

Roman Holiday

Rainster Rocks, Longcliffe, High Peak Trail, Minninglow, Roystone, Ballidon, Hipley.

Distance = 14 km (8.7 miles); off road = 10 km

Total Vertical Ascent = 305m

Ride Time = 1 to 1.5 hours

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

This route is an excellent introduction to off road cycling in the area being not too difficult and offering a variety of surfaces to ride on. Several interesting archaeological sites are passed en route and there are marvellous views to be had on a clear day.

Head out of Brassington in a westerly direction on the road to Bradbourne. About 300m beyond the final house (Hipley 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, at the foot of which is a settlement of Roman age.

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 the bridge over the main road. Look for the concrete sign indicating the gradient of the trail ahead and pride yourself in the knowledge that for the next 3 kilometres it is all uphill. Turn right, cross the bridge and head northwest towards Minninglow. After 3.1 km, an obvious track crosses the trail and nearby, to the right, is the distinctive summit of Minninglow Hill. Leave the trail here by turning left down the track of Minninglow Lane (signposted to Biggin).

It is now downhill virtually all the way to Ballidon – 4.7 kilometres – and although most of the surface is tarmac, there is hardly any traffic. Just make sure you don't miss the left turn at Roystone Cottages and enjoy! No wonder they call this a holiday!

If you have time, stop at Roystone Grange to see the Roman farmstead and field system. Also, behind the church-like compressor house are the remains of a mediaeval grange.

At the bottom end of Roystone is a huge limestone quarry. Avoid the heavy traffic by using the short gravel pathway along the left hand side of the road. The path rejoins the road at the grass triangle in Ballidon village. Turn left and follow the track up the hill until it veers sharply left. Keep straight ahead, go through the gate, over the summit (nice view) and steeply down the other side to Hipley.

Take great care crossing the busy main road (B5056) and climb gently up Pasture Lane to the corner in front of Rainster Rocks. Turn right, go down the hill and turn left at the T-junction for Brassington.

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