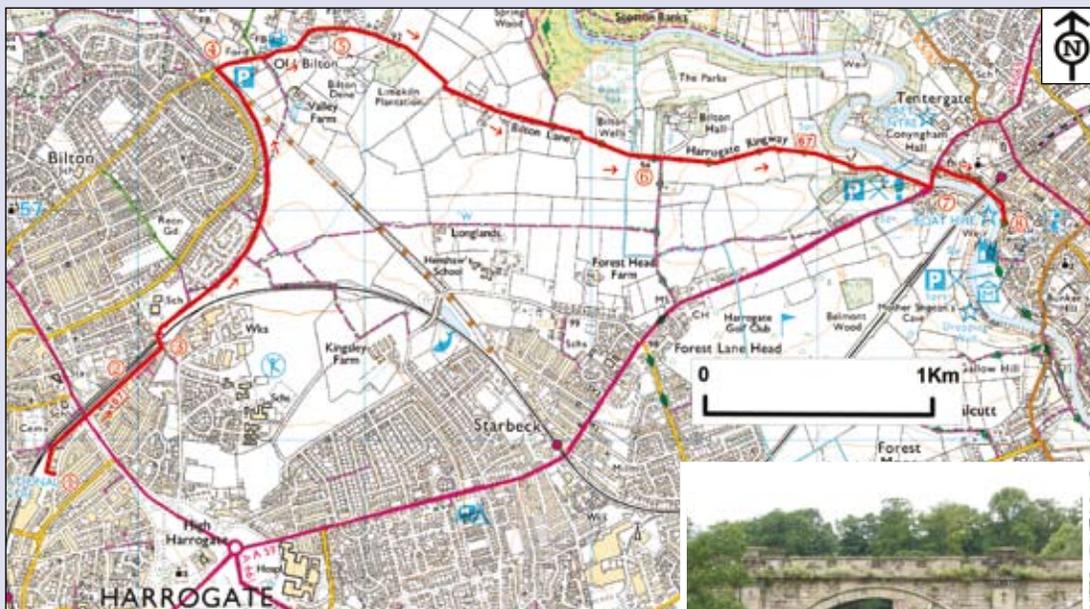


Cycle route: Harrogate to Knaresborough

including Bilton, Dragon Cycleway and Beryl Burton Cycleway



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The route: A 3.8-mile (6.2km) linear cycle route starting from Dragon Road, Harrogate.

Difficulty: Easy, one steep hill for a short distance going up Bilton Lane. You will need OS Explorer Map 289 (Leeds, Harrogate, Wetherby & Pontefract)

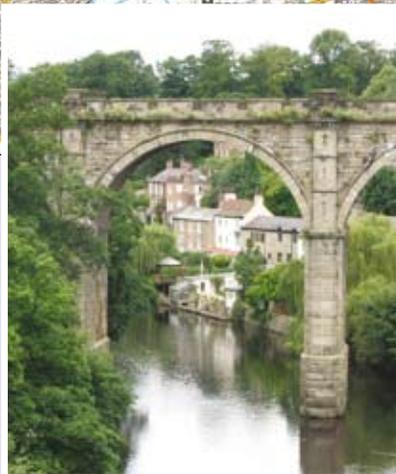
Parking: Car parking is

available in Harrogate.

Public transport:

A regular rail service operates between York, Knaresborough, Harrogate and Leeds with limited provision for cycles.

For further details, go to www.northernrail.org or www.nationalrail.co.uk or call 08457 484950.



THIS linear link is based on a route submitted by reader Jane Hamilton, of Harrogate. It's a short urban and rural journey that encounters a variety of wildlife, including blackbird, thrush, robin, magpie, sparrow, blue-tit, goldfinch and

the occasional squirrel. But, says Jane, she has yet to see any dragons, despite the cycle route's name. The cycle track is well used by pedestrians and cyclists. It allows cyclists to travel between Harrogate and Knaresborough without using the A59 road.

1. From the centre of Harrogate, starting on Dragon Road past the supermarket, turn left into the car park (signposted Dragon Cycleway) then turn right along the cycleway running parallel to the railway line.
2. On reaching Grove Park Avenue, turn left and head along the avenue towards the pedestrian bridge.
3. Continue over the bridge crossing the railway line. Follow the cycleway to the T-junction with the path, turn right at the T-junction, continuing along the cycleway.
4. Follow the cycle track along the dismantled railway to where it meets the road of Bilton Lane. This can be an alternative start to the route, with car parking available. Turn right, heading along the lane (be aware of traffic). Continue up the short climb. This is the hardest section of the route.

5. After the short climb, the road heads right and continues ahead after you have passed the caravan site on your left, continue along the Beryl Burton Cycleway. Follow this cycleway along Bilton Lane.

6. On reaching the entrance to Bilton Hall continue straight ahead along the cycleway signposted for Knaresborough. Follow this cycleway, passing fields, a wooded area and then running alongside the River Nidd into Knaresborough.

7. Reaching the end of the cycleway, the entrance to Mother Shipton's Cave is across the road. Turn left over the bridge crossing the Nidd. The entrance to Conyngnam Hall is on your left. Cross the road with care and head down the lane known as Waterside Lane.

8. Continue down the lane, passing under the viaduct, and continue to the foot of the

castle. From this point, access is provided to the centre of Knaresborough.

Before your journey:

- Make sure your bike is fit for use. If in any doubt, have it 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, livestock, blind bends and correct road positioning;
- Make clear hand signals;
- In wet weather, occasionally apply brakes to remove excess water; and
- Beware of icy patches on roads, especially minor roads that may not have been gritted.

For more safety information, contact the County Council's road safety and travel awareness team on roadsafety@northyorks.gov.uk.

Notes

Historic environment

THE area near map reference 2 would have been unpleasant for recreation 150 years ago when there was a bleach yard for boiling and whitening flax using a variety of nasty substances in preparation for weaving into linen cloth.

The wonderful curve on the railway track was put in at Dragon Junction to join up the new station at Harrogate with Bilton in 1862. It was closed to passenger traffic in 1966.

Old Bilton was close to Bilton Colliery, which was worked from small pits and shallow shafts from the mid-18th century, but possibly during the medieval period, too. Spoil heaps can still be seen in Bilton Banks, accessible along a right of way.

The road bridge over the Nidd has been rebuilt several times since its medieval origins but gained status when it carried the Skipton to Knaresborough turnpike road in 1777.

Linda Smith
Rural archaeologist

Ecology

AS the route leaves the outskirts of Harrogate, it runs through a patchwork of small grassland fields and hedgerows. These provide food and shelter for many small mammals, such as voles and field mice, with the hedges being used as foraging routes for bats and sheltered places for hedgehogs to hibernate. The River Nidd runs to the north of Bilton Lane and the extensive woodland between the river and the lane is ancient woodland and a designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. The wood contains a good range of tree and shrub species, including elm, ash, oak, field maple, hazel and wild cherry. In spring, the ground is covered in a carpet of bluebells, patches of beautiful white wood anemone flowers and tiny purple violets.