

A mountain biker is captured in action, riding a trail bike through a forest. The rider is wearing a black long-sleeved jersey with 'FOX' and 'SHIBBAK WELLS' branding, red pants, and a white helmet with 'FOX' on it. The bike is a full-suspension trail bike with knobby tires. The background is a lush green forest with some trees showing autumnal colors. The overall scene is dynamic and energetic.

The ultimate  
guide to the  
UK's bike parks,  
trail centres  
and purpose-  
built mountain  
biking trails

# THE DIRT DIRECTORY

HANNAH  
COLLINGRIDGE



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The ultimate guide to the UK's  
bike parks, trail centres and  
purpose-built mountain biking trails



Vertebrate Publishing, Sheffield  
[www.adventurebooks.com](http://www.adventurebooks.com)

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# INTRODUCTION

Trail centres with designated, waymarked trails have been around in the UK since the late 1990s. Since then, they have gone through considerable changes in the way they are built and the style of riding – and rider – they cater for. There are certain trail builders who can date a trail and tell you who built it, much as others might date a piece of architecture. The historiography of how riding and bike fashions have changed in the last 25 years would be another piece of writing entirely, but it does mean that now there is a wider than ever variety of purpose-built and waymarked places to ride your bike. The aim of this book is to give you a nudge in the right direction to find something you will enjoy riding.

Why ride at a trail centre or a bike park? For one, it's easy: you turn up and follow a series of arrows and you have a ride. You're likely to know the kind of riding you'll encounter and the distance involved, plus quite often there's the opportunity for a brew and cake at the end. You might fancy riding a particular sort of trail, such as a jump line, and if you pick the right place you get the ride you want. Riding at a trail centre or bike park is very different from following a map and a bridleway, just as coffee and tea are different and you can fancy one thing at one time and the other sometime else. There's also nothing stopping you using a trail centre trail as part of a longer ride.

There are also no access issues to worry about which, until all of the UK catches up with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, makes it easy to know you have a legitimate right to ride there. Indeed, if you combine trail centres and bike parks with our rights of way system, we've never had so many good places to ride.

Off you go. Go and ride them.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As ever, many other people have contributed immensely to the writing of this book. Thanks go to the ever-supportive team at Vertebrate Publishing for encouragement and distraction, probably in equal measure; Joolze Dymond who rode with me so often, took pictures and was a handy measure of how gnarly a trail was getting; the many, many people I have chatted to online, via email and sometimes in actual real life – there are far too many to name but you have all been incredibly helpful; Richie Rowland of Mondraker lent me a (very nice) bike when I was in need; Rory Hitchens (then) of Upgrade Bikes allowed me to play on a (orange) prototype Kinesis UK; Schwalbe tyres supplied rubbery goodness for all occasions; Matt Holstead of Arrow Bike Wheels kept them straight and true; Torq Fitness supplied the snacks; Alpkit helped with riding kit; Matt Williams and the Run & Ride crew in Milford let me raid the shop relatively uncomplainingly; Paul Davis taught me so much about trails, building and flow, and let me borrow his ebike frequently. All stars.

Those who have been an inspiration in terms of riding but also for conversations about riding and getting more folk doing it: Aneela McKenna and the FNY crew; Jenni Gwiazdowski for spannering chat; Kathy Gilchrist, the first female president of Scottish Cycling; Claire Bennett and the Hope WMN; Rich Martin and the crew at Cyclewise; the Saint Piran family; and the RR23 team.

And, as always, my family, who brought me up to be this way; my wife who appreciates the peace and quiet – and tidiness – when I'm away; and my friends, notably the Garage Bikes crew, the other, slightly chunkier Team GB. Team Satsuma forever.



GLENTRESS. © ANDY McCANDLISH

# ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is designed to be a reference volume covering all the (known!) trail centres and bike parks in the United Kingdom. Obviously, this is a constantly shifting topic to write about, so always check the place still exists, is open and isn't suffering from storm damage before you go. The book gives information about the facilities such as parking, toilets and refreshments and so on available, or not, at the trailhead, as well as a brief guide to the trails found there. Hopefully that is enough information for you to decide whether you fancy riding there. Be aware that some facilities, especially cafes, may well be seasonal.

## TRAIL CENTRES

### BIKE PARKS

- P** Parking
- wc** Toilets
- X** Refreshments
- £** Bike shop
- 🚲** Bike hire
- 🛖** Uplift

## WHAT IT COVERS

Purpose-built, waymarked trails. Somewhere you can turn up at without having been to the area before and find a trail to ride without needing to navigate. This does mean that a lot of places which are great to ride but aren't waymarked are omitted, most notably in Scotland.

## WHAT IT DOESN'T COVER

Unmarked and unsanctioned trails. These are liable to disappear either due to forestry operations or lack of use, plus there are potential liability and insurance issues. Where there is accepted riding near to a centre, possibly due to a local trail-management group such as the Tweed Valley Trails Association and the Golfie (p138), it will be mentioned. However, even these trails are likely to disappear at some point, so check your information before you travel.

Also, there isn't a full list of pump tracks, just because there are so many.

## WHAT'S A TRAIL CENTRE?

For years this was what waymarked mountain biking was all about. Usually on Forestry Commission (FC) land, you'd have trails laid out through a wood. There are still lots of these



throughout the UK and usually you only pay for car parking, which in turn helps support trail maintenance. FC, under its various names, tends to play safe and is mostly pretty risk averse (there are some exceptions), so the gnarliest riding isn't usually found in their woods as waymarked trails. The quality of the riding, and amount of singletrack versus fire road, can depend on when the trails were built and what the fashion was for trails at the time, so it can depend on your favoured style of riding whether you'll find a place fun. FC trails also change very slowly, as permissions and funding are so slow to take effect. But one advantage is that they are usually always open.

## AND WHAT'S A BIKE PARK?

This is the phrase I've used to refer to sites where you likely need to book (best done in advance) and sign a waiver of some sort before you are allowed to ride. Most of these places are privately owned and there is usually a slant towards harder, more technical riding. I have split bike parks into two flavours: the gravity, downhill (DH), enduro side of things; and the smooth, flowy tracks with big jumps, although some places do both. Bike parks tend to cater for the gnarlier sort of riding grades, because you have acknowledged the inherent risks of mountain biking in the waiver. And because bike parks are largely built on private land, they have much more freedom to develop and change their lines – without doubt the majority of the bike parks listed here will have changed by the time the book goes to print, hence some of the listings for bike parks are more descriptive than absolute. However, most sites are pretty clued up about keeping information on their social media up to date. A warning about social media: some pro riders regularly use certain bike parks and will post videos on YouTube, etc. These people are pro for a reason – they ride much, much better and harder than the rest of us. Do not necessarily

be put off by their rides. Instead, look for videos of normal riders spooning and casing the same jumps – that will give you a much better idea of what a bike park really rides like. Also remember that video flattens everything, so be prepared for stuff being steeper than you might have thought on the screen; if it looks steep on a GoPro, it's probably vertical in reality. Bike parks are likely to have restricted opening hours: some close during the week, some in the winter. Check before you travel.

## TRAIL GRADING

There is a great variety of purpose-built riding in the UK, and therefore there is a means of labelling the routes so you know roughly – sometimes very roughly – what you are heading into.

First, to be included in this book, a trail has to be a purpose-built MTB trail. Many forests have blue routes that just stay on fire roads – these are not described. Nor are the green family routes, unless they are one of the very rare beasts that are purpose-built, wide singletrack perfect for beginners of any age and ideal for building confidence. Where a forest has family routes as well as MTB routes, they are listed. Also, a couple of routes on easy trails are randomly graded purple!

### ■ Blue trails

At trail centres, it is designated that on blue trails all of the features will be rollable, obstacles will be small, and, if tricky, there will usually be another, easier, way around. They will be suitable for kids (and adults) with a bit of off-road confidence, but not so tricky that it would put them off. Generally, blue trails tend to be shorter. A good blue will be suitable for those pottering round slightly nervously, but will also be a lot of fun for more confident riders; a mediocre blue will be fairly boring for all. Some older blue trails are just on fire roads, but are longer than the green trail at the same place, and so these have not been included.

A bike park blue should still have features which are all rollable, but expect it to be more demanding than something at a trail centre. In general with bike parks, it's prudent to start on a grade lower than you ride at a trail centre until you get the feel for that particular bike park. It will also give you a warm-up – always a good thing.

### ■ Red trails

'Red' covers an extremely broad area, and in some ways it isn't that useful a grading. It can cover gentler cross-country-style routes, which may give you a longer ride but not much in the way of technical challenges, through to trails from the edge of a hillside where the only way down is steep, loose and technical. All of these can be described as 'red', and how happy you are on a trail can depend entirely on your riding style and preferences.

Red trails at bike parks take the difficulty a step further and can incorporate many more technical features that require you to be reasonably proficient and confident to ride well.

To help you further, I have therefore added a bit to the red trail descriptions. Naturally these are subjective, and you may well disagree:

**XC:** this doesn't have too many technical features but could be a lengthier ride, with the grading relating more to the required fitness level than technical ability. This is how many older trail centres were judged. There may be a fair amount of fire road involved. Something like Dalby Forest (p76) is a classic example of the old-school style of red trail.

**Enduro:** this is likely to be more technical, with possibly shorter runs designed to be sessioned rather than a long ride out. Reds at bike parks are likely to be steeper and much more technical than those at trail centres, but that is what you are paying for. Reds at jump parks will still likely be rollable, but the features will be bigger and longer. For instance, there will be tables rather than gaps, but the lengths of the tables will have increased.

### ■ Black trails

At trail centres this is about as hard as it gets. A black trail will contain bigger trail features which may not have a way around – a chicken line – and will therefore require commitment. At bike parks, this commitment could well be a large one. On enduro/DH sites expect drop-offs and jumps that can't be rolled. At this point, protection in terms of pads and full-face helmets is not only a wise precaution but part of the conditions of riding at some places. At jump parks, black trails involve gaps that have to be jumped.

■ Bike parks may also have black plus and pro lines, often graded orange. If you aren't sure about the grading of a place, start with something gentle to get your eye in. Riding something too easy is better than breaking yourself on your first run. It's also less embarrassing.

### Dave grading

In reality, no matter the trail centre grading, we all split tracks into one of three grades, which I refer to as *Dave grades*:

1. **Dave friendly:** you are quite happy on this and are not out of your comfort zone.
2. **Mildly terrifying:** there are some sections which push you a bit.
3. **No:** not riding this one.

I cannot know which trails fall into which grade for you – you can argue about it at great length on the internet, though.

### TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Trails do not look after themselves and maintenance costs money. There's such a thing as freeride, but there's no such thing as a free ride. Whatever you feel about the funding of the various Forestry Commission divisions, paying for car parking does, in part, contribute to maintenance. If you feel that maintenance could be better, get in touch with the local ranger, find out about dig days and pitch in.



LADY CANNING'S PLANTATION. © JOHN COEFIELD



TARLAND TRAILS. © SOPHIE FLETCHER

Find out about local trail groups and support them if you can, either with cash or time.

With bike parks it's a little more obvious where the money goes, and if a bike park doesn't provide good riding it's not going to get repeat customers. Expect trails to change or to be closed for maintenance, and check your information before making a special trip. Storms can damage forests, meaning trails are closed until they can be cleared, and felling of trees can disrupt normal service. Some bike parks close during the winter to protect the trails; other places ask you not to ride there after extremely wet weather.

## TRAIL CONDITIONS

Some trails hold water, others drain well; some have gloopy mud, some have really slippery mud. The variety in Britain is pretty wide because of our wide-ranging geology and variable weather. Surfaced trails will generally ride well all year round, even if there are puddles on the trail; more natural-feeling trails could well become greasy and tree roots will be just waiting to take you out. Tyre compound and pressure will make a difference, so read up and be prepared to experiment if you can. If a trail is rocky and wet, it will depend on what rock it is as to how grippy it is. Bear in mind there is not a rubber compound yet invented that will grip on damp chalk.

## WHAT BIKE?

Whatever you feel comfortable on. There are limits to what hardtails can deal with, but frankly until you become a very, very good rider the bike will be a lot more capable than you are. That having been said, there are certainly places where full suspension is much more comfortable.

There are very few bad modern mountain bikes, so don't worry if you haven't got this season's required travel – it will change by next year, and what was a good bike last season doesn't stop being good just because it's a year older. Check your bike set-up suits you and go on skills courses to have a professional help you ride better rather than just buying the latest gadget – developing your skills will be much better value for your riding.

Some of these trails are even suitable for gravel bikes, although the rocky sections will be rubbish – and just because you *can*, doesn't mean you *should* ...

## PROTECTION

Different riders wear different things. What you wear can depend on how hot you get when you are riding, your confidence levels or sometimes whether you've just got used to riding in certain things. It's only when things get gnarly that you might want to add to your normal gear.



DALBY FOREST. © JOHN COEFIELD

In terms of what you might wear:

- **Helmet:** please wear a helmet. Why wouldn't you unless there is a religious reason not to? Off-road helmets tend to have more coverage around the back of the head, but that's not crucial on many trails.
- **Full-face helmet:** some bike parks make it a condition that you wear a full-face helmet and at least knee pads. Be sure to check before you rock up with only a trail helmet. And again, if it makes you feel more confident, crack on. They are very hot to ride uphill in, though.
- **Gloves:** keep the skin on your hands, not the trail. There are so many varieties of gloves available; full-fingered ones tend to be better for gnarlier stuff.
- **Baggy shorts/long trousers:** not just because it's what MTBers wear, but because they offer an extra layer of protection. There's a reason downhillers ride in full sleeves.
- **Knee pads/arm pads:** there are plenty of trail pads now that can be worn reasonably comfortably all day. If they make you feel more confident, put them on. If you have uplift booked, you may choose to wear something sturdier as you don't have to worry about pedalling in them.
- **Spine/back/hip protection:** these are advisable for the really gnarly stuff, but again it depends on personal preference.



© JOHN COEFIELD

No equipment can keep you entirely safe and hurt-free, but it can likely mitigate the effects of crashing. Don't forget, if you hit your head during a crash, replace your helmet – it has done its job and now has a weak spot where you hit it. Many manufacturers have crash replacement schemes which are worth checking out.

## TRAIL SAFETY AND ETIQUETTE

Here are some suggestions for looking after yourself and others when you are riding. We are all out for a nice ride, whatever that means to you, so kindness and respect will help everyone.

- 'Be nice, say hi' is the single best piece of advice for all activities in life, including riding bikes.
- Leave the trails as you found them, or in even better condition. Pick up bits of litter where you can. Not all of it will have been dropped deliberately – someone may just have missed their pocket with a wrapper, so we can all help each other a bit here.
- If a trail is closed, DO NOT RIDE IT. It's closed for a reason, whether it's blocked, unsafe, being rebuilt, whatever. You are helping no one by riding it.
- Offer help to other riders if they look like they might need it, whether that be tools, help, directions – whatever you've got.

- If you come up behind a slower rider and would like to get past, then give a friendly greeting and ask something like, 'When you are ready, can I get past please?' and give them room to ride. Don't buzz them or pass comment on their riding.
- If someone is behind you and asks to come past, acknowledge their friendly greeting and reply that you'll pull over as soon as you can for them. Pull over when you are able and are comfortable to do so.
- Don't stop in the middle of the track (unless you've crashed there). Pull off the riding line properly. If you are in a group, make sure you are all off the line.
- If you or your riding buddy has crashed, then protect the trail if they cannot be moved. Walk back up the trail to warn other riders and place an upside-down bike across the trail in a place where it can be clearly seen and where oncoming riders have time to stop.
- If you see an upside-down bike on the trail, it means there is an obstruction on the track ahead. Proceed with caution.
- Take enough stuff with you to get out of any situations you might get into. Can you look after yourself if something happens? On the other hand, don't take stuff you don't know how to use. If you are on a group ride it can make sense to share the stuff out among you, so you aren't all carrying all of the things.
- There may be horses in the same woods you are riding in (not likely in bike parks). Speak to them and their rider. Horses tend to respond to human voices and may realise that the scary thing near them has a human voice and therefore isn't quite as scary. The noise of your freehub may well spook them, so be prepared to pedal very slowly past them so the hub is engaged. And let the rider work out how you pass each other – they are familiar with their horse and know how it is reacting. As a rule of thumb, horses with their ears forward are generally happier than those with their ears back. Be prepared to stop if you see ears suddenly

flicking backwards.

- If you come across livestock on the trails, don't chase or frighten them even if it stops your run. That's someone's livelihood there.

## TO THE TRAILS

The country is split up into regions/countries in this book to make it easier for you to find somewhere to ride. Some places have more structured riding than others, and some areas seem to have more of one sort of riding than another, usually to do with the number of hills available.

Trail centres are colour-coded **GREEN**; bike parks are **PINK** and will usually have an emphasis on enduro/DH or jump lines, although many have both.

Most importantly, have fun while you are riding. Remember not to take it too seriously – it's going into the woods to play on your bike.

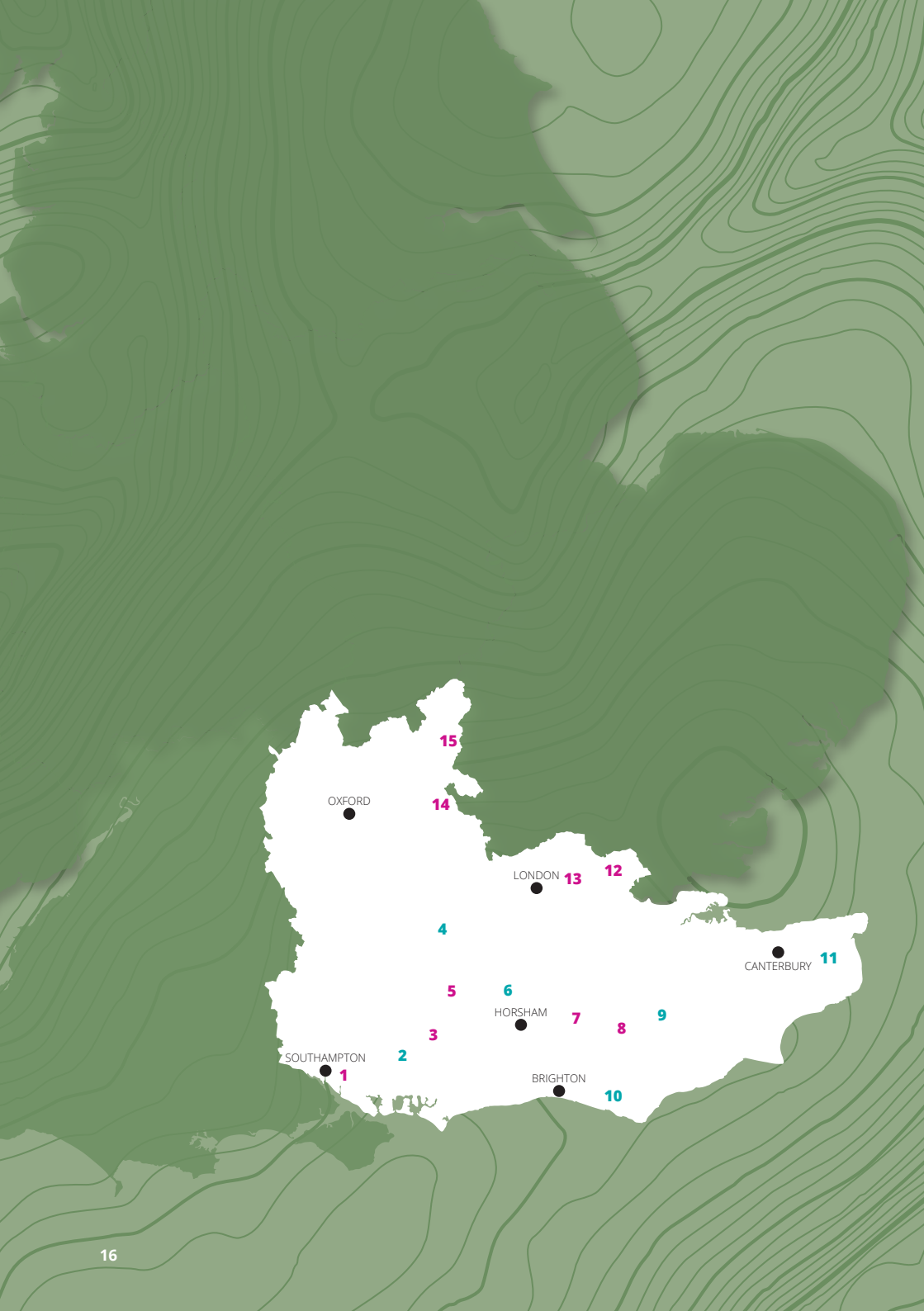
## ONLINE RESOURCES

- dmbins.com* – the Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland page has a wealth of information about all kinds of off-road riding in Scotland.
- forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/activities/mountain-biking* – up-to-date information about closures on Forestry and Land Scotland land.
- www.mountainbikeni.com* – this covers Northern Ireland.
- www.forestryengland.uk/cycling* – a site for cycling in English forests.
- www.mbwales.com* – information about MTB in Wales.
- www.trailforks.com* – information about trail centres, but also other trails.





TARLAND TRAILS. © ANDY MCCANDLISH



OXFORD

LONDON

CANTERBURY

SOUTHAMPTON

HORSHAM

BRIGHTON



# SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

The South East may not have the big hills of other areas in the UK, but it does have plenty of stuff to ride all year round. Slippery chalk is more of an issue than mud in certain areas, but if jumps are your thing, there is an amazing choice of venues.

- 1** Southampton Bike Park *p20*
- 2** Queen Elizabeth Country Park *p20*
- 3** Rogate Downhill B1KEPARK *p20*
- 4** Swinley Forest *p21*
- 5** S4P B1KEPARK *p22*
- 6** Surrey Hills – Leith Hill *p22*
- 7** Deers Leap Park *p23*
- 8** Bull Track Bike Park *p23*
- 9** Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest *p23*
- 10** Friston Forest *p24*
- 11** Betteshanger Park *p24*
- 12** Redbridge Cycling Centre *p24*
- 13** Lee Valley VeloPark *p24*
- 14** Aston Hill Bike Park *p24*
- 15** Woburn Sands *p25*





## SOUTHAMPTON BIKE PARK

**50.9426, -1.4234** / The Outdoor Sports Centre, Thornhill Road, Southampton, Hampshire, SO16 7AY / Trail maintenance: built and maintained by volunteers / [www.southamptonbikepark.com](http://www.southamptonbikepark.com)



This is a constantly developing small jump park – but while the park is small, not all of the jumps are. It offers a lot of opportunity for progression, with jumps for all ages and abilities. It does get very soggy in wet weather, and is best not ridden at those times.

### Trails

There's a start hill, three trails with a dedicated push-up and an advanced jump trail. It's a great local facility.

## QUEEN ELIZABETH COUNTRY PARK

**50.9614, -0.9778** / South Downs Way, Hampshire, PO8 0QE / Trail maintenance: [www.facebook.com/qecptrailbuilding](http://www.facebook.com/qecptrailbuilding) / [www.forestryengland.uk/queen-elizabeth-country-park](http://www.forestryengland.uk/queen-elizabeth-country-park)



This is a rightly popular place, with a fantastic blue trail that is excellent for all riders. As it's on chalk, certain parts of the route can get quite slippery in the damp.

There is also plenty of off-piste riding. The wood is well used for local enduro, DH and XC races.

### Trails

**■ 6-kilometre, award-winning flow trail.**

Like the best blue trails, it can be ridden by the less confident and the beginner, or absolutely nailed by the experienced. It is a long but pleasant climb up and then a swooping, flowy descent with berms and some rollers. Once you have got to the top of the climb it's pretty much downhill all the way. It has the occasional trail feature, but everything is rollable. The berms get bigger the further down the hill you go, so it's great for developing technique.

**■ 7 kilometres.** This trail has a fair amount of climbing, but it is made more interesting by short downs every so often. There are longer downs towards the end. This is a natural-feeling trail, so expect roots.

## ROGATE DOWNHILL BIKEPARK

**51.0275, -0.8664** / Rogate Woods, Combe Hill, Rogate, West Sussex, GU31 5DL / [www.b1ke.com/b1keparks/rogate-downhill](http://www.b1ke.com/b1keparks/rogate-downhill)



In order to ride here you will need to sign up as a free member and then pay for a day pass. Or, for regulars, there is a better-value annual membership for all of the B1KEPARKS. All of the trails involve a push up to the top.

Rogate is known for being rideable all year round due to the sandy nature of the soil, and it's also known for providing a great deal of varied riding within a smallish site, with a whole variety of flow and techy trails. It already has a long history of mountain biking and continues to be developed to match current riding trends. The site is split by a fire road, meaning sessioning can be done on half tracks as well as full. A good place to progress your riding.

The trail grading here involves both the colour of the trail and also a lozenge/dot system to give you further information: a single lozenge means it's a gentler trail and everything can be rolled; two-lozenge trails have bigger features and stuff that it's better not to roll, although alternative lines may be available; three lozenges mean you need to be comfortable and competent with your wheels off the ground. Both the colour grading and lozenge number should give you a reasonable amount of information about the trail but, as always with this kind of place, it's sometimes worth having a good look at features before riding them. There is also plenty of information about the trails on the website.



ROGATE DOWNHILL B1KEPARK. © JOOLZE DYMOND

## Trails

■ **Bottle Rocket.** This is the classic warm-up track, a blue, two-lozenge trail which is described as 'fast, flowy and as rowdy as you want it to be'. In other words, this will give you a great feel of what Rogate is like and how your riding style and skill fits in with the place. Do not be put off by the blue appellation – this is not a trail centre blue. There are a lot of very good riders who come here, such as Sam Reynolds, Olly Wilkins et al., and they warm up on the blue. Point taken? After this, it's a case of working your way upwards.

Other trails include a variety of flow and tech trails. Have a look at the trail map and descriptions: expect roots, rocks, drops and turns of all kinds. There are some very big features here such as the DMR whale tail and some very large tables and doubles.

## SWINLEY FOREST

**51.3874, -0.7411** / Nine Mile Ride, Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 7QW / Trail maintenance: Swinley Bike Hub / [www.swinleybikehub.com](http://www.swinleybikehub.com)



Handily close to London, Swinley Forest offers a good variety of riding, especially for families and beginners.

## Trails

■ **1 kilometre.** This trail is made up of gently rolling, wider singletrack. It's one way so is great for families and beginners, and it is a good trail on which to start building off-road confidence.

■ **9 kilometres.** Undulating, flowy trail with not too much linking fire road. There are some berms and rollers but nothing too technical, so it is a good beginner trail.

■ **14 kilometres,** plus the blue trail to get there and back. This is sort of a figure of eight off the blue, so if you overestimate things you can cut it shorter. As with the blue, this is an undulating, flowy trail but with more technical features, plus some jumps and drops.

## Other features

There is also the area known as The Summit, a purpose-built, private skills area. You will need to pay to use this area ([www.swinleybikehub.com/coaching](http://www.swinleybikehub.com/coaching)) but it should cover any and all areas of riding you need to improve, from beginners and basics through to big jumps and drops.



SURREY HILLS – LEITH HILL. © JANE BEAGLEY

### S4P B1KEPARK

**51.1698, -0.6586** / Godalming, Surrey, GU8 5BJ / [www.b1ke.com/b1keparks/s4p-milford](http://www.b1ke.com/b1keparks/s4p-milford)



Although riding on this site is free, you will need to sign up for free as a member of B1KEPARKS to ride here. This ensures insurance requirements are met, both for you and the bike park. Although it's called a bike park, it's essentially a set of dirt jumps that no one makes any money out of, so don't be shy about pitching in to help with maintenance.

Sam Reynolds, Brendan Fairclough and Olly Wilkins, among others, ride here regularly as well as helping to build and maintain it. That's how good the jumps are.

#### Trails

This is entirely a jump park – there are no trails – but it is designed to be progressive, so there's a line of rollers, a line of tables, a line of doubles and then trick jumps of a larger nature. It's built on sand, so not only does it ride well in most weathers, but also crashing isn't as painful as it could be. Obviously, it's designed to be sessioned.

### SURREY HILLS – LEITH HILL

**51.1764, -0.3712** / Leith Hill Tower, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 6LX / [www.surreyhillsmountainbiking.co.uk](http://www.surreyhillsmountainbiking.co.uk)



Surrey Hills is an area rather than one specific spot, with lots of riding but only one waymarked trail. However, there are access agreements in place in some of the woods to allow riding on the built-up trails, and there are plenty of bridleways in the area too. See [www.surreyhillsmountainbiking.co.uk](http://www.surreyhillsmountainbiking.co.uk) for lots of suggestions. Be aware of the access agreements, carefully negotiated and agreed for the area, and don't ride in a way which might jeopardise those agreements for everyone else. The area gets very busy at weekends, so bear this in mind when planning where to park.

#### Trails

■ **Summer Lightning – 7.3 kilometres as a loop.**

There are loads and loads of absolutely amazing trails here, they just aren't waymarked, so grab a map or chat to a local and go exploring. The trails are mostly of the loamy, flowy

variety and some have reached legendary status locally. There are some big jumps here and there too. It's pretty sandy under wheel, so usually rides well all year round.

### DEERS LEAP PARK

**51.1047, -0.0231** / Saint Hill Green, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 4NG



**Temporarily closed until spring 2026 for redevelopment. The info below relates to the site pre-closure.**

Deers Leap is a small park that's aimed at beginners and families. You will need to sign on and pay at the bike shop before you ride. Most stuff is very novice and child friendly. There's also pond dipping on site, and they cater for school parties and youth groups.

#### Trails

**5/1** 5 kilometres. The main trail has slightly harder lines than elsewhere in the wood. It's great for families and has no unexpected obstacles.

#### Other features

**■** There is a skills park, pump track and some North Shore. Lots for kids (of all ages) to have a go at.

### BULL TRACK BIKE PARK

**51.0516, 0.1949** / Palesgate Lane, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN6 3HF / [thebulltrack.co.uk](http://thebulltrack.co.uk)



Bull Track Bike Park is a dirt jump and freeride park with a whole range of sizes of jumps, from small tables through to absolutely massive gaps and trick jumps. You'll need to book before going or buy an annual ticket. They also hold an annual jam, and coaching is available.

#### Trails

This bike park is primarily focused on getting your wheels off the ground, so a full-face



SURREY HILLS - LEITH HILL. © JANE BEAGLEY

helmet and body armour are recommended, especially on the bigger stuff. There are plenty of chances for progression here, with smaller lines building up to lines with split options: tables on one side, gaps on the other.

### BEDGEBURY NATIONAL PINETUM AND FOREST

**51.0719, 0.4467** / Lady Oak Lane, Goudhurst, Kent, TN17 2SJ / [www.forestryengland.uk/bedgebury](http://www.forestryengland.uk/bedgebury)



Bedgebury is good for families and beginners, and there are coaching and women-only sessions available on site, too. There is a world-leading collection of conifers if you want to spend time deliberately looking at trees rather than riding past them – there's even a handy search tool for the tree collection at [bedgebury.arboretumexplorer.org](http://bedgebury.arboretumexplorer.org)

#### Trails

**■** 13 kilometres. This comprises mixed fire road and hard-packed gravel singletrack, so it weathers well. It is undulating and flowy rather than overly technical, and is good for beginners at the grade. There is one optional black section which has a few drop-offs.

#### Multi-use trails

**■** 4.5 and 9 kilometres. These are family trails.

## FRISTON FOREST

**50.7810, 0.1861**

(**50.7739, 0.2048** – Butchershole car park, **50.7759, 0.1521** – Seven Sisters car park) / Friston Forest, Old Willingdon Road, East Dean, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 0AT / [www.forestryengland.uk/friston-forest](http://www.forestryengland.uk/friston-forest)



Friston has loads of mountain biking – go exploring or find a local, and be aware of other users. There is authorised off-bridleway horse riding on specific routes for those with a permit, so there may be horses not necessarily where you were expecting them. There are also quite a few bridleways leading through the wood, which can easily be included as part of a longer ride.

### Trails

■ **Jeremy Cole mountain bike trail – 9 kilometres.**

This trail can be started from either car park. It is fast and undulating singletrack through the forest and has a very natural feel. It is on chalk so it can get slippery when damp.

### Multi-use trails

■ **6.25 kilometres.** A family cycle trail.

## BETTESHANGER PARK

**51.2368, 1.3689** / Sandwich Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 0BF / [www.betteshanger-park.co.uk](http://www.betteshanger-park.co.uk)



This is a country park with lots of activities, mostly aimed at

families rather than mountain bikers. Expect it to be busy in the school holidays. There are also coaching sessions available, giving you the opportunity to improve your skills.

### Trails

■ **7 kilometres.** This is a winding track through woodland, but then it opens out a bit in the parkland. It can hold water and get muddy. It's nothing very technical, so is great for beginners.

■ **11 kilometres, including the blue.** The red sections are extensions to the blue trail. Still, it is nothing overly difficult.

### Other features

There is also a 3-kilometre, one-way tarmac cycle track for your inner roadie or for practising safely riding on tarmac.

## REDBRIDGE CYCLING CENTRE

**51.6060, 0.1282** / Forest Road, Hainault, Redbridge, Essex, IG6 3HP / [visionrcl.org.uk/centre/redbridge-cycling-centre](http://visionrcl.org.uk/centre/redbridge-cycling-centre)



This is a good, safe place to advance basic skills. There is lots of coaching available and many adaptive bikes for hire depending on your needs.

### Trails

There are several short MTB tracks of varying difficulty here, as well as a road circuit,

a pump track and a BMX track. You will need to check the centre's timetable and book in advance.

## LEE VALLEY VELOPARK

**51.5506, -0.0150** / Abercrombie Road, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London, E20 3AB / [www.visitleevalley.org.uk](http://www.visitleevalley.org.uk)



This is part of the 2012 Olympic legacy. The velodrome here is the one used for the 2012 Olympic Games but is also still used for international events. Similarly, the BMX track is the Olympic one. Both have everything between taster and full-on race sessions. There's also a short road circuit. You will need to check the timetable and book in advance.

### Trails

There are several short MTB tracks of varying difficulty, and skills sessions are available, but the main focus here is the Olympic tracks.

## ASTON HILL BIKE PARK

**51.7828, -0.7087** / Aston Hill, Wendover, Buckinghamshire, HP22 5NQ / Trail maintenance: Aston Hill / [www.astonhill.co.uk](http://www.astonhill.co.uk)

At the time of writing (autumn 2024), Aston Hill is closed following tree felling work. It is scheduled to reopen in 2025.

Most of the trails here are aimed at the gravity lover, as it claims to be a slice of the Alps



in the Chiltern Hills. The trails are, necessarily, shorter than those in the Alps due to the size of the hill, but they pack a punch and are well regarded. The place has suffered badly from ash dieback and has needed specialist felling work. This has resulted in closing the trails temporarily while this takes place. Forestry England promise the trails will reopen with new investment.

### Trails

Basing this description on what the trails were like before the tree felling and what the current aims are for the rebuild, it's likely there will be an 8-kilometre XC loop suitable for warming up on and for pedalling to the top of the hill. Then several enduro/DH-style tracks increasing in difficulty. Expect lots of off-camber, rooty sections and trails that make the most of the steepness of the land, drops, berms and some interestingly tight corners.

### Other features

Also, there's a pump track and a 4X track.

## WOBURN SANDS

Under the generic title of Woburn Sands are several areas for riding. Rushmere Country Park has an XC loop and a DH/jump area, and Aspley Woods has XC trails plus the DH/jump section known as Woburn Bike Park. You will need a permit in order to ride on any of the trails.

## ASPLEY WOODS

**52.0003, -0.6537** / Woburn Sands, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK17 8TS / [www.greensandtrust.org/local-site-aspley-woods](http://www.greensandtrust.org/local-site-aspley-woods)



A part of Aspley Woods is the bike park, which is possibly what most people mean by 'Woburn'. You will need a permit for riding on the trails – details on the website.

### Trails

Aspley Woods has XC trails plus the DH/jump section known as Woburn Bike Park.

■ **Danesborough, 4 kilometres.** A short singletrack loop through the trees.

■ **Longslade, 9 kilometres.**

An XC-style loop, with fairly natural-feeling trails undulating through the woodland. Expect mud in the winter.

## WOBURN BIKE PARK

**52.0058, -0.6438** / Woburn Road, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK17 8TS / Trail maintenance: [Woburn Bike Trails Facebook page](#), including the notorious Kiing of Spades / [www.greensandtrust.org/cycling](http://www.greensandtrust.org/cycling)



A legendary and epic jump spot which holds annual jams and is ridden by some of the best slopestyle and dirt jumpers in the UK, as well as lesser mortals. There is every sort of dirt jump here you could ever require, and in all sizes. It is a constantly

developing area. The trails are sandy and so drain well, and there is lots and lots to session. You will need a permit for riding on the trails – details on the website.

### Trails

There are several short enduro/DH runs, again sandy in nature and well-draining, also with jumps of varying sizes.

## RUSHMERE COUNTRY PARK

**51.9470, -0.6726** / Linslade Road, Heath and Reach, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 0EB / [www.greensandtrust.org/cycling](http://www.greensandtrust.org/cycling)



Remember: you will need a permit for riding on the trails – details on the website.

### Trails

■ **Ridge Riders Cross Country Trail, 6 kilometres** with some red sections. As with Aspley Woods, this is fairly natural-feeling singletrack undulating through the woods.

■ **Ridge Riders Downhill Zone.** An area with some bigger drops and jumps to session. It's graded nicely so that it's progressive. There's a full rollable blue trail, a red with harder sections and optional gaps, and then a black with bigger and gnarlier features and unavoidable obstacles.