

# Water of Leith and Union Canal



## The Route

**Where:** Balerno to Edinburgh

**National Route Number:** 75

**Distance:** 10 miles

**Terrain:** towpath and railway path, mostly traffic-free (on-road links to stations at either end) and mostly downhill

### Public transport:

railway stations at Curriehill, Kirknewton, Kingsknowe and central Edinburgh (Haymarket & Waverley)

### Bike hire in Edinburgh:

Leith Cycle Co - 0131 467 7775; BikeTrax - 0131 228 6633; Edinburgh Cycle Hire & Safaris - 0131 556 5560

**Maps:** Clyde to Forth

**OS maps:** Explorer 350, Landranger 66

### Tourist information:

Edinburgh - 0131 473 3800

### Towns to search for on Sustrans website mapping:

Balerno, Edinburgh



Union Canal

The ride begins at Balerno High School, which can be reached via quiet roads from the stations at Curriehill or Kirknewton. Here you join the traffic-free route beside the Water of Leith, whose waters rise in the Pentland Hills and flow into the Firth of Forth at Leith. If you are lucky you may glimpse a kingfisher, or even an otter, as you pedal downhill with the city of Edinburgh spread out before you.

At Colinton you follow the old railway line through a long tunnel, and at Slateford aqueduct the route joins the Union Canal into Edinburgh where you emerge at Fountainbridge. From there you can follow the Route 75 signs to the Meadows and the junction of Routes 1 and 75. Head into the city centre for Waverley and Haymarket stations.

If you want a longer ride, why not head westwards away from Edinburgh when you reach the Union Canal? This will take you to the Falkirk Wheel, the world's only rotating boat lift, at the junction of the Clyde & Forth and Union canals. The infamous Burke and Hare were labourers on the Union Canal before they diversified into the more lucrative business of supplying bodies for dissection by Edinburgh's teaching hospitals.

Cyclists on canal towpaths must carry a canal cycling permit. These can be downloaded from [www.waterscape.com/cycling/permit.html](http://www.waterscape.com/cycling/permit.html) or obtained from British Waterways on 01923 201120.

