



## ITINERARY 8

### CLASSIC BOWLAND HILLCLIMBS

The quiet rural roads of the Forest of Bowland have been a magnet for serious road cyclists for decades. Sir Bradley Wiggins used the tough hill climbs of the Bowland Fells to prepare for his Tour de France campaign and the area is a popular destination for sportive riders seeking to challenge themselves on some of the most demanding road routes in England.

This itinerary combines some of the Forest of Bowland's iconic climbs in three classic routes which explore the highlights of this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in one long weekend. Together, they involve more than 3500 metres of ascent in just over 100 miles of cycling. Take your time and take them on individually or combine them in one epic tour of the Forest of Bowland. For the ultimate cycling Challenge, the Bowland 100 is a 100-mile circular route starting and finishing in Lancaster and incorporating all the classic hill climbs in more than 3500m of ascent



**Day 1:** Cycle 46km | 28.5 miles | 1069m of ascent  
**Day 2:** Cycle 67km | 41.5 miles | 1283m of ascent  
**Day 3:** Cycle 54 km | 33.5 miles | 1268m of ascent

## DAY 1

Start from Bentham or Slaidburn

46km | 28.5 miles | 1069m of ascent

Starting from Bentham or Slaidburn, this wild ride tackles the twin passes of Cross of Greet and Bowland Knotts – the only roads to cross the lonely uplands of the eastern side of the Forest of Bowland.

Both fell roads are effectively single track for much of the length, crossing lonely moorland offering outstanding views of the Forest of Bowland and Yorkshire Three Peaks with the Lakeland Fells also often visible on the north-western horizon.

Cross of Greet is a classic Bowland climb up one of the many steep-sided valleys or cloughs that perforate the edges of the Bowland plateau, passing the base of the cross after which the pass is named before a long and sometimes sinuous descent across the moors to Bentham.

After contouring round to Keasden, the climb back up to the gnarly outcrops of Bowland Knotts is steady and graded, followed by a steep and sometimes technical descent through Gisburn Forest and past Stocks Reservoir back to Slaidburn.

Starting from Bentham Station makes this a potentially car-free ride, but starting from Slaidburn and heading clockwise avoids the steepest gradients. At less than 30 miles, this is the easiest of the three routes to ease riders into the saddle and acclimatise to the hilly terrain of Bowland.

## Refuelling options

Stock up on cakes and snacks at Slaidburn Central Stores and enjoy coffees and snacks at the Riverbank Team Rooms in Slaidburn or the Black Pig in Bentham. Gravel bikers might want to detour to Gisburn Forest for a look at the off-road trails and call in at Gisburn Forest Hub for refreshments.

## Getting here

Consider catching the train to Bentham and riding direct from the station. Regular service from Leeds and Lancaster. Timetables at [www.northernrailway.co.uk](http://www.northernrailway.co.uk)

Further information on recreational rail connections here: <https://communityraillancashire.co.uk/lines/bentham-line/>

## DAY 2

### Lancaster – Chipping – Dunsop Bridge – Trough of Bowland

Start from Lancaster or Dunsop Bridge

67km | 41.5 miles | 1283m of ascent

This ride incorporates the classic ride through the Trough of Bowland after exploring the western boundary of the Forest of Bowland. Start from Lancaster (for an exhilarating car-free day ride) or Dunsop Bridge if you're basing yourself locally to explore the Forest of Bowland over a few days. In the latter case, this route can be shortened by following the minor roads from Abbeystead to Street or Lee to Dolphinholme.

From Lancaster, head southwest out of the city into the foothills of the Bowland Fells, climbing to the 'shoulder' of Harris End Fell, Oakencrough and Bleasdale before reaching the pretty little village of Chipping, where refreshments are available.

The route continues into the Hodder Valley, following the river upstream to Dunsop Bridge – gateway to the classic climb through the Trough of Bowland. Tackling it from this side involves a short but steep ascent through Sykes, followed by a scenic descent alongside the headwaters of the River Wyre. There's another extended climb to the viewpoint at Jubilee Tower, followed by a steep descent and one final sharp climb at Conder Mill before the final leg into Lancaster.

#### Refuelling options

Chipping Farm Shop and Brabins Café welcome weary cyclists requiring sustenance and there is another café at Dunsop Bridge which opens at weekends.

#### Getting here

Regular trains on the West Coast Mainline to Lancaster operated by Avanti West Coast. Northern runs trains from Leeds to Lancaster on the Bentham Line.

## DAY 3

### Tour of Pendle and the last Clarion House

Start from Clitheroe

54 km | 33.5 miles | 1268m of ascent

This testing 33-mile circular explores both flanks of the picturesque Ribble Valley and visits the last remaining Clarion House in Britain before taking on Pendle Hill in a challenging finale.

Starting from the busy market town of Clitheroe, the route heads out into the Forest of Bowland, following quiet singletrack lanes into the Hodder Valley before swinging back over Grindleton Fell and into the Ribble Valley.

After crossing the Ribble, the route climbs to 350m over the north-eastern shoulder of Pendle Hill, passing the last surviving Clarion House near Newchurch, before tackling the sustained climb up to the Nick of Pendle and a fast final descent back to Clitheroe.

#### Refuelling options

Bowland Food Hall, just a few minutes from the station, offers an array of sweet and savoury delights to keep you fuelled up and excellent coffee is available from Exchange Coffee House. After the Bowland section, Hudson's Ice Creams in Chatburn makes a convenient pitstop before starting the first 300m ascent of Pendle.

The Clarion House only opens on Sundays, when tea, coffee, cakes and light snacks are available to all visitors. On long summer Sundays, cycling clubs and individual riders from across the north of England make pilgrimages to the Clarion House and visitors are as likely to meet cyclists from Cleethorpes as they are from Clitheroe!

#### Getting here

Northern operates an hourly service from Manchester Victoria to Clitheroe. Connecting trains from the West Coast mainline at Preston via Blackburn.

---

## SHORT CYCLING BREAKS IN BOWLAND

For a car-free three-day cycling break, riding all three routes, base yourself in Slaidburn at either the Hark to Bounty or Dale House Barn.

We've also developed a slightly less scary 80-mile version of the route with 2700m of climbing which takes in most of the big climbs and starts and finishes in Slaidburn.

### Getting here

The easiest way to get to Slaidburn by rail and cycle is via the world-famous Settle-Carlisle line from Leeds. Alight at Hellifield or Long Preston – just south of Settle – then cycle 10 miles along the B6478 to Slaidburn.

---



# DISCOVER

## 1 The Trough of Bowland

Follow the ancient drover's route linking Lancaster with the market towns and rural villages of the scenic Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
<https://www.forestofbowland.com/towns-villages>

## 2 Bowland Knotts

Visit the rugged outcrops of one of the highest points in the Forest of Bowland in Gisburn Forest with panoramic views from the trig point.

## 3 Cross of Greet

Explore the secluded Cross of Greet Valley leading up to another spectacular viewpoint offering stunning views of the Yorkshire Three Peaks and the distant Lakeland Fells

## 4 Clarion House

A unique tearoom and meeting house nestling under the slopes of Pendle Hill, this is the last active Clarion House in the world and a welcoming oasis for walkers and cyclists to enjoy a brew and a natter. Open every Sunday. <https://www.clarionhouse.org.uk/>

## 5 Historic Lancaster

From a Roman fort to a pivotal royal residence and prominent trading port, explore the rich history and heritage of Lancashire's ancient county town. <https://visitlancaster.org.uk/>

## 6 Stocks Reservoir

Discover a little slice of the Scottish highlands in Bowland. Walk around the scenic reservoir and keep an eye open for the rich birdlife making its home there.

## 7 Gisburn Forest

Take a deep dive into the dense woodland of Lancashire's largest tract of forestry. Ride miles of traffic-free trails or walk to the highpoint of Whelpstone Crag for outstanding views.  
<https://www.forestryengland.uk/gisburn-forest-and-stocks>

## 8 The Bentham Line

A popular café and bistro at the heart of the bustling farming town of Bentham on the northern edge of the Forest of Bowland.  
[https://www.facebook.com/blackpigbentham/?locale=en\\_GB](https://www.facebook.com/blackpigbentham/?locale=en_GB)



# EAT

## 9 Slaidburn Central Stores

A friendly family-run café in an idyllic riverside location at the heart of the pretty village of Wray  
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063684575556>

## 10 The Black Pig

A popular café and bistro at the heart of the bustling farming town of Bentham on the northern edge of the Forest of Bowland.  
[https://www.facebook.com/blackpigbentham/?locale=en\\_GB](https://www.facebook.com/blackpigbentham/?locale=en_GB)

## 11 Riverbank Tearooms

Popular café on the edge of the characterful village of Slaidburn conveniently located adjacent to the car park and just a stone's throw from the River Hodder. Popular with cyclists.  
<https://www.riverbanktearooms.co.uk/>

## 12 Hudsons Ice Creams

Famous family-run ice cream shop in the centre of the village of Chatburn. Noted for home-made ice cream and light snacks to take away.  
<https://www.facebook.com/1947HudsonsIcecream>

## 13 Downham Ice Cream Shop

Another fantastic ice cream and refreshment stop in the delightful and traditional village of Downham.  
[www.facebook.com/DownhamIceCreamShop](http://www.facebook.com/DownhamIceCreamShop)

## 14 The Red Pump Inn

An independent family-run country inn with an extensive menu, excellent cask ales, a good wine list and pleasant views from the beer garden.  
<https://www.discoverbowland.uk/Business/the-red-pump-inn/>

## 15 Exchange Coffee House

A long-established coffee house and café in the market town of Clitheroe. Huge selection of speciality coffees roasted on site along with snacks and light meals.  
[https://exchangecoffee.co.uk/places/clitheroe\\_shop](https://exchangecoffee.co.uk/places/clitheroe_shop)



# STAY

## 16 Hark To Bounty Inn

Characterful village inn with accommodation in the pretty village of Slaidburn.  
[www.harktobounty.co.uk/](http://www.harktobounty.co.uk/)

## 17 Dale House Barn

An outstanding boutique B&B with bunk barn run by a very cycle-friendly proprietor. Green tourism Gold Award Winner.  
[discoverbowland.uk/Business/dale-house-barn-and-b-and-b/](http://discoverbowland.uk/Business/dale-house-barn-and-b-and-b/)

## 18 The Traddock

An upmarket county house hotel in the beautiful stone village of Austwick. Outstanding hospitality in a beautiful setting.  
[discoverbowland.uk/Business/the-traddock/](http://discoverbowland.uk/Business/the-traddock/)

**19 Peaks and Pods** Extend your stay in luxurious glamping pod, complete with hot tub with magnificent views.  
[discoverbowland.uk/Business/peaks-and-pods/](http://discoverbowland.uk/Business/peaks-and-pods/)

**20 Slaidburn YHA (exclusive hire basis only)**  
[discoverbowland.uk/Business/slaidburn-youth-hostel/](http://discoverbowland.uk/Business/slaidburn-youth-hostel/)

Also, plenty of self-catering options in both Pendle and Lancaster areas for those wishing to extend their stay:

Lakewood Cottages  
[discoverbowland.uk/Business/lakewood-cottages/](http://discoverbowland.uk/Business/lakewood-cottages/)

Moss Wood Caravan Park  
[discoverbowland.uk/Business/moss-wood-caravan-park/](http://discoverbowland.uk/Business/moss-wood-caravan-park/)

Higher Gills Farm  
[discoverbowland.uk/Business/higher-gills-farm/](http://discoverbowland.uk/Business/higher-gills-farm/)

Cobden View Self Catering Cottage  
[discoverbowland.uk/Business/cobden-view-self-catering-cottage/](http://discoverbowland.uk/Business/cobden-view-self-catering-cottage/)

Height Top Farm  
[www.discoverbowland.uk/height-top-farm-holiday-cottages/](http://www.discoverbowland.uk/height-top-farm-holiday-cottages/)



# CYCLE SHOPS

**A The Green Jersey**

**B Ribble Cycles**, Barrow, near Clitheroe  
[www.ribblecycles.co.uk/our-stores/clitheroe/](http://www.ribblecycles.co.uk/our-stores/clitheroe/)

**C Bowland Bikes CIC**, Clitheroe  
[bowlandbikescic.co.uk/](http://bowlandbikescic.co.uk/)

**D Cycles Recycled**, Clitheroe  
[cyclesrecycled.org/](http://cyclesrecycled.org/)

