

NORTHCOTE RIDES | RIBCHESTER & WHALLEY



A rambling ride through the Ribble Valley, visiting the Roman riverside settlement of Ribchester, the magnificent façade of Stonyhurst College and returning via Whalley and its medieval abbey.

AT A GLANCE

How far? 29km / 18 miles

How long? 2 ½ hours

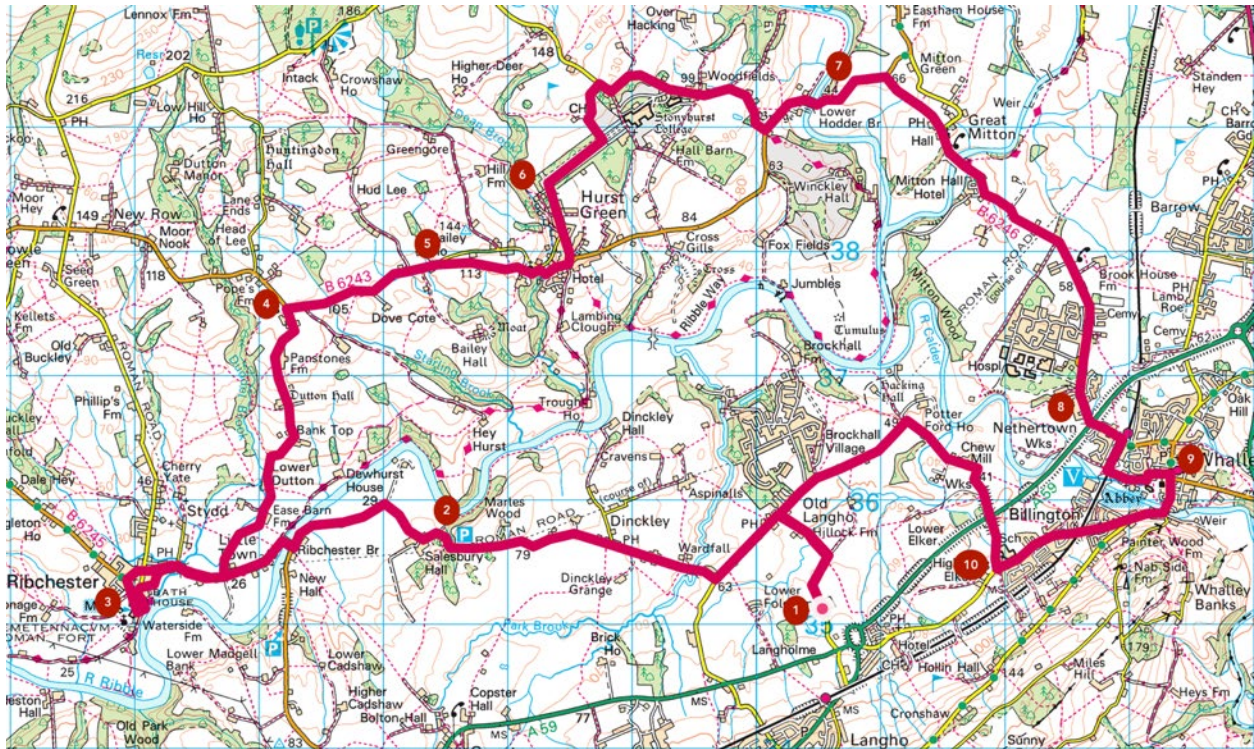
How hard? Moderate: A sustained 100m climb at 10km followed by a similar descent and an undulating run into the finish.

Traffic: Mainly quiet country lanes with the occasional busier road and some town centre traffic.

Ascent? 332 metres

Direction of travel: Clockwise

Refreshments: Whalley Wine Bar, Whalley; Ribchester Arms, Ribchester



START

1. From the main gate, turn right out of the drive and follow Northcote Road to the junction beside Keeper's Cottage. Turn left and continue past the pub, then, at next junction, turn right into the lane signposted Dinkley. Stay on this road for the next mile and a half as it meanders gently down into the valley.

2. Continue through the woods and past Salesbury Hall and onto the valley floor, passing the site of the Royal Lancashire Show. Continue straight ahead to the junction beside Ribchester bridge and turn right over the bridge then left over the other side to follow the road into Ribchester.

This ancient settlement is worth exploring. There's a Roman Museum and bathhouse to visit and the river frontage is a pleasant spot for a picnic.

3. Retrace your steps out of the village and 500m after the Ribchester Arms, at the sign for Hurst Green, turn left up Gallows Lane and climb steadily for the next mile and a half. The road ramps up steeply in places, so if you don't have electric assistance, there's no shame in getting off to push and get your breath back.

4. At the junction at the top of the lane, turn right, heading towards Hurst Green and Whalley. There's a potential shortcut after half a mile, where Shire Lane will take you into the village – but only after a very steep descent, followed by an equally steep ascent. Fans of Tolkien may want to explore this option in search of the legendary landscapes of 'The Shire'.

5. Continue into Hurst Green and at the Shireburn Arms, turn right up Avenue Road and continue past another pub through the gate and into the woodland. Follow the road round to the right where the magnificent facade of Stonyhurst College appears at the end of a glorious avenue.

JRR Tolkien's association with Stonyhurst began when his son, John, was studying for the priesthood during WW2. Tolkien often stayed in a cottage in the grounds of the college and wrote extensively while here. Some believe his work was influenced by the landscapes and the placenames hereabouts.



6. Continue straight on to the ornamental lakes then follow the road left. Climb to the left of the college, past the golf club to a junction. Turn right and descend past St Mary's Hall and at the bus shelter, turn right and descend to the bridge over the River Hodder.

As you cross the bridge, to the right lie the ruins of Cromwell's Bridge, which the man himself is said to have crossed with his army en route to the Battle

of Preston. Some accounts maintain he stopped overnight at Stonyhurst, where he slept on an oak table in full armour for fear of attack.

7. Over the bridge, climb the other side and after 500m, turn right, following signs to Whalley. Continue through the hamlet of Mitton then cross the river Ribble and follow the road towards Whalley.

8. Continue over the mini roundabout and under the road bridge, then, immediately before the railway bridge, turn right down Broad Lane, then left under the railway arches and beneath the gatehouse to Whalley Abbey. Continue past the Abbey and follow the road left then right past the church and onto the main street.

9. Turn left and continue over the roundabout then over the bridge and climb right on the other side into Billington. Continue through Billington for half a mile then, at the mini roundabout immediately after the school, turn right down Elker Lane.

10. Continue over the A59 and up a steep little ramp then follow the lane round to the left past the caravan park and back to Old Langho. At Keepers Cottage, turn right into Northcote Lane and return to the hotel.