

Bude to Bideford – via Stratton, Thornbury and Shebbear

This is a very scenic route using quiet roads (indeed some so quiet there is a grass strip up the middle). It is about 31 miles; the NCN3 route is much longer. There is another somewhat shorter route via Kilkhampton (see separate document).

Use the bridleway from Bude Junior School to the A39/A3072 junction (see separate map).

Go straight across the A39 (take care crossing – if very busy, use the traffic island) and down Hospital Road (A3072) to Stratton.

Take the 2nd left after the bridge (the 1st is No-Entry) and ride up past the Tree Inn, then right opposite Stratton Stores to pass below the church.

After 500m take the left fork (not Diddies Lane) and climb all the way up to the crossroads with the B3254 (Red Post to Kilkhampton road) at Hershams.

Go straight across the B3254 (signed 'Bradworthy 7'), descend the hill and then climb up to Moreton Pound.

At Moreton Pound ignore the road off to the left and go straight on (signed 'Bradworthy 6').

The route now goes east for 5½ km to Youldonmoor Cross on the Holsworthy to Bradworthy road (ignoring roads off to the right, left and right). You will cross over the River Tamar into Devon & pass over the Bude aqueduct canal.

Go straight across at Youldonmoor Cross, then after 1500m take the first right (signed 'Holsworthy Beacon').

After 200m follow this road round to the left (signed 'Holsworthy Beacon') and continue for 1000m to the next junction. Veer right here to join the more major road (now signed 'Holsworthy 4') and continue 1000m to the A388 crossing at Holsworthy Beacon.

Go straight (signed 'Thornbury') across the A388 (take care) and then turn left after 200m (also signed Thornbury (but sign often obscured)).

Go along this road for 2½ km to Branches Cross (ignoring a left after 2 km to South Wonford and ignoring another left to Thorne shortly after).

At Branches Cross take the angled left turn (signed 'Thornbury 1¼') and continue on this road (caution – quite potholed) for 700m to a T-junction.

Turn left at this T-junction and, ignoring the next road off to the right, continue 900m to Thornbury.

Go straight on through Thornbury, passing the church and ignoring roads going off to the right and left. This road goes downhill for about 900m and then crosses the River Waldon on a small bridge.

Take the right fork after this bridge and ascend for 600m to an offset crossroads at Gidcott Cross. Veer right then sharp left (signed 'Shebbear') at this offset junction.

This road twists and turns (in a generally easterly direction). After 1600m it crosses the River Torridge and after a further 1600m comes to a junction at Pitt Cross.

At Pitt Cross turn left (Shebbear, with its pub & shop, is 200m in the other direction up a steep hill).

Take the next right almost immediately.

This road climbs for about 800m up to Berry (where a sign warns of free-range children). About 100m after Berry turn right (signed 'Stibb Cross 4'). After 1700m this road comes to a T-junction onto the Shebbear to Stibb Cross road,

Turn right (signed 'Shebbear') but then after 150m turn left onto a minor road (signed 'Badworthy').

Continue up this road for 4 km (ignoring a left turn to Newton St Petrock after 1500m and ignoring a 2nd left turn to Langtree after a further 1800m).

About 700m after the left turn to Langtree (which you did not take!) is a very small road going off on the right with a large blue sign saying 'Unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles'. Take this right turn.

Ignore a road going off to the left after 450m and go straight across the next crossroads after a further 550m. This road now goes through the little hamlet of Berry Cross. Just after the hamlet there is a very minor junction (with two farm lanes) – you follow the road round to the left at this point.

This road then proceeds for about 1500m before descending steeply to cross the Tarka Trail cycleway. If you get to the bottom of the steep hill, you have gone 100m past the Tarka Trail!

Turn left * onto the cycleway. The surface is grit for just over 2 km until Watergate Bridge (where the B3227 Stibb Cross to Gt Torrington road crosses the Tarka Trail).

There is a small carpark at Watergate Bridge so it is a possible point to meet any family who have come up to the Tarka Trail by car.

** if, instead, as you join it, you turn right onto the cycleway, there is an excellent wood-cabin café (Yarde Orchard) 2km along the Trail at East Yarde.*

From Watergate Bridge the Tarka Trail has a tarmac surface and is gently downhill all the way to Landcross (6 km) and then it is flat for a further 2½ km to Bideford station.

There is no sensible parking near Landcross but there is parking at Puffing Billy (on the Tarka Trail just off the A386 Bideford to Gt Torrington road near Rolle Bridge) and there is also some parking near Bideford station – so Puffing Billy and Bideford station are also possible points to meet if you are doing a bike share or meeting family.

Total distance is about 31 miles (48 km) – whereas using NCN3 from Bude to Bideford (via Marhamchurch, Bridgerule, Holsworthy & Sheepwash) is approximately 45 miles (72km).