

## Nenthead & Garrigill

### ROUTE

The high rolling fells of Alston Moor separate two deep valleys which hold the upper reaches of the River South Tyne and the waters of the River Nent. Both valleys display a classic North Pennine landscape; that magical mixture of walled valley bottoms, pasture and hay meadows backed by rough open fell and interspersed with hamlets. They are both a delight to explore, particularly by bike, as they are endowed with quiet roads and lanes that traverse differing levels allowing both intimate and far reaching views. Conveniently linking both valleys are ancient traffic free tracks.

### 4

The ride starts at the Nenthead Mines car park and kicks off with the steepest climb of the day, up over the wild and lonely Flinty Fell. It then heads down to Garrigill and follows the River South Tyne by a valley side fell lane to Leadgate. A short detour on foot to see Ashgill Force Waterfall (between points 2 and 3) is well worth it. A brief encounter with the A686 leads on to an old high level track on the side of Brownside Moss with views down into Alston. A visit to Alston allows a bit of a refuel at one of the pubs or cafes before another high level section leads back to Nenthead via the southern flanks of Newshield Moss and Wellhope Moor.



## Cross Fell (Mountain Bike Ride)

Cross Fell and its near neighbour Great Dun Fell are ringed by an amazing network of high-level bridledways. They cross wild and exposed moorland and reach a considerable height making them the highest mountain bike routes in England, outside the Lake District. These routes are not for the fainthearted, particularly first timers to the area as they cross high and exposed moorland, and the distances and height gain involved in completing a loop are considerable. The best introduction to the style of riding they offer is to tackle an out and back ride up the bridlway that climbs to the northern shoulder of Cross Fell from the lovely village of Garrigill. There is a fair amount of height to gain on this route but it is achieved over eleven kilometres which gives most of the climbs a moderate and mostly cycle-able gradient.

The majority of the riding is along access track which is stony but well-maintained, with the balance being on stony single track and a final short section on open fell side. The climb is mitigated by superb wide ranging views and interesting old mine workings passed on the way up. The descent is world class and gives long and fast bursts interspersed with cruising freewheels. There are a couple of rock garden sections to deal with through the old mine workings, and some drainage channels to negotiate, but mostly the technicalities are at the softer end of the range. Remember to always stick to the bridledways as this is a conservation area.

- 1 From the southern end of Garrigill follow the lane on the R that climbs past the old chapel (bridlway - signposted for the Pennine Way). The lane climbs a steepening route 5 then W on to the crest of Black Band.
  - 2 On Black Band the track eases and turns sharp L and is followed S as it heads steadily up onto the flanks of Pkeman Hill and Long Man Hill.
  - 3 After Long Man Hill the track enters an area of old mining activity at Cash Burn. Ignore the bridlway that turns L towards Rake End, instead continue on the Pennine Way that heads SW and climbs through a series of technical rocky sections.
  - 4 Exciting single track then leads W across Backstone Edge and the flanks of Cross Fell to make one final climb after passing Gregs Hut (bothy).
  - 5 The high point of the route is rather nondescript open fell on the northern shoulder of Cross Fell 250m after passing the Pennine Way turning. If you are feeling fit and confident you can leave your bike and head up the Pennine Way (path) for the short steep walk to the summit of Cross Fell.
- The descent retraces the same route back down and is a truly outstanding ride. It is a popular path so take care for other users and also watch out for the drainage channels on the lower sections above Garrigill.



Start/finish: Garrigill  
GR NY 745 411  
Distance: 13.7 miles (22km)  
Grade: Hard - Challenge  
Refreshments:  
Cafe: Alston  
Pubs: Alston, Garrigill





# Brampton & Haltwhistle Tour

This cycle tour heads north from Alston exploiting the breach in the Pennines cut by the River South Tyne to explore the stretch of Hadrian's Wall between Brampton and Haltwhistle. It is a full-on cycle tour that covers some busy sections of road as well as quiet fell lanes. The height gain and distance covered are fairly substantial, so to enjoy it you need to be an experienced cyclist. The rewards for tackling this challenging route are plentiful, and range from outstanding views of classic Pennine landscapes, through to fascinating Roman remains.

The ride heads out along quiet lanes on the east side of the River South Tyne and then braves busier fell roads to head west to Brampton. From here it turns east and shadows the impressive remains of Hadrian's Wall as far as Greenhead. It then wanders off to Haltwhistle and regains the River South Tyne by quiet back lanes. The last leg back to Alston takes the climb back up head on, along the 'roller coaster' length of the A689.

**CAUTION:** this route features a steep descent going into a tight bend, just past Barhaugh Hall.

- 1 From the market place in Alston head downhill on the main cobbled street and turn R at the junction.
- 2 Follow the A686 to a turning on the left for Kirkhaugh Church and Randalhome.
- 3 Follow the lane alongside the river and then up a short steep hill to a T-jct.
- 4 Turn L for Barhaugh and Slaggyford. Follow the lane alongside the river, passing through two gates to come to a T-jct after crossing the River South Tyne.
- 5 Turn R onto the A689 and follow it N then NW all the way to Milton.
- 6 Take the first L at the end of Milton village (signed Farlam and Talkin), cross the railway and turn first R (signed Brampton Junction). Follow the road alongside the railway line to a T-jct.
- 7 Turn R onto the B6413 and follow it into the centre of Brampton.
- 8 Head out of Brampton on NCN 72 and follow it through Lanercost and Banks to cycle alongside Hadrian's Wall passing Birdswald Roman Fort Visitor Centre.
- 9 At the T-jct turn R and follow the B6318 through Gisland to Greenhead and continue out of Greenhead for 1.7km.
- 10 Turn R and follow NCN 72 into Haltwhistle town centre.
- 11 Pass under the railway to the left of the station, cross over the river and turn R. Go under the A69 and turn L to follow the cycleway east alongside the bypass for about 1km.
- 12 Turn R onto the road and immediately R again onto the old railway trackbed and follow the cycleway (NCN 68) to Wood Houses car park.
- 13 Leave the cycleway and turn R onto the road (signed Lambley).
- 14 At Lambley turn L onto the A689 and follow it S back to Alston.



**Start/finish:** Alston  
GR NY 718 465  
**Distance:** 47 miles (75km)  
**Grade:** Long - Challenge  
**Refreshments**  
Cafés: Alston, Brampton, Lanercost, Birdswald, Haltwhistle  
Pubs: Alston, Hallbankgate, Brampton, Haltwhistle, Rowfoot



## Newshield & West Allendale

This route climbs out of Alston and heads down to Nenthead before exploring the fascinating upper reaches of the West Allen Valley. It provides a solid days riding, with a mix of valley lanes and some sizeable climbs on fell roads. On a misty or windy day the high points of Black Hill and Willyshaw Rigg will prove challenging to say the least, but given a blue sky and a fair breeze there can be few better spots to be on two wheels. As well as the stunning North Pennine landscape along the way there is plenty to see particularly if you are interested in industrial heritage.

Allendale was once a very important centre for lead mining and every now and again you will spot the remains of the flues that once drew fumes up long tunnels from smelters in the valley bottom.

**CAUTION:** this route features steep descents into Nenthead and on the Loaning into Alston.

- 1 From the Market Place head downhill on the main cobbled street. Turn R at the junction and follow the A686 out of Alston.
- 2 Turn R (signed for Coalthill Hill and North Loaning) and climb the steep hill. Turn R at the T-jct and follow the B6294 down to the A689 and bear L into Nenthead.
- 3 Cross over the River Nent and immediately turn L, then first R (sign posted for Greenend) up the hill. Take care on the steep cobbled descent into Nenthead.

- 4 Turn L onto the A689 and climb out of the village. Turn L to climb to the summit of Black Hill, at 609m the highest point on the Sea to Sea (C2C). Descend north eastwards and bear L down Allendale and through Carrshield.
- 5 Turn L (sign posted for Ninebanks) and continue down Allendale.
- 6 Turn L to cross the river (sign posted for Alston) and bear R uphill. Turn R and climb Ouston Bank to meet the A686.
- 7 Turn L (again, sign posted for Alston) and follow the A686 up and over Willyshaw Rigg.
- 8 Bear L onto the B6294 and turn R (sign posted for Alston). Take care on the steep descent down North Loaning, turn L at the bottom and retrace your route back to the Market Place.

**Start/finish:** Alston  
GR NY 718 465  
**Distance:** 22 miles (35.5km)  
**Grade:** Long - Challenge  
**Refreshments**  
Cafés: Alston  
Pubs: Alston, Nenthead

## River South Tyne

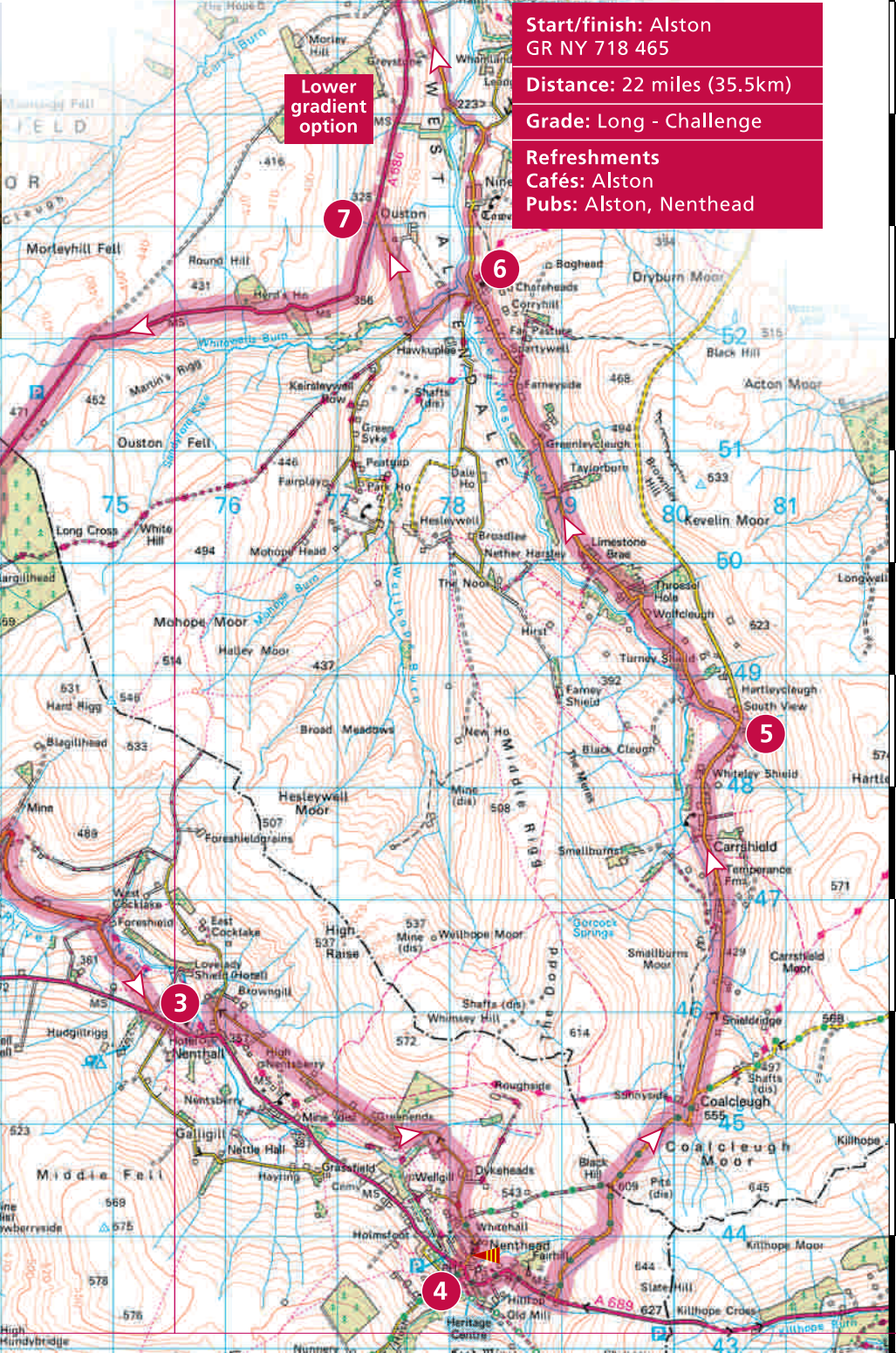
Tracing the course of the River South Tyne downstream from Alston, this route provides an excellent short introductory ride to the area. It first heads out along the fell lanes on the eastern side of the river steadily gaining height to Barhaugh Hall then descending by Blackcleugh Burn to the banks of the River South Tyne. The river bank makes an excellent spot for a rest or a picnic, after which the road bridge just south of Slaggyford allows the other side of the river to be reached. The return to Alston involves another climb to start with but once height is gained glorious views open up across the fells and down into the valley where you might just spot steam trains on the South Tynedale Railway, England's highest narrow-gauge railway.

**CAUTION:** this route features a steep descent going into a tight bend, just past Barhaugh Hall going N.

- 1 From the market place in Alston head downhill on the main cobbled street, turn R at the jct and follow the A686 out of the town.
- 2 After about 1km turn L signed to Kirkhaugh Church and Randalhome and follow the lane as it meanders alongside the river.
- 3 After a short steep uphill to a T-jct, turn L for Barhaugh and Slaggyford.
- 4 After Barhaugh Hall take care on the steep downhill going into a sharp left bend. Follow the lane alongside the river, passing through two gates to come to a T-jct after crossing the River South Tyne.
- 5 Turn L onto the A689 and follow it back to Alston.



**Start/finish:** Alston  
GR NY 718 465  
**Distance:** 10 miles (16km)  
**Grade:** Short - Challenge  
**Refreshments:**  
Cafés: Alston  
Pubs: Alston

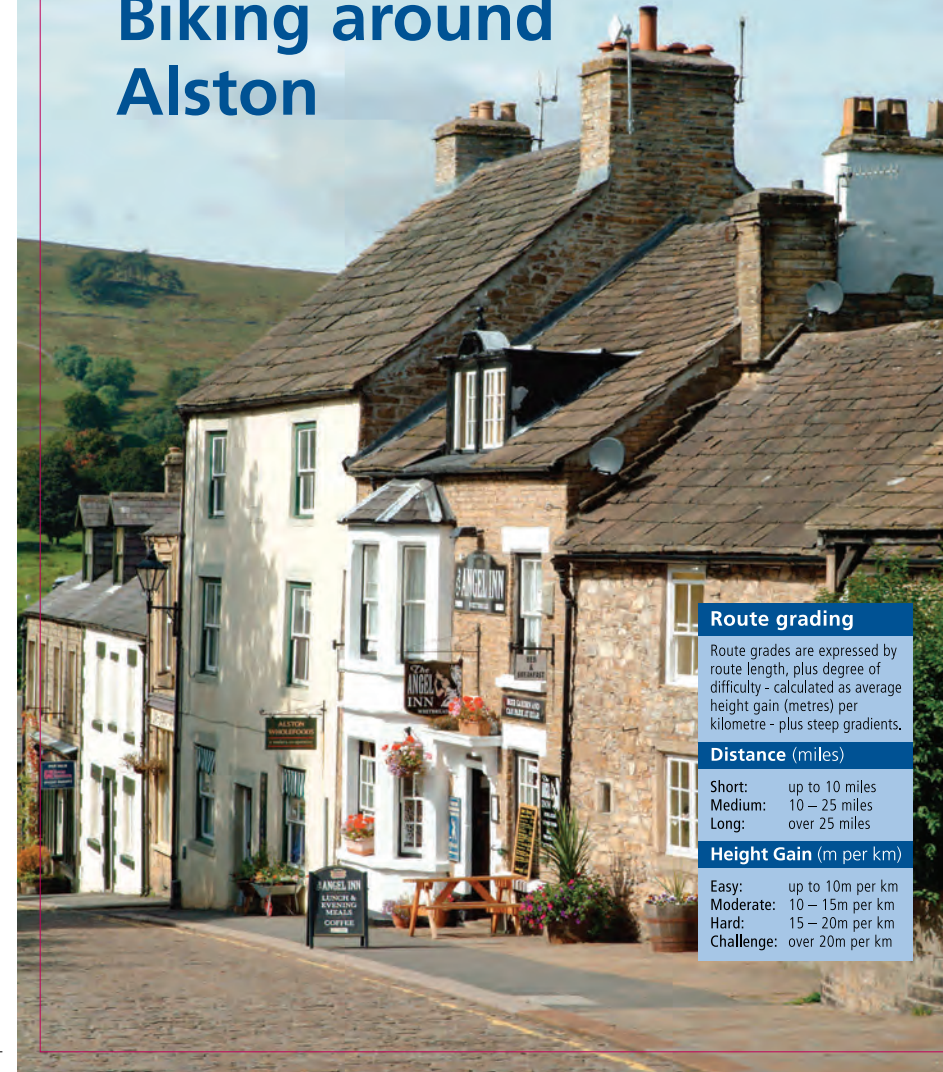




All the routes in this guide start from or near Alston, one of the highest market towns in England. This former mining town is now popular for the walking and cycling opportunities on Alston Moor, which forms part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

A bicycle gives you the freedom to explore this scenic area at your own pace, stopping as you choose to appreciate the views and discover the legacy of its rich mining heritage. The C2C (Sea to Sea) Cycle Route, part of the National Cycle Network and the Pennine Cycleway both pass through the Alston area.

## Biking around Alston



Route grading	
Route grades are expressed by route length, plus degree of difficulty - calculated as average height gain (metres) per kilometre - plus steep gradients.	
Distance (miles)	
Short:	up to 10 miles
Medium:	10 – 25 miles
Long:	over 25 miles
Height Gain (m per km)	
Easy:	up to 10m per km
Moderate:	10 – 15m per km
Hard:	15 – 20m per km
Challenge:	over 20m per km

This guide includes a variety of on and off road routes. These suggested routes are a brilliant starting point for exploring and discovering this wild and beautiful area on two wheels. It is a good idea to have an OS map to hand.

1:25,000 Outdoor Leisure

**OL31 North Pennines**

(Teesdale & Weardale)

**OL43 Hadrian's Wall**

(Haltwhistle & Hexham)

1:50,000 Landranger

**86 Haltwhistle & Brampton**

(Bewcastle & Alston)

**87 Hexham & Haltwhistle**

### Alston

Alston's steeply cobbled streets, hidden courtyards and interesting shops invite exploration at every turn. It's an inspirational area and home to many artists and designers making unique local arts and crafts.

One of the highest towns in England, Alston is 1,000 feet above sea level and surrounded by stunning landscapes. Once one of the richest mining areas in Britain, the area is now popular with cyclists and walkers looking to escape the crowds but reminders of its important industrial heritage can still be seen and explored.



The natural beauty and protected status of the land around Alston make it a special place for wild plants and animals, so keep an eye out for rare moorland birds and flowers. Alston Moor is also home to an important population of the elusive and endangered water vole.

### Getting there

The nearest mainline train station is at Carlisle connecting with bus service 680 to Alston and Nenthead (call 01228 221104 to check cycle carriage arrangements). There are also railway stations at Hexham and Haltwhistle. Call 0871 200 22 33 or visit [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk) to check public transport information before you travel.

### Accommodation and Tourist Information

For a range of serviced and self-catering accommodation in the Alston area, attractions, events and more information on cycling, including other guides in this series, have a look at the following websites:

[www.golakes.co.uk/stay](http://www.golakes.co.uk/stay)

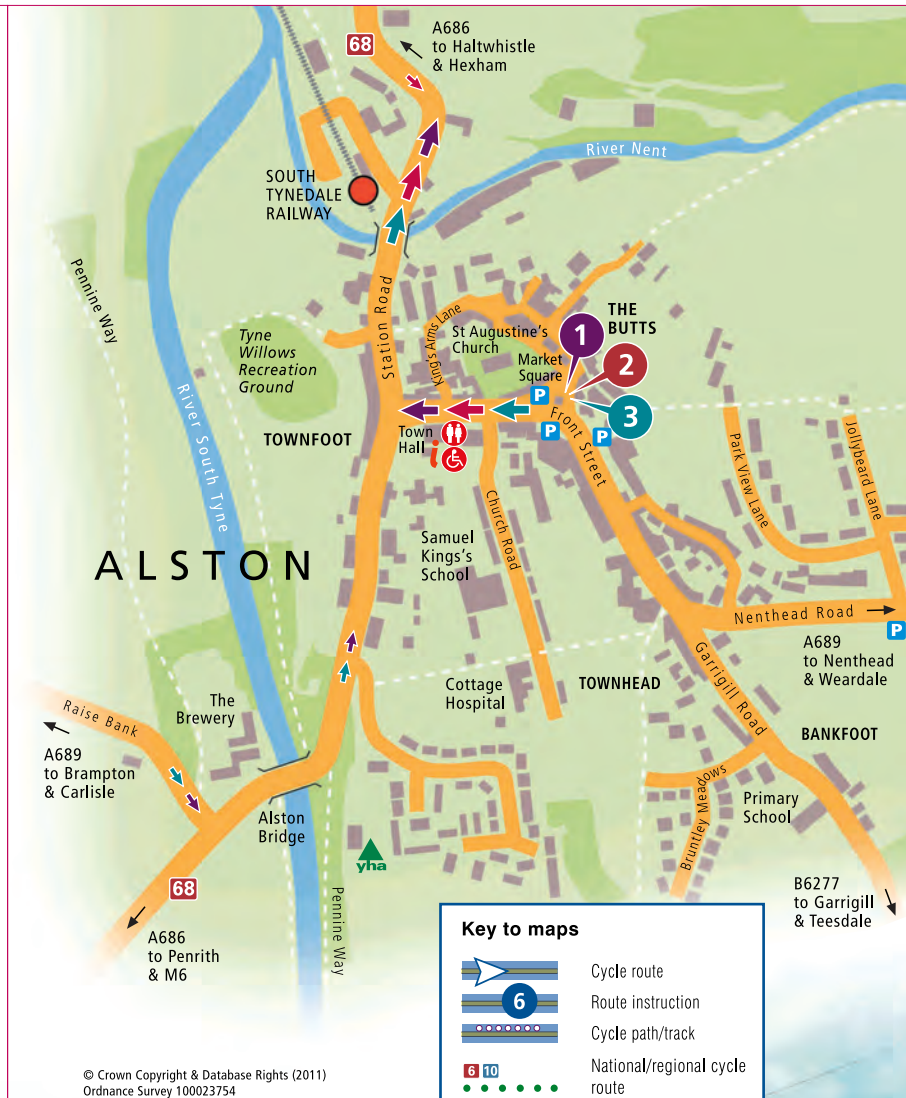
[www.visiteden.co.uk](http://www.visiteden.co.uk)

[www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk)

**Alston Tourist Information Centre**  
(Local Links), Town Hall, Alston,  
Cumbria CA9 3RF

Tel: 01434 382244

[alstonlocallinks@eden.gov.uk](mailto:alstonlocallinks@eden.gov.uk)



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Key to route descriptions	
R	= right
L	= left
SA	= straight ahead/across
jct	= junction
X roads	= crossroads
NCN 7	= National Cycle Network (route number)
m	= metres
km	= kilometre (0.6 mile)
Scale	17mm = 1 km (0.6 mile)

Key to maps	
	Cycle route
	Route instruction
	Cycle path/track
	National/regional cycle route
	Footpath (no cycling)
	Bridleway
	Byway open to all traffic
	Other tracks
	Primary route
	Main road
	Secondary road
	Minor road
	Take special care at this point/section
	Gradient: 14-20% (arrow points downhill)
	Railway
	National Park Boundary

### Following the routes

Each route is highlighted on the Ordnance Survey map with arrows showing the suggested way round and added directions at numbered points to help with navigation. The 'Key to maps / route descriptions' explain the symbols on the maps and the abbreviations used. Where the route uses part of a National Cycle Network route, just follow the distinctive blue signs. The general rule is to keep to the road you're on unless otherwise directed. Please note all distances are approximate.



Sustrans, the UK's leading sustainable transport charity, coordinates the award-winning National Cycle Network, a comprehensive system of safe and attractive routes identified specifically for cyclists and walkers. For more information visit [www.sustrans.co.uk](http://www.sustrans.co.uk)

Look out for Route 72 and Sustrans C2C signs for England's best known long distance cycle route.

### Good Cycling Code

#### Obey the rules of the road

- Always follow the Highway Code
- Ride in single file to let vehicles overtake

#### Be courteous

- Don't assume everyone can see or hear you
- Give way to pedestrians, wheelchair users and horse riders
- Ring your bell or call out (to horse riders) to alert of your approach
- Acknowledge people who give way to you

#### Care for the environment

- Try to reach the start of your journey by bike or public transport
- Follow the Countryside Code: Respect, Protect, Enjoy
- Take any litter home
- Cycle on roads, byways, bridleways and cycle paths, not public footpaths

#### Look after yourself

- Wear a properly fitting helmet and bright, weatherproof clothing
- Be alert to potential hazards and take extra care
- Carry enough food and water, and a map
- Check tyres, brakes and gears often, and be able to deal with a puncture
- Use lights in poor visibility
- Don't use any hand-held device while cycling

Look at [www.lake-district.gov.uk](http://www.lake-district.gov.uk) and [www.imba.org.uk](http://www.imba.org.uk) for codes specifically for enjoying off-road riding.

Thank you for cycling! The bike is the most efficient and environmentally friendly form of transport invented.

### Cycle Shops & Hire

**North Pennine Cycles (shop & hire)**

Nenthead CA9 3PF (next to Miners Arms)

Tel: 01434 381324

[npcycles@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:npcycles@hotmail.co.uk) [www.northpenninecycles.co.uk](http://www.northpenninecycles.co.uk)

**The Bike Shop Hexham**

16/17 St. Mary's Chare, Hexham NE46 1NQ

Tel: 01434 601032

[www.thebikeshophexham.com](http://www.thebikeshophexham.com)

**Edens Lawn Cycle Hire (hire)**

Bypass Road, Haltwhistle NE49 OHH

Tel: 01434 320443

*Other cycle shops are in Penrith:*

**Arragons Cycle Centre**

2 Brunswick Road, Penrith CA11 7LU

Tel: 01768 890344

[sales@arragonscycles.com](mailto:sales@arragonscycles.com) [www.arragonscycles.com](http://www.arragonscycles.com)

**Halfords**

Unit 2, Ullswater Road, Penrith CA11 7JQ

Tel: 01768 892960

[www.halfords.com](http://www.halfords.com)

**adventurecapital**  
**thelakedistrict**  
Cumbria

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Disclaimer: Whilst every effort has been made to present routes where it is legal to cycle, individuals are responsible for their own safety and the safety of others. All information is provided in good faith by the publisher and producer, and was accurate at the time of publication.

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### Guided Cycling, instruction & courses

**Adventure Cycling**

Tel: 07736 816700

[www.adventurecycling.co.uk](http://www.adventurecycling.co.uk)

**CycleActive**

Tel: 01768 840400

[www.cycleactive.co.uk](http://www.cycleactive.co.uk)

**CycleWise Training**

Tel: 01768 898775

[www.cyclewise.co.uk](http://www.cyclewise.co.uk)

**Slug and Hare**

**Bicycle Company**

Tel: 01931 713386

[www.slugandhare.co.uk](http://www.slugandhare.co.uk)



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