

Cycling in East Sussex:
Coastal Route Guide

Rye & Winchelsea circular



This ride links the fascinating old towns of Rye and Winchelsea, turning west to explore the broadleaf woodlands of Beckley Woods, fragments of the great forest that used to cover the Weald.

Rye – Winchelsea

Leaving Rye on National Cycle Network Route 2, pick up the easy, traffic-free bridleway south to Winchelsea with distant views of Camber Castle on your left. Upon joining the A259 on the Ferry Hill hairpin, the route climbs steeply up to Winchelsea through an old fortified arch where you are rewarded with fine panoramic views back over Winchelsea Beach. The town that exists today was rebuilt in the 13th century under the direction of Edward I after old Winchelsea was destroyed by sea and storms. It was once a busy port trading in wines and spices and one of the ancient Cinque Ports.

Passing the New Inn and the churchyard of St Thomas where Spike Milligan is buried, pick up Wickham Rock Lane and turn right at the windmill as you continue towards Icklesham. The route rejoins the A259 briefly before turning left down the wonderfully quiet Watermill Lane at the Robin Hood pub and through lovely woodland. Turn right onto Pett Lane and then right again for Church Lane as you sweep on past Doleham Station on an undulating road with fantastic views.

Take care for one mile on the busy A28 before climbing to Brede. There is another rollercoaster section with stunning views on the way to Beckley Woods. Beyond Peasmarsh Place

past the Norman Church, there is a rough off-road route back to Rye that uses the bridleway starting by Clayton Farm, crossing several fields of pasture. The road alternative takes you via Iden and Houghton Green.

Places of Interest

Rye In medieval times, Rye was almost completely surrounded by sea, sited at the head of an embayment. The town's name is believed to have originated from the French 'la Rie' – a bank – as it provided a safe haven and harbour for boats but violent storms in the 13th century altered the course of the River Rother, reducing its effectiveness as a major port. A combination of silting, attacks by the French and a trend for larger ships helped to change the economy of Rye over time, as fishing and smuggling became the key areas of trade for the town. Rye's narrow, cobbled streets contain many ancient buildings, with the Mermaid Inn dating back to the fifteenth century, and the Ypres Tower, formerly part of the town wall, now the Rye Museum.

Phone: 01797 229049

Website: visitrye.co.uk

Winchelsea Like Rye, Winchelsea was also a prosperous seaport and a member of the Cinque Ports. The sea receded in the Middle Ages, taking with it the prosperity brought by the port. The village was rebuilt in the 13th century after gradual sea erosion and then a massive flood in 1287 swept away the original Old Winchelsea. Winchelsea has had a turbulent past, battered by the

weather and the scene of numerous battles with the French and Spanish. Three of the four medieval town gates remain today alongside some of the ancient buildings and fortifications from the 13th/14th century.

High Weald Iron Industry It is hard to picture the extent of the iron industry in today's countryside of small fields, woodlands and steep, narrow, gill valleys, but all the necessary raw materials for iron smelting existed in this landscape for over 2,000 years. The onset of the Industrial Revolution took heavy industry north to the coal fields, and the last furnace in the Weald, at Ashburnham, closed in 1813. Only the telltale waste, called slag, from the smelting process, and some of the hammer and furnace ponds are left to remind us of a once-great Wealden industry.

Starting point

Rye train station

Distance

20 miles / 32 kms

Off road/rough sections

1.5 miles / 2.4 kms traffic free path between Rye and Winchelsea Station at the start of the ride and 2.5 miles / 4 kms between Peasmarsh Church and Rye on a rougher bridleway at the end of the ride

Grade

Moderate / Strenuous

Major climbs

Seven climbs of 35m - 70m plus several shorter ones

Refreshments

Rye, Winchelsea, Icklesham, Friar's Hill and Brede

Tourist Information Centres

Rye: 01797 229049

Cycle Hire and Repair

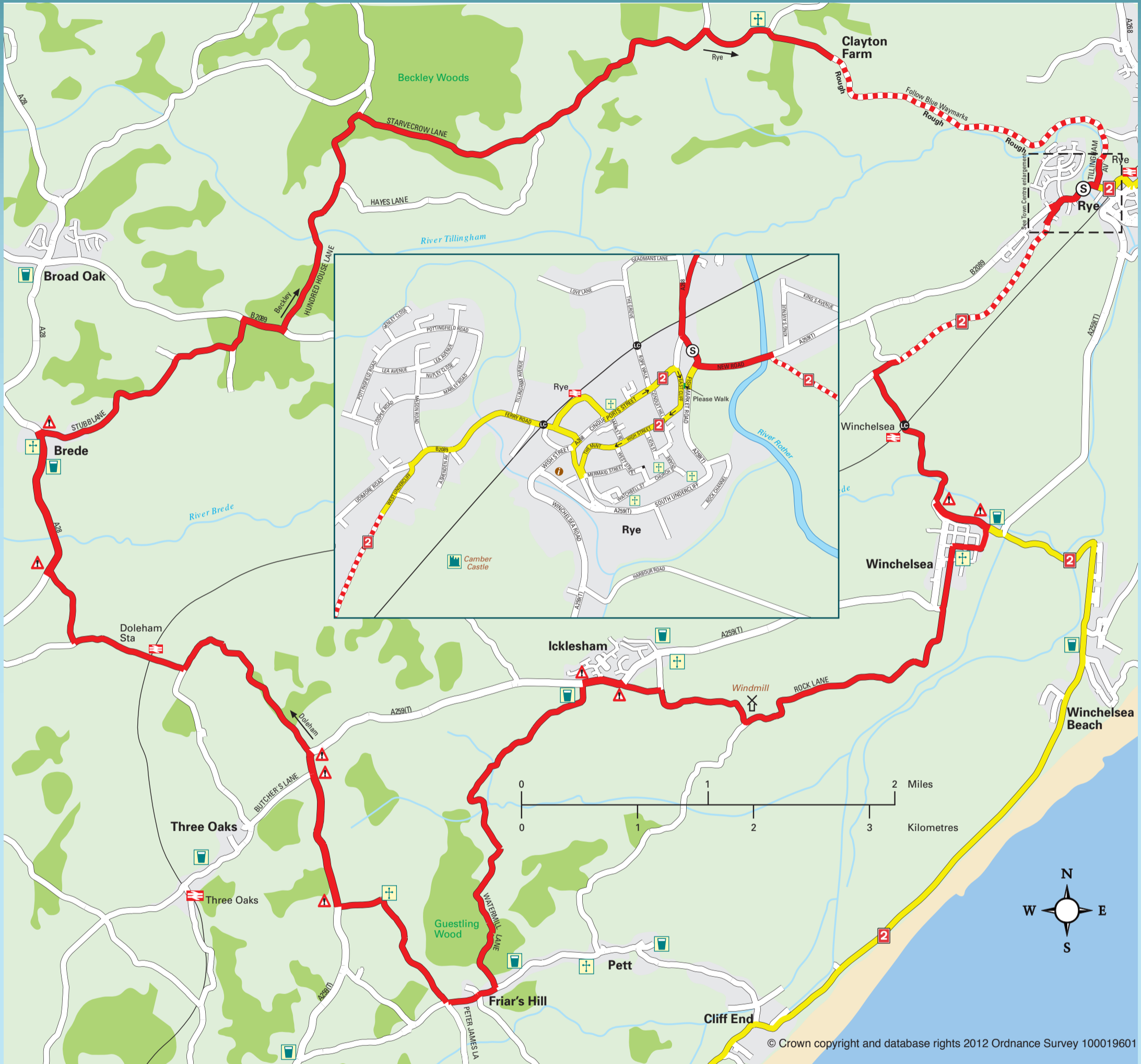
Rye Cycle Hire: 01797 223033

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Tour de la Manche



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- Circular Route (On Road)
- Traffic Free Sections
- National Cycle Network (On Road)

- A Road
- B Road
- Minor Road (arrow indicates steep l pointing downhill)
- Railway (with Level Crossing)
- Follow Road Sign as Marked

- Church
- Pub
- Railway Station (with name)
- Take Care!
- Tourist Information Centre
- Start of route

