

Consett & Sunderland Railway Path



As this route is predominantly downhill into Sunderland, and the prevailing wind is westerly, there is a strong argument for riding it from west to east unless you are

looking for more of a challenge. It is part of the C2C, the first of the National Cycle Network 'challenge' routes, but this is one of its gentler sections.

There is plenty to visit along the route. Between Stanley and Beamish you pass the intriguingly named Hell Hole Wood, managed by the Woodland Trust and part of the Great North Community Forest. The Beamish Open Air Museum is famous for bringing history to life, and its 19th century manor house and early 20th century town, colliery and railway station are well worth a visit. Further along the ride, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Centre at Washington is a haven for over-wintering migratory waterbirds, and has large flocks of curlews and redshanks – bring your binoculars.

The route into Sunderland takes you past the much-praised new Stadium of Light, along the riverside with its impressive artwork trail, through the marina and onto the beach at Roker, where people completing the C2C traditionally dip their front wheels in the North Sea.

The Route

Where: Lydgett's Junction (Consett) to Roker (Sunderland)

National Route: 7

Distance: 26 miles one way if you tackle the whole route, ideal for breaking up into sections: Consett to Beamish (10.5 miles each way), Beamish to Washington (7.5 miles) or Washington to Sunderland (8 miles)

Terrain: Mostly traffic-free, mostly downhill if you're heading eastwards to Sunderland

Public transport: railway stations at Chester-le-Street (about one mile south of the route at Pelton) and Sunderland

Bike hire: Darke Cycles, Sunderland - 0191 510 8155

Maps: National Cycle Network C2C map NN7AA £5.99 from Sustrans

OS maps: Explorer 307 and 308, Landranger 88

Tourist information:

Sunderland TIC - 0191 553 2000/1/2

Places to search for on

Sustrans website mapping:

Consett, Beamish, Washington, Sunderland

Much of the route follows the line of the former Stanhope & Tyne Railway, Britain's first commercial railway, which was finally closed in 1985 following the demise of the Consett steelworks. When the route was built in the late 1990s, Sustrans commissioned artworks to punctuate the route, and just south of Consett you will see Terris Novalis by internationally renowned artist Tony Cragg, a theodolite and an engineer's level at twenty times life size, on heraldic animal feet.

The route near Beamish

