeer Tunnel, cut out of solid rock by railway engineer, Isambard Kingdom Brunel. This is curving and dimly lit, so proceed with extreme care.
5. Leave the old railway line and go left down a minor road towards Shaugh Prior. At Shaugh Bridge, cross over the River Plym and immediately pull into the left.
6. Dismount and wheel your cycle across the footbridge into the NT Dewerstone Woods. Here you can explore the remains of an old tile making kiln and search for the remains of old leats and wheelpits. It is an ideal place for a picnic.

To return, go back over Shaugh Bridge, ignore the first road on the right (which you came down on from the tunnel), and take the next turning on the right. This will take you back up onto National Cycle Network route 27 at Shaugh Prior platform.

7. Turn left onto the cycle track and enjoy the downward slope for Plymouth.

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