

We want to publish your local group's favourite route. Contact the editor to find out what's required (p84)



(Left) There's a café at the Lavender Farm (Below) Chipping Camden



## Cheltenham

No one knows great rides like CTC's local groups. **Ron Carlton** describes a ride in the Cotswolds, home to the 2008 Birthday Rides

CTC members in Cheltenham are blessed with a wide range of countryside within easy reach. Northwards we can enjoy the Vale of Evesham, westwards there's the Forest of Dean and rural Herefordshire just over the Severn, and south west there's the quiet countryside alongside the Seven Estuary. To the east, meanwhile, lie the Cotswolds.

This area is well known for its picture postcard scenery and its honey-coloured stone cottages. It's a stiff climb to get up onto the Cotswolds from Cheltenham, which nestles under the Cotswold escarpment, but it's well worth it.

Cheltenham is a section of Bristol CTC, and has been active since the 1980s. There are group rides on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sundays see 30-40 members meeting at Pitville Park in Cheltenham for a choice of three or four rides ranging from 40-80 miles, or up to 100 miles in summer.

Cheltenham CTC is active in both the riding and organising of audax events. The popular Cotswold Corker 100km ride is held every February and the 200km Cheltenham Flyer is in March. This year many of our members will be helping with the Birthday Rides, which will be at nearby Moreton-in-Marsh.

Moreton-in-Marsh is the destination of one of our favourite rides from Cheltenham. It takes in some of the best parts of the

Cotswolds and the market towns of Chipping Camden and Stow-on-the-Wold, as well as Moreton itself. The route could equally well be utilised to start and finish in Moreton, with Cheltenham as a lunch venue.



### COTSWOLD EXPLORER

Set off from Cheltenham northwards through Southam, skirting Bishops Cleeve. By Gotherington the architecture of the older houses shows that you are already in Cotswold country. Turning east you ride over and near the Gloucestershire and Warwickshire railway, at the base of rolling hills, departing at Didbrook.

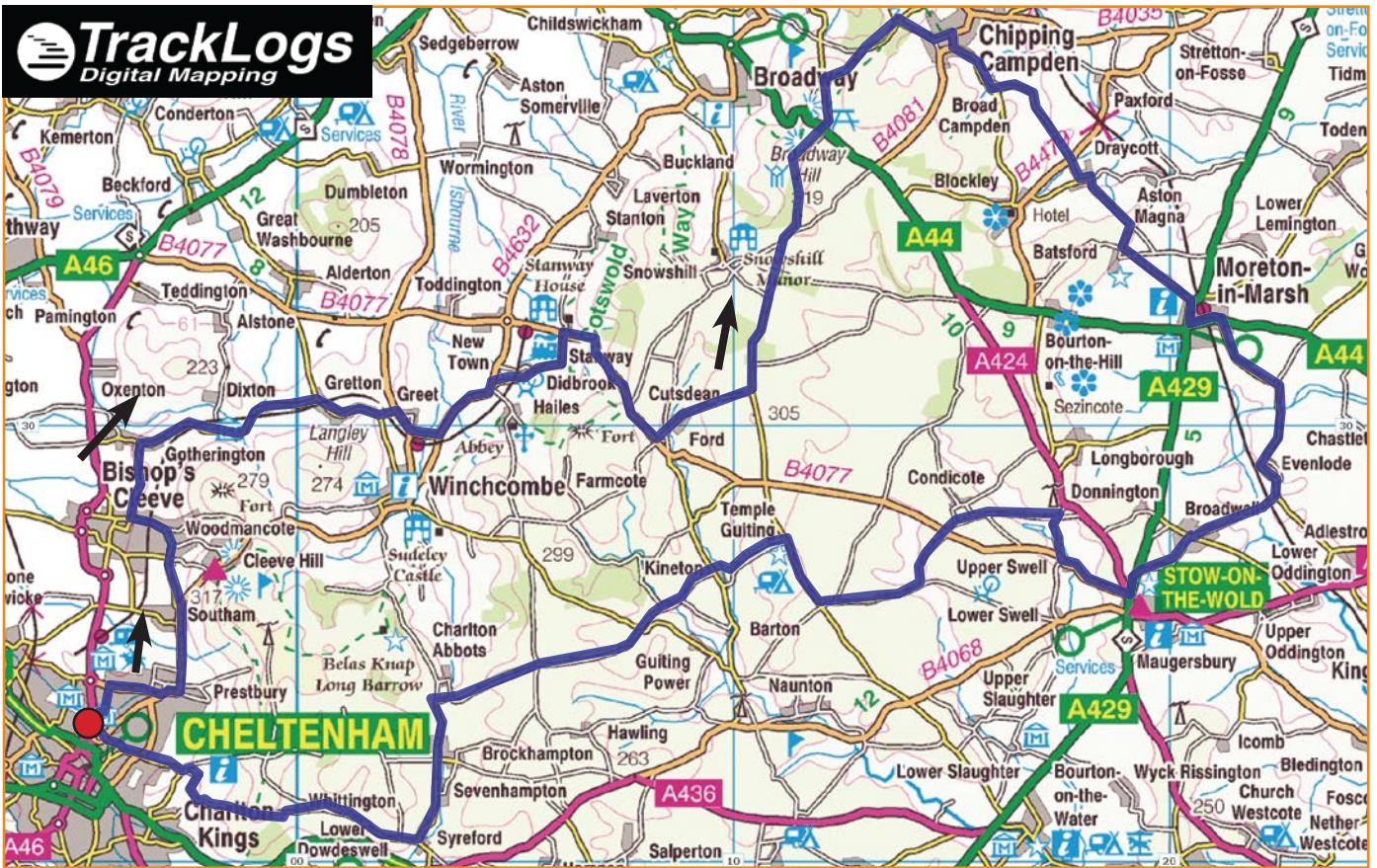
At Stanway, you climb the well graded Stanway Hill, turning off to Custdean and climbing again to one of highest roads in the Cotswolds. On it, you'll reach 1,000ft with views to both sides. Heading north towards Chipping Camden you pass near to the Lavender Farm, which is beautiful in August when the lavender is in flower. The farm has a café – a popular refreshment stop.

Two miles further is Broadway tower on the edge of the escarpment. It offers fine views in

### FACT FILE: BIRTHDAY VISIT

**DISTANCE:** 60 miles/100km.  
**TIME:** 6 to 8 hours, depending on stops etc. **TERRAIN:** Minor roads, undulating (1,300m of ascent). **WHEN:** Sunday 3rd August, first Sunday of the Birthday Rides. **BIKE SHOPS:** The Toy Shop, High Street, Moreton carries tyres and tubes. **MAPS:** OS Landranger 163, 150 and 151. Golden Eye Cotswolds. **START/FINISH:** Central Cross Drive, Cheltenham, OS 163 GR 954232. **CAFÉS:** Lavender Farm, Broadway Tower, Chipping Camden, Moreton, Stow, Cotswold Farm Park, many in Cheltenham including, in summer, tea kiosk at start/finish. **ACCOMMODATION:** B&Bs in Cheltenham. Caravan site at Cheltenham Racecourse in summer. **MORE INFORMATION:** [www.ctcwest.org.uk/cheltenham](http://www.ctcwest.org.uk/cheltenham), [carltron@netcomuk.co.uk](mailto:carltron@netcomuk.co.uk), tel: 01242 515041. **BIRTHDAY RIDES:** tel: 0113 2622328, [br@ctc.org.uk](mailto:br@ctc.org.uk), [www.birthdayrides.org](http://www.birthdayrides.org)





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**ROUTE DIRECTIONS**

Start: Tea Kiosk in Central Cross Dr (OS 163, GR 954232)

- Exit L from Kirk Sandall station car park (Sandall La), over rlyw, R into Moor La
- L into Albert Rd, then R into New Barn Lane to Prestbury
- At mini rbt, L onto B4632 towards Broadway
- At Southam, L to Woodmancote, where SO to Bishops Cleeve.
- Turn R, to Gotherington and at war memorial, R to Greeton, where R, towards Winchcombe
- After passing Royal Oak PH, turn L, to Greet
- At T with B4078, turn R. Turn L, opposite Harvest Home PH
- At T with B4632, turn L. Later R, to Didbrook
- SO to X rds, where R on B4077. Climb Stanway hill
- 1/2 mile after top, turn L to Cutsdean

- SO at X rds, SO in village and at X rds, turn L
- Turn R at bend, sp Chipping Campden. Turn L at fork, sp Broadway
- Pass Broadway Tower. SO A44. Next turn R (2m) into Chipping Campden
- Turn R into Sheep St. and continue to Broad Camden. SO through village
- At T turn R, then immd. L, to Draycott, where L and follow signs to Moreton-in-Marsh
- Leave Moreton on A44 towards Oxford. In 1/2 mile turn R, to Evenlode
- Through Evenlode and turn R and follow signs for Stow-on-the-Wold, through Broadwell, to T with A429
- Turn L to Stow and at traffic lights, turn R into A424 and immd. L into B4077
- Through Upper Swell and turn R to Donnington Brewery.
- At T, at top of short steep hill, turn L. SO to X rds with

- B4077 where SO
- Turn R at T and at X rds, turn R. Pass Cotswold Farm Park on L (café here)
- Turn L, sp Kineton. At fork, keep R passing 'Ford' sign.
- Over ford (there is a bridge) and climb to Kineton. SO staggered X rds.
- Follow signs to Roel Gate X rds. SO, to X rds near Charlton Abbots
- Turn L, sp Andoversford. Continue to T at Syreford, where R to Whittington
- SO, following signs to Ham. At foot of Ham Hill, turn R, sp Harp Hill
- At T, turn L, down Harp Hill and SO B4075 into Hewlett Rd
- Turn R into Pitville Circus Rd, SO rbt. into Wellington Rd
- Turn R into Pitville Lawns and L to Tea Kiosk in Central Cross Dr

all directions. The tower was built by the Earl of Coventry in the late 18th century, reputedly so that his new wife could see her home county of Warwickshire from the top. It now houses an interesting mini-museum and has an adjacent café.

Chipping Campden is notable for its fine buildings, especially the Market Hall and a magnificent 'Wool' church, so called because, like several others in the Cotswolds, it was built with the profits from the wool trade in medieval times. Appropriately enough, you leave the town along Sheep Street, heading for Broad Camden, Draycott and Batsford.

From there, it's a lovely descent into Moreton. This town, built along the Foss Way (now A429) has an attractive wide main street and numerous cafés and pubs which serve food, making it an ideal venue for lunch.

You leave Moreton on the A44, but soon turn off it to pass through the pretty villages of Evenlode and Broadwell. Then there's a climb to the Foss Way. It is worth diverting into Stow on the Wold, which was founded in the 11th century.

Leaving the town by the village of Upper Swell, you soon pass the Donnington Brewery, and a trout farm where the fish are for sale. The route continues past Condicote to the Cotswold Farm Park, which has a selection of rare bread farm animals and also a café.

After Kineton, you climb until you're at about 1,000ft again. There are fine views over Winchcombe and Sudeley castle, before you descend towards Cheltenham. From Ham Hill, just past Whittington, there's a panoramic view. On a clear day you can see the Black Mountains in Wales.



(Above) Lunch stop at Moreton-in-Marsh – home to the 2008 Birthday Rides