

## Carson Rezza

Rainster Rocks, High Peak Trail, Hopton, Carsington Reservoir, Knockerdown

Distance = 22.1 km (13.7 miles); off road = 15.4 km

Total Vertical Ascent = 421m

Ride Time = 1.5 hours

Maps = OS White Peak Area (OL 24) 1:25,000

This ride around Carsington Reservoir is easy and very enjoyable if you have a couple of hours to spare. Two variants are available, but the main route is the best.

Head out of Brassington in a westerly direction on the road to Bradbourne. About 300m beyond the final house (Hipleigh Farm), turn right up the road signposted to Ballidon. Go up and over the hill to where the road turns a sharp corner to the left. The first off road section begins here. The obvious crags ahead are Rainster Rocks.

Go through the right hand of the two gates and follow the bridle path across the grassy field with ridge and furrow. On the far side of the field, a steep, rocky ridge appears to block the way on, but the path manages to squeeze through by sticking close to the wall. Escape into the field on the other side of the wall via the wooden gate. Continue north past some farm buildings to emerge on the main road (B5056).

Turn right up the road towards Longcliffe and less than 50m after passing under the bridge, go through the stile on the right to join the High Peak Trail. If you reach Longcliffe crossroads, you have gone too far.

Loop around to join the trail proper at Longcliffe Station. Turn left and follow the trail for about 4.4 km, past Harborough Rocks and down Hopton incline to the bridge at Rider Point. Just beyond the bridge is a path on the right that will take you down to road level. Turn left and go straight over the crossroads following the signs for cycle route 54A. Drop down the steep, narrow lane into Hopton village and turn left at the T-junction. After 500m, turn right onto a short length of purpose-built cycle path that leads to a crossing of the B5035 (care).

On the other side of the main road is the start of the gravelled path down the east side of the reservoir to Millfields car park. This is 6.5 km of pleasant up and down riding through woods and fields with nice views over the water. There are no real difficulties, but a few steep bits will keep you on your toes. The route is generally well signposted and easy to follow. Minor deviations come at Upperfield Farm (13.9 km) and Hays Lane (15.4 km) where it is necessary to ride a short distance up the road. When approaching Millfields, keep to the upper track and avoid dropping down to the car park itself. You should then emerge onto the road slightly uphill from the car park entrance.

Turn right and ride along the wide grass verge for about 300m (it is not necessary to go onto the road itself). Opposite the entrance to the start of variant 2 (below) is a gap in the wooden fence. Go through this and onto the path along the crest of the dam to the visitor centre. This is perhaps the most enjoyable part of the route.

The visitor centre is the second large building on the right, the sailing club being the first. If you want to avoid the hustle and bustle of this area, keep to the left when approaching. Cross over the first driveway and continue to the second. Cross over again but do not follow the track ahead, instead turn left and ride up the hill on the pavement. Fork right after 50m and follow the cycle path (54A). On the other hand, the visitor centre sells ice cream...

Further up the hill, the cycle path crosses to the other side of the road where it continues along a disused section of old tarmac. After a short distance, it meets the main B5035. Turn right onto this, go past the Knockerdown pub and take the first left signposted to Brassington. From here it is 2.3 km of easy road riding back to the start.

### Variant 1 (Lemon Squeezy)

At the bottom of the steep hill dropping into Hopton, turn right for Carsington village. A short distance past the pub, follow the road around to the left and continue to a junction with the B5035 main road. Cross straight over (care) and take the narrow lane and pathway to the visitor centre where the original route is rejoined. This alternative reduces the route distance to 16.8 km. It is marked in green on the map.

### Variant 2 (The Waterworks)

Instead of riding across the top of the dam between Millfields and the visitor centre, follow the 'longer route' that loops around through the waterworks on the downstream side. This adds 800m of distance and a ford to splash through, but is less enjoyable. It is marked in blue on the map. An even poorer alternative is to escape into Hognaston and follow the road back to Brassington.

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