

Information on the main route

Rotherham Central to Park Square

Km on route: 0-33.2

Km distance: 33.2

Metres climbed: 353

Family-friendly route on this section: Round Rother Valley

Starts at 17.7km on route

Setting off from Rotherham's transport hub, the route follows the River Don on a traffic-free path, and passes the new flood defence wall, decorated with a mural that celebrates the town's history of industry and innovation. The route briefly joins a quiet road, before returning to the canal path, skirting nature-rich Blackburn Meadows, and heading south on Bessemer Way. From here we head east along the Don Valley, on a segregated cycleway, and then join the Trans Pennine Trail as it follows the River Rother south.

There is a brief section of main road as the route crosses the railway at Brinsworth, and then we return to quiet roads as we head south towards the chain of parks, lakes and nature reserves that line the Rother Valley. First, we come to Waverley, where the site of the Orgreave Colliery has been converted into a new residential area, surrounded by green space. Skirting the lakeside park via bridleways, we'll briefly follow the main road before passing through Woodhouse Washlands, a nature reserve that's home to a huge variety of birds. From here, after 300m on the A57 to recross the railway, the route rejoins the Trans Pennine Trail to enter the magnificent Rother Valley Country Park, where you can ride **Round Rother Valley: one of our family-friendly routes**. There's an unpaved section here which may become muddy in winter, but the park's two lakes are looped by a flat, paved trail, designed for all to enjoy.

The route leaves the lakes via another section of the Trans Pennine Trail, which it follows all the way to the centre of Sheffield. There are some unpaved sections en route, especially as we reach the Shire Brook Valley, a former sewage works which has now been planted with trees and turned into a wildlife reserve. From this point the route is traffic-free until Corker Bottom, though there are some points where it crosses main roads, notably at Coisley Hill, Stradbroke Road and Richmond Road. We divert through the forest at Castlebeck, to visit Iron Henry – an imposing sculpture of a steelworker, that overlooks the dual carriageway, but is

best visited by bike or on foot. Riders who prefer to stick to the paved route can cross the Mossborough Parkway via the bridge at 28.1km.

After passing through leafy Corker Bottoms, and crossing the main road via the traffic lights, the route continues via quiet residential streets and marked cycle lanes to Park Square, in the centre of the city.

Park Square to start of Five Weirs Walk

Km on route: 33.2-55.7

Km distance: 22.5

Metres climbed: 285

Setting off from Park Square, at the centre of Sheffield's network of roads, tramways and cycle routes, we ride uphill on South Street, past Park Hill flats: Europe's largest listed building, and one of the city's many architectural highlights. We then skirt Sheaf Valley Park, home to the Cholera Monument, which commemorates the 402 people who died of a disease epidemic in 1832, and whose distinctive spire is visible for miles.

Turning right onto Granville Road, we follow the bus lane down the hill and across the tramlines, and bear left around McDonald's, to follow Farm Lane towards Heeley. Here the route follows residential streets towards the City Farm and Heeley People's Park – the largest community-run park in the country. The route makes a short uphill detour at this point, to visit A Different Gear, Heeley's much-loved community bike shop.

From here it's downhill to the River Sheaf, crossing the main road at the traffic lights, and following the Sheaf Valley Cycle Route along the valley. There's a short section of main road as we cross the valley into Nether Edge, and then the route continues on quiet residential streets, looping back towards the city centre through Sharrow, and crossing the watershed between the Sheaf and the Porter Brook, two of Sheffield's five rivers.

The route follows, and then crosses the ring road on segregated cycle tracks, and follows quiet streets through the city centre, descending on shared-use paths towards Sheffield Station. From here we take the beautifully landscaped Grey to Green route, passing Park Square for a second time, and catching our first glimpse

of the River Don as we follow quiet roads and cycle lanes towards the historic district of Kelham – a showcase for the city’s industrial heritage, and home to the Kelham Island Museum, and numerous bars and restaurants.

A shared-use path leads us alongside the busy Penistone Road towards Hillsborough, and then a brief section of main road takes us up the hill towards Cookson Park, home of Sheffield Cycle Speedway. From here we loop back through residential streets towards Parkwood Springs, where there are miles of twisting mountain bike trails to enjoy, as well as gentler paths for walking, wheeling and leisure cycling, and spectacular views of the city. The route then descends along traffic-free Pitsmoor Road, and follows marked cycle lanes back towards the River Don.

Five Weirs Walk to Penistone Station

Km on route: 55.7-90.2

Km distance: 34.5

Metres climbed: 584

Family-friendly route on this section: Five Weirs Walk

Starts at 56.8km on route

Family-friendly route on this section: Blackburn Valley Trail

Starts at 64.1km on route

Starting with the eery Cobweb Bridge, which passes under the Wicker Viaduct and crosses the River Don, the **Five Weirs Walk: one of our family-friendly routes**, showcases an area that was once the world centre of steel production. Largely traffic-free all the way to Meadowhall (aside from some temporary diversions), the path offers Sheffield residents and visitors a close-up view of how the area has evolved in recent decades – fish have returned to the formerly polluted river, and birdsong now replaces the noise of the forge hammers. The route is flat, aside from a couple of gently sloping bridges, and paved throughout, making it suitable for cyclists and wheelchair users, as well as walkers.

NOTE: There is currently a diversion in place to avoid a section of path that is under repair: you will need to cross Attercliffe Road (traffic lights) and East Coast Road (marked crossing). The route also crosses Newhall Road, Jansson Street (traffic lights) and Weedon Road.

We then turn north and join the **Blackburn Valley Trail: one of our family-friendly routes** which takes you from the bustle of Meadowhall Interchange to the peaceful green space of Chapeltown Park, following the Blackburn Brook which divides Sheffield from Rotherham. It's part of the Trans Pennine Trail, and you can follow their blue signs in the direction of Chapeltown.

En route you'll pass Woolley Wood, famous for its bluebells in springtime, and Concord Park, where one of Sheffield's parkrun events takes place. The route rejoins the road at Loicher Lane, and there's a long climb up towards Grenoside Woods, on Whitley Lane, with gradients up to 10%. It has been home for mountain bikers for as long as the sport has been in this country; hosted races up until 1994 and provided the training ground for World Downhill Mountain Bike Champion Steve Peat. We then descend on woodland trails towards Wharncliffe Wood, where we follow a traffic-free cycle route that skirts the Don Valley. This route is unpaved, so may be muddy in winter.

From Forge Woods, the trail continues across the countryside towards Penistone, climbing very gently (so don't be surprised if it feels harder than a flat path ought to). There are some sections in this stretch that may be muddy, especially at wetter times of year. The 300-metre Thurgoland Tunnel provides a welcome respite on hot summer days – it is illuminated throughout, and has very unusual acoustics, so it's worth making some noise as you pass through. Shortly after this, the route crosses the Rompticle Viaduct, which carried the Sheffield to Manchester railway between 1845 and 1983, and from here it's a short roll to Penistone Station, where you can continue your journey by train if you're ready to stop riding.

Penistone Station Loop

Km on route: 89.0-114.3

Km distance: 25.3

Metres climbed: 361

Family-friendly route on this section: Penistone to Dunford Bridge

Starts at 89.0km on route

There's a traffic-free path leading away from Penistone Station, and we'll be seeing a lot more of it later in the ride, but for now we'll be branching off after just a kilometre, to take on the hilliest section of the route. Turning left off Leppings Lane, the route climbs for just under a kilometre, giving riders panoramic views of the Don Valley, before dropping back down to cross the river and setting off up the other side.

This section of the route showcases South Yorkshire's proximity to the Peak District National Park taking us rapidly from the leafy Don Valley up to the windswept uplands of Crow Edge, formerly home to a coal mine and fire clay pits. There'll be some ups and downs (but mostly ups) for the next 8km, as we gain over 200m in just 8km. Then, after a sharp left turn, we'll descend to Dunford Bridge, where the route joins the Trans Pennine Trail.

This traffic-free path takes us all the way back to Penistone Station, following the route of the old Great Central Railway, which used to run between London and Manchester. Although it looks flat, it actually loses 60m of elevation en route to Penistone, meaning that this may well feel like an easier ride. All manner of sculptures and carvings line the path, and we'll pass Wogden Nature Reserve, home to curlews, skylarks and meadow pipits. The Magic Wood Café, open six days a week (closed Mondays), is a great place to break your journey. This stretch of the route is also **Penistone to Dunford Bridge family friendly route** - and can be ridden as an out-and-back from Penistone Station.

Penistone Station to Conisbrough Station

Km on route: 114.3-155.5

Km distance: 41.2

Metres climbed: 305

Family-friendly route on this section: Dearne Valley Country Park

Starts at 132.5km on route

The route now follows the Trans Pennine Trail all the way to Worsbrough, on the outskirts of Barnsley. After leaving the traffic-free path at Oxspring, we'll briefly

share the road with cars as we climb back out of the Don Valley, and turn left onto a bridleway after crossing the main road. (If you'd prefer to avoid the unpaved section, you can stay on Coates Lane, and rejoin the trail as it crosses the road just before Silkstone Common.) This byway passes close to the Huskar Pit Memorial, which commemorates 26 children who were killed in a mining disaster in 1838. The memorial in Nabs Wood, a few minutes off the main path, is accessible on foot.

Leaving the Trans Pennine Trail at Worsbrough, the route now returns to public roads, heading uphill as we enter the outskirts of Barnsley. After a steady 2km climb, with some steeper sections (up to 8%), we're rewarded with a visit to Locke Park, one of Barnsley's largest green spaces, and then a pleasant descent through quiet back streets towards the town centre. We cross the busy Townend Roundabout (some cyclists may prefer to dismount and use the pedestrian crossings) and after a brief but steep climb up Fitzwilliam Street, the route skirts the town centre, delivering us to Barnsley's brand-new Market Gate Bridge, which overlooks the transport interchange.

From here it's less than a kilometre to the **Dearne Valley Country Park, one of our family-friendly sections**. From the station we follow a shared-use path alongside the main road, and cross the Harborough Hill Roundabout via the new toucan crossings. Then, as soon as the gate closes behind you, you'll find it hard to believe you were recently riding through a busy town centre. Like so much of the Dearne Valley, this park is a former industrial site, now very successfully rehabilitated as a home for nature, and a place for Barnsley's residents and visitors to enjoy the outdoors, at any time of year. If you're not in a hurry, you may want to explore its many different trails, make the most of the skate park and the play area, or simply sit under a tree and watch the world go by. Families with young children will want to take care on the paths that border open water, and all cyclists will need to be aware of other users, as this is a popular area, especially at weekends and on sunny days.

After crossing the busy Pontefract Road, the route rejoins the Trans Pennine Trail and continues along the valley, passing through Netherwood Country Park and skirting Wombwell. Manvers Lake, which the route approaches on leafy traffic-free paths, is a great place to stop for a picnic, and to admire the Wath Pit Wheel – a commemoration of the coal mining that took place in this area within living memory.

The route continues along the Dearne Valley, briefly rejoining public roads as we pass through the pretty village of Hartington, and returning to lush countryside on the approach to historic Conisbrough, where you may choose to pause your journey to get on a train, or to explore the town's magnificent castle, which has overlooked the town for almost 900 years, and inspired Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*.

Conisbrough to Doncaster Lakeside

Km on route: 155.5-195.7

Km distance: 40.2

Metres climbed: 176

Family-friendly route on this section: Valley of Viaducts

Starts at 155.5km on route

Family-friendly route on this section: Train to Bentley

Starts at 165.9km on route

The route leaves Conisbrough via a picturesque and traffic-free section of the Trans Pennine Trail – **Valley of Viaducts, which is our longest family-friendly section**. It's only a few minutes' ride to the spectacular Conisbrough Viaduct, which was built in the early 1900s to take the Dearne Valley Railway across the Don Gorge. And just along the river is Sprotbrough Flash, one of the richest wildlife sites in South Yorkshire, incorporating open water, wetland, woodland and limestone grassland. From here the route is unpaved for around 2km, and may be muddy in wet weather. There are two gates in this section.

You'll pass under the Don Motorway Viaduct and Warmsworth Bridge – a former railway crossing, that has been part of the Trans Pennine Trail since 2001. From there the route leaves the river, and rejoins the tarmac – for the next few kilometres you'll be on a broad, freshly surfaced trail, perfect for all users, and then a shared-use path along Piping Lane.

Another of our **family-friendly routes, Train to Bentley**, starts at Bentley Station. There's a 200m section where you'll be on the road, before turning left onto Jossey Lane, which has a shared-use path. You'll need to cross Jossey Lane carefully, to turn onto Park Road, but once you reach the tree-lined entrance to Bentley Park, the route is traffic-free all the way to Bentley Community Woodland – another former industrial site that's now been given back to nature, and is a popular escape from the city for Doncaster's residents.

Following a couple of kilometres on quiet public roads, there's a short gravel section, which includes a pedestrian railway crossing (remember to stop, look and listen) and an easy singlet rack path through the woods. Rejoining the road, the route follows the Trans Pennine Trail via the small villages of Trumfleet and Braithwaite, and crosses three waterways in quick succession – the New Junction Canal, the River Don and the River Dun Navigation. If you glance to your right as you cross the bridges, you can see the Don Aqueduct, which carries the canal over the river.

The route now passes through the pretty village of Barnby Dun, and you'll notice the roads becoming busier as we head back into Doncaster. There's a generous segregated cycle route from Sandall Park along Thorne Road towards the town centre, where you can head for the train station, or continue riding around the edge of Town Field, and head eastwards. A shared-use path follows the main road, and then uses a toucan crossing to take us across the A638 and along the cycle paths towards Doncaster Lakeside.

Doncaster Lakeside to Thurcroft

Km on route: 195.7-228.9

Km distance: 33.2

Metres climbed: 327

Family-friendly route on this section: Doncaster Lakeside to Annabel's Café

Starts at 195.7 on route

Leaving behind the shops and restaurants of Doncaster Lakeside, the route follows the Red Path: a quiet, traffic-free route that cuts between Bessacar and the Potteric Carr Nature Reserve – look out for dragonflies, wetland birds, and spectacular murmurations of starlings on winter evenings. This is one of our **family-friendly routes – Doncaster Lakeside to Annabel's Café.**

You can cross the railway via a pedestrian crossing (remember to stop, look and listen), or if you prefer you can follow the Doncaster Greenway signs and turn left at Checkstone Avenue. This will take you round via the main road, rejoining the route at Warren Lane – you will need to cross the road briefly, or walk your bike along the pavement for 100m.

From here the route follows the Doncaster Greenway along the River Torne, and crosses the newly installed iPort Bridge, before leaving the buildings behind and taking you out to the picturesque surroundings of Mombrick Wood Lake (popular with bird watchers), and the welcome sight of Annabel's Café.

Turning south, the route follows a quiet gravel cut-through, and then crosses the motorway via a quiet lane. Don't forget to look out for traffic as we pass through the pretty village of Wadworth, and then take a sharp left off Wadworth Hall Lane for a short section through the woods on a flat, unpaved path. There's a mile or so of busier road before we take a left turn onto quieter roads, that take us through the villages of Swinton and Braithwell. Look out for the Millennium viewpoint as you pass through Micklebring – it's a great spot for a picnic, and on a clear day offers panoramic views of much of South Yorkshire.

There's a short descent at this point, and then a progressively quieter series of roads takes us towards the small village of Thurcroft, via a steep climb and descent just after Carr.

Thurcroft to Rotherham Central

Km on route: 228.9-251.4

Km distance: 22.5

Metres climbed: 191

Family-friendly route on this section: Thurcroft Old Mineral Line

Starts at 228.9km on route

From Thurcroft we head south on the **Thurcroft Old Mineral Line, a family-friendly route** that links the villages of Thurcroft and Dinnington, and was once part of a freight railway line between the area's collieries.

Today it's a scenic and undemanding trail, traffic-free and designed to be welcoming to all. It's paved the whole way, so suitable for cyclists and wheelchair users, and there are benches at regular intervals, for those who might be in need of a rest – or a picnic. As you walk, ride or wheel along its 3km length, you'll be shaded by mature woodland, and serenaded by birdsong from the surrounding fields.

This is a popular path with local families and dog-walkers, so you can expect plenty of friendly encounters as you go, and there are no barriers along the way, making it accessible to almost all users. The route is signposted at both ends, and there are no junctions, making wayfinding very easy.

The route rejoins public roads on the outskirts of Dinnington, follows residential streets towards Laughton Common, and then heads west. Riders will need to take care when crossing Long Road (between Hawk Hill Lane and Penny Hill Lane), but otherwise there are only left turns, and this section is relatively quiet, with views of the Penny Hill wind turbines, and Rotherham's rolling fields.

There's a short descent after the village of Ulley, and you'll catch glimpses of Ulley Reservoir, which was created in the 1870s to provide drinking water for nearby Rotherham. It was decommissioned in the 1980s, and is now mostly used for sailing and fishing. From here we briefly follow the main road, on a segregated cycle path, and then climb up past the village of Upper Whiston, to follow a marked bridleway across the motorway, through the woods, and down the hill into Whiston itself. This small village sits on the outskirts of Rotherham, and is home to the Whiston Manorial Barn – an imposing thatched structure that claims to be one of the oldest agricultural buildings in Yorkshire.

As we enter Rotherham itself, we'll follow a shared use path alongside the main road, and a marked cycle lane along Broom Road, before deviating onto quieter streets to skirt Herringthorpe Playing Fields. The route takes us through the town's popular Clifton Park, where you may wish to pause for lunch at the café, to visit the museum, or to admire the remains of a Roman granary, originally excavated in nearby Templeborough, and moved to this site in 1922.

The route rejoins the road as we leave Clifton Park, descending slightly to the junction with Broom Road, from which a segregated cycle lane leads us towards the town centre, overlooked by the imposing steeple of Rotherham's minster. As we cross the river and the canal, we'll have views of the town's new Forge Island development – a new leisure complex built on the former site of the Rotherham Foundry. And then our journey ends where it began, at Rotherham Central, where South Yorkshire's past, present and future meet in a confluence of road, railway, tramlines, canal paths and cycle routes.