A GRAND TOUR OF WEST LANCASHIRE

Distance approx. 65.5 km/ 40.7 miles

This tour, based on the route of the Lancashire Cycleway, takes in most of West Lancashire, from the hills in the east to the levels in the west. It passes the stations at Croston, Appley Bridge, Town Green and New Lane so can be started at whichever is most convenient and is described in corresponding sections.

Arriving by train: Appley Bridge and New Lane are on the Wigan - Southport line. Town Green is on the Liverpool- Ormskirk line and Rufford is on the Ormskirk - Town Green is on the Liverpool- Ormskirk line.

Arriving by car: There is a car-park at Ashurst's Beacon (west of the summit) and informal parking opportunities at many places along the route.

Public Toilets: None on the route.

Refreshments: There are numerous pubs and several cafes along the route.

A. Appley Bridge to Town Green 18.1 km/ 11.2 miles

From the station cross the canal and river and begin the climb to Roby Mill – pub at half-height. Follow the road round then turn R into Farley Lane and resume climbing, finishing on a sunken lane through woods. Turn R at T-junction and follow the road along the crest of the Ashurst's Beacon ridge, with views over Skelmersdale, Liverpool, the Wirral and the Clwydian Hills – and past two pubs.

Make a fast descent to a sharp R bend then turn immediately L and descend more gently to a roundabout. Take the fourth exit, then at T-junction turn L towards Skelmersdale. Just before the next main junction turn R onto a narrow lane and follow it to its end near a large roundabout. Continue in the same direction, then at T-junction turn R into Spa Lane.

At the next crossroads, by the Plough Inn, go straight ahead into Dick's Lane. At Westhead village turn R onto A577 then 1st L into School Lane. After 1km go R on Vicarage Lane then 1st L (Wellfield Lane). At its end go R then 1st L, climbing gently past a prominent 'flying saucer' water-tower.

Go straight across A570, then bear R (sign to Aughton Park). Follow this road, keeping straight ahead at a crossroads on the outskirts of Aughton Park. Go L on B5197 on the edge of Town Green, then 1st R into Town Green Lane, reaching Town Green Station in about 300m.

B. Town Green to New Lane 16.6 km/ 10.3 miles

Cross over the railway and continue into Aughton (pubs). Turn R at the village green, pass the church and follow the lane to the dual carriageway A59. Cross, turn R along cycle track for a short distance then go L. At T-junction go R on B5195, then 1st L into Fir Tree Lane. Continue SA for 3km along the ridge of Clieves Hills, turning L near the bottom of the descent.

At a ‘Give Way’ on a bend turn R, then R again into Summerwood Lane. Turn L at end into Northmoor Lane, then next R just before a canal bridge. Go R again at T-junction into Morris Lane and on to Pinfold. Cross A570 into Smithy Lane and follow it to Heaton's Bridge. Turn L at T-junction onto the B5242, over the canal then 1st R into Drummersdale Lane.

Take the next R into Merscar Lane. After two R-angle bends (The Farm – café) this runs parallel to the canal. At T-junction turn L into New Lane and over the level crossing just by the station.

C. New Lane to Croston 17.2 km/ 10.7 miles

Follow the road north-east from the station (Marsh Moss Lane). At T-junction turn L on Tarlscough Lane. Pass the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Centre at Martin Mere, Homestead Farm (café) and later Windmill Animal Farm (café). Continue to T-junction with B5246, and go L. At Mere Brow, on sharp L bend, turn R into Mere Brow Lane. After 1km take a minor road on R, marked ‘unsuitable for wide vehicles’, just before some glass-houses.

Follow the lane to its end. Go straight across A59 into Sollom village, turn L and then R by the post-box. Cross over the canal. After the bridge the road becomes unsurfaced for 100m; those on light road tyres might want to walk. Continue over the River Douglas and into a quiet lane. At a T-junction turn right, then right again down a narrow lane marked ‘No motor vehicles except for access’. Follow this to a T-junction and turn right on B5249.

Go over a railway bridge and bear right past Croston station.

D. Croston to Appleby Bridge 13.6 km/ 8.5 miles

Continue to a T-junction with the A581. Follow the main road round left and pass the much-photographed packhorse bridge and St Michaels Church. Where the main road bends left, fork right on Grape Lane. At a T-junction by the pub go right and continue 1km before turning left on Dark Lane. Fork right on Bradshaw Brow then continue on Back Lane, winding past Cedar Farm craft centre (café). Keep following the twists of Back Lane into Bishpham Green and turn left at the T-junction (pub). Follow the lane to another T-junction. Turn L and soon follow the road round R and begin the climb onto High Moor - welcome pub (Rigbye Arms) at top. Continue to T-junction and turn R. Continue to meet the A5209.

Cross and begin a long descent into Appleby Bridge. Just before the bottom, a lane on the L leads to Appleby Bridge station. The next stage goes straight ahead.