

Cycle route: Scarborough to Whitby



ROBIN HOOD'S BAY: Along the route

This route, and others we will publish later in the year, have been supplied by NY Times readers who have found them particularly enjoyable. They are being shared in the hope that other cyclists might enjoy them. The routes have not been assessed for safety by North Yorkshire County Council, so cyclists should exercise the caution they normally would during any ride.

In my opinion North Yorkshire's best cycling route is along the old railway line between Scarborough and Whitby, which was constructed in 1885 and carried trains until Dr Beeching closed the line in 1965. Once the tracks had been removed, the railway line became a magnificent cycle track, following the coast for 20 miles with the sea on one side and the North York Moors on the other.

It forms part of the National Cycle Network, Route 1, and is also part of the Moor to Sea Cycle Route and the North Sea Cycle Route. The best kind of cycles for this route are probably trail bikes or mountain bikes because the track is rather rough-going in some places.

The route is completely off-road apart from the section through Robin Hood's Bay and a small stretch on the outskirts of Scarborough. The scenery is majestic, travelling through picturesque villages and giving breathtaking panoramas from some of the highest sea cliffs in Britain.

If you set off from Scarborough, the route begins behind Sainsbury's in Falsgrave. There are plenty of attractions to be explored along the way. There is Ravenscar, the seaside resort that never was. Developers laid out vast streets and squares but very few were actually built because the proposed resort lacked any beach!

To the north of Ravenscar are the remains of the 18th century Peak Alum Works, part of one of the first chemical industries in Britain, developed at a time when alum was a vital ingredient in the dyeing of clothes.

Further along the coast you come to Robin Hood's Bay, a quaint fishing village with a very steep road leading down to the shore, past rows of ancient cottages. During the Napoleonic Wars the village became a thriving smuggler's port and the cottages had secret inter-connecting passages to move contraband without it being seen by excisemen.

Finally, you arrive in the ancient, historic town of Whitby. The ruined abbey was founded in 657 AD by Saint Hilda and can be seen from many miles away, high upon the cliff top overlooking the town. Whitby is famous for its jet and its 200 million-year-old ammonites which can be found along the rocky foreshore. The town also has strong literary connections. Bram Stoker used Whitby as a setting for Dracula's arrival in Britain from Transylvania. The town with its red-tiled roofs has changed little from the Victorian era.

I can't think of anywhere else in the British isles which can pack so much rich landscape and so many interesting locations into a 20-mile cycle ride.

Alan Harland, Scarborough

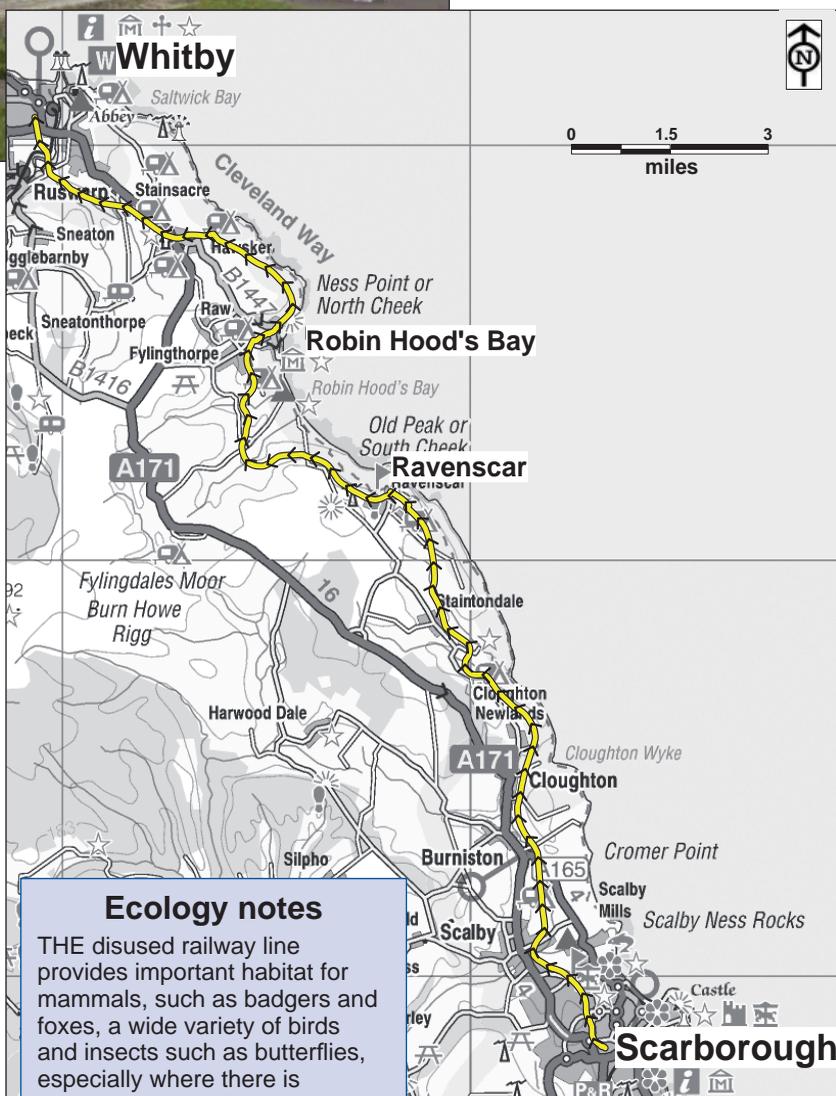
Before your journey

- Make sure your bike is fit for use. If in doubt, have your bike checked at your local bike shop.
- Make yourself as visible to other road users as possible.

During your journey

- Always wear a cycle helmet. Stay alert to poor road surface, other road users, blind bends, correct road positioning, give clear and correct hand signals, and in wet weather occasionally apply brakes to remove excess water.

- For more safety information contact the County Council's Road Safety and Travel Awareness Team on roadsafety@northyorks.gov.uk



Ecology notes

THE disused railway line provides important habitat for mammals, such as badgers and foxes, a wide variety of birds and insects such as butterflies, especially where there is intensively farmed land on either side. In the more wooded areas you may see the tall white clusters of greater stitchwort, the contrasting red campion flowers. In spring, the open grassy areas support bird's-foot trefoil, known as "bacon-and-eggs". The explanation of the "bird's-foot" comes later in the year, with the shape of the seed pods. As the route nears Whitby, a steep wooded valley drops down to the left. Here there are mature oaks, sycamore and birch in the canopy, lots of hazel bushes underneath, and a wonderful carpet of woodland flowers in the spring, including bluebells, primroses and wild violets. Lots of ferns can be seen in the damper areas, together with large clumps of the spectacular pendulous sedge, with its long drooping flower-heads.

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If you like
this ride,
there's more...



THIS ride forms part of the Moor to Sea cycle route, which takes in large parts of the North York Moors and coastline, stretching from Pickering, through Dalby Forest to Scarborough, Whitby, Castleton, Danby and Great Ayton.

Much of the route is off-road, through forests, across moorland and, of course, along the coast.

The route is promoted by North Yorkshire County Council and North York Moors National Park.

• For more details, go online to www.moortoseacycle.net.