

Ride in the shadow of The Downs







12 miles (19km) allow 2 hours riding time

A circular ride through the hamlets and villages that sit in the beautiful undulating countryside north of The Downs. Pedal along quiet country lanes, through farmland and woodland, climbing to scenic views, dipping into villages with ancient churches, traditional country pubs and local character.



How to get there:

Use the free journey planner on the Kent Connected app to find the best route to the Ride in the Shadow of The Downs, whether by train, bus, cycling or driving.

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|  | Start/Finish | ME9 0PP |
|  | what3words | famous.twist.store |
|  | Skill | Bikeability Level 2 |
|  | Terrain | Quiet undulating country lanes with three steeper climbs |
|  | Views | Estuary, The Downs and rolling countryside |
|  | Refreshments | Rodmersham Coffee Shop, The Fruiterers Arms, Rodmersham, The Club@Rodmersham, The Red Lion, Milstead, The Sun Inn, Bredgar, Bredgar Farm Shop & Tea Room, Oad Street Food & Crafts, The Maypole Inn, Borden |

Pedal-by-pedal Guide:

You are free to start your ride at any point on the map: as this is a circular ride, you'll always return to where you began. To help you plan your ride we've flagged where you'll find a pub, restaurant or coffee shop along the way – for a little break during your ride or to reward yourself with a welcome treat once you've finished!

We've provided a pedal-by-pedal guide to help you navigate the route, in addition to the map, and to highlight some points of interest along the way. Remember you don't need to start at No. 1 – you can start pedalling at any point. Your ride, your choice!

1. Leave **Rodmersham Green** with the **Fruiterers Arms** on your right and the village duck pond on your left. The country lane rises passing the **Club@ Rodmersham** and cricket club. Watch out for cricket balls when playing at home. Great views across the sheep fields on your left.
2. At the end of the lane turn left. Keep right onto Rawling Street, heading into Milstead, passed the **Red Lion** and the Ecoffins factory, riding underneath the M2 then passing Mintching Wood Lane. Above the rumble of the motorway you should hear robins, blackbirds and wrens. Entering the village, Milstead Cricket Club is on the left.
3. At the village hall turn right into Horn Hill by the old rectory, fresh free-range eggs available here. Leave Milstead on a dippy lane, back into open fields and on into woodlands.
4. At the bottom of the next hill is a crossroads with Bottom Pond Road – **stop**. It's difficult to see to your left. Cross the road up Bexon Lane, at the top it bears left passing the Scout Activity Centre and into a tree-lined avenue.
5. At the crossroads with Ruins Barn Road, continue straight ahead staying on Bexon Lane, with hedgerows on both sides.
6. Continue on into **Bredgar**, passing the village hall,

school and **St John the Baptist church**, then turn right onto The Street. Alternatively, turn left to visit **The Sun Inn** further down The Street.

7. Pass **Bredgar Farm Shop and Tearoom**, take the next left turn signposted to Borden, going around the duck pond and passing the village park. Turn left onto Silver Street signposted Dean Hill, rising out of the village between hedgerows. At the next Junction follow the road round to the right and continue the gentle climb up Deans Hill with spectacular views of the estuary to your right across the fields. At the top of the hill, the highest point on the ride, Southern Water's covered reservoir is on your left. Enjoy the views as you go down to Deans Bottom.
8. Hold on to your brakes as the descent turns sharp left, right, left, and then right up the side of the valley. Then the lane gently descends down the side of the valley. At the T-junction turn right onto Pett Road, passing the Oast House and stables.
9. At the end of the road, turn right up the hill, a bit of a climb, then over the M2, passing Applegate Farm (there's a butcher here), and then rolling gently down into Oad Street.
10. Turn left, passing **Oad Street Food & Crafts Centre**, and on to one of the few "Quiet Lanes" in Kent. Descend passed Eyehorn Farm Racing Stables, through the hamlet of Eyehorn and then Sunnyhill.
11. At the T-junction, with Borden Primary School ahead, turn right, across the fields you'll see **Borden**. The road rises into **Borden** coming to **St Peter & Paul Church** on the left. At the T-junction, turn left continuing passed the church, the road bears left then turn right into The Street passing **The Maypole Inn**.
12. At the end of The Street, with the black and white cottages ahead, the road bears left, but carefully turn right onto Bannister Hill. The road wiggles down, then rises as it leaves the village.
13. Turn left into Hearts Delight Road, signposted

Tunstall. Great views of the estuary, the Isle of Sheppey and the Kentish Flats Offshore Wind Farm some 30km away. The lane passes through hedgerows and a mix of orchards and open fields. At the end of the road turn left onto Tunstall Road, into **Tunstall** passing the village hall, Tunstall House and **St John the Baptist Church**. The road meanders through **Tunstall** - lots of traffic calming humps - and at the junction with Woodstock Road, turn right and immediately left into Cromers Road. This is a straight road with a deep quarry on the left.

14. At the junction with Highstead Road turn right and immediately left into Stockers Hill. It's quite a climb! Take your time, there's even a bench halfway up. The road, bends left and keeps rising (sorry). At the top you enter Rodmersham Green with a final treat of views across the estuary and then the ride is complete.

This ride along quiet undulating country lanes, with a three steeper climbs, tours the villages and hamlets north of The Downs. Here are some of the things you will discover along the way.

Rodmersham Green – A picturesque village green in a characterful countryside setting. It lies on the northern edge of the North Downs and is a designated conservation area. A handful of houses and cottages were built around the green during the 17th and 18th centuries at which time owners would have benefited from commoners' rights to graze cattle. The surviving medieval houses on the green today are Holly Tree Lodge, Pardoners Cottage and Baker Cottage. Rodmersham Green was surrounded by fruit orchards but by the turn of the 21st century many had been grubbed out and turned over to arable farming. It still retains some of its apple, pear and cherry orchards.

Rodmersham Village Coffee and Shop – A charming village coffee shop overlooking the Green serving breakfast, brunch and lunches. Enjoy freshly made food and drinks in a cosy and friendly environment.

The Fruiterer's Arms, Rodmersham Green – A traditional English village pub and restaurant serving a selection of real ales and homemade food. Log burners keep it cozy in winter. Garden with outside seating.

The Club @Rodmersham – Licensed bar at this squash and fitness club is open to non-members and offers bar snacks and hot and cold drinks. Open fire. Outside seating

Red Lion, Milstead – A family run country pub and beer garden offering delicious pub food. Open Fire and restaurant. Garden with outside seating.

Bredgar – This thriving heritage village lies just inside the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB. Nestled in the rising chalk downland hills you can find a charming village centre and duck pond with a church, welcoming farm shop, tearoom and Inn.

The Sun Inn – a 16th century pub and restaurant that, due to a refurbishment in 2021, is unusually light and airy. A Free House with a large garden, The Sun offers

a wide range of local and imported beers and home-cooked food.

St John the Baptist church – a church has been here for hundreds of years – there's a Norman door and evidence of an earlier Saxon church. A flying bomb that landed nearby during the Second World War destroyed much of the mediaeval stained glass. Fragments collected at the time were re-assembled to form the windows that can be seen today. There's also an 'Alphabet Window' which was installed in 1995 to record various aspects of village life at that time. A lychgate was constructed to commemorate the turn of the millennium and features a row of ducklings on its ridge.

Bredgar Farm Shop and Tearoom – an Aladdin's Cave of treats with locally produced bread, cakes, cheeses, wines, cider, eggs, honey, sausages, oils, ice cream, preserves, marmalade, chutneys and pickles, seasonal fruit and vegetables, as well as pet supplies, gifts and plants. In the Tea Room you can enjoy breakfast, lunch and of course, afternoon tea.

Oad Street Food & Crafts Centre – A destination for local cyclists for years, it offers good homemade food from brunch & lunch to afternoon tea, along with great coffee and, most importantly, homemade cake.

Borden – A beautiful historic village full of heritage buildings centred around the Grade 1 listed Saints Peter and Paul Church, its Primary School and the local inn. Farming in the area is the main industry, although this has been in decline for many years due to the "scrubbing" of most of the cherry and other fruit orchards. Borden also had a bell foundry and small ironmongers.

St Peter & Paul Church - There has been a church in Borden for over 800 years. It is thought that the church was built by monks from Leeds Abbey and they ministered here for three centuries. The first Vicar was appointed in 1160. In the Nave there is a rare Medieval Wall Painting of St Christopher carrying the Christ Child. It is thought the entire walls were probably covered in paintings at one time. The tower is the oldest part of the church dating back to 1160. It is built of Caen stone and has a Norman arch with dog tooth carving.

The Maypole Inn, Borden – A traditional 18th Century village pub serving fine ales and homemade food. There is a garden and outside seating.

Tunstall – A picturesque rural village hamlet with a population less than a thousand and surrounded by orchards, fields and countryside. Unusually for an English village, there are no shops or pubs within the village boundaries; these have been prohibited since the Middle Ages. The only village amenity is in fact a telephone box!

St John the Baptist, Tunstall – Pause for a moment to check out this ancient church and churchyard with lovely countryside views. It is believed that a church stood on this exact same spot in Saxon days. The oldest part of the present building is the Chancel which was rebuilt about 1250 using Caen stone. The spiral stair in the tower leads to a peal of eight bells which are regularly rung.

In the churchyard on the north side of the church is an ancient yew, estimated to be about 1000 years old, and close by among other trees planted in 1865 is a Wellingtonia.

The church is open during the day.

We have taken all responsible steps to ensure that this route is safe and achievable by people with a reasonable level of fitness and skill. However, all outdoor activities involve a degree of risk. To the extent permitted by law, Swale Borough Council accepts no responsibility for any accidents or injury resulting from following this route. Walking and cycling routes change over time. Weather conditions and other road users may also affect the route. Please use your own judgement when using the route, based upon the weather and the ability, experience and confidence levels of those riding.

