





On Your Bike

'Surrey offers some of the best cycling opportunities in the South East', says professional triathlete James Lock. Here is his pick of Surrey routes.

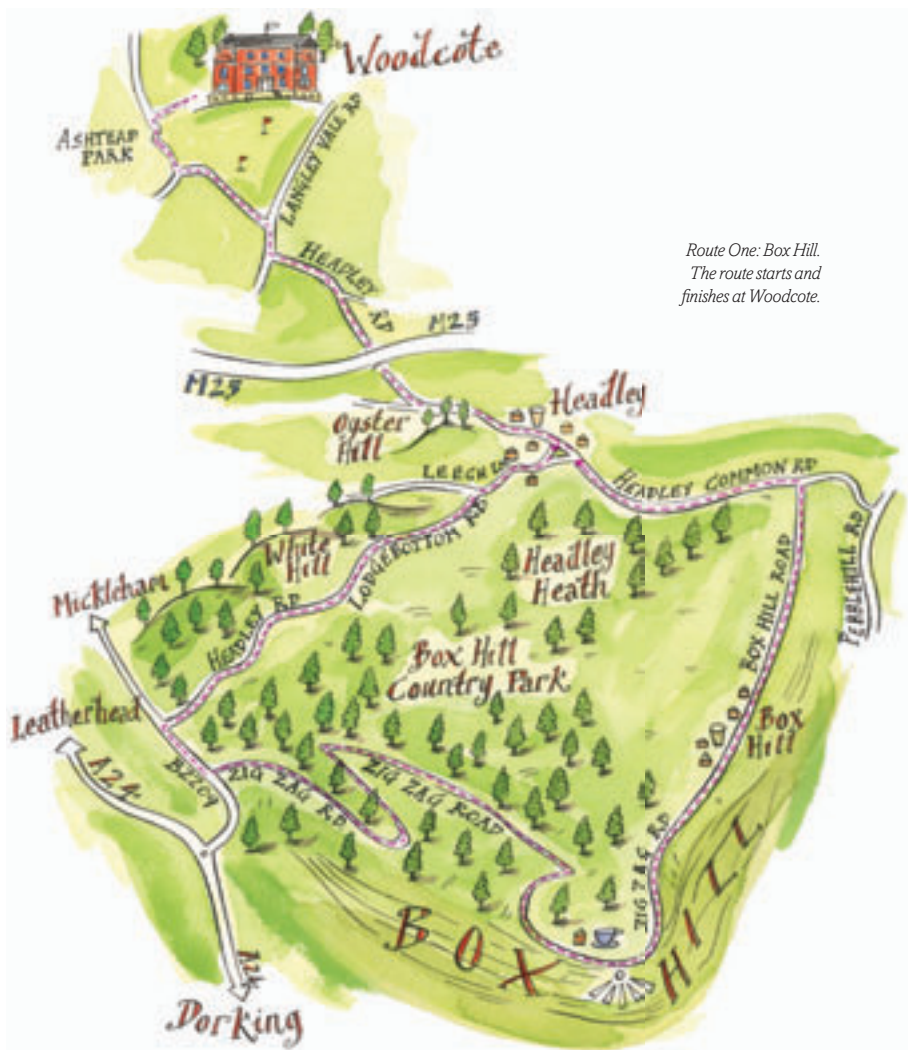
I WANT TO RIDE MY BICYCLE

Whether it is fast and furious or gentle and relaxing, cycling is becoming increasingly popular. And rightly so, cycling helps to tone all your leg muscles and keep your body fit, without putting too much strain on the bones or joints. It clears your head, de-stresses your mind and allows you to think things through rather than make rash decisions. Most importantly of all, cycling gets you out into the fresh air and away from a computer screen, which is something we all seem to struggle with these days.

TOUR DE SURREY

With the huge increase in mass participation sport over the last few years

and the Olympic road cycle event coming out as far as Box Hill in 2012, Surrey is now on the cycling map. With great routes and scenery, Surrey offers some of the best cycling opportunities in the South East - minimal amounts of traffic, the road surfaces are not too bad and, best of all, you normally don't have to put your foot down once you have started. The routes outlined could be tackled at your leisure or as part of a training regime. I have graded them according to their intensity. There are two options for road cyclists (intended for cyclists with road bikes who feel confident cycling alongside passing traffic) and also two options for cycling off road. Each route starts and ends at Woodcote Park.



Route One: Box Hill.
The route starts and
finishes at Woodcote.

BE PREPARED

When preparing for cycling it is always recommended to:

- Wear the correct clothing including helmet and gloves.
- Take plenty of water and a snack.
- Take a puncture repair and tool kit.
- Ensure you wear high visibility clothing and always use safety lights in darker conditions.
- Take a mobile phone and let family or friends know where you are going.
- Make sure your bicycle is in optimum working condition, especially the brakes, gears and tyres.

ROUTE ONE:

Box Hill. One lap is 15 miles and between one and two hours of cycling.

- This route is one of the most famous in the South East and is where the Olympics Road Race is centred. It is quite a technical and undulating course with a steep incline whilst climbing Box Hill, so it would be recommended for people who are confident on a bike and have a good solid fitness level.
- Exit at the main gates of Woodcote Park and turn left, follow this road (Headley Road) up the hill towards Epsom Downs. At the T junction turn right and then left and continue on Headley Road. Follow this undulating road for approximately two miles and then turn right into Leech Lane. This road is quite steep downhill with blind

bends so proceed with caution. As the road starts to open up and approximately 100m before the roads starts to go uphill again, take a tight turning right into Lodge Bottom Road and follow straight for two and a half miles. You then take a left and first left again into Zig Zag Road which is the start of Box Hill. Continue all of the way to the top and then continue to follow the road straight down the other side. It is well worth getting a drink at the Café at the top and enjoying the panoramic views whilst you catch your breath! Once you get to a T junction at the bottom turn left and this road will take you back the same way through Headley to Woodcote Park.

ROUTE TWO:

Surrey Hills. 35 miles and between two to four hours of cycling.

■ This route takes you into the Surrey Hills; classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is a long ride to and from Woodcote Park, an alternative is to drive and park in towns such as Dorking or Effingham and explore from there. There are some challenging hills to climb.

■ From Woodcote head towards Ashtead High Street and continue to Leatherhead. Pass Leatherhead Leisure Centre on your left and then take a right at the approaching roundabout sign-posted to Fetcham. Then take a gentle left at the next roundabout onto Lower Road. Follow straight until you get to the T-junction in Effingham. Take a left here and then straight over the A246 crossroads into Beech Avenue. This is the start of the Surrey Hills!

■ Follow this road upwards until you reach a crossroads. Go straight over and continue forward until you reach the A25. Take special care on the sharp left bend on the descent. Turn right on the A25 and follow for around 1km before going left into Felday Road. Continue through the pretty village of Holmbury St Mary and after four miles take a left on Tanhurst Lane. Continue up Leith Hill and then follow Abinger Road towards

Coldharbour. There are some stunning views around here. Pick up Coldharbour Lane and this will take you back into Dorking where you can follow the A24 cycle paths back to Mickleham where you can ascend Box Hill and return to the club in the same way as route one.

OFF ROAD:

These routes are more suited towards leisure cyclists who prefer to cycle away from traffic and on a mountain bike or similar. Both routes are quite easy to explore and there are nice views and spots to sit down and have a picnic or read a book.

ROUTE ONE:

Epsom and Ashtead Common

■ Leave the main gates of Woodcote Park and turn right towards Epsom. After 500m turn left into 'The Loop' and then left onto Woodcote Side. Follow this to the A24 T-junction. Turn left here then take the first right into Wells Road taking care when crossing the road. At the bottom of this road, before it bends around to the left, you can enter Epsom Common on the right hand side. From here you can follow the bridle tracks all around Epsom and Ashtead Common which are generally quite flat. One route would be to continue north until you reach the Church and then follow the Christ Church Road west until you head south again, passing a pond on your left before looping back around.

ROUTE TWO:

Epsom Downs

■ The alternative option would be to cycle around Epsom Downs. If the caddy master gives you permission you can cycle straight up through the centre of the golf course which leads you to a gate at the top which opens up onto Epsom Downs. From here you can explore the trails both within and outside the wooded areas.

Follow James: James gives regular updates of his races on his blog visit, www.RaceZone3.com

'GET A DRINK AT THE CAFE AT THE TOP AND ENJOY THE PANORAMIC VIEWS WHILST YOU CATCH YOUR BREATH'