

Off-road cycle ride 4

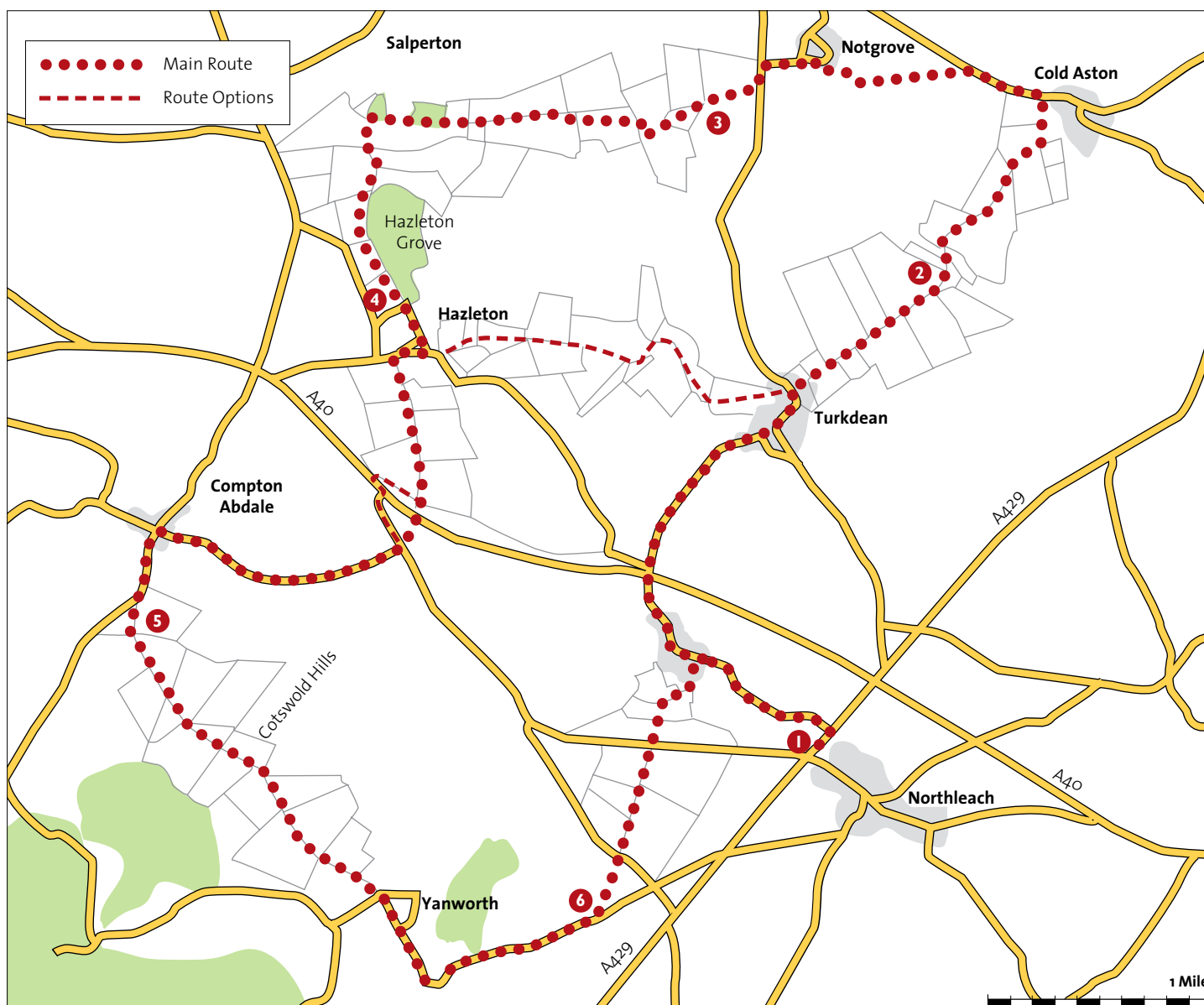
Northleach Hazleton – 16 1/2 Miles



This ride takes you around the high wold with its open fields and secret valleys. It also dips down into the upper Leach and Coln valleys giving you both contrasting landscapes and good descents, plus ascents too! Please try to get to it on your bike if possible.

You can start the ride at any point but subject to opening times, it is recommended to start at 'Escape to the Cotswolds!' the new discovery centre for the Cotswolds AONB. Please be aware that the car park barrier is locked at 7pm! If you do drive and park elsewhere

on the route please park with consideration for the local community. Brackets indicate the wording of signs and the route is described in an anti-clockwise direction. Enjoy!



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The Route

1 Leave the car park of 'Escape to the Cotswolds!' and turn left. Use the path if you are not comfortable on the A429 (Fosse Way). Take the first left (Hampnett). Stay on the lane through Hampnett ignoring first the left hand then the right hand minor lanes. Cross the A40 with care. Straight on (Turkdean). At the bottom of the hill by the post-box in the wall take the left hand turn – effectively straight on, to join a bridleway. Through the ford and up the steep push between the house and the garage. Left when you join the road. Turn right at the traffic island with the tree on it (unsuitable for motor vehicles). Head down the byway by the 'no parking' sign.

2 Cross the grassy valley, and straight on to Cold Aston. When the track joins the tarmac carry straight on. Left at the T-junction and left again to join a bridleway running through a belt of beech trees. Through the wooden gate at the end of the trees and turn right. When the wood on your left ends, turn left and go through the gate. Cross the valley heading for the metal gate in the wall at its high point on the far side. Through the gate and turn right taking the left hand lane (not the lane going downhill). Straight on at the crossroads and left at the T-junction (Turkdean 1 3/4). Take the first right opposite the wrought iron gate to join a bridleway on a tarmac track.

3 At the end of the tarmac, carry straight on and through the wooden gate. Follow the grassy track through the next wooden gate and on down to the valley bottom. At the bottom bear right in front of the big ash tree. Note the wonderful limestone grassland on your right. Go through the first gate on your left (metal) and follow the bridleway up across the arable field. Stay on the bridleway as it leaves the field through the wooden gate near the top. Turn left when you join a track. Just before the track goes over a cattle grid and bears right turn left. Go through the wooden gate to follow the bridleway between the dry-stone walls. Through the next wooden gate and straight on with the dry-stone wall to your right. At the bottom, go through the gap between the two woods to carry straight on with Hazleton Grove to your left. When the wood ends carry straight on down the track.

4 In Hazleton straight on at the road junction then turn right at the T-junction (Cheltenham, Northleach). Turn left onto a restricted byway at the end of the village (no through road sign) just before a large barn/industrial unit. Keep going straight on until you cross another byway. Cross this byway to take a bridleway across an arable field. Cross the A40 and the next field. When you meet a road cross it and take the lane leading straight on. (If you wish to avoid the field crossings you can turn right onto the other byway, left onto the A40

and take the first right. Take the first right again and you will have rejoined the route.) Turn left after the give way sign at the stone crocodile water spout in Compton Abdale (Roman Villa 2 1/2 Yanworth 3 1/2).

5 After a short steep climb. Turn left onto a bridleway (through a long green metal gate) near the brow where a roadside belt of trees starts. Follow the bridleway towards and through the belt of trees behind the pylons, Then all the way to Yanworth bearing right at the footpath/bridleway sign at its midpoint. At Yanworth go through the brown gate and straight on to the T-junction. Turn left - effectively straight on (Northleach 2 1/2). Stay on this lane until a bridleway crosses it.

6 Turn left onto the bridleway heading towards the pylon. Cross the road and straight on. Cross the road and straight on again, this time joining a restricted byway. Through the metal gate. At the bottom in front of a black gate turn right onto a bridleway. The bridleway curves left to turn into a climb on a concrete track. At the top turn right. Right again when the lane meets the A429, follow the path to the car park of 'Escape to the Cotswolds!'

Short cut and mini-ride

The restricted byway between Turkdean and Hazleton is not only a good ride in its own right it also serves as a shortcut and even better, creates an almost completely off road 'mini ride' when combined with this ride's northern loop. To find it from Turkdean don't turn right at the traffic island with the tree on it, carry straight on instead and turn left at the bus stop after the farm buildings. It's a clear route apart from when you reach the field corner in the valley bottom where you go through the left hand gate (dogs need to be on leads). To find it from Hazleton turn left instead of right at the T-junction (unsuitable for heavy vehicles, Lower Dean). Stay on this lane which soon turns into a byway.

Maps

This ride in its entirety can be found on both the Ordnance Surveys Landranger 163 'Cheltenham and Cirencester area' map and the Explorer Map OL45 'The Cotswolds'.

Further information

The Cotswolds AONB website contains more information about cycling, including downloadable routes, maps and places to hire bikes. Visit www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/cycling

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