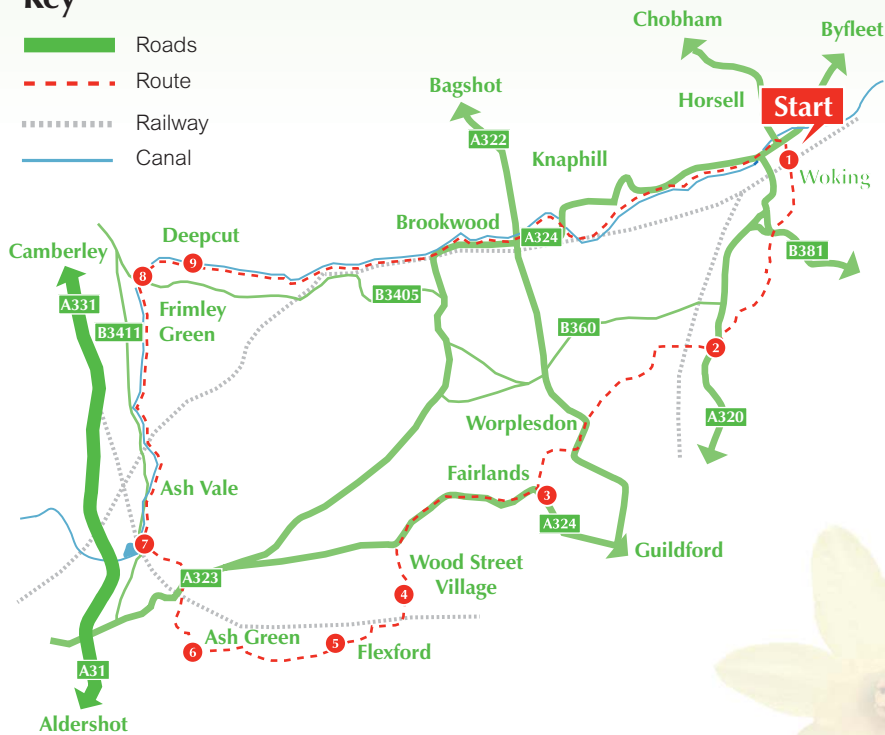


Out and about

The days are getting longer and spring is in the air, so dust off your bike and hit the roads for a breath of fresh air. With thanks to Woking Cycle Users' Group for providing details of this ride.

Key

- Roads
- Route
- Railway
- Canal



Turn left here along the old Guildford Road, to emerge at a staggered crossroads. Cross with care (right then left) over the A320, to join Prey Heath Road.

2. Follow this road under the railway at Worplesdon, round a left bend and up a short hill. Turn right at the top (taking care) into Goose Rye Road, and continue through wooded countryside to reach the A323 by Worplesdon Place Hotel.

Cross the main road carefully and pick up the shared use cycle path on the far side, turning left. Follow this for a short way until a small lane turns right opposite the White Lion pub.

This lane leads through Merrist Wood Agricultural College where interesting baby animals can be seen on the left over a gate just after the path narrows by cottages.

The section through the college is a public footpath but a private road. Technically, bicycles are not allowed to be ridden here, so ride considerably and be prepared to dismount if asked.

3. Remember to turn sharply left after you see a crocodile on your right (keep your eyes open for this)! Turn right out of the gates and then right again at the roundabout onto the A324, a wide and straight road where some cars can be travelling quite fast.

Follow this road for 3km (two miles) until the main road turns sharp right. Go straight ahead at this point on to a quiet road, which comes to an end past some houses.

Off-road part of the route begins here.

4. Join the rough and sometimes muddy path straight ahead through woodland, leading to a bridge

Key facts

Start/finish: South side of Woking Station (by M&S) and finishing by The Lightbox.

Distance: 40km (25 miles) but can be made shorter.

Time: Two to four hours of continuous cycling or take the whole day and enjoy a picnic, or lunch at a pub, en route.

Type of ride: Suitable for cyclists of all abilities.

This ride follows quiet roads and bridleways for the most part, including some uneven surfaces but very few hills.

The route

1. With your back to the station, go straight ahead on a contra flow cycle lane along White Rose Lane, passing the Royal Mail office and going downhill to cross Heathside Road.

Pass Hill View Road on your right, and turn right soon after into Woking Park. This is Woking Cycle Route 3 (soon to be called the Mars Trail under the Cycle Woking proposals).

Go through the park, turning left after the swimming pool to reach Kingfield Road. Here you can use the new cycle crossing to reach Westfield Avenue, opposite, again following the signposted route.

Turn right at a 'give way' sign to join Westfield Road. Soon Route 3 turns left but don't take this. Instead, stay on the main road for another three hundred metres to reach a mini roundabout.



under the railway. Immediately after the bridge, turn right on to a much better bridleway to join a minor road. Turn left to join the Christmas Pie cycle route.

5. Soon you will pass a lovely cottage with a pond on the right. At the next junction, turn right to soon reach a road where you go straight ahead through the village of Christmas Pie.

Go straight over the crossroads but beware of traffic as visibility is poor. The road is now called Green Lane East, which soon becomes a rough track leading out to Green Lane West. Follow this round a right bend past Pound Farm and look out for a track going left.

6. By this point, you have covered just over 16km (10 miles). If you want to shorten your journey, stay on this road, turning right at a T-junction to rejoin the A324. Bear left to stay on this road, which returns to Woking via Pirbright, after 14km (nine miles).

To continue the ride, take the track to the left which continues to join Ash Green Lane East and on to a crossroads. Turn right here.

Follow this road round a left then a right bend, until you emerge on a main road. Turn right and cross the level crossing by Ash station. At the mini roundabout, go left and climb the short hill and then drop down again into Ash.

Go straight over the roundabout and cross the bridge to join the Basingstoke Canal towpath, heading right.

You can stop for refreshments at the shops here, by turning right at the roundabout. Alternatively, continue for 800m (half a mile) for a pleasant pub stop.

7. At the first bridge over the canal, you can cross the waterway to have lunch at the Swan at Ash Wharf.

As you continue along the canal, you will pass several lakes, so keep an eye out for ducks, coots, moorhens, swans and grey herons. The Basingstoke Canal Centre at Mytchett is worth a visit, and is accessed by a small bridge over the canal. It also has a tea room.

After a few more kilometres on the towpath, you will emerge on Guildford Road by the King's Head, a good family pub.

8. Here the towpath changes to the other side of the canal. Turn right over the humpback bridge (controlled by traffic lights) and then left past a cottage.

You will soon find yourself beside the canal on an aqueduct over the main railway line – quite a surprise! As the canal bends right, you arrive at Deepcut.

Deepcut is a long, straight and deep cutting that is prone to blockage by landslip. If you wish to check for obstructions on the canal towpath have a look at the Canal Authority's website at www.basingstoke-canal.co.uk. Diversions are usually well signposted.

9. At Deepcut, there is a parallel path just to the north of the canal. Follow the canal through lovely countryside back to Woking, past several locks. The towpath changes sides again at Pirbright, Brookwood (use the traffic lights here) and Kiln Bridge at St. Johns. The section from Pirbright will soon be hard surfaced, as part of the Cycle Woking improvements, providing an easy finish back to Woking, but do keep your speed down if there are pedestrians.



Woking Cycle Users' Group is made up of local residents of all ages and its aim is to further the interests of cyclists and other vulnerable road users in and around Woking. If you feel strongly about provision for cyclists and wish to help, contact the group's Chair, Roy Benson (01483 740256), or Membership Secretary, Ian Wright (07969 506906), or visit www.wokingcycle.org.uk.

Points of interest

Worplesdon Place Hotel

This hotel offers food all day and was built as a country house, becoming a hotel in the early 1900s.

Merrist Wood Agricultural College

Now part of Guildford College, Merrist Wood has a history dating back to 1318, although the house was built in 1877. The site became an agricultural training centre after the Second World War. There had been plans before this for a mental health institution on the site, but great local opposition meant that this idea was shelved when war broke out.

Christmas Pie

The wonderful name of this hamlet dates back to the time of Henry VIII, when a family called 'Christmas' were prominent in the neighbourhood. The 'Pie' part of the name comes from the Saxon term 'pightel' or 'pightle' meaning a small piece of arable land. Until the area was built up during the 1920s, there was a small field called 'Pie Field' near the Christmas Pie crossroads.

Basingstoke Canal

The Basingstoke Canal was first opened to Pirbright in 1792 and its full length to Basingstoke was completed in 1794. The Canal was never a great commercial success and soon lost out to roads and the railway. Transporting timber and coal kept the canal in operation below Woking until 1947, when the canal fell increasingly into disrepair until it was restored for pleasure use during the 1970s. It reopened in 1991.

Deepcut

This 1km long, very straight and deep cutting avoids further locks, as the canal cuts through the surrounding land to form its long summit level, before dropping down again into Hampshire. The name 'Deepcut' has become associated with the surrounding area.