

# Bristol to Portishead



## The Route

**National Routes:** 41, 33

**Distance:** 11.5 miles one way (5.5 miles to Ham Green)

**Terrain:** a mix of traffic-free routes, purpose-built cycleways and quiet roads; some ups and downs

**Public transport:** railway station at Bristol

**Bike hire:** Bristol Bike Hire, Cumberland Basin - 0117 9655192

**OS maps:** Explorer 154, Landranger 172

**Tourist information:** Bristol - 0906 711 2191 (CARE – premium rate number!)

**Towns to search for on Sustrans website mapping:** Bristol, Pill, Portishead



The route along the Avon Gorge, under the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

The ride begins in the Regency splendour of Bristol's Queen Square, then continues over the Prince Street bridge (passing Bristol's Industrial Museum) and right onto Cumberland Road. After the pelican crossing there is a pavement cycle route, which then drops down to a traffic-free section along the river bank. This is locally known as the Chocolate path because of its mosaic surface, which can be a bit bumpy in places.

The route continues over the railway bridge to your left, but before you cross the river you may wish to continue straight on to visit the Create Centre, Bristol's centre for sustainable living, which has an eco house open to visitors from noon to 3 on weekdays, and a café.

Across the river you are on the Ashton and Pill path, one of the first routes built by Cyclebag before it evolved into Sustrans. It sweeps under Brunel's elegant Clifton Suspension Bridge and through the Avon Gorge. The Avon marks Bristol's western boundary, and this route gives cyclists and pedestrians a privileged view of its beautiful gorge. The gorge is home to two trees that grow nowhere else and numerous rare plants. To your left is Leigh Woods, where cycling is permitted on certain paths, and

the bluebells and wild garlic put on a fine show in late spring. The route follows the river to the Horse Shoe Bend, where you can see the remains of the white Powder House on the opposite bank, where ships were obliged to offload any gunpowder before proceeding to the port. From here the route continues a little further from the river, through the meadows.

You emerge near an interesting little pond onto a lane. This is a good spot to picnic and turn around if your party is not up to the full there-and-back ride. The ride continues through the redeveloped Ham Green hospital site, and down a traffic-free 'spiral staircase' descent to Pill Creek, from where the first emigrant Methodists started their journey to America. From here you follow the quayside road underneath the M5 Avonmouth bridge, and then emerge onto the Sheepway. From here you can either continue along the cycle lane to Battery Point, or take the traffic-free alternative into Portishead. Portishead's history as a port can be traced back to Roman times, but the town is predominantly Victorian. Portishead High Street is pleasingly dominated by locally-owned independent shops, and alongside the sea front you will find one of the UK's few open air lidos.