

Guildford to Cranleigh



Photo credit: Calum Shaw



The Guildford to Cranleigh stretch of Regional Route 79 is a beautiful off road route running down an old railway line, near rivers, canals and some beautiful

countryside. The route starts at the end of Quarry Street on the A281 just outside The Weyside public house. A short length of shared use pavement takes you past the River Wey and into Shalford Park. You pass meadows and playing fields before entering woodland, passing the Wey again and ascending a short hill to a small junction.

Turn right and continue, over the Guildford to Gatwick railway line, to Shalford. Following the signs to Godalming will take you to a small green opposite The Parrot Inn where you need to dismount and walk along the pavement and over the canal bridge. On the other side of the canal you reach another shared use path which intersects with the railway path after a few hundred metres. Turn left, passing under the road and you will find the start of the railway path.

The last 6.5 miles of the 9 mile route is on the old railway line, so the route is direct, and the hills are very gentle. The path is very well surfaced from here to Bramley so you can glide through the countryside along the tree lined route quite effortlessly. Towards Bramley you will cross the Wey again on a newly constructed bridge, then cross the A281 (with a new central refuge for safety), and pass sections of the Wey and Arun Canal Junction project. This old canal used to link London with the Arun River via the River Wey, and on to the sea at Littlehampton. The Wey and Arun Canal Trust are slowly restoring a 23 mile section with the aim of eventually restoring these

waterways from London all the way to the South Coast.

At the next road bridge over the route you hit the Downs Link which, as its name suggests, links the North Downs Way with the South Downs Way. Turning left takes you North East to St Martha's Hill, but continue on the Downs Link path to the pretty Wonersh and Bramley Station, renovated in recent years by the local council and Bramley Historical Society. This is a peaceful spot to stop and you will find tourist information here, as well as shops and accommodation at the Jolly Farmer on the High Street in Bramley village.

A mile and a half further on, where the Downs Link to Cranleigh passes over a small road and the surface becomes rougher, there is also a well surfaced offshoot to Shamley Green, which will form part of National Route 22 from London to Guildford, Farnham and eventually the Isle of Wight. To take this route, turn right down a steep access path and pass under the bridge.

Staying on the Downs Link, the path from here is unbroken all the way to Cranleigh. You will enjoy long avenues of trees, views across the countryside and some good sturdy old Victorian bridges along the way.

The first Cranleigh exit takes you to the cricket pitch near the Cranleigh Hotel with its nice bike- and child-friendly garden. Continuing on to Knowle Lane, you can turn left into the centre of Cranleigh, or cross and continue for a short distance to the Cranleigh Leisure Centre.

For those who want to continue south from Cranleigh, the track becomes a little more bumpy with hybrid or mountain bikes recommended over road bikes, particularly in winter. After 2.5 miles, you can stop for a drink and maybe a meal at the Thurlow Arms before admiring the beautifully reconstructed Baynards Station, now privately owned. Just a little further and you reach the Sussex border, where you have to climb over the hill to avoid the bats in Baynards Tunnel, and the Sussex border path, or you can continue another 25 miles, all the way to the seaside at Shoreham.

(With thanks to Calum Shaw, Volunteer Ranger.)

The Route

Family Friendly Ride

National Route: 22

Regional Route: 79

Distance: 9 miles

Terrain: almost all traffic free, very gentle hills

Public transport: railway stations at Guildford and Shalford

Nearest bike hire:

Pedalabikeaway, Alice Holt, near Farnham – 01989 770357

Maps: a set of eight maps covering routes around Surrey is available from Surrey County Council - 08456 009009 or download, and the Downs Link leaflet is available from West Sussex County Council - 01243 777100

OS maps: Explorer 137/134, Landranger 186/187

Tourist information:

Guildford - 01483 444333

Places to search for on Sustrans website mapping: Guildford, Cranleigh