

With its combination of woodlands, chalk downland, rolling fields and small villages, the North Hampshire countryside is a superb area for cycling. This route starts at Festival Place in the centre of Basingstoke, goes through the War Memorial Park and then heads south along traffic calmed roads and a newly created cycle path to Hatch Warren.

Leaving Basingstoke, it passes through Cliddesden and then climbs steadily to the higher ground around Ellisfield which affords fine views back over the town. Following quiet rural lanes which undulate through the small villages of Bradley and Lower Wield you arrive at Medstead where the route divides. The main NCN Route 23 continues a gradual descent to Bighton and Alresford and the link to Alton descends gently through Chawton Park Wood along the new traffic free path created from a Forest Enterprise permitted road and a bridleway newly surfaced for cyclists by the County Council.

Being only one section of the longer Route 23, this is inevitably more of an 'end to end' route, but with a little planning and the help of Ordnance Survey Landranger Map No 185, very good circular routes can be undertaken by the more adventurous cyclist.

Those using mountain bikes may like to try out all or part of the Ox Drove Way Off Road Cycle Trail. The Ox Drove Way, once a drove route for cattle, passes through the heart of rural Hampshire across beautiful rolling hills, through woodlands and past small farms.

The most useful section for cyclists seeking an alternative return section between Alresford and Lower Wield is shown on the main map overleaf. This part of the Ox Drove Way can be ridden with care on road bikes in dry weather but can become very slippery when wet. A leaflet describing the full 25 mile circuit can be obtained from Hampshire County Council information centres or via the cycling pages at www.hants.gov.uk/cycling



Watercress Line

The scenic Mid-Hants railway, commonly known as "The Watercress Line" operates heritage steam train services over a distance of 10 miles between Alresford and Alton.

This was formerly part of the Alton to Winchester railway, originally constructed in 1865 and closed following the Beeching review in 1973. Preservation groups got together almost immediately afterwards and the first section from Alresford to Ropley re-opened for business as early as 1977. In 1983 the line was extended to Medstead and Four Marks Station and continued on to Alton in 1985. The railway is now one of the largest leisure amenities in central Southern England.



Trains run on most days throughout the summer months and at weekends and holiday periods during the rest of the year. However it is always best to check train times in advance, either via www.watercressline.co.uk or by phoning 01962 733810.

The trains have a traditional guard's van which can easily carry a number of cycles. So if you are based in or around Alresford or Alton or are cycling from Basingstoke and wish to return by a different route, why not make use of the train one way between the two towns to add a new dimension to the day.

Maps and leaflets

The most useful map to take with you is the Ordnance Survey Landranger Sheet 185.

Other relevant leaflets and maps available from Hampshire County Council Information Centres and local Council offices:

NCN Route 23 Basingstoke to Reading and as pdf on www.hants.gov.uk/cycling

Ox Drove Way Off Road Cycle Trail and as pdf on www.hants.gov.uk/cycling

Basingstoke Cycle Route Map and as pdf on www.basingstoke.gov.uk/transport/cycling.asp

Winchester City Cycle Map available in hard copy only.

Train Services to Basingstoke and Winchester operated by South West Trains www.swtrains.co.uk and Virgin Trains www.virgintrains.co.uk

Services to Alton operated by South West Trains and between Alton and Alresford by the Mid-Hants Railway www.watercressline.co.uk

National Rail Enquiries 08457 48 49 50

Contacts

Hampshire County Council www.hants.gov.uk/cycling

Cycling provision in Hampshire is a partnership between the County Council's Recreation and Heritage and Environment Group departments.

Sustrans – the sustainable transport charity – works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport in order to reduce motor traffic and its adverse effects. As well as its flagship project, the National Cycle Network, Sustrans is working on Safe Routes to Schools, Safe Routes to Stations and other practical responses to the transport and environmental challenges we face. Sustrans' work relies on the generous donations and monthly standing orders of 40,000 Supporters, and the support of charitable trusts, companies, the National Lottery and local authority programmes. www.sustrans.org.uk

This route is a partnership between

- Alton Town Council
- Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
- East Hampshire District Council
- Forest Enterprise
- Hampshire County Council
- Millennium Commission
- Sustrans

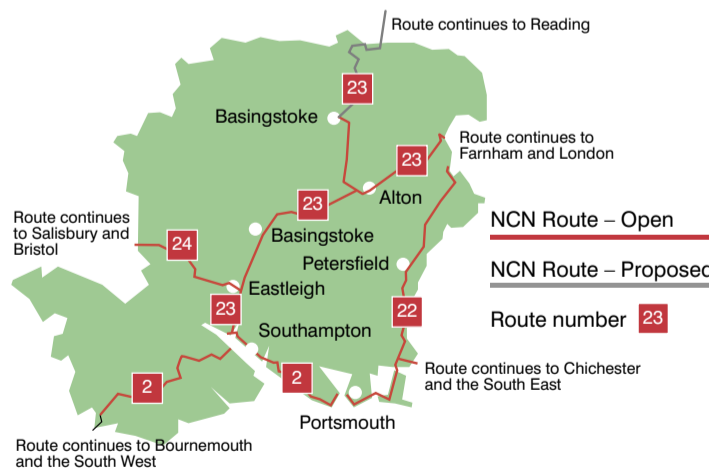


Part of the National Cycle Network in Hampshire



NCN Route 23
From the Thames to the South Coast

The popular 22 mile Reading to Basingstoke section of Route 23 opened in June 2003. This new section extends this route southwards for a further 18 miles to Alresford, with an additional 5 mile link from Medstead to Alton that includes an excellent traffic free path through Chawton Park Wood. Sustrans and Hampshire County Council is working in partnership on further extensions to and through Winchester to link with the existing southern sections around Southampton where the route will also link with the main south coast cycle route, NCN Route 2. Across the Solent, Route 23 continues on the Isle of Wight with extensive traffic free sections between Cowes to Sandown.



The National Cycle Network is a comprehensive network of safe and attractive places to cycle throughout the UK. 10,000 miles are due for completion by 2005, one third of which will be on traffic-free paths, the rest will follow quiet lanes or traffic-calmed roads. It is co-ordinated by the charity Sustrans, with the generous support of over 450 local authorities and other partners.

For more information on routes in your area, contact:

Sustrans, National Cycle Network Centre,
2 Cathedral Square, College Green, Bristol, BS1 5DD

Tel: 0845 113 0065 or visit the interactive mapping on our web site: www.nationalcyclenetwork.org.uk

Basingstoke to Alton and Alresford

Cycle 23 miles of cycling along quiet lanes and traffic free routes in the attractive North Hampshire countryside



Hampshire
County Council

Basingstoke to Alton and Alesford



Route 23 continues to Reading



1 Basingstoke

See the inset panel overleaf for details of the route southwards through the town. Most of the route is either traffic free or follows traffic calmed roads or on-carriageway cycle lanes, before leaving the built up and passing under the M3 on Woods Lane to reach Cliddesden.

Basingstoke

Route starts at Festival Place

PH

2 Cliddesden

Just 500 metres from the edge of bustling Basingstoke as the crow flies, but otherwise a world apart. The main feature of this small settlement of around 300 people is the village pond, a former watering place for animals set amid former agricultural buildings.



4 Bradley

A small village with a neat duck pond in the centre surrounded by a good number of Listed dwellings and the flint-faced church of All Saints on the nearby slope. The road through the village is single track only with some blind bends and due caution should be exercised when negotiating this section.

5 Lower Wield

A loose knit group of buildings with a useful refreshment stop, the Yew Tree PH just to the south.

8 Alton

A small market town with a wealth of attractive buildings. Previously famous for its hops and breweries, Alton has a good variety of pubs and eating houses. The signed cycle route stops at present at The Butts, a 'village green' considered by Altonians to be one of the finest in Hampshire. The intention is that it will be extended to Farnham once a satisfactory route through the centre of Alton has been agreed and necessary works carried out. The station is just outside and to the north east of the town centre. An interim route from The Butts to the station is expected to be signed later in 2005.

6 Medstead

Located on the Hampshire Downs, Medstead is one of the highest villages in Hampshire at over 210 metres above sea level. Main feature is its 12th Century church. There is also a pub and a small general store – the only shop on the entire route outside the three main towns.

Alton

7 Chawton Park Wood/Four Marks

With the help of Alton Town Council and Forest Enterprise the body that manages Chawton Park Wood, the County Council has improved an existing bridleway to produce an excellent largely traffic free path that links Alton with the village of Four Marks. The path passes through Chawton Park Farm on the approach to Alton – this is a working farm and cyclists are asked to take particular care and slow down when going through the farm yard area.



On road route

Traffic-free route

Ox Drove Trail link

Mid-Hants Railway

Public House/refreshments

PH

Scale 0 1 mile

North

3 Ellisfield

Set high on the chalk hills south of Basingstoke, but with no obvious centre. Most notable building is the imposing Fox PH, but those with their own refreshment might wish to stop at the small but very pleasant rest area, thoughtfully provided on the west side of the road by the Axford Road junction.

PH

PH

PH

PH

10 Cycling on to Winchester

The exact route of NCN Route 23 from its present termination in New Alresford to Winchester and beyond has not yet been finalised. More work is required both within New Alresford and Winchester before this section can be opened to full NCN standards. In the meantime more experienced cyclists wishing to continue to Winchester and perhaps return to Basingstoke by train should consult the OS Landranger Sheet 185. The most attractive route for cyclists follows the minor road along the Itchen Valley through Ovington, Avington and Easton. After Easton the cul-de-sac that terminates at the edge of Junction 9 of the M3 can be followed as there is a pedestrian route through the junction to Easton Lane on the Winchester side that is also used by local cyclists. Once through the junction into Winchester, consult the City Cycle Map for the best route to the station.

9 Alresford

Small Georgian town with a wealth of attractive colour washed buildings and a good selection of shops pubs and tea houses. Its fortunes were originally based on the wool trade, but the town is now better known for its watercress beds which increased in importance after the coming of the railway in 1865. The signed cycle route terminates at present at the town's focal point, the junction of Broad Street, West Street and East Street. The station is less than 300 metres away to the south – not surprisingly, along Station Road.

Alresford